

**POST 1990 WOMEN SHORT STORY WRITERS IN
INDIAN ENGLISH: A THEMATIC AND
STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS**

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By

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Dedicated
to my Father

Late Mr. Akhilesh Kumar Pareek

**“You inspired us to work hard and to be busy
You live in hearts and to forget you, will not be easy.”**

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ABSTRACT

A short story is the spontaneous form of writing which is as old as the other genres of literature. Short story emerged as a powerful genre in 20th century in India. Indian writers of English are masters of all genres of writing. They have been writing beautifully in all forms of literature. The Indian short story in English came into proper being in 1920s in India. It drew inspiration from ancient classics and contemporary issues. Gradually, women writers started to enter into the field of short story writing.

Women writers` role and contribution to short story writing is remarkable who wrote by heart and chose the themes of alienation, identity crisis and dilemma for their stories. The thesis is an effort to analyze the thematic concerns and structure in the short story collections of the four writers: Githa Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Nergis Dalal and Nandita Puri. It aims at in-depth analysis of the condition of women in the stories of the proposed writers and an attempt is also made to bring out the similarities and dissimilarities in the theme and form of their stories.

Women have been working hard for the welfare of their family and society but they are not treated equally. These writers have discussed the various roles of women and they have also tried to pour light on the man-woman relationship. The thesis attempts to talk about the dilemma and alienation of women protagonists in the proposed stories of these four writers. These writers have touched upon various themes and they have tried to be the voice of the voiceless. They have chosen to throw light on the untouched and mystified experiences of women. The work is a modest analysis of theme and structure of these four women short story writers.

Key words: Women, alienation, dilemma, voiceless.

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, hereby, certify that the work, which is being presented in the thesis, entitled **“POST 1990 WOMEN SHORT STORY WRITERS IN INDIAN ENGLISH: A THEMATIC AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS”** in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, carried out under supervision of Dr. Jatinder Kohli, Associate Professor, Department of English, Government Arts College, Kota and submitted to the University of Kota, Kota represents my ideas in my own words and where other ideas or words have been included I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. the work presented in this thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any other degree or diploma from any Institutions.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTERS		Page No.
Chapter-1	Theoretical Framework	1-19
Chapter-2	Introducing the Female Canon	20-41
Chapter-3	Defining Women: Protagonists of the Stories	42-71
Chapter-4	Women: Muted and Marginalized	72-109
Chapter-5	Unfolded Stories through Time and Space	110-149
Chapter-6	The Art of Narration	150-190
Chapter-7	Insights	191-208
	Summary	209-217
	Bibliography	218-228

Chapter-1

Theoretical Framework

Chapter – 1

Theoretical Frame Work

Literature is the voice of all those intellectuals who like to introduce new dimensions in every vision. It has been there since ages. It can be seen as a virtue which only human beings can claim. A person, who likes to read and write, is certainly eligible of being known as a lover of literature. Literature gives a unique vision to its learners and it makes them artistic as well. A literary scholar will always come up with a different perspective and will always see everything in a different manner.

Literature is vast and it is like an ocean which is full of gems. We have got many literary gems. All languages have seen the progress of literature. English is one of those languages. English Literature has always fascinated the readers due to its variety and diversity.

We are well aware with the aim of writing short stories. Short story not only entertains the readers but also educates them. It behaves as a catalyst sometimes. It is the mirror of the society. It can be seen as a mentor, facilitator and a navigator as it is always ready to guide the readers and motivate them to do well.

Short stories are not new forms of literature as they existed in many forms like anecdotes, brief narratives and many more. Stories can be seen in various forms and they have been appreciated by all. In India the stories of *Panchtantra* and *Hitopdesh* are seminal examples and if we look at West, then we have got *Tales of the Old Testament*. These can be considered as ancient literature. One can easily accept the long heritage of short story in the form of legend, fable, parable and novella. Nobody can deny the modern changes in the form, technique and theme of short story but the purpose of writing short story remains the same and that is to educate and entertain.

Short story went through proper form in the 19th century with the writers like Poe in The United States, Gogol and Chekhov in Russia, Maupassant in France and Sir Walter Scott in England. They contributed a lot in the field of short story writing and they are remarkably known for it till date. Short story has marked its presence on the globe in one or the other way. The tradition of story-telling was common even in ancient ages and the tradition continues in modern times as well. G.H.Mair says, “The faculty for telling stories is the oldest artistic faculty in the world and the deepest implanted in the heart of man. Before, the rudest cave-pictures were scratched on the stone, the story-teller, it is not unreasonable to suppose, was plying this trade.” (Mair qtd in Mehta12)

Mair is absolutely correct in his expression as we cannot deny the fact that story has always been there in some or the other form and it has been the best way of conveying message to people in a lighter manner. They are expression of inner thoughts of the teller who somehow tries to depict the social conditions of the society and surrounding. They are narrated in such a manner that readers are not only entertained but also educated. A short story can be of one paragraph and it can be a full length description as John Cournos observes, “A short story may, indeed, be long, even quite long, if conceptionally and structurally it creates a concentratedness of mood and single-mindedness of purpose which permit of no digression or deviation, no over-running of the frame.” (Cournos 3-4)

Cournos` s observations are right in this regard as short stories are purposeful and they are woven around a single purpose of educating people about the odds of the society. *Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines it as, “...a relatively short narrative (under ten thousand words), which is designed to produce a single dominant effect, which contains the elements of drama... a good short story consists of a character (or group of characters) presented against a background or setting involving mental or physical action.” (Shaw 343)

Thus, it is quite important to keep all the above mentioned points in mind while writing a short story as they are the key elements of short story writing. In this regard, H.G.Wells opines, “The short story may be horrible or pathetic or

funny or profoundly illuminating, having only this essential that it should take from fifteen to fifty minutes to read aloud. But here is something very bright and moving to be achieved in a small place ...and short time.” (Wells qtd in Sahni 176)

We cannot deny the fact that short stories are served to the readers in many ways, they can be funny, sad or they can be written in the form of a personal experience of the writer but ultimately they give immense pleasure to the readers and they are served with a hidden message. According to Edgar Allan Poe, “A writer must conceive with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out.” (54) Further he continues:

..Then invents such incidents and combines such events- as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tends not to the out –bringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design and by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. (Poe qtd in Mehta 4-5)

In Russia, Alexander Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol wrote great stories and that too; with realistic approach to life but Turugenev and Chekhov were masters in writing such stories which emphasized on the revelation of characters and life. With the passage of time, short story was transferred from Russia to America. Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne and O.Henry wrote remarkable stories and Henry is best known for his wit, wisdom and humour.

The short story became popular in France and it was influenced by naturalism which was followed by the golden era of Guy de Maupassant. The European short story is mainly divided in two schools- The Maupassant and The Chekhovian. Maupassant can be hard and direct while writing as he clearly says about his characters, “What they are doing is entirely their responsibility. I present them as they are.” (qtd in Mundhra and Sahni 121) Chekhov`s writing is soft and

sympathetic as he says, “Yes, I know that they are responsible for whatever they are doing. There may be some little thing that will explain.” (qtd in Mundhra and Sahni 120-121)

Short story became famous in England due to the writings of Rudyard Kipling which was continued by writers like Doyle, Joseph Conrad and H.G.Wells. There had been many names in the list of short story writers who contributed to great extent like Katherine Mansfield, Somerset Maugham, A.E. Coppard and so on and so forth. Hugh Walpole defines it thus, “A short story should be a story; a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and satisfying denouement.” (qtd in Mundhra and Sahni 117) Walpole`s definition of a short story is truly appropriate as stories are always full of incidents and happenings and one can find a sudden and swift development of thoughts and events in a story and that is why Louis Stevenson has talked about three ways of writing a short story, “There are only three ways as per *A World of Great Stories* of writing a story—you may take a plot and fit characters in it or you may take a character and choose incidents and situations to develop it or you may take a certain atmosphere and get actions and persons to express and realize it.” (qtd in Shaw 358)

The development of Indian Short Story in English can be seen with the first Indian English Short Story Collection by Shoshee Chander Dutt in 1885. The first two decades of the nineteenth century offered seminal collections of short stories by writers like S.M. Natesan Sastri, Dwijendra Nath Neogi, S.K. Chettur and Muhammed Habib.

Later, the Gandhian era introduced different ideas to the writers and helped in the development of short story. A.S.P.Ayyar and K.S.Venkataramani did fantastic job and contributed immensely in the field of short story writing. The short stories of Indian writers are renowned because of the modest efforts of Manjari S. Iswaran, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan. Indian short

story in English became significant in this era and in the able hands of these writers, Indian short story got a unique identity.

Iswaran`s stories are known for the variety of theme which ranges from lives of men and women to superstitions and faith. Mulk Raj Anand`s stories are a true mirror of contemporary India which portray rich people and beggars. K.R.S.Iyengar observes, “Anand sees life sometimes as comedy, sometimes as tragedy.” (356)

R.K.Narayan is a luminary who is known for his style and themes and C.V. Venugopal rightly opines for him, “Narayan is content generally in skimming lightly on the surface of life.” (75) Another eminent writer to this chain is, Raja Rao, who is considered as a genius of writing by all. There have been so many short story writers whose contribution to Indian Writing in English can never be denied and they have marked a remarkable presence. Manohar Malgonkar, Kushwant Singh, K.A. Abbas, G.D.Khosla, Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das are known for their short stories and they have done a significant work in the field of short story writing.

Jayanta Mahapatra, Rohinton Mistry, Shashi Tharoor, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Amit Chaudhari, Makarand Paranjape, M. Bandopadhyay and R.K.Laxman have added a lot to the glory of Indian short story writing in English. Many writers have defined short stories in their own ways, for instance S.K. Das has rightly observed about short story in his book *A History of Indian Literature*:

The short story distinct from anecdotes, tales, sketches, reportage and novellas came at the last stage of the evolution of the narratives. As a form, it shares some features of these four but it developed its own distinctiveness identified by the presence of a conscious narrative, foregrounding a particular incident, or a situation or a moment of emotional intensity. (Das 302)

Das has talked about the conscious narrative form of short story and he mentions it as the last stage of narrative. Short story was invented in 20th century in India as a literary form. India is a proud country with a tradition in tale-telling

and ancient fables and tales had great significance in the shaping of short story. Today, short story has spread its roots all over and is accepted by all.

Indian writing in English has marked its presence across the globe and our writers are lauded by all the readers. Our writers are masters of almost all genres of writing but short story leaves a great impression on its readers` mind. Our seminal anthologies for instance *Kathasaritsagar*, the *Jataka* and the *Panchtantra* are invaluable as *Kathasaritsagar* is a collection of tales of wisdom; *Jataka* is the world`s first collection of didactic tales and *Panchtantra* is the world`s first collection of fables. To quote M.Rama:

We have had in India stories which lie embedded in the hymns of the *Rigveda*, or scattered in the *Upnishadas* and the epics, the stories which constitute the *Panchtantra*, the *Hitopadesha*, the *Sukasaptati*, the *Dasakumaracharita* and the *Vatalapanchvimsati* in Sanskrit, the Buddhist *Jatak Katha* in Pali and a host of similar stories in modern Indian languages. (Rama 216)

It can easily be said that short story writers have always tried to pick contemporary and burning issues for their stories. They try to bring the problems and conflicts of our society to our notice through their writings. They write for a cause and that is the beauty of literature. Writers have always taken this responsibility on their shoulders to be a voice of all. Their pen is a strong weapon which brings a positive change in the society.

Indian Women writers marked their presence in a glorified manner. There cannot be a second thought to their magnanimous writing. One can see never-ending efforts from Sarojini Naidu to the women short story writers of today. During nineteenth century, women writers were influenced by freedom movements, role of women, anglicized views, English education and western crusaders and it helped in the formation of feminist perspective among women folk. They started raising their voices. They began talking about issues of identity, equality and liberty. This was done in many ways and short story is the most powerful among all of them. The literature which was inspired by freedom

movement was a symbol of freedom as well and it introduced a new image of women. To quote Riemenschneider:

National and populist struggles characteristic of the pre-war and war periods have been replaced by economic and social contradictions and struggles among the classes and castes of India. Middle class writers have, accordingly, turned to questions and problems besetting their own class. The changes in the country after political independence form the basis of a literary development noticeable from the end of the 1960s: an increasing tendency to turn away from national public themes towards individual and private themes. The development of Indian short story written by women is to be placed in this context. (Riemenschneider 312-318)

Women were truly inspired and highly motivated and that is why they came out of their homes and became the part of the crowd. This was a beginning of awakening where women started getting an idea about their rights and importance of social awakening. In this context, A.R.Desai truly opines, “This was unique in the history of India, the spectacle of hundreds of women taking part in a political mass movement, picketing of liquor shops, marching in demonstrations, courting jails, facing lathi charges and bullets.” (Desai 279)

They gradually started writing and their personal issues forced them to be the voice of public. They were inspired by the western practitioners like Virginia Woolf, Rebecca West, Dorothy Richardson, Simon de Beauvoir and German Greer. Mary Wollstonecraft and Margaret Fuller `s writings acted as a pathfinder and women became aware of their plight and marginality.

Women have always been treated in a bad manner and they are supposed to play the pre-defined roles. Women are supposed to be governed by men. There position in the society is thought-provoking. The songs of Bahinabai, a Buddhist Nun, pour light on women`s position as she writes:

The Vedas cry aloud, *The Puranas* shout
“No good may come to woman”
I was born with a woman`s body

How am I to attain truth?

“They are foolish, seductive, and deceptive

Any connection with woman is disastrous.”

Bahina Says, “If a woman`s body is so harmful,

How in this world will I reach truth?” (qtd Tharu and Lalita 107)

This was the position of women in the ancient times. Women were not regarded as literary and intellectual beings because they were supposed to take care of the family and were asked to live a life full of responsibilities and yet, they were not considered as responsible beings. They were doing everything for their families and family was everything for them but still they stood nowhere. They had no identity of their own. They had no space of their own. They tried to adjust in the family. They did everything to be the part of the family but they were never appreciated for the duties they performed. They did a triumphant job in the making of the unit called ‘Family’, but they were never recognized for the same. According to Manu, a woman can never live a life on her own as he says, “her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence.” (Manu, ix: 3, 328) This is how women were treated. Male- dominating society considers the fact that women cannot live on their own and they need male protection in their lives if they want to survive and Manu`s views are an example of it. Our women short story writers introduced a new form of short story writing as they have always attempted to be a voice of voiceless. They write about women`s experiences in the society. They talk about the condition of women in present world and short story became the powerful tool for them as K.R. Srinivas Iyengar observes, “Women are natural story-tellers even when they don`t write or publish.” (Iyengar 435) Women writers in Indian English feel enthusiastic to write short stories as they find it as the most suitable form for their purpose of writing. Indian Short Story in English was introduced by a woman writer Kamala Sathianandan in 1898 and her first short story collection was *Stories from Indian Christian Life*. Later, Cornelia Sorabji held it high by writing superb stories. Shhela Hauli, Santa and Seeta Chatterjee and Swarna Kumari Devi`s stories were extolled due to their wide-ranged themes of folklore, Indian myths and legends.

Attia Hosain, Ruth Pravar Jhabwala, Usha John and Romilla Thapar`s contribution to the world of short stories is commendable.

The Post 1970 period is noteworthy due to the emergence of writers like Shashi Deshpandre, Kamala Das, Nergis Dalal, Veena Sharma, Sadiqa Peerbhoy, Veena Adiga, Bharati Mukherjee, Shona Ramaya, Jhumpa Lahiri, Manju Kapur, Tara Deshpande, Githa Hariharan, Nandita Puri and many more, the list is long where words fall short to write about them and their contribution to the world of Indian writing in English and World Literature.

Women short story writers tried to pour light on complex issues and their condition in the world. The condition of women has not undergone major changes in the present world. Though things have changed slightly but still, women are facing the same problems and crisis. They are still trying to establish their identity and they are still facing identity-crisis. They have to perform all the household chores and this is totally their responsibility. They need to adjust between their office life and personal life and if at any point they fail to do so or they feel tired, they are asked to sit at home and pay attention towards their children and family. Here, responsibility is not at all a problem for women, they are doing it perfectly but the question which arises is: Is it the responsibility of women only? Are they destined to do it? Are they bound to play these pre-defined roles? The answer to all these questions is a big `yes`, because in this patriarchal society, males are not supposed to help women in household tasks. Here, it is important to say that the scenario has changed a bit and men are trying hard to help women in growing and establishing their identity but that number is not enough as still most of the women are facing all these conflicts.

Women are worshipped as Goddess in our country but these Goddesses feel muted and marginalized. They feel as if they are not a part of society. Their identities are suppressed. They live in a dilemma which sometimes makes their lives miserable and they are unable to come out of it. They start feeling depressed at times and gradually surrender to such circumstances, considering it as their destiny.

Women short story writers have poured light on these experiences. They talk about the role of women in society and throw light on their condition. They try to become the voices of voiceless. One can clearly notice the feminine perspective in women`s writing. They present the present condition of women through their stories. They depict their loneliness, their dilemma, conflict and compromises through stories. Their stories are full of concerns and readers can easily find that most of the times the protagonist will be women. Women readers can identify these protagonists easily.

Today, we have got so many women short story writers, who are habitual of introducing variations in their writings which introduce us with the hidden meaning of their writing. The picture of modern world is changing rapidly. People are becoming ambitious; they are moving forward and entering a new world. With this changed picture of modern world, short story, too has taken a new shape. The aim of this work is to look into the new changes in the short stories of women writers, written after 1990 in Indian English. An effort is made to notice the thematic and structural changes in the short stories of women short story writers of Indian English. Women`s efforts are noticed and admired in the field of Indian English short story.

The short stories of women writers in Indian English, written after 1990, talk about new subjects and define women in a new role. Their writing style, too, is different. Earlier, women who went against the norms of society were not considered as good women and were forced to accept the norms of family and society. The modern woman is aware of her capabilities and she can do what she wants to do. She tries to resolve the conflicts and tries to live a life free of obstacles.

Short story talks about the burning issues and it leaves an impression on the reader`s mind. The reader can associate with it and can contemplate. Sometime, short stories are auto-biographical as writers are influenced by their own struggles and conflicts. Women writers write about the exile and loneliness. Thus, it can be said that short story is a form of writing which tries to serve the

readers with a message. It tries to awaken people and allow them to think in a different way. Short story can be considered as a spiritual being who keeps its cool even in adverse times and tries to give its best to create a better surrounding and perfect world.

The short stories in Indian English, written after 1990 and that too by the women writers, are mature and invaluable as they pour light on different and various themes. They have got a different narratology, structure, style and characterization. They have defined women in a new way. On one hand, they talk about women as central figure and they go into details about man-woman relationship on the other.

This thesis covers four major Women Short Story Writers in Indian English, writing after 1990. In this study, only those collections are taken, which are written after 1990. This work is a thematic and structural analysis of Githa Hariharan's *The Art of Dying and Other Stories* (1993), Shashi Deshpande's *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1993), Nandita C. Puri's *Nine on Nine* (2005) and Nergis Dalal's *The Nude* (2007).

Githa Hariharan is an inventive writer who keeps on writing for women and she deals with those aspects of women's lives which are mystified and muted. Her stories elaborate the concepts of decency and honor but with playful irony. It is the beauty of her writing. She tries to connect smaller events with larger and tries to portray her characters in all shades and from different sections of society. This is done in *The Art of Dying* also where with the help of twenty short stories; she has taken up many different topics and characters. Death, inner conflict, women and their condition, past and present, loss and change can be seen as important themes of this collection.

In Shashi Deshpande's writings, one finds the strong women characters who are bold enough to face adverse conditions and sustain on their own. Her characters are middle class women who are educated enough to survive on their own but they feel trapped. Her writing is a perfect blend of realism and modernity. The mother-daughter relationship and husband-wife relationship are common

projection of her stories. She writes in a simple language. M.K. Naik in the book *The Indian Short Story: A Representative Anthology* opines, “She shows how traditional Indian society is biased against woman but she recognizes that is very often women who oppress their sisters...” (Naik 84)

Nergis Dalal is a scrupulous writer whose writings are renowned for Indian themes and sensitiveness. Her language is clear and transparent. One can find various themes in her stories. She too, talks about women and portrays their different roles as mothers, wives and daughters. She is a versatile writer who has contributed a lot to Indian English Literature as she has a great number of works to her credit.

Nandita C. Puri is a writer and journalist. Her collection of stories revolves around urban women. She uses climax factor to add a twist to her stories. Her vernacular words make her stories interesting and her readers feel a sense of belongingness. Her urban women are projected in such a manner that they keep on questioning the age-old established norms and asserting their independence.

Main Objectives of Research

The work aims to provide an overall view of post ninety Women Short Story Writers in Indian English who have contributed to great extent and who have paved a path for the upcoming writers in the field of short story writing.

Further, it is also aimed to pour light on the thematic concerns. Whenever a writer writes something, the theme plays a seminal role and this study attempts to analyze the thematic concerns of the collection of proposed stories of these writers who have talked about the condition of women and the various roles played by them in a male-dominated society.

It is also attempted to analyze the structure and narratology. The structure and narratology add to the beauty of any writing. The writer tries really hard to make the writing well-versed with good devices and narrative techniques. This study aims at all these aspects in context of the proposed stories of these writers.

An effort is also made to assess their contribution to the form and literature in general. These writers have contributed to large extent and they have opened new doors in the field of short story writing. It is also ventured to examine the man-woman relationship in the stories of these writers. They talk about the simple and complex relationships which are shared by them. The similarities and dissimilarities are discussed and projected so as to make the things transparent.

The study aims at the close examination of various roles which are played by women in our society. Women have been the navigators but their jobs are never acknowledged and they remain silent and live in isolation so this work tries to discuss this silence and isolation in detail.

No full length study has been done on this particular topic, there are writers and works who/which discuss the selected writers individually, but this study, is a comparative analysis of the selected four women short story writers in Indian English.

It is proposed to make the readers known with the changes and shifts in the writings of these writers with the passage of time since time plays a very important role in the formation of views and expressions.

Further, it is attempted to examine them separately from the viewpoint of thematic concerns, characterization, style and other related aspects and it is tried to find out the similarities and dissimilarities in themes, character and style in the context of time, space and circumstances.

Thus, it is hoped that this thesis will throw light on the different and similar thematic concerns taken up by these Women short story writers. They all have chosen women as their protagonists. Women are the central figures. They play different roles. They are mothers, wives, daughters, daughters-in-law, and on top of all human beings.

All four writers of the projected work talk about this alienation, loss and blankness. This study is an effort to bring into readers` notice to man-woman

relationship in the male dominated society. It also discusses women`s awareness of the concept of family, sacrifice, selfhood and womanhood.

Women writers in India feel marginalized and so do the women characters of their work. This too, is discussed in this work. The search for ‘self’ and a conflict between “what women are” and “what they want to be” are again a part of these writers` stories. It is aimed that the work will be able to tell the readers about the changes introduced in the post 90s short stories in Indian English, with special reference to female perspective. Thus, the work imparts knowledge about the current trends of the society and the changing scenario by the characters of the works of these writers.

Importance and relevance of Research

The study aims at the overall examination of thematic aspects and structural aspects of the selected works of these four women short story writers in Indian English. It is an effort to define women, their roles, identity crisis and conflict from the female perspectives. It tries to assess their contribution to form, literature, genre and themes. It examines their narrative techniques, characterization, style and other related dimensions. A period of twenty years of Indian English from 1990 to 2010 is covered in this study. The work covers only at home/ native writers which will definitely give a new insight to these writers and their works.

The thesis aims to give a new insight into the women`s writings and will help to understand their writings in a better manner. It is an effort to make the readers understand women`s plight and inner conflict.

Women`s writings have always been an interesting topic to be discussed. The main reason behind choosing this particular topic is the relevance of this work in present world. Short stories have been an area of interest since ancient times and even today, they are appreciated by readers and critics. Women short story writers try to give their voice to the mystified existence and experiences of women in the patriarchal society. Women go through humiliations and harassments which is a big obstacle for them. They go through an inner conflict.

The proposed writers have tried to throw light on this aspect of our society and the condition of women with special reference to man-woman relationship.

Research Methodology and Design

This thesis will be a helping hand for further researches. It is divided into seven chapters. It is a detailed study of the four writers' selected works. It is a detailed structural and thematic analysis of the selected works. The research is divided into chapters which are followed by bibliography. The bibliography contains primary and secondary sources. The research is based on the readings of the primary and secondary sources. The thesis is designed as per the eighth edition of *MLA Handbook*.

Expected Contribution from the Study

The work will open up new dimensions for further researches. It is hoped that this work, through a close study of thematic aspects and narrative strategies adopted by these four writers, will be able to rework the narrative approach. The work is an effort to tell that though story telling is a seminal trope in the writings of these four writers, their narrative technique is different. Short stories written by women in English are highly neglected in spite of their significance. Absence of enough critical work is a big sign of this. This thesis is an attempt to critically look into the texture of these writers' works and this project will go a long way in the appraisal of these writers' works that have not been, perhaps, adequately evaluated particularly with reference to various narrative techniques and thematic aspects.

Review of Literature

Krishna Daiya in her book *Post-Independence Women Short Story Writers in Indian English* (2006) has discussed the thematic concerns, style and art of characterization of women short story writers of independent India. She has taken up Shashi Deshpande, Gauri Deshpande, Tara Deshpande, Anjana Appachana, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shalan Savur, Prema Ramakrishnan, Manju Kak, Githa Hariharan and R.P. Jhabvala. Her book contains eighty pages and cannot be

taken as full-length study and this thesis is an effort to deal with short stories written after 1990, by women writers in Indian English.

Bijay Kumar Das in his book *Post Modern Indian English Literature* (2006) talks about Indian English poetry, fiction, drama, autobiography, and short story. In the fourth chapter, he talks about short story, and in that too, one can notice that he has talked about all the short story writers, but this study aims at female short story writers.

Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Spectrum, edited by T.M.J. IndraMohan (2004) is a book which in form of various essays, gives detailed study of Deshpande`s works, especially novels, but it does not talk of her short stories, except for three stories, based on Indian epic *Mahabharat*.

Jaydipsingh Dodiya`s *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English* (2006) is important because of its essay on Shashi Deshpande but they do not talk much about these writers as short story writers.

Ritu Menon in her afterword “No Longer Silent”, published in *A Matter of Time*, talks about Shashi Deshpande`s novels and short stories- *The Intrusion and Other Stories*. She pours light on her art of characterization which can be a good help, but that is limited to Shashi Deshpande.

“Women in the Literary Corpus of Shashi Deshpande”, an article by L.V. Padmarani Rao in the international journal *Galaxy* is again on Deshpande`s art of writing and characterization.

Thus, no full-length study is done on this topic. There can be studies related to detailed analysis of writing style and thematic concerns of individual writers, but when it comes to the selected four writers of this research work, perhaps no full-length study in the field of structural and thematic analysis, can be considered.

Outline of Chapters

This opening chapter has thrown light on the main objectives of research and has discussed the research methodology. It is a **Theoretical Framework** of the thesis.

The Second Chapter: **Introducing the Female Canon** is an introduction to the lives and writings of the selected women short story writers.

The third and fourth chapters are a thematic analysis of the selected short stories of these writers. The third chapter: **Defining Women: Protagonists of the Stories**, takes up women as central figure. The fourth chapter: **Women: Muted and Marginalized** pours light on Man-woman relationship. It depicts the loss and plight of women and their efforts to break away from the stereotypes.

The fifth and sixth chapters are a structural analysis of the selected short stories of these writers. The fifth chapter: **Unfolded Stories through Time and Space**, is a study of time and space in the selected collections. The sixth chapter: **The Art of Narration** discusses the narrative techniques, structure, language, style and overall structure of the selected short stories.

The last chapter: **Insights**, is the concluding one which tries to conclude the narrative and thematic changes in the short stories of these women writers , which means, it briefs the thematic and structural patterns of the post 90s women short story writer sin Indian English.

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Chapter-2
Introducing the Female
Canon

Chapter – 2

Introducing the Female Canon

“The task of interpretation of women`s experience cannot be left to male writers alone, however sympathetic they might be. The female perspective expressed through women`s writings of all kinds is more than a valuable corrective to an all-male view of the universe.”

(Miles 1)

These views of Rosalind Miles are appropriate to tell the need and importance of Women`s Writing in Indian English Literature. Women were in a better condition in vedic period where they were duly regarded and they had a place in family and society. Girls had freedom to move according to their choices. Women were lauded for their wisdom and beauty. Gargi and Maitreyee were prolific scholars and this was the period which introduced famous poets like Surya, Savitri, Lopamudra, Ghosa, Apala and Saraswati but things and conditions changed a lot with the passage of time. Later vedic period was not at all favorable for women. Child-marriage, widowhood and polygamy became common practices due to which women`s creativity came to an end. Manu Smriti added a lot to women`s plight and they were confined to live on the mercy of men. As the result of this, their condition became pathetic. With the arrival of Epic age, their condition improved to some extent and some of them turned into learned beings. Bhakti movement gave many women poets like Meera Bai, Akkamahadevi, Muddupalani and Bahina Bai. Women have been struggling a lot since ages and nobody knows when this struggle will come to an end but things are changing gradually and the nineteenth century introduced modernization and education in India. It was seen as the age of renaissance as western ideas influenced our intellectuals and they started thinking about the condition of women and thought of their upliftment. Ishwar Chandra Vidhyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen and Raja Ram Mohan Roy supported the idea and talked about women empowerment and the introduction of Women Education Act 1835 became a prominent step in this

field and Dr. Anne Besant rightly opines, “There cannot be educated people without educated women.” (qtd in Meerabai 18)

Pandita Ramabai can be considered as the finest example of New Woman. She tried a lot to change the condition of women and she worked hard for education of women. Women started raising their voices gradually as G. Forbes says, “The first generation of women found voice: they wrote about their lives and about conditions of women, critiqued their society and the foreign rulers, and developed their own institutions.” (Forbes 61)

Works of Indian women writers of late nineteenth century concentrated on their new findings and self appraisal and Malashri Lal has truly said:

Romantic attachments that she read in Charlotte Bronte or George Eliot were immensely alluring to the intellect but totally false to her own position as an object agreeable to an arranged marriage. Through flights of fancy the woman writer could transform some of her insistent reality. What she managed in these transformations was re-telling of her own life in one way or the other. (Lal 1)

Toru Dutt, the first Indian novelist and a great poet did a fantastic job for the empowerment of women and she came up with the archetypes of Indian females, for instance Savitri and Sita. Writers like Krupabai Sathianathan, Swarnakumari and Cornelia Sorabji were remarkable in their themes and writing. With the passage of time, the writers were influenced by Western practitioners and they compared their writings to that of Western writings. Mary Wollstonecraft’s views influenced other feminists like Harriet Martineau, Sarah Grand and Oliver Shruners who tried to bring changes and emphasized on the importance of women’s education. The feminist literary criticism has brought the reality to readers’ notice and women’s plight and dilemma is discussed in detail. Women writers have acted as pioneers in delivering women’s plight. Feminism became a keyword in Western countries and Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, Simone De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* and Elaine Showalter’s

Sexual/Textual Politics were praiseworthy examples. They acted as catalyst and instilled a new awareness in women in India also.

When the world was facing an era of change, it was the time when Indian women writers entered the threshold in a praiseworthy manner. They were influenced by the circumstances of society. Indian women writers introduced a new form of short story writing and they found it as a better option to express the agony and experiences of women. Indian women are naturally blessed with art of storytelling as they are always ready with bed time stories for their children. Dr. G.S. Balram Gupta opines:

With the exception of Anita Desai, the major women novelists in English have not shown any marked interest in the short story as a form of artistic expression and exploration...the possible reason for the avoidance of writing novels by women short story writers seems to be their recognition of the difficulty of maintaining a steady centre of interest in a long narrative or of achieving coherence of action rather than unity based on theme and idea. (Gupta 37)

Journals and magazines gave wings to women short story writers' flight. They got a platform for the publication of their creativity. Cornelia Sorabji wrote fantastic stories which were followed by writers like Sheela Hauli, Sunita Devi, Ela Sen, Krishna Hutheesingh, Attia Hosain, Usha John, Romilla Thapar, Amrita Abraham, Vasanthi and Sharada Venkatraman. Sheela Hauli's *Potpuri* (1912), Sunita Devi's *Bengal Dacoits and Tigers* (1916), *The Beautiful Moghal Princesses* (1918) and *The Rajput Princesses* (n.d.) and Swarna Kumari Devi's *Ghoshal's Short Stories* (1930) pour light on Indian myths, legends and folk lores. Ela Sen talks about the real life tragedies in her collections *A Child is Born and Other Stories* (1943), *Darkening Days* (n.d.) and *Midnight on the Lakes and Other Stories* (1943). Krishna Huthee Singh deals with the life of politicians and prisoners in her volume *Shadows on the Wall* (1948). *The Phoenix Fled and other Stories* (1953) is written by Attia Hosain and she throws light on the life of north Indian women in her collection. Ruth Praver Jhabwala needs no introduction and her four collection of short stories *Like Birds Like Fishes* (1963), *An Experience*

of India (1966), *A Stronger Climate* (1968) and *How I became a Holy Mother and Other Stories* (1976) are a remarkable presentation of orthodox Indian society and lives of widows. Usha John's *The Unknown Lover and Other Stories* (1961) is a beautiful description of actresses, laymen of the Moghal Empire and female temple dancers. Romilla Thapar's *Indian Tales* (1961) and Amrita Abraham's *The Lost Necklace and Other Stories* (1974) are seminal collections of this time.

Later, the period of 1970s can be seen as the period of progress as this period introduced perfect women short story writers. Kamala Das is a frank writer and poet who wrote *A Doll for the Child Prostitute* (1977) and *Padmavati the Harlot and Other Stories* (1992) and highlighted the condition of women in society.

Anita Desai's *Games at Twilight and Other Stories* (1978) and *Diamond Dust* (2000) are good examples of Indian life. Malathi Rao's *Passion Fruit* (1980) and *Come for Coffee, Please!* (1982) are remarkable due to her way of narration. K.L. Sadana's *The Prejudice of Ages and Other Stories* (1979) and Jayashree Chatterjee's *Where Oleanders Don't Grow* (1981) also belong to this period. Veena Sharma's *The Unrepentant and Other Stories* (1982) and *Naina and Other Stories* (1989) depict the complexity of relationships. Prema Shastri's collection *The Blue Convertible and Other Stories* (1983) and Shailaja Ganguly's *Festive Seasons* (1983) are read as the fantastic records of man-woman relationships.

Women short story writers viz. Mira Balasubramanian and Laxmi Kannan are also lauded for their narration. Sunita's collections: *A Woman is Dead and Other Stories* (1980) and *Eunuch of Time and Other Stories* (1982), are true account of women's exploitation and their condition in the society. Anjana Appachana's *Incantations and Other Stories* (1992) focuses on the condition of women in traditional India.

Indian Immigrant women writers of short fiction have done great work in this field. They got variety of themes due to their diverse experiences. Bharati Mukherjee's *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) are

great examples of diasporic writing. Suniti Namjoshi is also well known for her retelling of stories in the collection *Feminist Fables* (1988). Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* (1995) is an account of immigrant Asian women's misery. Ginu Kamani pours light on Indian Life and Indian Women in her anthology *Jungle Girl* (1995). Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) are true depiction of exile and alienation of Indian Immigrants. Tara Deshpande's *Fifty and Done: Stories and Verse* (1999) is a true projection of the condition of women.

There are women short story writers who have done a great job in the projection of contemporary India. Prema Ramakrishnan's *The Homemaker and Other Stories* (1994), Anjana Basu's *The Agency Raga and Some Variations* (1994) and Anuradha Murlidharan's *The Coconut Cutter and Other Stories* (2000) are major works.

A story is narrated to show a chain of events and it is done in the form of words and it comes up with a message. Stories try to convey a meaning and this is done in direct or indirect manner. They become the mouthpiece of the voiceless beings and they focus at positive change. They introduce reality in the form of imaginary or real characters. It is appropriate to quote Shiv K Kumar here, "The early short story whether written in English or any Indian language, grew under western tutelage. The only difference was that while the writer in Indian language breathed in the western influence as a part of the zeitgeist, the writer in English was ostensibly conscious of his indebtedness to the western masters." (Kumar 2)

Short Story writing attained maturity by the writings of Anita Desai who introduced new ideas, fresh themes, different responsibilities and a new form. Today, we have got so many short story writers who try to pour light on the darker side of modern world. Short story gives an underlying message and reflects the society. A.K. Ramanujan has rightly observed, "No text is original, yet no telling is a mere telling and the story has no closure, although it may be enclosed in a text ...the stories are there, 'always already'." (Ramanujan 53)

These are the words of A.K Ramanujan. Stories have always been there but they have been different in different surroundings, country, location and places. Short Story writing depends on the author also. Talking about the merits of the form, Mary Rohrberger says:

This is the accomplishment, perhaps of all great short story writers, the encompassing of time and motion in a present moment, while simultaneously suggesting past and future. All of the characteristic devices of short story finally relate to this end: juxtapositions that create montage patterns, the accumulation of details forming networks of images that become metaphors, the layering of time and place, the meshing of antitheses – joy and sadness, waking and dream, even life and death – tonal reverberations operating paradoxically, as a means for non- verbal expression [...] and, of course, the epiphany, a point of frozen energy operating just beyond understanding. (qtd in Harrington 6-7)

The notable writer R.K. Narayan glorifies the form by saying, “I enjoy writing a short story. Unlike the novel, which emerges from relevant, minutely worked out detail, the short story can be brought out into existence through a mere suggestion of detail, the focus being kept on a central idea or climax.” (qtd in Naik 226) Krishna Daiya observes about the writings of Indian Women short story writers:

The post- independence women short story writers were living in a society where independence had also inspired women who had decided to throw away their veil, which had covered all their mental abilities and accomplishments. They had decided to move out of the four walls and go into the world with a new confidence and determination .However they had to face lot of hurdles, created not only by men but also by other women. There were a lot of actions and reactions. The women writers of this period have captured this situation in their works. (Daiya 12)

Women have been worshipped as ‘Goddess’ in India but are treated in a different manner. They can be the main figure of the house, they can do everything, they can wake up at around 3 am to complete the household task, and

they are multi-talented. They can be here, there and everywhere, they are good at everything but still good for nothing. They are the 'backbones' of Indian families but still they do not have any identity of their own. Indian Women are still struggling for their identities, roles and rights. They feel muted, ignored and marginalized and this can be read in most of the writings of women short story writers. Similarly Usha Bande and Atma Ram opine:

Nothing escaped the notice of the storyteller; political behavior, the joint family system, the generation gap; the changing attitudes towards love, marriage and sex, the invasion by feminist ideology have all been subject to incisive analysis. These fiction writers are watching with concern, the shift in moral values and are trying to analyze the period of transition. Since the writer too is the part of the game of see-saw of old and new values, the tussle between tradition and modernity, he/she considers it his/her duty to focus on the issues that concern society. (Bande Ram 36)

It is not wrong to mention here that earlier women were confined to household boundaries and their writing genius was not allowed to be expressed but things are changing with the changing times and women have started doing very well in the field of writing and expression. They think, analyze and express. They have got new roles to perform and these are created by their inner strength only. Here, it is very important to quote Veena Dass:

Women Writers of the nineties probe into human relationships, since the present problem is closely concerned with mind and heart and the crusade is against age old established systems. In order to make the process of change smooth and really meaningful, women writers have taken upon themselves this great task. (Dass and Dhawan 12)

Our Society's role is remarkable in the formation of this process. A girl is reminded of her womanhood time to time and a set of norms is decided for her. She is evaluated on the grounds of these norms and if she is not able to follow all of them, she is not a true woman. New Woman tries to break through these norms. She wants to do what she wants to do. She tries to live her dreams and is ready to fly high. She does not allow anyone to clip her wings. She can establish a perfect

balance between 'household' and 'office'. Indian Women Short Story Writers have tried their level best to bring this shade of New Woman's personality out. Their writings are full of identity issues, isolation, sense of loneliness and struggle. A scholar and critic Joseph Ammu opines:

There is always a disconnection between what women say and what they write; between their spoken words and their silences, There is always a recess between women as a subject matter and women as writers, between language, literature and social movements, emergence of women voices, between language and gender and gender and genre. (Joseph 09-10)

Indian women short story writers have tried to bring those aspects of women and their lives which are obscure and marginalized. They discuss the identity crisis in their works. They try to define women from a new perspective. They depict the dilemma, inner conflict and gap between reality and dream. Here, it is necessitous to understand that reality means : their present condition in family and dreams mean: their quest for establishing their own identity, for doing something on their own, for being appreciated and above all – being recognized by their work and name. According to Anita Myles:

Women Novelists have created their own models, patterns and concepts of feminism suiting the Indian context that adheres to the Indian system. Vibrant and multi-colored festivals, high dearth, exotic people, dirt, heat, spicy food, magical realism and enchantment plus a spiritual haven are some of the stereotypical images that are associated with India. Much of the mysteries and fascination that surround India and, Indian women shrouded with same. They draw inspiration from the resistance and the compromises practiced by the contemporary Indian women of all classes, creeds; urban or rural. (Myles Cover Page)

The above views are appropriate in context of writings of Indian Women but one can find an addition to this and that is the voicing of the voiceless, which means our scrupulous female writers have tried to put in fantastic efforts to be the voice of voiceless women. They initiate to be the mirror of present society through their works. They take it on themselves to be a shield for Indian women.

Here, it is relevant to quote Nabaneeta Dev Sen's views, "Writing is an act of intellection and the area of the mind is allotted to men .. But the woman who writes ... has stepped out of her area of the senses and has appropriated the male gesture." (Sen 298)

Today, Indian Women Writers are performing their tasks so well; the task of awakening and raising voice but they have to face so many challenges while doing so as Shashi Deshpande expressed her views on "The Dilemma of Women Writers", "It is a curious fact that serious writing by women is invariably regarded as feminist writing. A woman who writes of women's experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, caused her strong feelings; I don't see why this has to be labeled feminist fiction." (Deshpande 18)

This is something which no one can deny. Feminist Writing needs no special introduction or definition because women are equally depicting the reality of the society. This thesis is an effort to analyze the thematic and structural aspects of the Short Stories of Post 1990 Women Short Story Writers in Indian English. This chapter is an attempt to introduce the female canon: the four female short story writers and their major works. The thesis covers four major women short story writers in Indian English, writing after 1990. In this study, only those short stories are taken which are written after 1990. The stories are examined in terms of thematic and structural analysis. These writers have defined women in new roles and they talk about different subjects. Earlier, women were supposed to abide by the norms, they were not supposed to even think about disobeying the social norms of the patriarchal society. Those who tried to disobey the norms, were not considered as good women but the modern woman is well versed and well aware of her own set of capabilities and is ready to establish her own identity. These stories are mature and invaluable as they pour light on different and various themes. They have got a different narratology and structure. This thesis will be an attempt to study the above mentioned collections of short stories in detail but first of all, it is important to introduce these writers.

Githa Hariharan`s birth place is Coimbatore, Tamilnadu. Her father was a founder and publisher of the Indian newspaper *The Economics Times*. She grew up in Manila and Bombay where she received her early education from Bombay University in the year 1974. She got Masters Degree in Communications from Fairfield University, U.S.A. She worked at a Radio Station in New York for a short duration and returned to India in 1979. In the beginning, she worked in a publishing house as an editor and then she became a freelancer and publisher. She began her writing career with her novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* which brought laurels to her as she won Commonwealth Writers` Prize. Her works are translated into French, Spanish, Dutch, German, Italian and Greek. She hails from a traditional family but her parents gave her full liberty to question the decision which affects her. It is because of her upbringing that she and her husband fought the system to declare the mother the legal and financial guardian of her children. She not only made history but also empowered women in some ways. She lives at JNU Campus, Delhi with her husband who is a medical practitioner but preferred to teach in university.

Githa Hariharan is an activist and feminist and she portrays women characters perfectly but one can see variety in her handling of themes. She recalls her pregnancy days when she was surrounded by old ladies who came up with best of suggestions. In an interview given to Arnab Chakaldar in 2006, Hariharan says:

There was an example for everything –like scripture or government documents, there was something applicable to every situation, there was a lot in small print you were just about aware of. And so I started writing the section on Mayamma, [a character in novel *Thousand Faces of Night*] the old woman first, and that just sort of emerged intact – because I had got to know so many women like that as well. (Chakaldar 2006)

Hariharan`s women characters range from girls to elderly women. She gives different shades to her characters and defines women in different roles. She has poured light on this in her article “Discrete Thoughts”:

I have considered myself part of the Indian women`s movement for the last twenty years. The extent of my day to day life involvement has, of course, been dictated by my juggler`s life – of earning a living, raising children, reading and writing. To begin with as a student in mid seventies, my political concerns were almost exclusively directed and shaped by feminism. Perhaps this was because I was then a student in America, and this was the time of passionate debate of the ERA (Equal Rights Amendments) and so forth. But once I returned to India in 1978, I saw that any real participation in movements for social change had to come to terms with the big class gender issue. It became clear to me that neither class nor gender could be privileged as the central focus of protest and activity at the expense of the other. The struggle to change the quality of political and personal worlds has to be simultaneous. (Hariharan 215-16)

Hariharan writes in her own style but she admits the influences of three legacies in the same article:

Personally I feel I have three legacies to draw on as a writer. First, there is the long Indian tradition of storytelling and the varied streams of literatures in Indian languages. Second, there is the body of English and European writers who made up our ‘canon’ in school and college and third, we have the alternative prophets, writers like G.V. Desani and later Salman Rushdie, who made their parallel legacies meet in vibrant working tune with our times. (ibid 215)

Hariharan`s works can be considered as a true sketch of bonding, relationships, dejection and illusion. Devi, the female protagonist of *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) has returned from New Jersey, U.S.A. and feels dejected and lonely after marriage. Her characters are trapped into certain webs. *When Dreams Travel* is a story of women by a woman. Her novel *Fugitive Histories* is based on Gujarat riots where the darker shades of riots are depicted. One can find the sense of loss and bonds of affection and sympathy together in the novel. *In Times of Siege* is a beautiful account of how one looks at one`s culture and past.

Githa Hariharan is not only a creative writer but also an active activist. She has tried her hands in many things. Her writings are not revolving around only women; she tries to cover almost everything. *I have Become the Tide* is a magnanimous novel which brings to our notice the castes on campus and attempts to be an eye-opener for all of us. The novel throws light on a literature Professor's research efforts on a medieval poet Kannadeva. He becomes a target for Hindu militants for his research.

Hariharan will remarkably be known for her collection of short stories *The Art of Dying and Other Stories*. Manisha Sinha in her Research Paper states about women characters of Hariharan's works:

Githa Hariharan is a post-colonial woman grappling with the problems of individual identity and national identity at the same time. The detailed study of her work reveals the social, emotional and ideological set up in our country. Her fiction acquaints with an understanding of women's issues and predicaments. Githa Hariharan with her intellectual standards, and sharp observations of life and has imparted a psychological depth to her female characters. She has projected a deep view of female psyche, inner aspiration and their peculiar responses to patriarchal society. (Sinha 131)

The other writer of our study is Shashi Deshpande who tries to take out the inner conflict of women in her writings. She narrates the dilemma of Indian women in her stories. She was born in the year 1938 in Dharwad, Karnataka and her father was a renowned Kannada dramatist and Sanskrit scholar and she has received these skills as a heritage also. Her education played a very important role in shaping her thought process because she was educated at a Protestant Mission School in Karnataka. Her writings can be seen as an influence of Jane Austen whom she used to read during her childhood. She is a post-graduate in English and after taking degree in journalism, she started working as a journalist in the magazine *Onlooker*.

Her husband supported her in all her endeavours. She began her writing career most casually with a responsibility of two sons on her shoulders. She accompanied her husband to England and they stayed there for a year. She started jotting down her experiences in a new country and her father gave those papers to *The Deccan Herald* which were considered worthy of publication, this encouraged her to a great extent and she started writing. She considers herself as a feminist but she does not want to be known as a feminist writer, “I write as a writer but am identified as a woman writer. I am nothing more than a novelist and a short story writer but people seek more glorified titles to elevate you to stardom. If critics and reviewers insist on calling me a woman writer, then ‘men’ should be prefixed to male writers as well.”(Dhawan 9-11) Her first collection of short stories *The Legacy* was published in 1978 and was prescribed for graduate course in Columbia University. Her works are translated in many languages.

She never got any guidance from her father as she answers to the question of Vanmala Vishvanatha, “If I should criticize him, I should say he was somewhat detached from us ...never guided us. May be if he had directed us at an early age, I could have done better. He never did that.” (Sivaraman 136-152) One can never deny the fame that Shashi Deshpande has received because of her art of writing. She is a versatile and vivacious writer and her writing technique makes her a great writer and When it comes to Deshpande`s art of writing, one is forced to agree with Dhawan`s opinion, “In this era of verbal acrobatics and pretty packaging, her clear lucid prose is starkly real and refreshing. Everything is said as it should be and not a superfluous word to be found anywhere.”(Dhawan 20)

The main theme of her novels is the middle class women who undergo a dilemma and feel perplexed at every juncture of the journey of life as what to do , how to do and what to choose? In *Roots and Shadow* (1992), Indu is confused about the concepts of love, marriage and relationship. *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980) pours light on the ego – problem of a professionally frustrated male who cannot digest the successful career of her wife and they ultimately live in separation. *That Long Silence* is the story of Jaya who chooses to keep quiet and be silent willingly as she finds it as her best companion. *The Binding Vine*, A

Matter of Time and *Small Remedies* introduce the real shades of middle class women who feel muted and oppressed in a patriarchal set up. Sarla Palkar opines about the ending of most of her novels:

The novels end with an optimistic note with the hope of some positive action in future. For example, Saru in *The Dark holds No Terror* waits for her husband to come to take her back and start their life afresh; Indu in *Roots and Shadows* plans to go back to her husband and tell him everything about herself, and Jaya in *That Long Silence* interprets Mohan`s letter in positive terms and hopes for the better. (qtd in Dhawan 169-175)

Moving on is an interesting account of Manjari who follows her own decisions but moves on with moving circumstances. She feels cheated in marriage and starts living with parents after husband`s death. Chanchala K. Naik`s observations are worthy, “In probing into the complex relationship within the family, Deshpande weaves her narrative around multiple acts of transgression while bringing into contestation self/other, man/woman, bone/body, physical/emotional, sexual/ethical, individual/social binaries.” (Naik 218)

Her novel, *In The Country of Deceit* presents newer shades of modern woman where Devyani does not want to be caged in the boundaries of marriage as she wants to relish her privacy and freedom.

Her female protagonists are educated women who belong to middle class societies and who are struggling with identity crisis, who are not able to adjust between the old and new, between what she wants and what society imposes. They are not heroines but common ladies who struggle a lot, live a life full of confusion and with the passage of time, become confident enough to face the hardships of life. Her female characters viz. Kshama, Jaya, Indu and Manju are relevant examples to be given here.

Sarita is the protagonist of *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980) and she is a doctor but she finds it difficult to live happily in a patriarchal set-up and this

becomes severe when her husband finds it difficult to accept her status as a doctor. Her own mother does not want to see her alive when her son dies as she says, “Why did not you die, why are you alive and he died?”(14)

In *Roots and Shadows* (1983), Indu is not able to be happy in a family where she is supposed to be muted and she says at a place, “That was one thing I had learnt now. One thing my marriage taught me .The gift of silence.”(30)

Her novel, *That Long Silence* won Sahitya Academy Award for 1990 and it is a real projection of Jaya`s loneliness. *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980) won the Nanjangud Tirumalamba award in 1990. *Roots and Shadows* was also selected as the best Indian Novel of 1982-83.

On the other hand Urmila of *The Binding Vine* (1993) is fine example of new woman who is secure and brave to stand on her own. She says, “No human being wants to be dominated. The most important need is to love. From the moment of our birth, we struggle to find something with which we can anchor ourselves to this strange world we find ourselves in. Only when do we love we find this anchor.” (*The Binding Vine* 137)

In *A Matter of Time* (1996), Sumi is a woman who is supposed to live all by herself but she proves herself by being confident and brave. *Small Remedies* (2000) depicts the plight of a mother who lost her young son but ultimately she overpowers her sadness.

Her latest book *Listen to Me* is autobiographical and makes the reader familiar with the journey of her life. She accepts the influence of western writers. She is quite comfortable with English language and she has used Indian myths in her novels and short stories. Her major concern is the condition of women and the injustice which is done to them. Her short stories consist of themes of her fiction that tell about her discussion of problems of women. She asks the question of women`s survival in totally unfavorable surroundings. Deshpande`s collection *The Legacy* pours her feminist approaches of the women who are exasperated sexually and professionally. For instance, in the story “A Liberated Woman” the

wife's success hurts the male ego of the doctor husband and the wife does not reveal this to her husband due to social restrictions but she tells this to her friend who remarks thus, "But what really astonishes me is her feebleness, her attitude of despairing in difference. Surely she, an educated, earning competent woman, has no right to behave this way to plug all her escape routes herself and act like a rat in a trap." (*The Legacy and Other Stories* 20)

Deshpande's all the novels and stories revolve around one single axis of compromise and acceptance where the women characters accept the condition and start adjusting as they cannot do anything else than to change their approaches. Thus, it can be said that Shashi Deshpande's writing is magnificent and her anthology *The Intrusion and Other Stories* will be studied in detail in the coming chapters of this thesis.

The third writer in the list of proposed writers is Nergis Dalal who was born on 13th of June 1920 and died in the year 2012. Nergis Ghandy was born at Panchgani and grew up in Pune. She was the youngest of seven children and she started writing at the age of 17. Her father gifted a typewriter to her which she used for forty years. Her first article was published in Blitz. She got married to Jamshed Dalal in 1943. In her long writing career, she had written thousands of articles, more than a hundred short stories, five novels, one book on yoga, one on desserts and a children's book.

Her first novel *Minari* was published in 1967. It poured light on life and love in a small hit station. Her daughter Roshen Dalal tells in an article published in *The Pioneer*, "Minari was a fictitious place, but the descriptions were based on Mt. Abu, where we had stayed for a few years." (Dalal 13 June 2020)

Her next novel *The Inner Door* was all about the world of gurus and yoga which was due to her inclinations towards yogasans which kept her fit till the end. Her next two novels *The Sisters* and *The Girls from Overseas* were applauded by all. Her last novel *Skin Deep* is a study of non-identical twins and human attitude and perception of beauty.

The Birthday Present is a children`s book which is a true account of a dog rescue. She had several articles to her credit and she was known as “Queen of Middles” due to her articles which were published in Middles. Her anthology of short stories *The Nude* is a perfect example of her writing style and is taken for detailed study in coming chapters.

Nergis Dalal received two citizens` awards in Dehradun including the Pride of Doon Citizens Award in 2004. Nergis was a devoted mother and wife. She followed her husband wherever he went. Her husband had 28 transfers and she accompanied every time and perhaps that is the reason why her writings are full of variety.

Nergis Dalal has written all her novels in a great manner and though *Minari* was her first novel but was written with all beauty. P.S. Javalgi truly admires, “The masterpiece of Nergis Dalal that certainly assures her a permanent place in Indian English Fiction.” (Javalagi 15 Dec 1995)

Her Novel *Skin Deep* is seen as an account of the bond of sisterhood and identity. Yasmin and Naaz are twins but Yasmin is very beautiful and Naaz can only dream of this beauty. The writer brings the reality to readers` notice that beauty is still worshipped by people in modern world.

The Girls from Overseas is a totally different novel which projects the lives of five women who feel dislocated due to their marriage to Indian men. This novel gives a Diaspora touch to her writing.

Nergis Dalal`s novels and short stories deserve a true appreciation for her artistic projection of scenery also. She touches the hearts and alarms the minds of the readers with her writings.

Nandita Choudhary Puri was born in Kolkata. She studied in a boarding school in the former French colony of Chandernagore during early childhood. Her father died when she was only ten but her mother brought her up perfectly and that is why she always wanted to be like her mother.

She worked as a writer and journalist with several newspapers like *The Telegraph*, *The Statesman*, *The Times of India* and others. She wrote weekly film column for *Mid Day (Potpuri)* and *Dainik Bhaskar (Khaas Chehre)* for more than a decade. She has worked as a broadcast journalist at All India Radio and Radio network in Calcutta. She has written scripts for T.V. serials and movie *Mera Dil Leke Dekho* (2006).

She is applauded to great extent for her collection of short stories *Nine on Nine* (2005) which was translated in German at the 2006 Frankfurt Book Fair. One of the stories is included in the Sahitya Academy Anthology of Indian Writers. She got married to famous actor Om Puri in the year 1993 and this marriage ended in separation. She has a son. She published the biography of her husband and a versatile actor late Mr. Om Puri, *Unlikely Hero: Om Puri* in 2010 which talks about his dreams, struggles and anxieties. Her novel *Two Worlds* was published in 2012 which depicts the lives, struggles and triumphs of two women. It also talks about media world. Her recent publication *Jennifer* is about one woman, two continents and the burning topic of child trafficking.

She is a professional speaker, script evaluator at NFDC (National Film Development Corporation) and an ex-member of script committee of CFSI (Children`s Film Society of India). She is also a Chairperson of Om Puri Foundation.

Nandita Puri has taken a very sensitive and burning issue for her recent novel *Jennifer*. Child trafficking is one of the biggest problems on the globe. It must be solved somehow. Her anthology of short stories *Nine on Nine* is a collection of nine stories of urban women who want to assert her independence and question norms of the society. All stories are about betrayal of men. She states, “It was not deliberate, I guess that is just how they are. There is no gender bias in my stories. Being a woman means it is easy for me to tell the story from a women`s perspective.”(Doshi 25 April 2005) Her story collection will be studied in detail in the coming chapters. B.S. Goyal rightly opines about Indian women writers, “These women novelists are closer to earthly realities, to the subtle

nuances of social behavior, to the complex structure of men`s and women`s inner life, and to the use of language that varies from the pedestrian and prosaic to the poetic and ornate.” (Gupta 139)

Gupta`s view are no exaggeration in context of Indian women short story writers who have been doing a commendable job in bringing out the untouched issues of female`s world and it is true what Rashmi Bajaj states, “We have increased social consciousness, a strong awareness of identity as woman, championing of women`s cause, problems of alienation and identity crisis, daring portrayal of sex and emphasis on the study of personal relationships.”(Bajaj 28)

This chapter is an effort to introduce the Female canon, four female writers who wrote short stories after 1990. An attempt is made to introduce their novels and other works also but briefly. Their writings play crucial role and they have written par excellence. One can find the similarity of theme i.e. women and their condition in present society in the writings of these above mentioned four writers. Everyone has got a unique way of expression and we all are blessed with our own set of capabilities. Women are the choicest creations of God and they deserve a better living, better place and best treatment. They do not want any special treatment due to their gender but they want to be identified and treated equally. All, they demand is equality, dignity and love. This difference and discrimination has made the women`s writing too powerful to echo and they must be identified for the contribution they have made to Indian Writing in English.

The coming chapters of this thesis will be an effort to do an analysis of the structure and theme of the collection of the selected short stories of these writers. An effort will also be made to delve into the perspective and narratology.

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Chapter-3
Defining Women:
Protagonists of the Stories

Chapter - 3

Defining Women: Protagonists of the Stories

It was through the women`s liberation movement that we began to draw connection between our own work and our lives, to note the disparities between the identifications and ambitions that had attracted us, along with thousands of other women, to the study and teaching of literature, and the limited and secondary roles granted to fictional heroines, women writers, or female scholars. Feminism involves literary experience with the fierce urgency of revelation or a great awakening. (Showalter 5)

Women have been a source of inspiration for men and they play various roles throughout their lives. They are the backbones of the unit called Family and they sacrifice a lot to establish this unit, sometimes they even sacrifice their selfhood to establish it. Showalter`s above statement is apt to be quoted here as they are not given due place for the role they have been playing in the society. They have tried their best to sacrifice their self to maintain the existence of the family. They have a lot to do but they have nothing which can be taken as a word of appreciation for the magnanimous task they have been doing. Women can be seen as doing so many chores altogether and they never complain of anything. One can see a woman working at home and working at office, and that too with equal efficiency. They have been playing various roles and these roles are pre-defined roles which they have to play due to their sensible nature and due to the pressure of the society which is completely patriarchal as Chandra Nisha Singh has very well said, “To feminism, 'Patriarchy' is the key word: patriarchy as that social organization which produces and guarantees superior status for the male and inferior for the female, a political concept, that governs power structured relationships in which one group is controlled by another.” (Singh 3) It is plainly understood that women are still considered inferior and they have to follow the male figure and perhaps this dilemma and inner conflict gets reflected in the short stories of the proposed women short story writers of this study. This chapter is an effort to take women as central figure. This will pour light on the various roles of

women in the short stories of proposed writers. An attempt is also made to define women as the protagonists of these stories. It is tried to make their presence felt in the families of male-dominated societies. The first writer out of the chosen four; Githa Hariharan is not only a writer but she also likes to raise her voice against discrimination. Her proposed collection of short stories, *The Art of Dying and Other Stories*, is a collection of twenty beautiful stories where each story tries to serve the best of themes. Her women characters try to contribute hard in the making of the family. They keep themselves busy in the upbringing of family. They are obedient daughters-in-law as in “The Remains of the Feast”, caring mothers as in “The Reprieve”, a shattered mother as in the “The Art of Dying”, helping wives as in “The Closed Room”, and modest wives as in the “Untitled Poem”. Their children are also rooted in Indian traditions. It is an obvious thing that in India, Women`s narratives revolve around the boundaries of marriage. Marriage glorifies the existence of relationship socially, emotionally and sexually. According to Manu, “Though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure (elsewhere), or devoid of good qualities, (yet) a husband must be constantly worshipped as a God by a faithful wife.” (Manu 5- 154, 196) This statement of Manu is correct in Indian context as Indian wives consider their husbands as God. In the story “Untitled Poem”, the wife Sarla is the backbone of the home. She manages everything. She tries to boost her husband`s morale and she listens to his poems. She looks after the family and takes a very good care of the garden which gives her a soothing feeling. Her husband understands the role of his wife in his life and that is why he says:

Sarla does not understand poetry. But she likes to hear me read it out – or used to, in the days when we still thought marriage meant doing things together. Now, in the evenings, we eat early- boiled vegetables, rice, a glass of cold milk each. She does not have an ulcer but she shares my diet. Our dinners are austere, serious affairs. (*TAOD* 3)

Here, the wife is an epitome of sacrifice as she not only takes care of the household and husband but also compromises on her diet so that to accompany

her husband who is a patient of ulcer. Further she solves the biggest problem of catching the rat which was a herculean task for the husband, to quote:

He is so absorbed, so inspired, that he is still at it when Sarala finds the two of us. She has a large stick in her hand which she brings down on his bristly back. She gets him the first time. I have always thought rats squeal, but this one grunts, a deep, angry growl that grows and grows out of his stomach. I can feel the thick, sticky slime of his blood, his last poem, spurting on to my numb, outstretched hands. He has left nothing for me to do but write an epitaph. (*TAOD* 8)

Here, the role of Indian wives in a household is clearly explained that she has easily killed the rat which he had been struggling for long. Similarly, in the story “The Remains of the Feast”, the great grand daughter is a caring girl who takes a very good care of her dying great grandmother and tries to fulfill her smallest desires. She looks after her in the hospital also, “She was in the nursing home for ten whole days. My mother and I took turns sitting by her, sleeping on the floor by the hospital cot.” (*TAOD* 4) Hariharan has tried to showcase the vital role of women in families with the help of the story “Halfway Animals” where the narrator visits a zoo and notices the importance of female chimp which does not sit still, “The female chimp never sits still. She prances about, half upright, her arms hanging loosely in front of her. When she holds her baby, or when she cleans his hair all afternoon, her face is tender. She purses her thick lips as if she is humming to herself.” (*TAOD* 22) Here, it is praiseworthy to notice the efforts of female chimp and it can be compared to the similar role of women who work on their toes for the better functioning of a family. Her other story “The Warden” is a pathetic depiction of an old lady who has been locked up in an outhouse and the husband comes time to time to satisfy his physical desires and she has been left alone to be taken care by a young lady. The woman is living such a pathetic life but still when she hears the news of her husband’s death, she mourns thus, “She lies there like a broken tree, not a leaf on her for years, and you are afraid? You make me laugh. I hold her in my arms and weep all over her. The tears flow from my face to hers. She is a broken, mangy old woman, just like me, and we

lick the tears off each other`s faces.” (TAOD 40) “The Reprieve” is a story of Nagaraj who misses his dead wife a lot who was the backbone of the family and who was the beauty of his joint family and he realizes her responsibilities and importance after her death, to quote from the story:

For fifty years, she had been a good or at least unobtrusive wife in the background. She had run the machinery of a thirty member household, had oiled its creaky joints, though Nagaraj Rao had been responsible for the larger, more obvious task of providing the components of the machinery, the family members who would be part of the fold, the hierarchy. Then, the children grew up in batches, their own and the cousins, and left, jobs and marriages taking them to different towns, cities, even countries. (TAOD 43)

Here, Mangala has played a very important role in the formation of a joint family and perhaps that is the reason why she is missed badly by her husband just after her death. He wants her to be with him and he recalls how she reacted on the question of going to her sister`s wedding and she reacted in a girlish manner which was totally opposite to her usual role-play:

Years ago, she must have been barely twenty; he had seen that smile on a younger face. Her sister was getting married, and Mangala was packing to go the wedding. Surrounded by rich silks, boxes of jewellery, presents for nieces and nephews, Mangala had looked at him when he walked into the room. She could hardly suppress her excitement. For a moment she seemed to have forgotten the restrained look she had been tutored to assume as mistress of the house. And in this sudden reversion to girlhood, she had smiled, a radiant, welcoming smile, and held out an arm towards him. Will you come too? Please come, it will be such fun. He had been surprised, especially by the word fun. But he had also been amused. Why, the woman was a child! (TAOD 46)

The narrator`s bewilderment on hearing the word fun by her mouth , makes our interpretation clear that women can never think of having fun in their lives as they are occupied with so many responsibilities and they cannot think of

having fun in life. In the story “Forefathers”, the dying father is looked after well by the wife and his daughters. His son is considered to be completely responsible for his proper care and he does that but the daughters took charge of the kitchen as the mother remained busy in nursing the father. The title story is a story of a daughter who takes a very good care of her dying mother and she recalls how her mother took charge of the whole family and she compares it to her life and concludes thus:

Death-or- madness – is far too sudden, dramatic. The tenor of my life-wifing, childbearing- has been determined by the subtle, undulating waves of progress creeping over my body. Bleed, dry up; expand with life, contract with completion. A peaceful, gentle existence; motion, not quite blunt-edged chance. I am better equipped now to acknowledge the claims of the past. On long leave from the familiar clutter hundreds of miles away- the distractions of husband, college – going children, the hours at the counseling centre –I have suspended life temporarily. Like her, I have begun to remember. (*TAOD* 64)

Further, the narrator narrates the incident of a medical student who came to her centre once and who was afraid of sight of blood and whose mother bathed her even during her days of menstruation which proves the affection of a woman as a mother, to quote:

She loves me deeply, she said. She pours fresh, cold water on my head while I sit on the stool in the bathroom, stark naked, on the third day of every month. Even if I am still bleeding, she bathes me like a baby. Not even my stale blood can contaminate her. She washes, the medical student said, her eyes now beginning to fill, my white coat herself, though it is not blood spattered, every single night. (*TAOD* 75)

As the story progresses, the daughter`s role in the family is described beautifully when she says, “Like the impeccable housekeeper I am, like a filial nurse and volunteering Samaritan, I iron the sari anyway. Without the border, it is easier to smooth out.” (*TAOD* 76) In the story “Gajar Halwa”, Perumayee`s mother works hard to feed her children as she could not leave them to suffer and

she goes to work even if she is not well. Hariharan`s two stories revolve around widows and their roles in the families. Marina Warner brilliantly links the usual old age of the story –teller to the post-fertility period, when “grandmothers” are allowed a voice because they have less of a wifely role. The symbolical content of this ageing, speaking figure is that fertile women have to be silent, erasing the subject hood of a wife in relation to a husband. On the contrary, the old hag, widowed grandmother or the old servant, are husbandless women: hence they are allowed a voice. (Warner 103) Revati of the story “Revati” is a child widow through which Hariharan has tried to draw our attention towards the social evils present in India. In the story “Voices in the Twilight”, the narrator is proud of his widow mother`s affection and way of upbringing them as he recalls, “I sit on the lone chair, the requisite figurehead. My mother stands behind the chair, behind me, self-effacing widow who raised three children single-handed. She has an unfocused look about her face because she will not spend money on spectacles. Her myopic look suits her martyrdom.” (*TAOD* 128) Here, the mother is a responsible widow who works real hard to look after her children; on the other hand, her daughter Shakuntala can be seen as a woman who believes in self –hood and self-love as she says:

Each time, I weaned my babies; I spent hours feeling my breasts. They were like crumpled velvet. If they could no longer nurture and sustain, remain wet and generous, I wanted them to go back to their days of firm youth. I rubbed more and more cream on them every day, drew circles with the tips of my fingers, Vitamin E, mustard oil and turmeric. A dry skin means neglect. Vidya`s skin: it is a dull beige, the kind of skin women have when they don`t look after it. When they never comfort themselves with cream, lotion and love. (*TAOD* 133)

In this story, Hariharan has beautifully presented the contrast between two sisters. Shakuntala believes in herself and loves herself most. On the contrary, Vidya has always been a kind of submissive person as she herself admits:

I too have my strenuous years. For a woman, youth is hard work. Who will grudge me this pool of stillness I have now stumbled into? It is not that I

am old and wrinkled. I see young girls wherever I go. They don't even have to try. I no longer have the strength to cajole, coax, feed, stroke, even love, another man. I cannot drive myself to begin again from the very beginning. Sometimes I day dream: a man may yet come along, someone who will heal, provide, comfort. (*TAOD* 140)

Even the mother regretted the kind of life she lived and this is recalled by one of the daughters when the mother admitted clearly:

I have led a useless life, she suddenly confessed. Even if I had not been taken by surprise, what could I say? I said the obvious: You have raised three children alone, in spite of obstacles, in the face of tragedy. She gave me a quick and shockingly shrewd look before her face fell back into its everyday mask. She was right though. She had been wasted. She was patient, tender; she could put the group first. Perhaps all this could have amounted to something. If she had married someone else, if she had not been forced to turn her virtues into a whining, self – sacrificing martyrdom which gave none of us, including herself, any satisfaction. (*TAOD* 136)

Hariharan has tried to indulge into the details of the orthodox system of widowhood where still in some of the families, widows are not allowed to go for a second marriage and the mother of this story did the same thing but she regretted the fact just before her death and this is a tragedy that women are not given the due liberty in some of the families which causes nothing more than a sense of choking and suffocation. “The Rainmaker” is a story of a mother who has looked after the family in a fantastic manner and even after death; her daughter can feel her presence time to time as if she comes to take care of her, to motivate her and to be her support. According to Chandra Nisha Singh, “Contemporary women novelists often speak of premarital and extramarital relationships, sexual experience, adultery, and even of promiscuity, without the conflicts of patriarchal moral principles. They also construct a new, unmarked and uninhibited language to facilitate the propagation of new sexual conventions.” (Singh 271) Premarital and extramarital relationships can be seen in Hariharan`s work. Her stories like “Virgin Curry”, “Repeat Performance” and “The Summertime Incubus” talk about

the same theme where women are not victimized, rather they willingly be the part of the process and move on with the passage of time. For instance, in the story “The Summertime Incubus”, the narrator is not sure “Whether what he was remembering was the woman or the novel.” (*TAOD* 59) In the story “Repeat Performance”, the narrator recalls her past when she was into a relationship with Shyam who was fifteen years older than her and she would wait for him, ignoring all the beautiful paintings and later she turns into a great artist. Here she does not regret her relationship but moves on and becomes a successful artist. Hariharan`s women characters are responsible, obedient and affectionate and they give their best to run the family but somewhere they feel a gap which is impossible to bridge and the same crisis is visible in Shashi Deshpande`s *The Intrusion and Other Stories* where the writers has tried to serve the actuality of women`s condition in middle class families.

Shashi Deshpande`s protagonists are familiar with the unfair conditions that they have to face and they do not protest but they surrender so that the family remains intact. Shashi Deshpande`s proposed work has got nineteen stories and all of them are full of variations but they directly strike to the minds of readers due to their theme. As Shashi Deshpande, in an interview given to *Mumbai Newslines* said:

This has made it possible for us to ask a great many questions, questions which had never been asked before. Writers in India in search of some truths about themselves and their condition invariably go to the epics and puranas. So do women. And when they began, they were in fact rediscovering themselves, finding things relevant to their lives today. What we are doing is retelling our own tales. (Deshpande July 29, 2001)

Deshpande has really tried to rediscover the women characters and they look for their identity but their rootedness into the family does not allow them to go beyond it. Her females feel for things which they are lacking in life but they don`t have that much of courage as to raise their voice and do away with them as it can be seen in Nandita Puri`s *Nine on Nine*. “The First Lady” is the story of a woman who has turned seventy and recalls her past when she used to be at her

parents` house and was free to live the way she wanted and how she compromised to run the institution of marriage where she had to compromise on her preferences like texture of sari and tea etc. She recalls, “As a young girl, she had been used to wearing heavy silks in her father`s home. Later, in the austere atmosphere of her husband`s home, she had worn only white khadi saris. How often she had groaned at their weight, specially, when she had to wash them herself.”(*TIAOS* 9) She had to surrender herself many times so to make her life a good life as per social norms. In the story she recalls her way of living at her father`s home which she stopped thinking of just after getting married:

I love my comforts too. I would not like to go back to being just any housewife struggling to make ends meet, to get the ration and the milk, to run after buses. I enjoy being served by bustling, efficient servants; I enjoy the good food, the good living. After all, she often thought wryly, remembering the fragrance of expensive cigars her father had smoked. I am my father`s daughter. (*TIAOS* 14)

Shashi Deshpande`s this story beautifully talks about the smallest compromises which are made by women as the protagonist of this story recalls, “She had given all her rich saris without pang. The only thing that she had missed had been tea. How she had longed for a cup of tea, especially during her pregnancies! But even to talk of tea in her husband`s home would have been blasphemy.”(*TIAOS* 15)

This protagonist represents most of the Indian women who compromise exactly the same way just for the sake of marriage. At a time, she was denied the sexual pleasure by her husband as according to him, the purpose of sex was procreation and they did not want any more children. She longed for a real companion and a true lover which is reflected in her thought process and she never confessed her affection towards her husband`s disciple who later died. In another story “Why a Robin”, the mother feels lonely and sad due to the neutral behaviour of her husband and daughter as she says, “I don`t have the key to open up this child, though she is mine. I don`t have the key to her father, either it is as if

I am, in my own house, confronted with two closed rooms. I am condemned to sit outside and gaze helplessly at the closed doors.” (*TIAOS* 19)

Here the mother feels very lonely as the daughter finds her good for nothing and the case is same with the father. She has beautifully depicted the various roles that are played by a woman throughout her life, “Sometimes I think we are all chameleons. We change colour, become different being with different people. With my servants I am authoritative, with my parents, irresponsible, happy-go-lucky-but with my husband and child; I am foolish, stupid, and inarticulate.”(*TIAOS* 20) Gradually, mother`s importance is realized by the girl when she starts feeling menstrual pain for the first time and the mother like all the mothers comforts her and motivates her to accept it as a part of life:

Now all her self-possession has deserted her; she is only a woeful, frightened child. It is as if she is facing forces she cannot understand or control. I talk to her gently, trying to make her feel it is natural, a part of growing up, something to be welcomed, accepted. She listens to me silently, lying with her knees drawn up to her chest. Like an unborn foetus - waiting to be born again. ‘I have a pain.’ She says. The tears spill over. I wipe them with the end of my sari. I make her get up and show her what is to be done. I get her a hot water bottle for the pain. I bring her a cup of hot milk and sit by her side as she drinks it. She is unexpectedly docile and childlike, this child who has just become a woman. (*TIAOS* 23)

Here the mother plays a very important role and only she can provide with the comfort the girl needs at the time and she does her best which ultimately makes the girl sleep. Tillie Olsen talks about women`s condition and observes, “Cabined, cribbed, confined; the private sphere. Bound feet: corseted, bedecked; denied one`s body, powerless.” (Olsen in Eagleton 81) Olsen`s observation fits absolutely in the stories of Deshpande as in the story “It was Dark”, a young girl is raped and she remains silent and keeps on looking at the dark corner of her room as she is still unable to come out of the trauma, the mother links it to her wedding night where she had to surrender and submit herself to her husband. Here, the only difference is that the offender is unknown. The mother tries to

console her and tries to start a conversation with her. She behaves as a mediator between the father and daughter. The father is not able to think about the psychological aspect of the incident but being woman, the mother can understand her daughter`s pain very well. Here, like the story “Why a Robin”, the mother wins the heart of her daughter, tries to soothe the soul of her girl child and behaves as a wall to defend her. To quote, “I brought the tea. She drank it eagerly, almost greedily. This greed was a strange, new thing I had noticed in her since yesterday. She had been a small, fastidious eater. Now, she ate and drank ravenously; but only when she was given something to eat or drink. She had not asked for anything herself.” (*TIAOS* 37)

Finally, the mother wins in changing the focus of the girl on the dark whole at the ceiling as she pulls back the curtain and lets the sunlight enter into the room. Deshpande has beautifully tried to portray the character of mother who keeps herself busy in thinking of the well-being of her children and who cannot imagine life beyond this. To quote from the story:

I stared at her for a moment. Then suddenly, I walked to the window. With a savage movement I pulled back the curtains. The rings danced and jerked over the rod in metallic tings. Sunlight poured into the room, mote upon mote, invading it, filling it with brightness. It showed up the neglected slovenliness of the room, the dust piled on the furniture. But I was looking at her. And now, at last, her eyes moved from her spot to a glimmering, moving circle of light on another part of the ceiling. They rested on that shining circle for a moment, and then moved to me. She saw me. (*TIAOS* 41)

Similarly, in the story “The Intrusion”, the newly married woman has to indulge into physical relationship without even knowing him because the husband does not consider it important to know each-other for relationship. A woman has to let her identity go in the process of adjustment and marriage. The narrator experiences a dilemma thus:

But I could say none of these things to him. Even if I did, I thought, looking at his face, he would not hear me. He was all keyed up for a

different experience and for him other things would come later. While I wish to talk now, sitting up the whole night, so that in the morning we could smile at each other like old friends. I stammered as I tried to explain, I flushed, I almost burst into tears looking at his angry face. The eager look in his eyes died as I spoke, and finally he turned away from me, violently flung himself on a bed and lay there still. (*TIAOS* 48)

According to Rajeshwar, “With a gift of sharp psychological insight into the subtleties of human mind and society and aided by a richly evocative, unassuming and unpretentious style, Shashi Deshpande is perhaps ideally suited to tread the labyrinthine tracts of human psyche and credibly represent it in fiction.” (Rajeshwar 41) Rajeshwar’s observation is right as each story delves into the psychological insights of her female characters. In the story “Death of a Child”, the wife is not ready to give birth to child a third time as she is not mentally and physically prepared for it whereas the husband can say yes very easily but she questions, “I cannot imagine that the main purpose of my life is to breed....any cow, any bitch can breed.” (*TIAOS* 52) The lady questions and compares herself which proves that her characters can easily identify the problem but they always remain in a dilemma due to their sensible and human virtues because she feels relaxed after the abortion, “I will feel human again. Three times in less than four years. This is not fair.” (*TIAOS* 54) but there is an inner conflict which does not allow her to be herself and the same inner conflict does not allow the women to be the way they want to as at the end she says, “I feel that the ghost of my dead child walks with me.” (*TIAOS* 58) She realizes a need for her selfhood as she speaks to herself, “I am terrified he might convince me. Terrified I might submit. And have years sliced off my existence again. Years before I can go back to doing anything else. When my actions are dictated to, not by my will, not by my desires, but by the sheer animal needs of the children.” (*TIAOS* 53) And finally she feels relaxed by her decision but an inner conflict does not allow her to be fully relaxed which is perhaps due to the patriarchal set up of our societies. “My Beloved Charioteer” is the story of a grandmother whose daughter is in a severe shock due to the untimely death of her husband whom she loved a lot. She

is not even able to take care of her daughter and thus the mother takes complete care of the girl. Here, the grandmother performs her dual responsibility of taking care of two children. Her daughter was in a very good relationship with her husband but mother's husband never behaved in a husband like manner as she recalls:

He was your father, but what was he of mine? I lived with him for 25 years. I know he did not like unstringing beans and hated grits in his rice, I know he like his tea boiling hot and his bathwater lukewarm. And he hated tears and so, when your baby brothers died, I wept alone and in secret. I combed my hair before he woke up because he did not like to see women with untidy, loosened hair. And I went into the backyard even then because it made him furious to find stray hairs anywhere. And once a year he bought me two saris, always colours I hated; he never asked me what I liked and I never told him. And at night, I scarcely dared to breathe; I was so terrified of disturbing him. (*TIAOS* 66)

The mother played her role as a wife beautifully, she did everything to make her husband happy, though he never tried to think of her happiness, she was asked to “come here” and “go out” (*TIAOS* 66) whenever he needed her in bed and the similar experience is narrated by the narrator of the story “An Antidote to Boredom” whose husband is too busy with his office life and cannot feel and notice the loneliness of his wife and as a result, she starts finding this lost love in her son's school friend's father and she starts living her life again but at the end of the story, she feels trapped in a cobweb as she decided not to meet him anymore and perhaps, this is something which can be seen in most of the stories of Deshpande, her characters land up nowhere as they struggle a lot but they cannot do away with the set norms because they are women and they know the value of the family in which they live. The narrator decides to discontinue her relationship with her newly met lover and concludes thus:

The words sounded suddenly menacing, and I looked up startled. The same face, the same voice, but for a brief second, I saw a dull, red light flicker in his eyes, like a warning, a challenge, and then disappear. And I

felt as if I was standing with my back to the wall, no room to move, no air to breathe, the two faces watching me steadily and warily. And then I knew that he knew, that he cared and as if a dam had burst, a flood shame of guilt swept over me, drowned me. I let go of the mirage I had tried to grasp so long, and now I realized, when it was too late, the most piercing thought of all—that it had been no mere antidote to boredom, but the best part of my life. And I let it go. (*TIAOS* 75)

“Lucid Moments” reminds us of Hariharan’s “The Remains of the Feast” and “The Art of Dying” where the dying mother is looked after well by her daughter or granddaughter. In this story, the daughter takes care of the mother but she equally misses her household responsibilities and the story makes the readers sentimental due to projection of relations in India and a dying mother’s helplessness to recall her mother’s name which indirectly draws our attention towards the identity –crisis every woman goes through. “Ghosts” is a story of a wife who accompanies her husband to a foreign land and she performs her duty completely even when she feels highly alienated. This is a woman’s innate virtue that she tries to fulfill her responsibility to the fullest and that sometimes is taken for granted by people. On the matter of different roles that the women are destined to play, Deshpande says in an interview published in *Mumbai Newlines*:

We may laugh at the crudeness with which the movies present us with these stereotypes, but there is no doubt that these women from the myths are a very powerful influence on us even today. To be as pure as Sita, as loyal as Draupadi, as beautiful as Lakshmi, as bountiful a provider as Annapoorna, as dogged in devotion as Savitri, as strong as Durga—these are all the ultimate role models we cannot entirely dismiss. (Deshpande 29 July 2001)

Deshpande’s women characters are befitted for all the roles and responsibilities and they are ready to compromise at all costs but in one of her stories, “It was the Nightingale”, she has introduced the character of Jaya who is fully aware of her ambitions and is a career – oriented woman. In the story, she is to leave for a foreign land the next day for better job opportunities and the

husband insists her by saying, “But what intrigues me, Jayu..is this..Why are you really going? Is it really going to make all that much difference to your work? You know you have just begun feeling your own way. And you don’t crave for a foreign-returned tag...” (*TIAOS* 96) but she is firm and she has decided finally to leave which is a kind of realization of selfhood. She says to her husband, “You know why I am going. To get a bigger salary when I return.” (*TIAOS* 96) She is determined and focused and she leaves for a foreign country due to her career aspiration. Similarly in the story “The Inner Rooms”, the protagonist Amba decides to run away and end her life than to get married out of force and she cannot remain happy as a prisoner where she is just supposed to be in the inner rooms where the husbands will come to them when they wish. She feels elated and thinks thus:

How foolish I was, she thought, to let my happiness depend on other people! My nurse at first, then my mother, my father, my sisters and finally Salva. What a burden to put on others, the burden of your own happiness. She felt a fleeting pity for the sisters she had left behind in the inner rooms, stoically waiting for their husband to visit them at night, living in the constant of bearing him sons. At least she had escaped that degradation, by rejecting that same husband in an open assembly. (*TIAOS* 100)

Deshpande writes:

All these incidents are there in *Mahabharata*, narrated straight. I narrated them through Amba and saw her anger, her utter disgust of the games men play, of her despair at having become pawn in their game and finally, her decision to kill herself, not as a defeat, but because she thinks that if she cannot control her life, at least she can control her own death. (*Mumbai Newsline* 29 July 2001)

Here, Amba realizes the importance of selfhood and when she finds herself unable to live life in her own way, she chooses death happily because she finds it better way to get the liberty of at least choosing something, no matter if she has to end her life. Amba is real representative of a determined woman who

decides not to be dominated but to lead the path. She rejects the decisions of patriarchal set up and finding it impossible to sustain, she ends her life because her determined vision cannot allow her to surrender and submit. In the story “A Wall is Safer”, Hema is the representative of most of the Indian homemakers who find their inner world happy and who considers it as their destiny and start living accordingly. When Hema`s friend Sushma asks her to do justice with herself as she was a lawyer early, Hema says, “Oh, I am alright as I am. After all I am a good housewife now.” (*TIAOS* 125) Here, Hema is in a dilemma. She feels lonely at home and she too wants to go to work but she herself remains muted and quiet so as to avoid any conflict with her husband. Here, the wall is a symbol of confinement in which women adjust to live and stay forever and this is best described by Deshpande in Hema`s words:

I go to bed in a good mood, but I am surprised by a fierce surge of longing to be one of those women who carry their work about with them – a writer, a painter, a musician. The next morning they are all to leave at the same time. I rush about getting breakfast ready, suddenly eager to have the house and the day to myself once more. The children shout warnings when they see the bus approach. (*TIAOS* 126)

Deshpande tries to take the deepest meaning out, she writes with a kind of sensibility which makes the readers to ponder over the deep issues which are ignored and mystified. Her women characters remain in a world which sometimes behaves as a foreigner and they strive for their meaningful existence. In the story “The Wall is Safer”, Hema attempts her best to feel happy and she is a very good homemaker but her inner conflict clearly describes her desire to go out and establish her own identity. Similarly, in the story “Stone Women”, the newly married lady starts feeling a kind of suffocation when she feels at one with the stone women. She questions her identity and existence and gets disturbed to accept herself as a commodity. Her women characters live in a dilemma and are not able to do away with the kind of life they live. They are not bold enough to do away and the important point is that they are not rebellious and they are happy to adjust. Though, she has sketched the characters of Jaya and Amba who understand

the importance of selfhood and go beyond the available means and circumstances. Dalal`s women characters are somewhat similar to Deshpande`s characters in the terms of compromises and adjustment. They also struggle for their identity. In the story “The French Wife”, the Indian wife is a caring wife whose one and only motto is to make her husband happy and she cannot think beyond this. She prepares tasty dishes, she takes care of the house and she feels guilty that she does not have a child:

The Kapoors had no children and as though to make up for something for which she felt herself to blame, Mrs. Kapoor turned herself into the perfect housewife. She was a terrific cook and no matter when they dropped in, she was always able to produce something which appeared to have just come off the stove or from a hot oven. Her glasses of fruit punch were deliciously frosted and jewel coloured. Her cakes were covered in cream or melted chocolate and her pulaos and curries were the best they had ever eaten anywhere. In addition, the house was always spotless, the garden magically producing flowers and fruit in extravagant profusion. (*The Nude* 2)

She was a modest lady who looked after everything at home and she died all of a sudden which was followed by a remarriage by Mr. Kapoor. He gets married to a French lady just after Mrs. Kapoor`s death which startles everyone in the neighbourhood. Mr. Kapoor`s new wife Yvonne soon gets bored of the monotonous routine and leaves for France which makes everyone think about the responsibilities their wives perform and that is the reason why Mr. Mehra while returning back from Mr. Kapoor`s house looks at his wife and thinks, “Fat, comfortable, always there for him. She put a hot cup of tea into his hand.” (*The Nude* 11) The story “A Taste of Blood” is the story of a mother who does not want her son to be like his father. She does not want him to be rude and insensitive. The lady becomes totally frustrated with the kind of values that were instilled in her son by the father that she willingly motivates the child to shoot in the direction where the husband was going:

She looked towards the lake where the man had gone. From where she stood, his passage was marked by the slow movement of reeds that closed

behind softly, without sound. She waited for a moment and then put her hand on the boy's arm, still jumpy from the encounter with the deer. 'There', she said softly 'look another deer.' Without a moment's hesitation, the boy flung up the gun and aiming carefully as he had been taught, shot at the movement in the reeds. The air was rocked by the sound of the shot. Scarcely able to control his excitement, the boy ran, leaping into the air exuberantly. She followed stolidly and the scream which split the silence was expected and the silence that followed did not unnerve her. The man lay face down on the grass and under the hair, growing low on his neck, ran a thin line of red blood, moving and gaining momentum till it seemed to be a river of red blood. (*The Nude* 18-19)

She was so frustrated due to false ego of her husband which ignored innocence and due to which, he was spoiling his own son. She felt quite relaxed and consoled the child by telling him not to be sad and guilty as he did not kill him intentionally, it happened by mistake. Nergis's women characters are aware of the agony and suffering and they sometimes try to revolt and the above mentioned wife is the one such example. Simon de Beauvoir's views in *Second Sex* are apt here to be quoted that "It is not nature that defines a woman; it is she who defines herself by dealing with nature on her own account in her emotional life." (Beauvoir 69) She has defined herself truly in the story by finding a true path for her son and herself. In the title, story, Mrs. Oliver is ready for a nude shoot as she wants to earn money and she looks fantastic as a nude model and she gets good money. Her husband is not able to identify that the lady in the brochure is his wife. Here, Dalal has touched upon a rare theme where a woman is presented as a commodity and she wants to draw our attention towards the fact that men consider women as mere commodity and beauty attracts them. When the picture was displayed in an exhibition, it became the highlight automatically:

Robie, quite simply, called the picture 'Nude' and it was the highlight of the exhibition. Critics spoke of the 'ageless tranquility' of the pose, the 'physical excitement' of the skin and flash tones, of the cleverness of keeping the face hidden so that it did not intrude. There was always a

small crowd, mostly men, standing around the picture, staring with urgency, with longing, with desire. Robie finally sold it for a huge sum and commissions poured in. (*The Nude* 57)

In the story “Christmas Means Love”, the narrator is a caring mother and responsible wife but she goes away from her husband due to his egoist issues and dominance. She does not want to return but Dalal has beautifully portrayed the virtues of a mother who irrespective of her own identity, writes a letter to her husband to pick them up:

At home, Meena pulled up the writing pad and began her letter. She took a long time over it, pausing to scratch out words here and there, dropping tears on the page so that the ink blurred, till at last it was finished. She posted it quickly, before she started thinking and changed her mind. For the first time she wondered if he too had missed them – his wife and little son. His telegram arrived quickly and said simply – ‘arriving Christmas eve- love.’ With it in her hand, she went in search of her son. (*The Nude* 77)

Here, the mother dominates the wife and she forgets her self- respect and writes a letter to her husband which she does not want to do. A mother’s selfless love is best depicted in the following introspection of the narrator:

She washed and changed him and sent him out to wait. Leaning against the window, her flushed cheek pressed against the cool glass, she could see her son, not playing any longer, but wandering aimlessly about, his head turning again and again at each small sound that came from the road. Watching that small, intense face, she knew that she had been right – nothing was more important than his happiness, his sense of security. A little boy needed his father. (*The Nude* 78)

Prabhati Mukherjee says, “The society represents two sexes, the balanced and smooth functioning of which are absolutely necessary to both these cases. The two wings, to continue to simile are very ill proportioned in India, which prevent Indian society from progressing smoothly.”(Muherjee 01) This can be considered

very true in the context of Indian societies where women are not given equal stature and importance which makes them feeble and inferior all the time. In the story “The Beautiful One”, Nina is an extremely beautiful lady who gets married to a professor but she feels alienated due to his busy schedule and never-to-worry attitude and she narrates this to her husband as it is. Professor cannot understand the situation as he never realized this, “I didn’t realize you were so unhappy. I married you because I loved you, I suppose. I thought you too were happy with me.” (*The Nude* 65) Finally Nina musters some courage to elope with Suresh but here also, she remains unhappy as the man is extremely over-possessive and does not allow her to be out of his sight. She ultimately leaves his house because he started “locking me into my room each time he went out” (*The Nude* 67), so she has no other option than to leave him. Dalal has attempted to deliver the approach of men through her narration and she makes it absolutely clear with the sketch of third male character in Nina’s life who is such eccentric that he would not allow her to talk to anybody even for once and this is told to the narrator by the hostess when she saw him talking to Nina in the party, “Her husband is very jealous. I should not be surprised if you wake up tomorrow with a knife in your back. It is more than any other man dares even to look at her more than a moment.” (*The Nude* 69) Vidyut Bhagwat’s observations seem fit here when he says, “The woman is the other against which man defines himself as a subject. In expressing men’s otherness, women deny their own individuality.” (Bhagwat 63) Similarly, in the story “Roses, Roses, All the Way...”, the lady denies herself all the pleasures including her all-time favourite tea because she is a spinster and she finds it better to join an ashram where she can soothe her soul. She is a firm lady who stops drinking tea just because of her commitment but when she realizes the reality of the Babaji, she leaves the ashram and books a hotel to live the life the way she wants:

Miss Malik emerged from her room, in on clouds of perfume. I stared. She looked very different from the bedraggled, dispirited female who had cried over my teacups this morning. She was wrapped in a dark blue silk sari and her hair had been neatly coiled into a bun. Her face very discreetly made-up and the pearls in her ears matched the double string around her

throat. She would never be beautiful but she was elegant, assured and confident. (*The Nude* 89)

Miss Malik of the story “Roses, Roses, All the Way...” emerges as a confident lady at the end but the new Mrs. Vale of the story “The Intruder” cannot adjust in an atmosphere where she is ignored by the husband and that is why she ends up her life in tragic manner. “Ranjit’s Wife” is a story of Lila who has been asked for divorce by her husband Ranjit and she is shocked to hear this as she did exactly what he liked. She never went against his desires. She followed him blindly and when she is asked for divorce, she requests him to give some time. She rethinks about her relationship and her condition and decides to live life and enjoy it. She goes for shopping, purchases things of her choice, buys new dresses to wear and starts going to parties. She meets Kamal Bhatt and enjoys his company. Here, Lila is a self-esteemed lady who changes her lifestyle completely when it comes to her self-respect. Her husband’s extra-marital affair comes as a jolt and she takes it as a lesson and starts living her life. She enquires about her legal rights, “I should like to know what my income would be, in the event of a divorce from my husband” (*The Nude* 128) when Mr. Shah hesitates in mentioning the details, she very clearly states:

No, but is there any reason why you should not tell me? I don’t need exact figures – just what you would consider an approximate amount. You see, though we have always had a joint account, I have never handled it at all. I know, of course, the extent of his annual income and I want to know, if we were divorced, how much of that income I would get? If, for instance, he were the guilty party? (*The Nude* 129)

Further, she becomes so lively and realizes the value of selfhood that her friend becomes real happy for her. Lila says, “Look at me. Plain, old fashioned, uninteresting. For ten years I have tried to please him and now he has found someone else. Do you know he is even richer than I expected. I have decided I am going to make use of our joint account and have some fun. Ranjit is going to pay.” (*The Nude* 130-131) She understands the value of living life for herself and this is appreciated by her friend who was not expecting this kind of reaction from her,

“Why, you sly little puss. I thought you were certain to take it lying down. Remove yourself out of the way and disappear somewhere. All these years I have wanted to give you a good shake, make you stand up for yourself instead of being a polite little doormat. And here you are, doing it all on your own.” (*The Nude* 131) Dalal has portrayed a perfect comparison of a submissive Indian wife and a transformed and self-esteemed woman. This is narrated in these two lines, “The old Lila would have been apologetic, scared, a little confused, but the new Lila said coolly, ‘hi, what are you drinking, pour me one too!’” (*The Nude* 139) She has completely changed after getting the news of divorce from a husband whom she gave ten years of complete trust. Further, she tells her husband that “I am sorry Ranjit. I don’t think I want to forget about the divorce. I find it very enjoyable to do as I please, to dress as I please, to go out dancing and to find that others think I am beautiful. After all these years, it is intoxicating. I don’t want to come back to you and the same dreary routine.” (*The Nude* 141) She starts enjoying the new version of herself and denies going back to her husband which clearly proves that Dalal tries to present the new approaches of Indian wives towards life. Similarly, in the story “The Red Pavilion” and “The Connoisseur”, the female protagonists are spinsters who live life in their own ways. Ms. Turner is a self-driven lady who does not want any fame and name and likes to live alone and away from any madness. On the other hand, Miss Krishna has always craved for beauty and beautiful things which creates a kind of hollowness which nobody can fill. Dalal has tried to portray different shades of women characters with the help of her stories where the readers can take out the notion in the best possible manner. Her characters are spinsters who don’t marry for the sake of their lonely mothers and they come up as strong women who hold their heads high. Miss Turner and Miss Malik are the remarkable examples to quote here. Her characters sound feeble also as Madhu in the story “The Silver Anklets” feels cheated in love when her lover gives her husband’s gifted anklets to some other woman. Meena in the story “Christmas Means Love” makes a compromise for the happiness of her son and decides to go back to her matrimonial home. Nina in the story “The Beautiful One” becomes the victim in the hands of three men who are either emotionless and boring or over-possessive. Her female characters deal with the

same struggle and they live in the same dilemma but Nandita Puri's female characters are projected as strong women who can decide and act as per their wishes. Puri gives a new life to what Elizabeth Cady has called a new woman, "Thus far women have been more echoes of men. Our laws and constitutions, our creeds and codes, and customs of social life are all of masculine origin. The true woman is yet a dream of future." (Moers in Eagleton 294) Puri's women characters are full of life. They know the art of living life. They are educated middle class women who take the responsibility to be happy in their own ways. They refuse to be unhappy because of the involvement of male dominance and orthodox norms. In the story "An Arranged Marriage", the story begins with a phone call where Rani and Rekha are talking to each other. They are mother and daughter who are discussing about Raja's marriage. Both the ladies are taking good care of their household and both opted for love marriage. Puri tries to narrate the mother-daughter conflict of Indian families through her stories. Here, Rekha is a firm and bold lady who "never holds her tongue". (*Nine on Nine* 3) Throughout the story, mother-daughter conflict is narrated over a phone call. Puri has narrated things with the help of stream of consciousness where the characters recall their past and their marriage incidences how they were denied any share in the ancestral property because they were females and it was to be kept safe for sons. Rani is a very caring mother who does not want to give any share to her daughter and is in favour of giving everything to her only son Raja. Ultimately, after the death of her husband, she has been left with nothing and has to live with her daughter. She cannot even imagine to live in her daughter's house as Indian parents don't live in married daughter's home. Puri has tried to draw our attention to the rigid and orthodox norms which again demand for sacrifice, suffering and denial for women. When Rani has to come to her daughter's house, her daughter knows that it would be an insult for the mother. This all is narrated in the form of conversation between Rekha and her friend Bindiya:

"It is not the betrayal of her son which has affected her so much" Rekha said with hurt.

"Then what?" Bindya asked.

“The fact that she has to be dependent on her daughter for the rest of her life. Especially a daughter she does not like....”

“Come on now, Rekha. Don’t be so harsh. After all , she is your mother. It is just her way of expressing ...”

“I am not a child, Bindya. You know and I know, how much love she has for me. Her son`s betrayal she can deal with ...but being obliged to her daughter for the rest of her life, is something she has yet to come to terms with.” (*Nine on Nine* 24)

In the story “At Jenny`s”, the women come to parlour for their make-up and treatment and they gossip over day to day issues. These are educated middle class ladies who easily mock even at their husbands. They are quite mature and they have learnt the art of enjoying their own company. Sonika enjoys visiting the parlour and she needs not to give any explanation to anybody at home as she always informs in advance not to disturb her. She very boldly says, “No kitkit from bai and no bakbak from hubby and children” (*Nine on Nine* 26) Sonika is not that type of woman who would sit alone in a corner and weep, in fact she reminds her husband for anniversary gift. She is happy in her ways and does not want to go for anymore foreign trips with him as she says:

No, he is too caught up with work. Might just join us in the last week. But, I would rather he did not. Half the holiday will be ruined. He and his gujju food habits. Will spend half the time hunting for dal-shak and tindoli-rotla in London. And all I will be doing is lugging khakhras and chundo or making rods and khatta-meetha gujju dal in the apartment. That way the kids are happy. Take them to Mc Donald`s and they are happy and mama is happy. That is what I call a real holiday. (*Nine on Nine* 34)

Here, Sonika is a woman who has become habitual of the odds of life but when Alia comes to know about the reality of her lover that he is a married man with children and Sonika`s husband, she breaks down and stops visiting the place and the other ladies feel bad for her but they especially feel bad for the diamond ring she returned. Here it is appropriate to quote Jasbir Jain who says:

In all these role-definitions, neglect, disposal and existential loneliness are recurring features. Women are disposed of, discarded, rejected and subordinated. They are able to redeem themselves mainly through devotion, sacrifice and sublimation. And even when placed within family situations, there is a deep realization that they are alone, that they don't belong, feel perpetually uprooted and on trial. They are also constantly exposed to male exploitation. (Jain 98)

Here, in this story, Alia is exploited and she was not even aware that the man she was dating with, was an already married man. Similarly, in the story "Flashback", Srimoti is a beautiful and determined girl who falls in love with Arijit who has come to India on holidays and she is victimized and she feels cheated when she comes to know that he is the same man who has a relationship with her mother years back and he is her biological father. She was completely broken when the truth was revealed:

Srimoti made her way home unsteadily. She locked herself in the room for the better part of the evening and cried uncontrollably. Arijit was married. He had not told her. Not that she had asked. She had assumed he was single. Just an assumption. But then, why did he profess his love for her, when all along he was married? All those mushy notes and cosy evenings. He did not mean it one bit. And to think she had believed him. Believed in his love. She had even been willing to shed her virginity for this cad. He had wanted to take her to bed, he had hinted a couple of times. And she had almost succumbed to his charms. "Bastard! He just wanted to have sex with me." Srimoti wept and in the same breath exclaimed, "Oh God! Then why do I love him so? Please God. Help me. Help me out." (*Nine on Nine* 64)

Here, Srimoti is cheated and betrayed in love and the same was done to her mother by the same man. Puri strikes on the hardest and hidden aspects of the society around us and each story comes up with a different notion. In the story "Bhabhiji", Bhabhiji emerges as a very strong woman who runs the household and who knows the art of getting things done. She manages everything on her

own and being the mother of four sons, manages a big household. When she was asked about the fourth child, she very plainly replies, “But we always wanted a little girl so we thought to give it one last try.” (*Nine on Nine* 74) Puri portrays her women as strong ones who don’t want to cry over the spilt milk but decide to move on and this is clearly reflected in the coffee table talks of Gautam’s former wives who were not able to sustain their marriages due to Bhabhiji’s involvement, to quote:

“Imagine the cheek of that bitch? Bhabhiji actually asked me whether I wanted tea or a cold drink, as if I were a guest. In my own house? Was that any way to welcome a new bride? Especially after all that Gautam has done for her and her family ?” Seema said as she sipped her coffee.

“That bitch did not even give me any shagu.” Meenakshi joins in. “Not even a rupee or a coconut. And imagine Gautam trying to stand up for her by saying, ‘oh, you should not take it so seriously. Bechari, does not have any money.’ Bechari, my left foot. Especially after living off my husband’s largesse for so long.”(*Nine on Nine* 75)

This conversation reminds one of Promilla Kapur’s ideas where she says, “The new woman voices a note of dissent to this and resents to be stifled under the oppressive restrictions. She has her own changed notions of life. It is true, women education, her rights of citizenship and other legal rights and above all her gainful employment and economic independence have tremendously influenced her outlook and conjugal relationship and attitude towards marriage.” (Kapur194) Puri’s characters justify these views of Promilla Kapur.

“Pages from Indulata Debi’s Diary” is a story of Indu’s journey who is a true representative of firmness and she does not surrender to the odds of life and comes up as a real champion. She was married to an older man and after the death of this man, she was sent to the ashram for widows but she struggled for her identity and hit it right by becoming a doctor and by serving the people. Her journey was not an easy one as she “took to working in different households. All along she refused marriage proposals from elderly Brahmin widowers with children, as she realized that all they wanted was a housekeeper rather than a

mate.” (*Nine on Nine* 106) She worked in the toughest manner to become a settled lady doctor and she had to face the music of life in the form of her husband and colleagues who never wanted her to be successful. Puri has tried to portray a changed picture of the strong woman and Promila Kapur has analyzed this change thus, “With a change in woman`s personal status and social status has come a change in her way of thinking and feelings and the past half century has witnessed great changes in attitude towards sex , love and marriage.” (Kapur 4-5)

“Remebering Little Dee” is the story of Deepa whose mother Nirmala has always taught her children the importance of hard work as she recalls one of her childhood incidence when her father would not go to work and they were the only bread earners and her mother did not like to visit her parents:

Nirmala was embarrassed by these visits and felt humiliated every time she visited her parents. She knew that her parents and brothers and their wives, treated her and her family little better than beggars, with loads of pity. And pity she did not want from anybody. And, unknowingly this was one quality she passed on to her daughter. Not money or jewel but a regard for hard work and the dignity of labour. (*Nine on Nine* 118)

Deepa learnt this lesson and followed this throughout her life and finally, this became the big reason of her success. She took tuitions and worked hard to become an independent lady. She recalls her struggles and says, “It amazes me to think that fifteen years ago I used to cycle forty kilometers every Sunday with the sun blazing overhead and look now... the most comfortable chauffeur-driven air conditioned vehicle.” (*Nine on Nine* 131) This is the true portrayal of a self-driven lady who achieves the pinnacles of success.

“Radha`s Journey” is a dive into Radha`s journey who has struggled a lot to be a renowned choreographer but she has lived her life on her terms. She gets married to Alok but she does not find him appropriate match and feels that she married him in hurry. She starts living alone, makes friends and enjoys life which is noticed by her mother Parvati:

A few days went by. Parvati noticed certain changes in her daughter. She mostly wore revealing outfits, had permed her hair and wore loud make up. Things unaccustomed for were coming into the house, like a mixer, juicer, a new colour television, new curtains and cushions. Even the fridge was full of expensive cheese and foreign chocolate. (*Nine on Nine* 152)

Betty Friedan says, "...for woman, as for man, the need for self –fulfillment, autonomy, self-realization, independence, individuality, self-actualization – is as important as the sexual need, with as serious consequence, when it is thwarted." (Friedan 314) This seems appropriate in the context of Radha who started enjoying her freedom, "Freedom from her mother, her husband, her sister and even her friends. No prying questions, no explanations given." (*Nine on Nine* 153)

"The Piano Teacher" is also a story of an independent woman who takes piano tuitions to earn money to live. She has two children who have settled out of the state. Her son lives in Sydney and daughter in Delhi but she does not want to take any help even from her children. Here, Puri has sketched one more character who is not protagonist but significant to mention here, she is her neighbour Mr. Kichlu`s wife Rosy who was his second wife and used to misbehave with him. She was her secretary when he was young and she got a chance to encash the opportunity to get married to thirty years elder Mr. Kichlu just because he was into an affair with her and she started treating him badly:

Now at eighty two, he was too weak to protest against the ill treatment meted out to him by his wife and daughter. He was told to leave the house by nine in the morning and not return before nine in the evening. 'Be grateful man, I am letting you stay. It is enough man I have to tolerate you during nights. At least let me have some peace during the day you old bugger.' Rosy would scream. (*Nine on Nine* 176)

Simon de Beauvoir opines, "She is called 'the sex', by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex- no less... she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute- she is the other." (Beauvoir 16) These views fit perfect to be

quoted in the context of Puri's story "Waiting" where Promit and Nita are husband and wife and their love marriage lost its charm too early. Nita is an educated and good looking lady who found Promit charming but gradually, the charm started fading and she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and her husband starts enjoying extra – marital affair with Mallika. Nita understands it that he is waiting for her to die so that he can marry Mallika and live a peaceful life. In this story, Puri has narrated the sensitive issues of man- woman relationship and also the approach of men towards women whom they consider no more than what Beauvoir calls 'sex' and they treat them not as an identity but as a commodity.

Thus, it can be said that these four women have defined women in their own ways through their stories. Hariharan`s women characters are truly Indian mothers, daughters, sisters and wives who sometimes become puppets in the hands of destiny and have to surrender. They have to serve the dying or they have to meet an untimely death. Deshpande`s women characters are educated women who strive for their own identity, who want to be a part of the process of progress, who want to be listened to and loved but they are not as brave so to do away with their family norms or to go against the wish of the family. Dalal`s women are spinsters who find it a better option to remain unmarried than to suffer and they try to raise their voices against rigidity but they also cannot do away with familial set up. Puri`s women characters are sketched with a total different approach who represent the modern mindset of women. They are not ready to suffer, they cannot remain quiet and they are courageous to fight for their rights and growth.

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Chapter-4
Women: Muted and
Marginalized

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“What possession can woman call her own except her body? Everything that she has, is her father`s, her husband`s or her son`s.”

(Narayan 88)

These lines from R.K. Narayan`s novel *The Dark Room* talks about the condition of women where they can claim over nothing other than their body and even this body also is governed by their husbands. A married woman`s first duty is to take care of the happiness of her husband and family. She needs to make her husband happy and this can be done by giving him sexual pleasure and the very institution of marriage makes it authentic to indulge into sex with wife, no matter she wants or not. Women are not supposed to question anything, they are not supposed to raise their voice against anything and that is why they are muted and marginalized. They can`t speak in their own house, they can`t come up with their own decisions and they have to seek either their father or husband`s permission for any decision. They are confined to boundaries and these boundaries are completely made by the patriarchal set up where women can`t even think of going in other direction. Women are considered to be very generous but they are not given liberty generously and this is the reason why they feel alienated. Today, circumstances have changed to some extent but still women are marginalized everywhere, whether it is at office level or at home level. Everywhere, they are sidelined. When we talk of literature, it is important to state here that even literature was dominated by men earlier and was written from men`s perspective which no doubt, was biased. In Indian literature, women writers came in front significantly later except a few but the writers who were women centric, came very late.

Women`s voices were ignored for a long time and they were not given the due regard and place and the literature was based on the religious sources and due to which, it mainly focused on the incarnation of women where they were worshipped as Goddess. In real life, they were not given considerable place in the

family and society. Women have been presented as an ideal of beauty, grace, softness yet they are not given a voice in the literature. Male hegemony in literature never concerns itself with voice of women.

Women got an opportunity to voice their experiences in the form of writing. They were considered to be guided by men, they were asked to look at the male figure for approval and they were denied any independency which can be hazardous for the peace of the family. The same attitude is visible in most of the families of India where still men think that if a woman is allowed to decide things on her own than it can be problematic at some level. Women writers wrote from a women`s perspective as they were facing the music and they wanted to jot it on paper so to make others aware of actual condition and to try to introduce and appreciate change.

The current chapter analyses this silencing and marginalisation of women in the stories of selected women writers like Githa Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Nergis Dalal, and Nadita C Puri. All these writers, in their stories made sincere efforts to mirror the genuine condition of women in Indian middle class families which are believed to be somewhat educated.

Muteness of women refers to their inability to express their anguish, frustration and inner self due to the inequity enforced by the male hegemony. The concept of muteness describes the relationship between a male and female in regard to the fact that all the norms and linguistic patterns, vocabulary is male generated which don`t talk about the problems of female. They are bound to follow the rules which are imposed by the male-dominated society.

Hence, the subordinate group, i.e. the female has been asked to be silent by the male dominated voice as well as they are not permitted to frame their own vocabulary and due to which they cannot express their views in their own literature. When they walk on the fields of male dominated group, they are supposed to follow the set norms. This tendency has marginalised the role of women in society and they are made a subject of favors received from males. This

monopolistic and prejudiced male dominated society has reduced the role of woman to just a pleasure giver to men and a child bearer. Women are supposed to be submissive, docile and kind hearted, they should not think for themselves, all their happiness lies in the happiness of the men in their lives. All the writers under discussion in this chapter are champions of women liberation in Indian society.

When we talk of Githa Hariharan`s collection *The Art of Dying*, it is a collection where death is the recurring theme and the reaction of living beings towards dead and dying is noteworthy. She has not at all tried to elucidate the death rituals and proceedings. On the contrary, she pours light on the reaction of female relatives of the dead persons. She narrates the stories in such a way that readers feel attached to all the stories and they become sentimental at times.

Death is an inevitable event which takes place in everyone`s life and this is not a new theme in literature. Many Indian writers like R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, U.R. Anantha Murty, Kamala Markandaya etc. have written on this theme. Githa Hariharan has followed their footsteps and tried her hands on the same thing but in a different manner. Her characters come up with their reactions and this helps in the continuation of the story and it also helps in stating the condition of women in her stories. Women writers try their level best to be the voices of women. In an interview with Preeti Lal Verma, she conveyed her opinion:

It is difficult to separate the woman and the writer and the citizen in you. Personally, it was very important for me to challenge this, imagine being told that you are not the natural guardians of the children you have borne – and that too in a society that places such a high premium on motherhood! But the important thing to remember is that all the personal laws in India are anti – women, anti- lower castes, anti anyone who was marginal to the scheme of things when these traditional laws were formulated. (Hariharan 2003)

Hariharan has always been there to take a stand for women`s right and that is the reason why, she challenged Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act and her women characters are best representatives of her perspective. In the proposed work, she has talked about the contemporary modern way of living. The prominent theme is the male dominance which never gives creative liberty to women. According to Manpreet K. Sodhi, “Her stories reflect the social restrictions or the oppression and suppression inflicted by various social institutions which act as the societal ghosts.”(Sodhi 166) When we talk about societal ghosts, it is best described by Avery Gordon thus, “A form of power or maleficent magic that is specifically designed to break down the distinction between visibility and invisibility, certainty and doubt, life and death that we normally use to sustain an ongoing or more or less dependable existence.” (Gorden 126) This power or the societal ghosts can be seen as the patriarchal set up of our society. The male-dominated society tries to teach women to suppress their desires and to mute them so to enjoy their own space. In her story “Untitled Poem”, she talks about the Indian home-maker Sarla who lives happily with her husband but she does not have any child and she never complains. She keeps herself busy in gardening as she says, “I know they are common, but they fill up all the empty spaces so quickly.”(TAOD 5) Here, she finds her own happiness to fill the blanks. She accompanies her husband in his endeavours and never utters a single word against his wish. When a rat enters into her garden, she feels helpless and unhappy which is reacted in following manner by her husband, “Sarla`s wards are also in danger. For the past week, I hear cries of alarm from the garden every morning. She sounds like a small animal in pain. ‘It`s been here again’, she calls to me.’ See what the rat has done to my rubber plant’. Even before I go out to her, I can see her plump face screwed up, like a child about to cry.” (TAOD 5)

In another story “The Remains of the Feast”, the ninety year old widow lady wants to taste everything which she never tasted throughout her life as she knows that she would die. Her granddaughter tries her best to fulfill her desires, “So we began a strong partnership, my great-grandmother and I. I smuggled cakes and ice cream, biscuits and samosas, made by non-brahmin hands, into a

vegetarian invalid's room. To the deathbed of a Brahmin widow who had never eaten anything but pure, home-cooked food for almost a century.” (TAOD 12)

This shows the condition of a woman who has been asked to follow a strict routine throughout her life and on the deathbed she realizes that she must enjoy her remaining life in her own ways. Further the readers come to know:

‘I’m thirsty’, she moaned, when my mother asked her if she wanted anything. ‘No, no, I don’t want water; I don’t want juice.’ She stopped moaning and looked at my mother’s patient, exasperated face. ‘I’ll tell you what I want’, she whined. ‘Get me a glass of that brown drink Ratna bought in the bottle. The kind that bubbles and makes a popping sound when you open the bottle. The one with the fizzy noise when you pour it out.’ (TAOD 13)

These lines clearly depict the compromises that are made by women to establish the unit called family. The old lady realizes the kind of life she lived throughout and that is why she thinks of devouring whatever is forbidden and is considered not to be chosen. According to Susie Tharu:

It desires everything that it has been forbidden: cakes with egg in them, from the Christian shop with a muslim cook, coca-cola laced with the delicious delight that it might be alcoholic, bhel-puri from the fly-infested bazaar, possibly touched by untouched hands, tweezed eyebrows shaven legs; and finally in the flourish of death, a sari of bridal red. (Tharu 1 June 1996)

Further, the last wish of the dying widow invokes our thought process to rethink about the norms and rituals which are still practiced at most of the places and which deny a widow to live a life of her own choice. They are not supposed to wear red which is a symbol of their marriage and that is why Rukmini requests her daughter-in-law “to bring a red sari with a big wide border of gold” and “to bring peanuts with chilli powder from the corner shop. Onion and green chilli bondas deep-fried in oil.”(TAOD 15) The great – grand daughter brings red sari to wrap around the dead great- grandmother but the daughter-in-law becomes

furious which clearly strikes the minds of the readers that women themselves are also responsible for their condition as they don't try to gear up courage to fight for their rights. The daughter-in-law should have tried to fulfill the last wish of the lady, despite of thinking about the societal norms but she fails in doing away with such norms.

In the story "The Warden", women`s silenced voices are best described where the married lady is supposed to live in the outhouse on the grounds of mental fluctuations and she is nothing more than a sex object for her husband but she does not want to be indulged into it:

That white, white flower. So cunning, so sweet swelling. Teases and teases, all the petals are like crescent moons. Then it came nearer and the smell was like vomit. The smooth white rubbery petals, thick, thicker, I could not even breathe. I saw the bee inside, he thought I didn't see it, but I saw him sting. You leave my rubber flower alone, I said to him, you don't even like it. It's ugly and stupid and smelly, I know, but I married that flower. How else to protect it? (*TAOD* 33)

Here the lady was not at all interested as she was confined into the outhouse and there was no bond of love between the two and due to this, once she reacted furiously. To quote, "Once she bit him, hard, her teeth had drawn blood on his arm. I had to run back to the outhouse, save him, hold her down and lock ourselves in. Shutting out her wild, frenzied screams, holding down her stick-like arms that had now grown powerful talons, I shot him a glance that said, are you satisfied?" (*TAOD* 33)

In another story "The Reprieve", the retired husband feels so lonely after the death of his wife Mangala who died of cancer and who was the backbone of the family as he recalls his past and Mangala`s role in the making of the family:

Mangala had come to the old ancestral house as a fifteen year-old bride. If she missed her parents, her brothers and sisters, the games of her recent childhood, her husband heard nothing of it. She was not particularly beautiful, but her features were not displeasing, and her skin was a

pleasant and smooth pale brown. She must, in fact, have been considered pretty, though not enough to get either enraptured by, or alarmed about. Mangala grew to be an adult, and she grew to be something very much like her looks. Pleasant, patient, hardworking, selfless, discreet- essentially faceless, an elusive middle-of-the-road woman, who did not attract attention for either her shortcomings or her virtues. (*TAOD* 42)

Here, the wife has been described as a modest figure who is selfless as most of the women are and who works really hard for the smooth functioning of the house work. Further he recalls:

For fifty years, she had been a good or at least unobtrusive wife in the background. She had run the machinery of thirty – member household, had oiled its creaky joints, though Nagaraj Rao had been responsible for the larger, more obvious task of providing the components of the machinery, the family members who would be part of the fold, the hierarchy. (*TAOD* 43)

Here, the husband has never given due time to his wife when she was alive and now when she is dead, he misses the smallest moments related to her which seemed unimportant to him earlier. Indian women work whole heartedly for their families but they have to be quiet many times so to establish peace, harmony and bonding. They kill many of their dreams due to patriarchal set-up and they are instructed to work up to the expectation of the society. Mangala died of cancer and we can best notice the marginalized living of women when the husband tells how the wife died, “She died as she had lived, nothing ugly or sudden, just a slow, lingering, inconspicuous bundle of well-disguised pain.”(*TAOD* 43)

Here, the word ‘well disguised pain’ exactly describes the plight of women that they live such a miserable life where their pains and sorrows are well disguised and are not even noticed by others. In another story “Forefathers”, the son narrates the story who is half-heartedly taking care of his bedridden father and the daughters are given the kitchen house duties, “My life is neatly divided between college and his bedside. My sisters, he says, are too young. They are

growing girls, he says. So their job is to help run the household as quietly as possible.” (TAOD 51) Further narrator`s aunt visits his home and recalls of an incident where the man does not listen to the screams of a dying woman which is indirectly a hint towards the pathetic condition of women, “Have you heard what happened to old Vijaya in the village? Her sari caught fire in the puja room- and she always wears silk. Her deaf husband didn’t hear her screams, even though he was in the next room.” (TAOD 55)

Most of the times, women`s voices are not heard in this male-dominated world. In the title story, the narrator`s mother recalls the incident when she was forbidden to stand alone in the balcony which clearly indicates the role and control of men in a woman`s life:

My hair, she says in hoarse whisper. (She speaks, I have noticed, of her dead son in a clear, unchoked voice.)Your father was always jealous. He caught me combing my hair once in the balcony upstairs. That was the last time I was allowed to stand there alone. It was a different time, I say. Perhaps he was protecting you from neighborhood gossip. My father`s authority had a long–distance quality to it, something like a powerful memory. He rarely spoke to us, but his word – sometimes unspoken – was our law. (TAOD 69)

Further, the case of ‘dreamer’ at narrator`s counselling centre makes our point of discussion very clear where the woman is so alone that she wants someone`s presence who can simply listen to her and due to so many restrictions in a male–dominated society, she wants to do and become all what is restricted:

She was a wealthy young woman who had travelled a little and tried her hand at many things. Painting, interior decoration, a small business of her own, but nothing endured. Very soon we discovered her reason for coming to us: she wanted someone to listen to her dreams. She had been to an expensive psychiatrist for a couple of years, but she never referred to that. She sensed, perhaps, that her dreams left little room for interpretation. She dreamed: that she was Napoleon`s mistress; that she had saved Jesus Christ from the crucifix at the last, critical moment; that the Buddha

shared a bowl of sweet water with her, while telling her about his life as Siddhartha. She flew around the world, without wings, and floated in a deep blue and cloudy space well above the earth. (*TAOD* 73)

In the story “Gajar Halwa”, maids` miserable lives are described in such a manner that the readers feel sympathetic, this depiction tells the condition of poor women who have to live a life which is not only miserable but also full of burden. The narrator`s mother lived one such life as she recalls:

My mother was always screaming. No wonder my father left her, he must have been afraid of going deaf ...She went to work every day, even on days when she was sick or when her stomach was empty, to the highway they were building near our village. She would leave at six in the morning after drinking the strong, sweet tea I made for her. She coiled a rag on her head, ready for the basket of gravel she would carry all day. On her hip she held the youngest, who she was still breastfeeding. The other two stayed at home with me. I would get my brother Selvan ready for school, feed him his gruel, oil and comb his hair, and wave at him from the door of our hut. (*TAOD* 82)

Here, the mother goes out to earn money so to run the family and the sister takes care of the whole family in her absence. The father is such an irresponsible man that he found it better to run away from his responsibilities. Her story “Close-Up” is a story of a photographer who clicks glamorous photos of women. In the story the customer Urvashi is described thus, “Her violet nylon sari is covered with gigantic orange roses at regular intervals. They are bordered with gold sequins that glitter like sharp little teeth. She sits very still, like a tame, obedient animal awaiting its master`s orders.”(*TAOD* 85) Here the woman is compared to a tame animal which clearly strikes at the mindset of this patriarchal society where women are still treated in a very rude manner. This story also reminds us of Nergis Dalal`s “The Nude” where the photographer gets fascinated to a woman when she is clicked nude. Both the stories describe the mindset of society where still women are projected as a commodity.

“Revati” is a projection of Indian widows` lives and the attitude of society towards them. Revati is an old widow who is not appreciated by the narrator as she lacks feminine qualities, to quote from the text:

I had never seen anyone eat like Revati. Usually we women waited till all the children had eaten, then the men, before we sat down to eat what was left over. But Revati, in spite of being completely grey, never noticed any of these feminine niceties. She would sit with the children, and stuff the food, great big balls of it all mixed up, into her mouth. (*TAOD* 94)

These lines by the narrator clearly show that women are supposed to follow the set traditions and norms where they have to adjust, compromise and sacrifice a lot and if a woman like Revati enjoys the life then she does not fit into the society and is ridiculed and ignored. In the story “Love Poem”, Neeta becomes victim. She is a studious girl who has come to Women`s College, Bombay to study poetry. She surrenders to the unwanted moment due to situation created by her Sir. Here again, a girl is victimised and the Professor takes advantage of the moment and her interest in literature. In another story “Voices in the Twilight” the narrator comes to attend the death rituals of her mother and recalls the time of her father`s death when they used to live together in a small house and the only brother was burdened with responsibility and was considered as the only caretaker:

Before the empty-eyed sufferer, between the sharp bones on the right and the penetrating perfume on the left, I sit like an idiot caretaker. I am the sole male of the surviving family. I am the staff for my widow mother to lean on. I am frozen in the middle of the photo. My path was chosen for me even as my father breathed his last. I am surrounded by women, the object of their day- to- day womanly cares. They sweep my floors, cook my rice, sew my buttons and wash the dirtiest of underwear without a murmur. In return they don`t make outrageous demands. Merely: duty, responsibility, sacrifice, the rest. (*TAOD* 129)

Further, when Shakuntala moves to hostel and starts earning, she starts thinking about maids and other women who are never free and are nothing more than mere victims:

Some of the women in the hostel are constant reminders of what I could become. An old maid who wears a label on her sagging virgin breasts. The label declares to the world that she is helpless, lonely, pointless and unhappy. I see strange contortions on some of their faces when they think no one is looking. The slack corners of their mouths tell me why they didn't choose any of this. They are victims; their nearness taints my new-found independence. Now I am free. I can choose, decide. It cannot be too late. I can still revel in my orphan hood. (TAOD 131)

In the story "The Rainmaker", an Indian mother's worry and concern is narrated to such an extent that even after her death, she comes to see her daughter and when she feels her maturity level appropriate, she stops visiting. Here, Hariharan has introduced ghost element. To quote:

She was smiling, not her polite, neighborly smile, but something full-fledged and glorious. I gasped and moved away from the window, shocked at last. Then the Peepal tree, now that it was no longer raining, shook off its sparkling costume with ease. It looked banal somehow, like an ordinary shade-giving backyard tree. And though I did not see her again, though I did not as yet know if anything had changed, I felt the child in me leave that room forever. (TAOD 159)

Thus, it is quite true to say that Hariharan's women are also muted and marginalized like most of the Indian women and the same projection is found in Shashi Deshpande's proposed work *The Intrusion and Other Stories*. Deshpande is not a writer who writes short story as a pastime or to relax but she has adopted this form with serious intentions and she has been doing it quite religiously. She talks about the desperation, compromise, loss and such feelings which are prevalent in a male-dominated society. Her women characters struggle a lot and we find identity crisis and a dilemma in almost all the stories.

Elaine Showalter talks about the three phases of historical development in the feminist movement:

First, there is a prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and internalization of its standard of art and its views on social roles. Second, there is phase of protest against these standards and values, including a demand for autonomy. Finally, there is a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity. An appropriate terminology...is to call these stages, feminine, feminist and female. (Showalter 13)

Shashi Deshpande`s characters travel through these three stages. They understand the patriarchal set-up in which they live and try to protest against the rigidity of social norms but this all is done in a very indirect and polite manner. They try to adjust themselves in the environment and keep trying their level best. Her first story of the proposed collection “The First Lady” expresses the mental condition of a woman who marries a Gandhian man and her life has become totally opposite of what she thought of it and she has to wear a mask of being first lady and freedom is far away from her as she says, “Yes, I love my comforts. But for these comforts we have battered away our immortal souls. And the whole prize has not yet been paid.” (*TIAOS* 35) She is too bored of the fancy life and at the age of 70 she admits:

Gracious and dignified! No, I am only a tired, old woman, whose feet swell up to grotesque proportions after an evening like this. And then the doctors come and look concerned and murmured comfortingly about exertions and strains, about medicines and rest. When they know, I know that the real trouble is I am too fat. And I am fat because I eat too much. And I eat too much because I am bored. And I am bored because there is no truth in anything we do or say. (*TIAOS* 13)

Here the lady is completely bored due to the kind of lifestyle she is supposed to live and she cannot tolerate the silence. She is alone and she regrets her decision of falling in love with a man who has stopped being in love anymore as she says, “The passionate and dedicated face she had fallen in love with was

incapable of loving another human being.” (*TIAOS* 14) The limit exceeds when the husband tells her to follow celibacy as his master’s principle because purpose of sex is procreation and they have three children but she always wanted “him to touch her, felt aloof that is why she attracted to young man, says to hold her, to have her.”(*TIAOS* 15)

We find that the lady undergoes a deep pain and there is a deep desire and quest for love which she tries to find in the form of that young disciple who afterwards dies and she recalls the memories even at the age of 70. At the end, the lady is going back to her room after the party is over and she shouts recalling the past but the husband does not hear it as, “He had removed his hearing aid and did not hear her.”(*TIAOS* 16) Here, Deshpande has beautifully linked the hearing aid to men’s deafness as they never listen to their wives and they feel muted and marginalized. Like the first lady of this story, the women feel alienated and their aloofness is never identified by men. Likewise in the story, “An Antidote to Boredom”, the wife is in quest of love who is too busy with her schedule and then finds a man who is her son Rahul’s friend’s father whose wife has died, to quote her feelings here:

The thought of meeting him kept me keyed up to a more intense pitch of living. His frank admiration was as refreshing to me as cold water on a hot day. Until then, nobody had cared. What I wore, how I dressed. My husband denied me nothing; but there was not one sari with associations. Not one sari that was special to me because of something we had done together, something he had said to me. (*TIAOS* 71)

G.S. Amur writes about the story in the preface, “The story dramatizes the suffering of a woman who makes an unsuccessful attempt to escape from the prison of her fixed role as wife and live a life of spontaneity.” (Deshpande 13) The woman is ignored to such an extreme that she tries to search this love elsewhere and she is fed up with the day to day routine where her husband returns from office, sips tea and there is no communication between them. She wants some love, some memories; some moments which can make her live and laugh even when she sits alone. She says for her husband, “But what if there is no

affection at all, the only thing holding us together being habit and a child?" (TIAOS 71) In most of the Indian marriages, the couples just drag the relationship because of their children and they continue due to a responsibility towards their children. In this institution of marriage, sex also becomes just a routine, to quote from the text, "Love making just became another chore." (TIAOS 72) Here the wife is so unhappy due to lack of communication between her and her husband that she finds the intimate moments as mere chore. She is in a dilemma as to continue with her new fascination or not because she cannot blame her husband for his insensitivity as he is a man, "How often had I felt in myself a boundless capacity for loving, for giving? But I had felt in him incapacity to receive and for that I hated him at times, though I knew I wronged him by that. For he was not a wicked man, not harsh nor cruel. Only unperceptive. And dull. And dullness is to me an unforgivable crime." (TIAOS 73) The lady finds the man's company as an antidote to boredom as she has no fun and enthusiasm in her life. She says, "Whether it was only the demon of discontent which had brought me to such a strange situation sitting with a strange man in his car... this was for me, perhaps, only an antidote to boredom." (TIAOS 73) Deshpande writes about these neglected aspects and she writes about the real experiences of women which should not be considered as only women's writing but as the real depiction of the male-dominated society. As R.S. Pathak says, "She has sensitively treated typical Indian themes and has portrayed contemporary middle-class women with rare competence. In a wider sense, her subject matter is nothing less than human predicament." (Pathak ix)

It is completely true as most of her characters are middle class women and they are most of the times in a dilemma as what to do with their condition and circumstances and they cannot gather courage to do away with the norms. In the story "Why a Robin", the girl child enquires about the bird Robin as she has to a two page composition but she does not think her mother as the appropriate person for any suggestion. The mother feels sad and alone because nobody belongs to her. She says, "I don't have the key to open up this beautiful child, though she is mine. I don't have the key to her father, either it is as if I am, in my own house,

confronted with two closed rooms. I am condemned to sit outside and gaze helplessly at the closed doors.” (*TIAOS* 19)

These thoughts clearly reveal the condition of most of the Indian women who feel isolated and alone and who are destined to live the same way as they don't raise voices against the orthodox norms. The narrator feels as if she is an outsider in her own house, especially when her in laws visit her:

They can never forget that he married 'beneath him'. Neither can I. Before they visit us, I take endless trouble to tidy the house. But it remains dull, dead. Till he, or the child, does something. A small touch and the house looks different. I slog in the kitchen for his family; I must impress them, show them he is well looked after. They sit at the table, carelessly eating the food I have prepared, and talk of many things, ignoring me. The talk flows above and around me, leaving me untouched. An outsider in my own home. Have they locked me out or have I locked myself in? (*TIAOS* 20)

Women work round the clock but they are not given due regard, they remain a stranger in their family. They struggle between the dual identities and can't associate with any. In this story, the woman is lonely and she needs a companion with whom she can talk and share her thoughts but they lack a bonding as she says:

Two single beds. Two islands that nothing can bridge. Not the child. Not even the bridge of passion. He has not come to bed when I go into our room. He sits and listens to music every night. I lie on my bed, eyes open, listening to the music streaming across the dark. I cannot understand this music; it is as incomprehensible to me as he is. (*TIAOS* 21)

Further, the lady questions herself whether to disturb her husband in his personal time or not as she says, “I wanted to sit with him, to try and share his enjoyment, to ask him to open my ears to the sounds so that they would become a melody. But I was afraid. Now I know I will never do it. It is his special place, his retreat, the place where he can be the most alone. I will not intrude. And the

worst, most frightening thought is that he may ask me – what do you want?” (*TIAOS* 21) Here the lady is completely ignored but she does not want to intrude the privacy of her husband whereas in the title story of this collection, the husband is not even bothered as not to intrude the privacy of her wife and that too when they are newly wedded and they hardly know each other. She wants to spend time with him so as to be friends with him but for him, the very institution of marriage allows him to intrude her privacy and to be physical with her. Tong observes, “A woman has little or no say about when, where, how or by whom her body will be used.”(187) Likewise, she has no right to protest or to place her point and ultimately she has to surrender thus:

At last, mercifully, it was over, my body having helped him by some strange instinct beyond and outside me. And the cry I gave was not for the physical pain but for the intrusion into my privacy, the violation of my right to myself. I drew the sheets over myself and lay quietly, afraid to move, thinking of nothing, my mind an absolute blank. When sensation and feeling came back with a surge, my first thought was that I could not hear even the sea now. I wondered why till I realize that there was another sound drowning it. I looked at him. He was lying on his back, legs flung apart, snoring loudly and steadily. (*TIAOS* 48)

Here it is apt to quote Foreman, “Men seek relief from their alienation through their relation with women; for a woman there is no relief. For these intimate relations are the very ones that are the essential structures of her oppression.” (Foreman 102)

In the story “Ghosts”, a young married woman’s loneliness is described who is shifted to England with her husband. Women feel alienated in their native place but her condition is worse as people do not communicate with each other at all and she has to move in total isolation and her husband is busy in office work and due to all such things, she starts talking to herself which makes her condition worst. She is so alone that she murmurs thus, “The color she thought bleakly, of hopelessness and despair. Even a fog would be better than this nothingness.” (*TIAOS* 86) Further, it pours the feeling of gloom and loneliness out when she

says, “Never let anyone know your humiliation. Never reveal how shamefully, humiliatingly isolated you are. How utterly lonely. Keep writing home...yes, it’s wonderful here. I am having a lovely time. I am enjoying myself terribly.” (*TIAOS* 89)

This is really a heart-touching story where the lady is forlorn on a foreign land and she finds the volume of television as her only and best companion. In the story “Can You Hear Silence”, silence is used as a metaphor where the sound of the outside world of the house is soothing but the sound inside the house is troubling and this all is observed by one of the daughter Megha. She can hear silence where her parents quarrel as the father comes late and the angry mother behaves as a ghost. The story “It was Dark” is a story of a girl child who was not only kidnapped for three days but also raped. She is back to her home but she is not able to utter a single word and keeps looking at the ceiling. The father asks the mother why she had not warned her against so many things. The mother thinks:

Why had not I warned her? I had been warned enough as a girl. Don’t, don’t, don’t, you are female. They had taught me to build a wall around myself with negatives from childhood. And then suddenly, when I got married, they had told me to break the wall down. To behave as if it had never been. And my husband too-how complete his disregards of that wall had been; I had felt totally vulnerable, wholly defenseless. I won’t let my daughter live behind walls, I had thought. (*TIAOS* 38)

Here, it is noteworthy to mention that she was told by her mother that she must submit to her husband on her wedding night and she recalls how this submission made things easier. This is not the story of this lady only; this is the story of almost all the women. They are told to compromise and adjust as to run the institution of marriage smoothly. Deshpande’s another story from the collection “Death of a Child” pours light on the same theme that how women are not given liberty to think on their own and how they are supposed to give birth to children and child rearing should be their inborn virtue. In this story, the wife is not ready to give birth to the third child as in four years, it is for the third time and

she is not prepared mentally and physically for the same whereas the husband says yes very easily. The husband says, “It is quite simple really- having a child. What’s complicated about that? You know we can manage. Why do you get so disturbed?”(*TIAOS* 51) Here, for the husband the unwanted pregnancy is not at all any problem as he does not think about all the troubles and concerns which the lady will have to go through and that is why the wife says, “I cannot imagine that the main purpose of my life is to breed ...any cow, any bitch can breed.”(*TIAOS* 52) Here, the lady is in a dilemma that the decision of terminating the pregnancy is right or not and ultimately it is terminated but she feels disturbed as she is sensible and she cannot justify her decision. Here, the important aspect is that the women are not given liberty to decide such important issues on their own. They are forced to give birth even when they are not ready for it.

Deshpande does not believe in idealization of womanhood as she says to Vishwanathan in an interview, “It is necessary for women to live within relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this and no farther, then one becomes unhappy. This is what I have tried to convey in my writing. What I don’t agree is the idealization of motherhood- the false and sentimental notes that accompany it.” (Pathak 236)

In the story “My Beloved Charioteer”, the mother envies her own daughter who communicates a lot with her husband but later he dies. She feels unhappy for the fact that she never shared such happy relationship with her husband who was a good father for her daughter but never paid any regard to his wife’s feelings and that is why on the matter of breaking of photo frame she responds thus: “Yes, your father, but what was he to me? The day he died, I let him go like this.” (*TIAOS* 65)

“It was the Nightingale” is a story of Jaya who is a career – oriented woman and who decides to go abroad on a job proposal but she is worried about her husband. They discuss too many things before her departure and on the matter of Jaya’s mother-in-law’s behavior, her husband says, “You should try and understand her, Jayu. For women of her generation, life held nothing, apart from

husband and children. She can't understand how a woman can see beyond that."(*TIAOS* 97) This is the reality even today. Women are taught not to think beyond husband and family. They are supposed to kill their dreams.

In another story "The Inner Rooms", the story reveals the life of the princess of Kasha, Amba who was abducted by Bhisma but she was in love with other man and she could not surrender and went to her lover but he refused due to his lost pride and ultimately she jumped into fire. Here, T.N. Geetha is of the view, "Amba`s fate is prototypical of that of the mistreated, humiliated woman suffering at the hands of male chauvinists found in every country and in every age." (Geetha in Dhawan 171)

Here, it is pertinent to mention that Amba is representative of all the women who are confined to their rooms and who are not supposed to do something on their own. As Amba recalls:

No, she was glad she had no children. For a brief moment, the thought of her mother came to her- who had to watch her daughters being carried away by an old man. Had she cried? Protested? In any case, neither her tears nor her protests would have had any meaning, for they would not have reached the world beyond the rooms in which she lived. Those inner rooms – how she hated them! As a child, she had imagined that the whole world was hers. But gradually, relentlessly (don't, don't, you can't) the world had closed in on her, pushing her into the woman`s rooms. From the first she had felt trapped in them. Today, when she walked out, she had been amazed to find how easy it was. A sense of peace had descended on her. Why had not she done this earlier? (*TIAOS* 99)

Usha Bande opines the same, "Shashi Deshpande makes Amba the representative of all women who suffer oppression and humiliation at the hands of the society governed by male rules. Amba`s revolt against the male-order is rendered meaningless; she loses all relationships that would have given some semblance of meaning to existence." (Bande in Singh 136)

“Hear me Sanjaya...” can be taken as retelling mythological episodes of Mahabharata where Kunti has tried to break the image of a silent mother and has given voice to her feelings. She talks to Sanjay during their stay in forest after the war was over. She tells how painful it was to be given away to someone else. This happens with women, they have to leave their maternal home to grace the in-laws home but they remain outsiders throughout their lives. She pours her agony out in this way:

My father gave me away- how easily he gave me away. As if I was a bit of property... And I can't even remember if it made me angry?.. But I remember I was frightened. It thought my father had given me away to his friend because he was displeased with me, because I had done something wrong. And I thought – what if I displease this man too? Will he give me away to someone else? And so I did everything I could to please him, I tried hard... never to displease him. (*TIAOS* 143)

This is what she had to face when she was a girl, later she remembers how she had to welcome her husband's second wife and how she had to take care of her children. Similarly, the story “Stone Women” also deals with the projection of women and the perception of a new bride. She is on a trip with her husband and while sight-seeing, sees the paintings of “Lush-bodied, high-breasted woman... leaning provocatively.... looking the mirror, doing the hair, playing on musical instruments, dancing.” (*TIAOS* 146) Here, the wife realizes a sudden fear after seeing all these stone women as she smells a sense of marginalization and she feels that she is also confined to a particular space and she will not be given her own space. This sudden realization of self makes her recall the episodes when she was forbidden to hum the songs of her favorite movies and she was asked to put away the silver bracelet as they were ugly. She started thinking that she is also like the stone women as she is surrendering and moving towards marginalization, to quote:

Beautiful, I hear the word over and over again and I look at the women with their high, firm breasts, tiny waists, straight noses and elongated eyes and wonder- are they? I suppose they are but they don't look real, a voice

inside me protests. And yet...no, I don't know. Sometimes, I think that's the truth. I don't know. 'What an ugly thing', he'd said soon after we were married, touching the silver bracelet I was wearing. Was it ugly? I had never known. In fact, I'd been wearing it for so long, it was like part of myself; I scarcely saw it. But I put it away that day. Yet even now, in idle moments, the fingers of my right hand grope for it and there is a sense of loss when they miss its familiar contours. (*TIAOS* 148)

Shashi Deshpande speaks about it and opines:

I imagine that this kind of an idea of women exists in literature everywhere, especially in stories which...were told by men in exclusive male company. The truth, the sad truth, is that most of the literature has been the creation of men. And, for centuries, this limitation has never been understood and the picture presented by this literature has been accepted as the true and the entire picture; not only men, but women as well, have taken their idea of women from here. (Deshpande 85-86)

In her another story "A Wall is Safer", she has talked about the lifestyle of a home-maker who could be a nice lawyer but she chose to be home-maker as she says, "I am busy, I have enough to do. I cook. I clean. I wash. I iron. I read. I listen to music, help the kids with their lessons, I visit..." (*TIAOS* 124) The protagonist Hema has started looking for her happiness in all these works though her heart longs for things she compromised. On the question of her career, she very plainly tells Sushma, "Oh, I am alright as I am. After all, I am a good house wife now. (*TIAOS* 125) She has learnt to manage and compromise and she thinks that she is happy with whatever is happening in her life. Her dilemma is best delivered in the lines of the story where she accepts that wall should be built around the house as it is safer. Here, this wall is symbolic of women's confinement that they have to live a life where they are supposed to be confined in the walls of a house, to quote her dilemma, "A wall? As the work goes on and the fence goes up around us, I think of her words. Finally it is done. Five rows of barbed wire. And only then I understand Sitabai's words. A wall is safer. With a

wall, you can't even see what is on the other side. But suppose the dangers are inside? What do you do then?" (*TIAOS* 127)

Thus it can be said about Deshpande that her women characters are educated Indian women who feel alienated throughout their life, who understand their pain and who realize their condition but still they try to adjust and they cannot even think to do away with the institution of marriage. Similarly the women characters of the another Collection of this study Nergis Dalal's *The Nude* also believe in adjustment and that is why they walk on the roads of compromise and adjustment. Namita Gokhle(2002) questions "Do women write differently from men? Do these constitute parallel literatures? Are the critical yardsticks different?"(65) Further she says, "It is necessary to document the internal conflict of the feminine psyche, with its conflicting and contrary expectations, this should not become an obsessive internal exercise. Of course women are obsessed with their sexuality because this is an area in which they have been repressed."(66) Dalal also tries her hands at this and tries to pour the inner conflict out through her stories. In the story "Ranjit's Wife", The story begins with Ranjit's demand of divorce from his wife Lila and Lila's helpless condition. The narration goes thus:

Lila dragged her eyes away from her hands and looked at her husband. He had just asked for a divorce and since the scenario was unfamiliar and totally unexpected, she did not know what to say. Yes? Or perhaps just no! After ten years of living together it gave her a strange feeling to be asked if she would divorce Ranjit. She had known about the woman for some time of course, and she had listened to all her friends saying the usual things – 'A man has to have a fling now and again – just don't pay any attention – be especially nice to him and he will come back to you.' That sort of thing. (*The Nude* 125)

The story begins with this conflict which goes on and Lila is unable to decide what to do and she is not even able to accept this jolt and tries to justify and compensate it by recalling the words of other women who think that men behave like this time on and off. She asks her husband to give her two months to

decide and meanwhile they can continue to live as husband and wife and the narration is worth quoting here:

‘I don’t suppose you will stop seeing this- this woman-but for these two months, I should like us to continue living together as before, go out together sometimes, and perhaps you could even dine at home once or twice a week, to keep up appearances.’ Her voice was low, without inflection, but he flinched as though he had been lashed. Had she then minded so much being alone, pitied perhaps or held in contempt by all those who feel a woman is a failure if she can’t hold a man? (*The Nude* 126)

Here, Lila represents almost all the women of our society who are tied so deeply to the institution of marriage that they can’t even imagine of living on their own, further it is narrated thus, “She felt curiously empty and defeated. Even to herself she found it difficult to explain why she had asked for these two months. Why not a quick, clean break? Why prolong the inevitable, like a condemned man asking for an extra day?” (*The Nude* 126)

Further she regrets that “She had done what he wanted for ten years and this was the result. I’ve given the best years of my life.” (*The Nude* 127) She feels that she did exactly how she was guided but still she has been asked for what she was not able to accept. She decided to live life her way and that is what changes everything. She says to her friend Meera, “I have been married to Ranjit for ten years and in all that time I have never really done anything to please myself. Always, I thought first of Ranjit – always I have done what he wished.” (*The Nude* 130) Lila is being asked for divorce even after so many compromises and that is just because her husband is in relation with another lady. She decides to go for makeover to enjoy her husband’s money which earlier she never even thought of. She starts meeting Kamal Bhatt and enjoys his company which is described thus:

Lila smiled and held out her hand, and felt it engulfed in an enormous paw, felt his eyes on her in a prolonged stare, and felt in herself the first prickling of pleasure that she had felt in ten long years, because a man’s

eyes told her clearly that she was beautiful and desirable. The evening was an enormous success—she could not remember having so much fun in years, and curiously it was a relief to have no Ranjit sitting opposite to look at her critically if she laughed too much, or talked too much, or drank more than one small glass of wine. She danced alternately with both the men and she found it delightful to be told that she was ravishing, adorable, and lovely. (*The Nude* 134)

The wife has lived such a life where she was not allowed to live her own way, where she was not supposed to do what she liked and where she was observed all the time and was instructed to behave properly and that is why, she thinks of living it on her own and she decides to enjoy life and to do all what she was denied to. Further, Ranjit`s dominance is described in the following manner,” His eyes travelled deliberately down the bare shoulders, down the shimmering folds of the sari that seemed to be wrapped so as to reveal every curve , and down to her feet with their painted toenails.” (*The Nude* 140) Here, Ranjit`s attitude towards his wife is noteworthy, especially the way he wants to dominate her and does not like that she went out in such an attire. Lila is totally happy with her new life and she laughs and says, “I`m free, thank heavens. Free to do what I like, say what I like, dress as I like. After ten years it feels wonderful.”(*The Nude* 140)

Dalal`s next story “The Red Pavilion” is a story of a spinster who lives all by herself and who is a writer and writes what makes her soul happy and she does not want others to know that she is a writer. Here, she chooses to be herself and to be totally away from the male-dominated society. Her another story “The Connoisseur” is also a story of a 65 year old spinster Miss Krishna who spent her life in taking care of her mother. Some of Dalal`s stories deal with the theme of spinsters and most of them don`t marry due to the health issues of their mothers and they become a great support for their mother but once their mothers die, they become all alone and that is picked up by Dalal. Miss Krishna`s desire for small things show the lack of required happiness in life. Her desires portray the alienation and aloofness of her life. To quote:

She went into raptures over my tea set. Holding her cup as though it were a beautiful flower, she traced the design with sensitive fingers, marveling at the delicate fluted edges and at the translucence of the china when she held it to the light. She said, 'All my life I have been starved of beautiful things. My early life was one continuous struggle. Poverty is so ugly. All those thick, coarse sheets on the beds, uncarpeted floors, pottery cups and plates and ugly, discarded furniture. How one's soul craves for beautiful things.' (*The Nude* 174)

Here, Miss Krishna represents all those women who are not that beautiful according to the set definitions of beauty by the patriarchal society and they sometimes or the other feel it. One more theme which is a recurrent in Dalal's stories is – envy, her female characters envy the beautiful women. For instance, in the story "The Silver Anklets", Sita envies Bhima as she is beautiful. In this story, Madhu and Bhima are husband and wife but Dalal has portrayed the other side of reality where Bhima had been cheated by Kapil who gave her silver anklets to some other woman and she could not even tell this to anyone. This is a real depiction of victimization of women where Bhima felt extremely cheated, to quote, "He saw her at once and his bold eyes ran over her in the remembered look. Then he turned, and putting his arm around the girl whispered into her ear. They both threw their heads back and laughed, the girl derisively, and Kapil with frank enjoyment of the joke."(*The Nude* 204)

In her other story "The Seller of Mantras", the mother-in-law wants a mantra which can make her daughter-in-law less attractive so that she can equally share some moments with her son. This is also important to look at the other side of the coin that sometimes women are oppressed due to some other women and this can be done knowingly or unknowingly. She says, "Give me a mantra to make my new daughter-in-law less attractive. She has enslaved my son. She is beautiful and he has eyes for no one else- not even for me-his mother." (*The Nude* 210) Her other story "The Intruder" talks about the psychological aspect of a woman who is lonely and who feels the emptiness deep within her and thinks of a child or a dog who could have bridge the gap. She is unable to help her husband

and she feels the presence of her husband's first wife everywhere and ultimately dies out of fear and trauma. She murmurs thus:

And all at once she was very angry. What nonsense to talk! Helen was dead and gone; out of loneliness and dislike for the house she had conjured up an image that was not really there. Tomorrow everything would be different. She would go again for long walks across the fields, get herself a dog – and perhaps there would be the child. That was why she felt so peculiar. She was almost certain of it now. This too she would tell him tomorrow. (*The Nude* 107)

Dolores Hayden pours light on the never-ending job of a woman:

Each household has a kitchen and laundry to clean, and separate living areas require the individual supervision of the children. They also involve nurturing activities, cooking, home remedies for illness, emotional support for family members, arranging recreational activities, keeping in touch with the relatives, interaction with business (shops) and institutions (schools). But all these are unrecognized. (Hayden 84)

The same responsibilities are performed by most of the women characters of almost all the proposed writers of this study. Dalal's "The French Wife" is a story of an Indian wife who performs her household tasks whole-heartedly but her husband marries a French woman just after her death. The French lady starts feeling boredom as she has nothing to do in the house. "She said if she continued to live here she would die of boredom. Without access to plays, music and intellectual stimulus she often found herself wanting to scream. She said she was still in love with Kapoor and she wanted him to come back with her to France. If she stayed any longer she would go mad." (*The Nude* 11) Indian wives try their level best to make their husbands happy in all possible manners and they compromise to extremities so to make the bond strong but the same dedication is not shown from the other side and which sometimes creates a vacuum. In the story "A Taste of Blood", the lady's husband is the best example of male-dominance. He wants his son to be brought up like a real man and he motivates him to hunt birds and animals and when protested, he reacts thus, "Now you shut

up', he said evenly.' I don't want my son to grow up a namby- pamby. I have told you before. I won't have him tied to your apron strings. I want him to be a real boy. You stop scolding him. He did a fine job with that bird. I am proud of him." (*The Nude* 13) The wife is living such a life where she does not love her husband anymore and there is no desire to be with him but she does not want to lose her son as she says, "The woman looked at him dispassionately. It was a long time since she had felt any desire. Almost the moment the boy was born there had begun this struggle for possession, subtle and hidden at first, out in the open now." (*The Nude* 16) She is not at all at one with her husband's attitude and she is very firm on the note of upbringing of her son and that is why, she asks the child to shoot the deer in the other direction where his father is shot by him unknowingly but this was the last way for her to get her son back.

Dalal's other story "Once for Asking" delves into the devotion of a foreign lady who starts living with the narrator and takes a very good care of him. Here, the narrator compares her to Indian wives who are epitome of sacrifice and devotion as he says, "When we went out she had a habit of walking a little behind me like an Indian wife. I teased her about it and she said it was because I walked so fast, but I think she liked to walk like this, as though I sheltered her from stares or perhaps from that mysterious past." (*The Nude* 25) Here, the narrator's words clearly articulate the approach of men towards women. They think that women are meant to follow them throughout their lives. Dalal's title story reveals the hidden truths of patriarchal society where a painter gets restless after seeing Mrs. Oliver's nudity. Even her own husband is not able to make the fact out that the nude model is none other than his wife and he rebukes her and addresses her as good for nothing because women have been regarded as a commodity since ages and they must know the art of making their husbands happy, failing to which, they are misbehaved in following manner:

He felt furious and frustrated. He slammed his hand hard on the table. 'Now there is a woman if you like. Something to come home to. Not a bag of old clothes like you. 'He glanced again at the picture and he felt the injustice sharpening, growing, persecuting him, filling him with a

brooding shame for being married to a woman with fat legs and a body like a tub of lard. Blind in his anger and frustration, he left his food and slammed out of the house. Inside him was the rising urgency for sex which he would ease somewhere with some woman he had bought, or in drink. He threw one last bitter glance at the massive figure standing bowed over the sink. (*The Nude* 58)

“The beautiful One” is a beautiful depiction of ugly mentality of some of the husbands who consider women as their property and behave in over possessive manner. The narrator Nina is an extremely beautiful lady who gets married thrice but is not happy with any of her marriages. Her first husband Prof. Chander is an ignorant man who never observed her wife`s loneliness and who remained busy in his books as she speaks:

I will go out with whomever I please and do exactly what I want to. Just because I don't exist for you does not mean other men don't find me desirable. You are not a man; you are just a machine, dry and filled with straw instead of blood. I am a woman and I am beautiful. Do you think I want to spend my life alone with neither passion nor friendship given to me? Why did you marry me? You are happy with your books and your work. You could have kept a housekeeper instead. You don't need a wife. (*The Nude* 65)

The protagonist of the story leaves his house and starts living with Suresh till she gets divorce but she finds it impossible to live with him as he is over possessive and dominant. To quote:

I found that life intolerable and Suresh was crazily jealous. If I so much as looked at another man he went into passionate fits of rage. He suspected my every movement, glance, expression. If he were out and I alone at home, he rang me up constantly to find out what I was doing. If I went on a harmless shopping expedition, he would wait for me to come back and then take me through a minute by minute account of what I had done and whom I had met. At first it was such a change that I was amused and flattered. But after a while it became merely tiresome. Finally, when he

took to locking me into my room, each time he went out, I revolted. We had an awful row and I left. (*The Nude* 67)

Afterwards, when she gets married to third man, he is also of the same nature. He deals the same way and is over possessive. Ultimately, she realizes that she was better at Chander`s home. By this story, it is plainly clear that women have to suffer in every phase of life and they have to either submit themselves or to live on their own. Dalal`s stories talk about those women also who choose to live on their own, who are spinsters and who decide to take care of their mother. Like, in the story, “Roses, Roses, All the Way...” Miss Malik is an elderly spinster who starts residing in an ashram after her mother`s death and follows the rigid norms of the ashram religiously. She stops drinking tea as it is forbidden in the ashram but she catches Swamiji red-handed while drinking tea and decides to run away. That is the moment, where and when she realizes to live life on her own terms. She books a hotel and enjoys tea with the narrator and says:

They say no experience is wasted. Now I know what I am going to do with my life, I am going to enjoy myself. I shall go back to my house and renovate it- new carpets, curtains, furnishings and the most sybaritic bathrooms you have ever seen. I shall read enormously- every new book that comes out, and listen to music. I shall grow roses and drink tea. (*The Nude* 90)

Dalal`s women are home-makers who try to adjust and similar is the case of Nandita Puri`s women characters of the collection *Nine on Nine* who are also home-makers but they try to stand against the odds of the society and they try to sound strong. Beauvoir has very well asserted about independent woman, “Ceases to be a parasite, the system based on her dependence crumble; between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator.”(*The Second Sex* 76) Puri has tried to sketch a bold image of her women who are educated urban women and who somehow manage to be happy on their own. Her nine stories serve the notion of women`s independence who are liberated and who enjoy their status. “The Piano Teacher” is a story of Mrs. D` Souza who is a piano teacher and who lives in a flat and she has no regrets for being alone as she likes

to live independently after her husband's death. She shares her thoughts with her neighbor Mr. Kichlu in the following manner, "My children don't care for me. I have lived life and seen good days with Walter. What do I have to look forward to now? At least let me enjoy my last years, eating and lazing around. Whether I diet or exercise, I will have to go one of these days. So I might as well live it up." (Nine on Nine 171)

Further, her pupil Natasha is a fine example of Puri's women who try to find solution of their loneliness than to be gloomy and depressed. They enjoy their freedom and they don't bother if their husbands don't have time for them. To quote:

She had had many students like Natasha Singh .Rich, bored housewives with more money than they could spend. With her husband in office and son at school and servants to look after the house, Natasha has the whole day to herself. Mornings were usually spent in the gym or the beauty parlour. Then it was lunch dates or kitty parties with girlfriends or catching a quick matinee show at the nearby multiplex. By early evening she would be home, either instructing the cook on the dinner menu or advising the nanny on how to look after her son. (*Nine on Nine* 169)

In the story "At Jenny's", the ladies come for beauty treatment and gossip with each-other. They mock at their husbands. Sonika Gill had been visiting Jenny's parlour for almost a decade and she had very clearly warned her husband not to disturb her unless it is urgent. Sonika admits the fact that she feels relaxed to come here as "No khitkhit from bai and no bakbak from hubby and kids." (*Nine on Nine* 26) Sonika knows that her husband never remembers their anniversary date but she gives reminders and she is confident enough to demand for her gift as she says, "Well, I had to remind him at least ten times in advance about the anniversary. Shows how thoughtful he is. And as for generosity, well, we almost had a major show down before he agreed to buy this. What more can one expect after so many years of marriage." (*Nine on Nine* 27)

Here, it is noticeable that the women are well-educated and practical to understand the approach of men towards women as one of the customer Petula says, “Don’t worry honey; it is the same story everywhere. Men are like that. If you ask me, all husbands should be sent back to mars. That is where they belong.”(*Nine on Nine* 28) Sonika does not want to accompany her husband on his foreign trips anymore due to his gujju food habits and the husband is in an affair with Alia which even Alia herself is not aware of. She does not know that the man, whom she loves, is already married and later when she comes to know it, she stops visiting the parlour due to guilt, so it can be said that again a woman is cheated in a way. It will not be an exaggeration to say that two women are cheated by one man. One is his wife Sonika and other is Alia, the only difference is that Sonika never comes to know what the truth actually is. Her pathetic condition is described thus:

Till she returned from South Africa. She broke down and confessed. Apparently she found out during the trip that he was married and had a wife and children and obviously had no intention of marrying her . He was just having a good time. She was heart-broken. She decided to take a break from the city as it had too many painful memories for her. So she has gone off to her native place—Mangalore. The Shetty`s are devastated by their daughter`s behaviour. Alia`s mother was worried that it would be difficult to find a good Tulu boy for her now. (*Nine on Nine* 52)

The girl Radhika, who works at the parlour, cannot even imagine of getting married to a boy of her own choice which clearly proves the fact that even today, women are not allowed to go for their own choices. She says, “You don’t know my folks. They are very conservative. They will not even let me marry outside my caste, leave alone my community.” (*Nine on Nine* 36) Similarly, in the story “An Arranged Marriage”, Lata Tai is addressed as “scandalous just because she married a husband of her choice.” (*Nine on Nine* 8) and Sandesh `s words boldly tell the role of male in decision making when he says, “No girl in our family has had the audacity to choose her own husband.” (*Nine on Nine* 7) On the note of parental property, the father wants to give his daughter her share but the

mother denies saying, “You will be depriving Raja of his rightful share.” (*Nine on Nine* 13) The condition of woman gets worst with the demise of their husband and this is what is pointed out by the daughter to her mother when the father dies. She warns her against the behavior of her son and daughter-in-law, “This would not have happened if baba was alive, but wait, the worst is yet to come.” (*Nine on Nine* 22) Further, the agony and pain of mother is exactly described by the daughter. According to her, “It is not the betrayal of her son which has affected her so most” but “the fact that she has to be dependent on her daughter for the rest of her life, especially a daughter she does not like.” (*Nine on Nine* 24) The same agony is described in Shashi Deshpande’s story “And Then” where the mother has to live on her own as the son and daughter-in-law don’t find her presence appropriate in their house.

Puri’s another story “Flashback”, is the story of a daughter who is not treated well by the father who is not her biological father and who “would pinch her bottom and squeeze her nipples – wet nurse told her to keep quiet as no one would believe it.” (*Nine on Nine* 65) The daughter Srimoti was intelligent enough to make it out clear that her parents did not have best of marriages. She is afraid of sharing the same roof with her father as she mentions, “God forbid, should anything happen to Ma, I will move out of the house. Live with anyone, anywhere. Beg, borrow and steal. But never, never with this old fogey. I will never share the same roof with him alone.” (*Nine on Nine* 66) The story progresses to the point of extreme misfortune when the readers come to know that Srimoti’s lover Arijit is the same person whom her mother loved years back and who is Srimoti’s biological father. This comes up as a jolt and best describes the marginalisation of women in male-dominated societies. Chaman Nahal writes, “Both the awareness of woman’s position in society as one of disadvantage or in generality compared with that of man and also a desire to remove those is advantages.” (Nahal in Singh 17) Puri’s women characters try their best to deem fit to this frame and they revolt against the rigid and orthodox norms. In the story “Bhabhiji”, Gautam is not able to run his marriage smoothly due to too much interference of Bhabhiji in the family and this is not digested by any of his wives.

He marries thrice but ultimately is left to live with his brother and his family where Bhabhiji dominates the family in her own ways. When she got married to Govind, Govind's father reacted thus, "At least she will be faithful to him and we will have someone to do the house work." (*Nine on Nine* 71) In this story, Gautam's wives are not hesitant of asking for divorce as they find it quite difficult to adjust and survive in an atmosphere which is fully interfered by Bhabhiji and Family. The readers come to know this through the conversation of Meenakshi and Seema where Meenakshi says, "The divorce should come through by next month. Thank God we did not have any kids, though Gautam was keen on having children. Just imagine, they would have had to go all through this. It can be very upsetting for children." (*Nine on Nine* 80) Puri's women confident to take decisions very quickly and their decisions prove prompt and apt. They don't want to be in a relation where they have to suffer along with their children. In her other story "Pages from Indulata Devi's Diary", the mother made her daughter Indu marry Satish Chandra Ghosh – a twice widowed man whose children were elder than Indu and she was just nine at the time of her marriage. She was not at all prepared for any physical relationship and that very juncture, the husband slaps her and says, "Why did I marry You? To pickle and preserve you in a jar?" (*Nine on Nine* 98) Satish dies in a year but his younger brother becomes Indu's protector and asks her to make him happy and she has to do as per his wishes and when she is caught red-handed with Satish, she is sent to Benaras. Priitsh is not punished for whatever he did, in fact she is sent to an ashram for widows "life at such ashrams was like living death" (*Nine on Nine* 102) She escaped from there somehow and got married to Kartik a second time but Kartik does not want her to go for medical course as she says:

I know that Kartick – my "educated" and "enlightened" husband is jealous of my professional success. He spends a lot of time doing social work for the samaj and his financial contribution to the house is nil. Not that I mind, but what is annoying is that he expects me to take care of all the household chores even after a hard day's work. He hardly takes interest in the education of our children, Krishnakali, now six and Kundan, four, though he is at home most of the day. I have to hand over my entire earnings to

him and at times when I ask for money to buy a much needed item, like a new saree or a pair of shoes, I am refused. Kartick hates the fact that I am financially Independent and controls my finances. He hates to see me well-dressed and says it will arouse the lust of my male colleague. He is just being petty and jealous. I have heard him gossip about me to relatives and neighbors. But I must admit that I do take satisfaction in disobeying him from time to time, modest attempts at rebellion. I don't reveal the exact amount of my earnings from my private patients to him I keep a little for myself. I don't feel guilty at all but rather justified in doing so. (*Nine on Nine* 105)

Here, the dominance of a male is clearly noticeable in a woman's life but Puri has tried to depict the approach of her protagonist towards this dominance as she tries her level best to cope up with the circumstances and comes up as a strong woman. Further, as the story progresses, we come to know about the high temperament of her husband who beats her on and off but she ignores the beatings as she has no other option and she decides to focus on her career and job. This depiction proves the fact that Puri has not allowed her women to sit at a corner and be gloomy all the way; in fact, she glorifies their journey which is not at all a bed of roses. To quote:

Kartick is as moody and at times violent. I disapprove of his temper and occasional beatings, but I don't make a hue and cry of it. Where is the time after work for such things? Besides, I live most of the decisions to Kartick, good or bad; I accept it as I have no other choice. I did not want to marry Kartick but I agreed to the marriage. It is my destiny and I accept it. (*Nine on Nine* 109)

Meena Shirwadkar opines, "Literature, which until recently was male dominated, has started reflecting the sparks that have emanated from this struggle of the woman to be herself." (Meena in Naik 200) Her story "Radha's journey" is a story of Radha who is a bold lady and thinks that she married in haste and says, "All along I have been someone's daughter, someone's wife. Let me be myself for

a whole now.” (*Nine on Nine* 150-151) She goes to her mother Parvati telling about her condition but she tells her to adjust. She says, “Then go back and explain your problem to him. You must learn to adjust. Marriage is all about adjusting.”(*Nine on Nine* 151) Further the mother warns her by saying, “I don’t understand you kids at all. You are all in such a hurry. No patience. No tolerance. I tried adjusting with your father’s whims for ten years before I opted out and you won’t even give your marriage a year?” (*Nine on Nine* 151) Puri’s “Waiting” is a story of a dying lady who is waiting for a miracle to happen as she wants to live for her daughters and she has been diagnosed with ovarian cancer but she does not want to die. Her marriage was a love marriage but soon after the marriage she started feeling lonely as her husband was in a relationship with Mallika. She says, “We have been missing out on the best years of our lives. On love. What is the point in having so much money if your husband has no affection for you? It has been ages since Promit made love to me last....A tear rolled down Neeta’s cheek.”(*Nine on Nine* 196) Further, when she is diagnosed with cancer, he is not bothered about her health but about his career, to quote:

Nita is not well; my career will take a backseat. We will have to give Dubai a miss. Her folks will insist she stay here for treatment. I will not be able to manage the kids alone, and we will have to be holed up in this city for another couple of years. Amit Bhatia will get the transfer instead of me. Damn. Why of all times, did it have to be now? Couldn’t she have held on for a few more months? Shit. I hope it is nothing serious... (*Nine on Nine* 198)

Nita is not keeping well and she feels quite upset when she smells the relationship with other woman and her inner conflicts pours out thus, “He is a man after all. Men and their hormones. And I have been ill for more than a year now. Unable to....satisfy his physical needs. But then what about the time before that. When he was unable to satisfy mine... I did not go out of the house and seek... Never mind. There is nothing I can do now. Such is my fate....” (*Nine on Nine* 203)

The story comes to a pathetic end where the readers feel very sympathetic towards Neeta`s fate as she says:

Life is so cruel. I have nothing to look forward to. Baba just passed away. Ma is in a bad shape. My children have been kept away from me. Sutapa is suffering on my account. And Promit is waiting.. waiting for me to die. So that he can marry Mallika. She must be praying too. In earnest. For my death. It is two prayers against one. Do I still want to live? I don't know.
(*Nine on Nine* 205)

Thus, it can be said about Puri`s women characters that they try to revolt against the orthodox norms as it is easily noticeable after reading her stories. Shashi Deshpande`s women characters are also educated women who try to raise their voice, who can identify their agony and condition but who don't want to do away with the familial set up and that is why, they try their level best to manage and adjust. On the other hand, Githa Hariharan`s women characters are destined to suffer a lot due to the sudden demise of a family member and its aftermath. Nergis Dalal`s women characters are spinsters who live in their own ways and are confident to stand separately. They also try to maintain a balance in life but it can be said that women have been marginalized for ages and they are muted so that they don't even try to raise their voice against any rigid and orthodox set up of the patriarchal society.

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Chapter-5
Unfolded Stories through
Time and Space

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Unfolded Stories through Time and Space

Stories are great medium of revealing the hidden side of things. Each one of us can tell a story. Everyone is a story in one or another way. Everyone experiences something or other everyday to relate it to other people; everybody loves it when he gets ears to his words and gets appreciated.

Stories connect people, they strengthen relations and above all they build trust in relations. Like a teller of stories, listeners of stories also like to be narrated or related to, it gives a sense of importance and satisfy their inner urge for being communicated upon. It's a painful experience when the stories don't get audience and when nothing is there to be related.

Showing the ways and purposes of human life in written words is a phenomenal job. Story writers must try to take out the biggest and complex subjects and the story writer's narrative genius must have to be able to translate its perception into the form of a story. To many writers, it is the biggest challenge to record the perception into the form of the story. Stories have been significant since ages and the concept of time is inevitable for a short story to create desirable impact among the readers and stimulate the scholarships to undertake detailed research based studies of the stories to examine and establish their universality.

The concept of time can be multi dimensional in a story: it can depict only one generation or many generations in the same story. It can also compare the generation based perspective and volatility of psyche with the passage of time. For example, in a story a writer can exhibit the generation gap of thought process among grandfather, father and son. Likewise space, personal (spiritual and mental space) and physical (location) also play considerable role to produce readership and appreciation for the stories. The keen perusal of the concept of time and space enables the readers to become more and more receptive towards the stories which in one or other aspects represent the real life problems and challenges.

In this chapter, a detailed analysis of the stories of four notably eminent women Indian short story writers has been undertaken to figure out the narrative techniques of these writers pertaining to time and space. All these writers deny to be labelled as feminists yet most of their writings represent the perspective of women and their place and struggles in the male dominated and regulated patriarchic society. Githa Hariharan deals with almost all the aspects of female life in her stories while Shashi Deshpande is more interested in showing women with a distinct kind of sexual awakening. She explores new sexual dimensions pertaining to women, marriage and motherhood. Very few writers have written with the audacity and boldness like Deshpande in their works. In the post 1980s period, stories are written on various aspects of life and society such as love, sex, death, and attitude towards women, corruption in public life, human relationship, and above all, superstitions and rituals that are prevalent in society. The perceptible changes in society due to urbanization and industrialization brought about newer themes. The stories with autobiographical elements by all the chosen writers cater to the changing trends in the genre and this has been exploited as a weapon by these writers to bring radical change in the society in respect to attitude towards women. Stories with psychological insights into human nature also added variety to the genre. Indian women writers have added a new dimension and vision to short story writing.

Githa Hariharan also deals with themes of quest of identity and defiance of patriarchal authority by women in Indian social scenario. Nergis Dalal is also brave in dealing with the themes of nudity and sexual satisfaction for women. Her frank and free treatment of female sexuality is surprising and equally remarkable for the readers. Nandita Puri's stories also raise voice for women's cause.

The Indian short story writers like Dina Mehta, Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Sunita Jain and a few others contributed to this genre and thus popularized it. Most of these writers were inclined to respond to reality rather than imagination in their stories.

Anywhere in the world when you talk about literature, you basically talk about time and space as both play dominant role in shaping the literature of any nation. Literature is said to be the mirror of time and contemporary society. Likewise, Here in this chapter we are faring into analyzing selected collection of stories of women short story writers and examine the various perspectives of Indian women e.g. their themes and social dimensions pertaining to female psyche and condition of women both from political and economical perspective that too in the post 1990 literary scenario.

Post 1990 era is best known as an age of radical feminism where women demand economic, socio-political and sexual freedom. Women today become more aware of their sexuality and sexual pleasure, they have broken all the old shambles of sexual inhibitions and now they openly adopt their sexuality and claim to have sexual freedom. Today's woman doesn't need man to provide sexual gratification; they embrace and explore their sexuality by self love and same sex love.

This chapter is a sincere effort to unfold the stories of the eminent female writers of Indian peninsular in the context of time and space. Time and space are the dominant concept of literature as literature is believed to be the mirror of time and society of a specific period. Everything in this world is ruled and tested by time; time is the most vital element of literature for almost as long as literature has been in existence. Evidently, all the stories are written in a time frame regardless of the chronology, concurrent narration, flashbacks, flash-forwards, and other random time related progressions etc. The motion of time, flowing with constant speed allows the plot to unfold the events. It introduces and reveals the characters, and helps readers to sympathize and empathize with the characters and experience the desired pleasure.

The stories that are chosen for analysis in this chapter belong to post 1990 period where concept of time and space are discussed in connection with the development of the writers and their thematic concerns in the course of time. Moreover, what we are dealing with here are stories where time, and the passage

of time are major thematic concerns, and how space (inner and outer) helps in revealing characters and their challenges and sometimes almost a character in its entirety.

Concept of time and space as a theme in literature, though, is a potentially vital subject, and well beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it has been tried level best to explore at least a few aspects of it in the given short-stories. The selected female writers and their collections of stories to be discussed in this chapter are essentially post modern Indian English writers who belong to era of revolutionary ideas concerning women and their essential rights in the society, their denial of patriarchal social norms and their quest for economical, political and social independence.

Thematic concerns of space are equally as important as the concept of time is in literary analysis. We need clear understanding of these basic concepts to analyse any genre to get the proper understanding of literary piece of writing. Here, it is pertinent to refer to Aristotle's concept of literary unities viz. time, place and action here to clarify the stand on unfolding the chosen stories on the basis of the concept of time and space as space reflects physiological as well as psychological domain of the character delineation and analysis. Stories reflect time and characters represent space.

In the concept of space we consider the place where the story is set, the traditions, customs and social norms prevalent at the fictional or real land of stories and how this terrestrial external space communicates with the protagonists of stories and what impression he makes of it, plays key role in interpreting and appreciating the stories in the correct manner. We also get glimpse of the inner space of the characters, their thought process, ambitions and worries etc. As the stories picked up for exploration are all written by female authors, they are an expression of angst of women the supremacy of patriarchal society and their defiance of set standards of patriarchal hegemony to secure economic, social and political freedom. Women Writers like Githa Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Nergis Dalal and Nandita Puri vehemently write about emancipation of female sexuality

and exploration of new social, political and economic identity. They present women standing against all the odds of patriarchal society, the women in their stories are self dependent and defiant of all the identity denying restrictions of patriarchy that even don't accept her as human being by foregrounding the problem in their narratives through iconoclastic women characters. The common concern of these writers in addressing the issue is to question the rational reckless pursuance to static, stagnant and unproductive customs and inhuman prejudicial beliefs that pose a threat for a woman to make efforts for building her own world. The short stories taken for analysis in this chapter, present female protagonists who challenge the status quo and fight hard against the patriarchy of the social system, and represent the struggles of the Indian woman against oppression of all kinds.

When we talk about space, it is important to elaborate further that there can be different kinds of spaces in a piece of writing. A short story writer can use different spaces to deliver the message of the story. These spaces are used to express the agony of the female characters and they are also used to showcase their inner virtues and dilemma hand in hand. First of all, it is important to pour light on the concept of space. Space can be physical, geographical, public, private, individual, mental, internal, external, emotional and spiritual. Physical space can cover the physical surrounding like birds, house, flowers and many more. Geographical space covers land, ownership, property and territory. It has a great impact on human behavior and culture. It is an important factor in architecture and has great impact on the design of buildings, structures and farming.

Here, it is important to mention that a person's personal and public space may vary totally. These writers have used all the spaces beautifully in their writing. Emotional space pours light on the sentimental aspect of characters where it deals with the time and energy spent dealing with or listening to a person's emotions, words, thoughts, wants, needs and all. When writers write any piece of writing, they basically deal with the different spaces which are associated with them. These four writers have exactly done the same thing and they also talk

about the inner dilemma and thought-process of their female protagonists in special reference to the role of time and space.

Githa Hariharan in her collection of stories titled, *The Art of dying and Other Stories* featured the situation of women and their struggles in India post 1980s and their rebellion against the restrictions imposed on them by the patriarchy. Hariharan conceptualizes the women of exceptional courage and endurance who are the images of confident and determined women who face and overcome hurdles posed by the patriarchal society. Women centered themes primarily about their feelings and struggles for existence found expression in the short stories of the later decades of twenty first century as an output of the full flowering of the feminist literary theory. The modern women writers deal with evergreen and universal themes of life, love and death and these became the chief motivation of writers in the 1990s. Githa Hariharan predominantly deals with the theme of death in her collection of stories *The Art of Dying and Other Stories*; feminism is still a key issue in most of her stories. Hariharan's genius at portraying the process of death/dying is reflected in her characters. Her characters are representatives of the space and time in which they are placed; they possess incredible courage in facing the unavoidable and accepting the inevitability of death and that becomes the author's chief concern. Her women characters are living in present times who face the challenges of life and they are living in their personal spaces where the inevitability of death and dying process leaves a great impact on their personal and emotional space.

In the title story "The Art of Dying", death plays a dominant role in the story and it is described as a painful process in the story. The physical and emotional spaces are beautifully depicted where the mother mourns her son's death and the sister recalls his pranks. In the story, the dying mother tells her daughter that dying is a brave act which requires great courage and strength and above all acceptance. "Death, she says the word rolling off her tongue with intimacy, demands strength not a final weakness" (*TAOD* 70). The predicament and suffering of the mother makes the daughter utter these words, "To come back, nurse her again, relieve the burden, and feel the same remorse: who says she

should be kept breathing at any cost? It would be simpler to help her forward. It would take only a minute or two to give her what her heart yearns for.”(TAOD 79)

While other prominent writers like Shashi Deshpande and Anita Nair deal with the theme of love and life, Hariharan deals with the theme of death and the idea of death dominates her stories. As a result, both the characters and style become subsidiary to this central concern of the writer. Here, the mother is distant in space and time from her son. He was present in the past but in present, his past is present and his memories are there to be recalled. The daughter, who is nursing the mother, has her own personal and public space where she has to handle many patients at her counseling centre. Here, she recalls her house`s window which cannot be imagined without the picture drawn by her daughter which is a symbol of physical space, to quote, “I got my younger daughter to draw me one of her bright, garish pictures; an open window, orangey sunlight pouring in. I no longer remember if I looked at it often then, but I cannot imagine my corner now without the faded crayon window.” (TAOD 70)

In her story “Voices in the Twilight”, the author mirrors the disillusionment and heartlessness of the present generation. In the story we are shown degradation of essential family values and rise of nuclear families. The youth of new generation doesn`t have any respect for their traditional social values they don`t want to adjust with their senior ones and they become Indifferent and callous towards the age old institution of family and society. The Society has moved on from the joint family system to a nuclear family. This has made the man selfish and profit seeking materialistic man. Children too, become self-centered and obsessed with their own individual lives. Their reaction at their mother's death is neutral of any emotions or sense of loss. The son and the two daughters have no time to mourn the death of their loving mother. Even more ironically, they feel relaxed after their mother`s death as they have become liberated from the bond that bound them together. The children don`t even become ready to perform final rituals after their mothers` death, that`s the height of indifference. Hariharan wishes to draw attention of the readers towards it. Shakuntala (the daughter) says, “I left before the thirteen-day ceremony...it makes it that much easier for me

though, to spend a little more time in the city.”(*TAOD 143*) Here, time plays a significant role where the mother is no more but her rituals and memory play a vital role in reunion of three siblings after a long period. They dwell from their past to present and the home is representative of physical space which has many stories in its heart and the daughters recall the past events which were associated with the home:

I have spent many monsoons in this flat. Toadstools grow in the dark, moist corners of the toilet. The dishes are washed in the bathroom, so that all around the year, bits and pieces of vegetables, brown, suspiciously sticky fuzzes of tamarind, float around my feet in the murky water. Earthworms make their way up the pipes and the holes of the drain. (*TAOD 129*)

Further, Shakuntala does not want to spend any time in the flat as she is guilty of living in a two-room flat and says, “There is no time in this flat that I want back. I have always hated it; it rides on my back like an ugly monkey. I know I will never feel as confident as my born-rich friends. To myself at least, I can’t pretend that I lived in a two-room flat all that long ago. But my daughter will do better, just as I have done better than my mother.” (*TAOD 132*)

Here, she associates the physical space to one’s status and speaks in this manner. Time also plays a significant role where three siblings were united due to the home in their past times but in the present times, they belong to different spaces which makes a lot of difference in their thought process. The flat becomes a reason of their reunion once again and allows them to travel in their past times.

In the story, “The Rainmaker”, yet again Hariharan has dealt with the theme of death and long lasting memory of near and dear ones. In this story, the confrontation of the narrator with the ghost of her mother brings back the spectrum of all the happy and sad memories of her dead mother whom she had lost when she was just eleven years old. The daughter keeps her mother alive in her memory. The setting and treatment of the story is extremely sensitive and emotional, yet again the writer succeeds in presenting death as most philosophical

separating agent. The time is again a catalyst in the story where the daughter recalls the incidences which are associated with her mother and which take her to her childhood. The geographical and physical space cover the whole story as rain plays an important role and the reference to Peepal tree is symbolic of her mother's presence. The Gulmohar tree is a symbol of her mother's care and concern for the family. The Peepal tree is representative of present times whereas the Gulmohar tree takes the readers to her childhood when her mother was alive. The story also talks about the personal space of a husband who has lost his wife and who "spent all day at his chessboard, learning master games by heart. He still played alone, or with some alter ego we had not met, taking hours over every move; planning strategy." (*TAOD* 156) The husband's personal space makes the readers sentimental as the man is all alone to play chess.

Another story, "The Will" also deals with the consequences of husband's death in the life of a widow. Hariharan highlights the pathetic and miserable condition of a nervous widow. She was given a manuscript by her husband containing some good thoughts that become surviving strength for her throughout her life. It transforms her into a philosophical individual. The story primarily captures the mental space of a widow and the anguish, adjustments and compromises made by her. Hariharan's treatment of the story and her concern for the women and their multi-folded challenges in the contemporary Indian society is remarkable. She talks about the personal space of a woman which is affected by marriage and matrimonial home. Her husband's death changes the situation and a letter acts as a super strength for her which foregrounds her emotional space. Sushila's attempt to stay alive with the good thoughts handed to her by her late husband defeats death.

In the story "Forefathers", Hariharan presents such a protagonist, representative of self engrossed modern generation who awaits his father's death as it would establish him as the man of the house. He becomes so insensitive towards his father that he considers serving and nursing his father as a burden. Here also in this story another shade of death is drawn by the writer. Death is awaited in the story as a force that replaces and relieves the burden. He says, "I

become a man, at long last in the funeral atmosphere of death certificates, burning pyres at the ghat, bones and ashes collected the next day to be immersed in the Arabian Sea.” (TAOD 56). The present generation, engrossed with their respective careers, is shown taking the death of their near and dear ones bereft of any emotions. The narrator bemoans the lack of privacy in the confines of the circumference of his father's kingdom. His “sisters have learnt the art of slyly dressing in public. They put on some of their clothes in the narrow, wet bathroom -a fine balancing act - and then rush to the kitchen to finish dressing behind the open doors of their steel cupboards. Even sleeping is communal activity.” (TAOD 50) The author describes the plight of the suffering women who wardrobe their pain with a veil of humbleness, dutifulness that ‘puts up with the sharpest sarcasm and hides the angriest of tears’. Engrossed with the act of looking after his ailing father, he has lost contact with the outer world. “I no longer know anyone in college.” (TAOD 52) Here, the house is the physical space and whole story revolves around the house. The narrator recalls the past incident when the father decided to grow plants and this is recalled by the son in his present time when he finds his personal space up on the terrace.

Further, in the story “The Reprieve”, time and space are key factors as Nagaraj Rao misses her dead wife badly in present time and due to shift from his old house to new one which is in a way change in his personal, physical and emotional space:

Since he had been moved away from the town in which they had lived –he had been moved by his eldest son who had said his frail father was his responsibility –away from the old house in which they had spent all their fifty –odd married years , Nagaraj Rao found himself thinking of Mangala more and more of the time. It had become something of an obsessive settling of accounts, a stock-taking and reordering of memories, a final attempt, or rather a belated attempt, to know the woman who had been his wife. Fifty–three years, he thought, and how did she escape me completely?” (TAOD 41)

Nagaraj thinks that there was a lack of needed private space between them. He was too busy with his work that he never paid attention towards Mangala. He realizes that he has missed the beautiful moments of his life by not giving time to his wife. Further he questions to himself, “Had he then missed something finer, more essential, in his pursuit of justice, and in his well-deserved leadership of an untidy, amorphous family?” (*TAOD* 44) With the passage of time he realizes the fun he has missed in his life, the love that he had not shared with his wife. Her absence made him crazy.

“The Remains of the Feast” another story in the anthology of Hariharan, talks about the insensitivity of a daughter-in-law at the death of her mother-in-law. She replaces the red silk saree brought by her daughter for her funeral with a pale brown one. The old lady is cremated in a light-brown sari, with her weeds, and she is adorned with the prayer beads which she never touched during her life time. All her hidden desires die with her death. Hariharan’s understanding of the time, space and artistic process can be attributed to her being a literary artist herself. Here, food also plays a very important role where the old lady wants to eat all what was denied to her. She wants to enjoy her personal space which her cultural and marital space denied her of. Raja observes that this story “Celebrates transgressive behaviour as an obliteration of oppressive societal norms.”(Raja 80) and this is correct also because food can be associated to dominance where women are always supposed to serve first and then to eat. Further Mark Stein says, “Food choice divides communities and has the power to delineate the boundaries between them. Food taboos can serve to mark outsiders as unclean, unhealthy, unholy.”(Stein 134)

It is correct to relate it with Rukmini who accepts the food from outsiders where she allows her mental space to be wider and to accept the cultural differences. Here the granddaughter Ratna remembers her grandmother even after her death and tries to feel her presence in the form of street food. In the other stories, namely “Untitled Poem”, “Love Poem”, “Repeat Performance” and “The Close-up” deals with the writer’s interest in art and art forms. In “Untitled Poem”, a retired salesman’s attempt to compose poetry which is the main theme and

which connects the husband and wife to their personal space. They have moved into a new house and the garden connects both of them to their physical space. Earlier they lived in a flat where flats no space was given for plantation or anything that could “dig its roots deep into the soil.” (*TAOD* 1) The villain in the story is a rodent that creeps into her Eden to destroy the paradise. He picks on the most lush, the most fecund of her plants; he uproots them, tears them in shreds, all stalks and leaves. “He does not eat any of it. It is a song of pure destruction” (*TAOD* 5) - a very apt comment that comes from every suffering woman. Sarala manages to strike the rodent at the right time. The message is loud and clear. Do not underestimate the power of a woman, who might live a non-existent life.

In “The Close-up”, the different aspects of the art of photography are depicted through a professional photographer who tries to beautify things around him. He also possesses a complete, versatile and priceless collection of photographs but he never clicks nude photos which are against his principles and this connects to his personal and mental space. He says:

It has stood the test of twenty years. I began with village Belle, The Girl Next Door and Cocktail Sophisticate. The stories Bridal Night, Wet Nymph, Veiled Mystery, Rugged outdoor, and Innocent Babe have been added in the later edition of the collection. In Honor of an Actress, (*TAOD* 86/87), the protagonist is a thorough professional. He is reserved and doesn't mix business with pleasure dissimilar to others in the business. The writer pictures him as a missionary who deals in truth; the photographer walks a lonely, solitary path. (*TAOD* 87).

“Love Poem” pours light on the urban and rural space of geographical surroundings where the girl comes to the city with a set of dreams. Here, her personal space is attacked by the intentions of the teacher who tries to play with her love for literature. Hariharan's love and knowledge of poetry, painting and photography are reflected in her stories.

In her story, “Repeat Performance”, the theme shifts from death to the artistic process of creation, painters such as Rembrandt, Van Gogh, and Sisley

are mentioned, which also indicates the author's interest in the art of painting. The protagonist who is a forty-plus homemaker becomes an artist and the paintings which she used to look at as a pastime while waiting for her lover, has now become her career. Here, the writer wants to draw our attention towards the fact that with the passage of time and change in any of the spaces be it physical, inner, external, personal, geographical or any other, the reactions and attitude also change and the same happens with the protagonist of the story.

The stories of Githa Hariharan reflect the impact of forces of life on her writing. She is a proponent of Feminism in India; her stories reflect the roles Indian women are assigned to play in the so-called learned, etiquette, educated and modern middle or upper middle-class society. Patriarchy has deep roots into the minds of both the sexes, more as a habit of mind and way of life. It is this social structure that is evident in some of Hariharan's stories. The women protagonists in her stories are shown as opposing their oppression and suppression. The motifs and themes of the post-1980s era female short-story writers can be seen in the portrayal and treatment of Hariharan's character through their thoughts, actions and dialogues.

Hariharan exploits with familiar settings. A conventional theme is set in a rural background whereas a modern theme is set in metros like Delhi, Calcutta in "Gajar Halwa" and "Virgin Curry" respectively. Hariharan focuses on some underlying truth that is not always described or even referred to in the stories of her precursors. There are so many empty spaces that the reader has a fair chance to infer from. Her stories are realistic and authentic; genuinely capture the soul of Indian rural and urban life settings. The stories seem to have some internal disconnectedness, some disjointedness, with ending as much as the beginning, not providing a resolution, but the stories have an internal design. Her stories voice the mute sufferings of suppressed women. Hariharan attempts to use an internalized voice constantly searching for answers. As a result, her stories facilitate a new portrait of the Indian woman, who is stronger, more balanced and also proud of her limitations. In the back-page of the book, Michael Ondaatje remarks, "Githa Hariharan's fiction is wonderful, full of subtleties and humour

and tenderness.” (*TAOD* Backpage) Hariharan has adapted a unique style for narration. Hariharan's style of creating memorable images with the help of literary tools and devices is the noteworthy feature of her style. She compares human beings with animals in “The Remains of the Feast”. The great grandmother of the narrator is described thus, “Her neck was a big hump, and she lay in bed like a moody camel that would snap or bite at unpredictable intervals.” (*TAOD* 9)

The images created by literary devices are so realistic that they save a space in the mind of the reader. In her story “Love Poem” the image of a classroom is thus described, “The benches and desks... formed a close, tight square, like an airless box: or like an orderly phalanx of identical, blank-faced strangers advancing on her.” (*TAOD* 119) Here, these images are closely associated with the physical spaces which represent the girl’s desire to study and her interest in literature.

In “Gajar Halwa”, the protagonist compares the city life with the village life, “At the milk booth, the queue reminds me of our fights at the water tap in the village. But I don’t have to push so much here.” (*TAOD* 83) The city of Delhi is described above, which is again a familiar place to the author, her having settled there. Here the geographical spaces are compared in a fantastic manner so as to bring the difference between the two. In this manner Hariharan experiments with familiar settings, as Margaret Atwood said in her interview:

I don’t think you transcend region, anymore than a plant transcends earth. I think that you come out of something, and you can then branch out in all kinds of different directions, but that doesn’t mean cutting yourself off from your roots and from your earth. To me an effective writer is one who can make what he or she is writing about understandable and moving to someone who has never been there. All good writing has that kind of transcendence. (Atwood 2018)

In Hariharan’s anthology, setting is not just the approximate time and place in which the work is set. It is more than that. It deals with physical features. She has beautifully used all the spaces in her stories and her past-present narrative

links to the changing time. She has talked about the different spaces in her stories where she has stories like “The Field Trip” which is all about summer vacations and rural life and stories like “Gajar Halwa” where the emotional space of maids and the responsibilities are beautifully depicted.

Hariharan`s stories depict the inner and emotional situation of her characters who are helpless in the hands of death but they try to accept it. Her female characters accept the situations and their condition but the readers can easily smell the odds as Rajul Bhargava says in her paper “Post-Feminist Configurations in Githa Hariharan`s Short Stories”:

Hariharan has projected the post feminist ethos with perfection. The main text runs smoothly well within the orthodox order as if upholding the traditional power equation , but very subtly she lets us see and feel the simmering ferment just below the surface. The muted subtext, the unsaid seven-eighths of the story speaks louder than the voiced narrative. (Jain 226)

Home is a topographical space—a location where we reside but it is also “an ideal and an imaginary place that is invested with feelings.” Seven key aspects of being at home are as noted by Somerville:

Shelter, hearth, (emotional and physical well being), heart (loving and caring relations), privacy, roots (source of Identity and meaningfulness), abode and paradise (ideal home as a distinct from everyday life). Down the ages, humans have associated ‘home’ as a haven, far away from the hostility and surveillance of the outside world. It is in the privacy of home that an individual gives expression to his ideas. The domestic items from curtains and furniture to books and records all the contribution to the developments of an individual. (Somerville 1992)

Shahshi Deshpande, the Indian writer who doesn`t miss an opportunity to raise the voice of women in her literary compositions, is extremely bold and vibrant concerning the sense of time and space in her story. She believes that any groundbreaking change happens from the confinements of the domestic walls

hence the setting of most of her stories in her collection, *The Intrusion and Other Stories* is the four walls of house and time is universal as the stories reflect the age-old suppression of women. The Chrono-topical study of stories delineates the very relevance of the happenings for all the ages and all the people.

When reading the stories, one is hypnotized with the very first glance at the stories; all the stories in the collection are hard hitting and riveting, they are thought provoking and for all ages. Deshpande possesses a keen sense of time and space; she is reckoning of the historical sense of time as in many of her stories she takes resemblance with the ancient narratives of *Mahabharat* and others. She draws the inscape as well as the exterior of her female protagonists in such a realistic way that it makes the readers empathize with the leading character of the stories. Women readers assume themselves one with the protagonists of the stories and they share their pain and suffering.

She becomes overwhelmed with response she gets for her stories but it's not the appreciation she writes for, instead she is more concerned to look through the psyche of Indian women and she strongly endorses the freedom of women especially economical, Social and above all sexual.

In *The Intrusion and Other Stories*, there are nineteen exceptionally captivating and thought provoking stories that mirror the condition of women in the contemporary society that exercises larger than life impact on the readers; they are more real than the reality itself. Deshpande exhibits her acute sense of time and space in all the stories of the collection.

In *The Intrusion and Other Stories*, she digs deeply into the world of women which is full of disappointments, suffering (physical and mental) and a strong urge for the quest of her true identity (personal and sexual).

She focuses chiefly on the deepening inscape of women characters to shatter all the shackles of society and refutes to accept their stereotypical limiting roles completely. However, they are forced to accept defeat due to their selflessness. Shashi Deshpande delves deep into various aspects of man-woman

relationships and exposes the relationship politics of man-oriented concept of the family and home in Indian middle class family where women are made to believe in the submissiveness and service to man are their essential virtue. They are not allowed to think for their own happiness. They are trained rather forced to believe that their happiness lies in the happiness of their relations i.e. husband, children and other family members. This prejudicial social attitude towards women doesn't allow them realize their true potential and indulge in the pursuit of their own happiness apart from their family members. They are not even allowed ownership of their body by the society as in the story "The Intrusion" the woman is subjected to sexual intercourse by her husband against her willingness. In the story "The Death of a Child", Deshpande voices the agony and guilt conscious of the protagonist who knowingly aborts her pregnancy and later on regrets her decision she begins to experience visions of her unborn child. Massey has coined the term power geometry to highlight the gendering of home space, "...places are shaped by power geometry, whereby different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections." (Massey 1991) It is true in context of a woman's personal place where she is not given a due place in her own home. The father considers that she will be getting married one day and matrimonial home never becomes her home. Women are taught to remain at home and do the household works from their very childhood. Their matrimonial home is nothing more than a place to perform their responsibilities and routine tasks. She is taught to surrender her happiness for the happiness of her parents, husband and children, hence the space of house is essentially the male space where women are mostly denied existence and they are treated as marginalized. For husband they are supposed to provide food and sex and bear his children, for children she should be a caring mother and for old people she is assigned the role of a nurse. Significantly, if a house establishes one's world, then, it is still very much a man's world. As Jayanta Rana says in her paper about these gendered spaces, "The housewife, thus, lives an isolated life, is denied her own space and privacy because the household is organized in such a manner that she constantly serves the need of the male members and patriarchal priorities."(Rana 169) This is true in case of all the stories of Shashi Deshpande where her female characters have no

personal space and they keep compromising for the happiness of the family as they are quite mature to accept the reality that they cannot do away from the responsibilities of their family and children. John Ruskin in his lecture “Of Queen`s Garden”, which was published in the volume *Sesame and Lilies* in 1865 has presented women as self-effacing and pure beings and his presentation of women is exactly similar to the presentation of women in Shashi Deshpande`s stories, he says, “..And whether a true wife comes, this home is always round her. The stars only may be over her head; the glowworm in the night cold grass may be the only fire at her foot: but home is yet wherever she is ...” (Ruskin 59)

In the story “The First Lady”, there is a lack of personal space due to which the wife feels isolated and lonely. The story runs in present times where she has turned quite old and this shift in time has changed her completely. She has a desire for lost love and she thinks of her husband`s dead disciple who has now become past but she thinks of him in her present times and says, “an old woman , for lusting, even in retrospect, after the young body of a young man who had been dead for so many years.” (*TIAOS* 15) Similarly, in the story “Why a Robin”, Deshpande has tried to pour light on the lack of personal space between mother-daughter and between husband-wife and the lady feels completely isolated from the family. Here, time plays a crucial role as she keeps recalling her childhood incidences where the physical space plays a very important role. She recalls a childhood incident, “when on suggestion of a friend, she used blade for smooth legs which gave her cuts and today, her daughter`s words and glances lacerate her that ways.” (*TIAOS* 18) Further, the lady recalls one more childhood incident where she used to accompany her grandmother in pursuit of peacocks. (*TIAOS* 19) Deshpande has depicted the physical spaces in the story so as to bring a contrast between her present condition and lovely past. Ultimately, the daughter gets connected to the mother due to her sensitive issues related to femininity. In the story “It was Dark”, the girl child is completely broken due to the intrusion in her personal space. She has been raped by a stranger and the whole incident breaks her down completely. Here, the mother is helpless to help her daughter and she recalls her wedding night where she too, was helpless to deny her body to her

husband. Deshpande talks about the limited physical spaces in a woman's life and lack of personal space. In the stories "The Intrusion" and "Death of a Child", the same theme is discussed where women are denied their personal and inner spaces. The husband takes advantage of the physical space i.e. the hotel room and is not even bothered about the mental space and inner hesitation of his wife. In the story "The Wall is Safer", the wife is happy in the house and the household duties are her utmost concern where the wall is a symbol of the physical confinement for women that they are in better condition to stay at home and Marion Young correctly brings in Luce Irigaray's ideas to explore the gendering of home:

.....man can build and dwell in the world in patriarchal culture {Irigaray suggests} only on the basis of materiality and nurturance of women. In the idea of 'Home', a man projects onto woman the nostalgic longing for the lost wholeness of the original woman. To fix and keep hold of his identity man makes a house, puts things in it and confines there his woman who reflects his identity to him.(Young 148)

The home is conceptualized as being of male gender as it erects four walls of domesticity to confine the women into it, to not let them realize their true potential and secure a true identity of their own; hence most of the female protagonists in the stories taken under scrutiny cross the line and break the glass ceiling limiting them and their world of opportunity away from the home.

This gendered concept of home has played a significant role in Deshpande's stories where her female characters are care takers of the household but still they remain helpless due to the lack of emotional bonding between their husbands and them. In the "The Wall is Safer", the lady is staying completely away from any family member and the boundary wall is the representative of her miserable condition which she is also aware of but she is happy in compromising with her identity. Deshpande relates the strife of the protagonist Hema to secure an inner and safer space for herself, she wishes to withdraw from the affairs of the world and resign into isolation and becomes happy in the walls of her private space, the wall is symbolic of her acceptance of herself and fuller control over her

life and events of life. Again the writer succeeds in portraying a female protagonist in the external space of domestic walls, Hema who is a very sincere and dedicated wife to her husband Vasant, She is more of a submissive and subservient kind who likes other female protagonists of the Deshpande's stories, is not allowed her time and space in the family. For Vasanth, she is nothing more than a food provider (a cook).

Here also the master imagination of Shahshi Deshpande presents a female lead challenging the authority of husband in the space setting of four walls of a house whose conscious understanding of their visitors' look without any expectation or their getting uneasy with her underscores her denial to enforce her existence. Deshpande again focuses on personal space by employing the first person narrative by the lead woman herself. She narrates, "Unnatural, forced smiles flicker across their faces as they talk to me, staying on even when there is no need. They turn away from me with almost audible sighs of relief ..." (*TIAOS* 116) the presence of woman protagonist is made visible 'not out of choice, but because there was none.' (*TIAOS* 116) Sushama, a friend of Hema perfectly describes the woman-narrator, "And here she is, the woman behind the successful man, the one to whose support you owe everything, the devoted, self-effacing wife ..." (*TIAOS* 120) The word, "self-effacing" keeps Hema awake, completely aware. She relates the "cry of new-born" to the "triumphant assertion of being. Of existing" (*TIAOS* 120), which she lacks and consequently allows her cry to be stifled. Deshpande demonstrates her female protagonist to be a victim of self-abnegation. For instance, in one of the incidents, Hema eats out her genuine expression and invalidates her professional status as lawyer with indistinct utterance, "Oh, I'm all right as I am. After all, I'm a good housewife now." (*TIAOS* 119)

"The Intrusion", the title story in the collection deals with a newly married woman and her disillusionment with marriage and yearning for self realization, she is treated with streak emotional cruelty by her husband who denies her what she is entitled to as a wife. Her inner space feels a void and she wishes to fill it by

getting rid of the Husband who she considers as an intruder in her life. The time setting of the story involves the youth and all the desires, dreams and expectations of a young woman from her life partner; the youthfulness of the protagonist and as usual the space is the institution of marriage and domestic walls. The newlywed woman is forced to realize her sexual identity and her role as a sexual partner for her husband. She is so much reduced to a sex machine by her husband that she develops a hatred for sex and turns away from bed. She suffers mental agony on the reception of such insensitive treatment by her husband that she fails in providing sexual pleasure to her husband.

Her husband needs her only for sex and for the rest of the day he demands complete privacy which is totally and completely inhuman treatment. Deshpande raises questions for the true identity of women in this story where she emphasizes that a woman silently accepts the proposal of marriage without even knowing the individual personally to spend and dedicate her entire life but when the man turns out to be a selfish sexual beast what are the way-out for the woman in the patriarchal social space.

The story translates the psychological condition of a bride who is unhappy due to the bad treatment which she receives from her husband and whom she regards as an intruder. There are numerous instances in the story where the newlywed woman is told to be sexually submissive to her husband on the day of her honeymoon and she is forced brutally by her husband, truthfully saying, she has been reaped several times by her husband against her will, hence Shashi Deshpande questions the hollowness of the sacred institution of marriage so far as women are concerned. The sacred institution of marriage, here, proves to be just a plea for legal rape. This makes the protagonist afraid of sexual encounters with her husband and she tends to run away from the bed; the symbol of exploitation and beastly treatment. Her husband's insistence on absolute privacy shatters her expectations of emotional gratification in marriage. Her husband totally denies her emotions and proves to be an opportunistic sex seeker. Consequently, she averts her face from the beds.

She is depicted as mute consentor as she silently offers her consent to the marriage proposal. She has high hopes with her marriage; she is romantic in believing that friendship is the need of marital bond but this aspect is found missing here. In her narration, it is quite clear for the reader to sense her feeling of surrender at the time, “to hear the intimate sounds that were seeping through the thin walls and flimsy door.” (TIAOS 38) She finds it almost disgusting to see herself “with a strange man in strange room.” (TIAOS 39) It becomes quite appealing when she relates, “And at present we were not friends, not acquaintances even, but only a husband and wife.” (TIAOS 38) Her submission to her husband in the role of a wife rejects her existence as woman or an individual. She appears to be victimised by the conflict between liberty and security, between body and mind which is a commonly shared experience of most of the middle class Indian Women. She considers her husband as a hypersexual beast as ‘the slightly glazed look’ in her husband’s eyes appears to her as revealing and demanding. Shashi Deshpande efficaciously tries to underline as Vidyut Bhagwat (2004:81) expresses in her analysis of Simone De Beauvoir that “body and sexuality are concrete expressions of existence.” The protagonist in the story feels her very personal space to be encroached by her husband *whom* he believes to be an intruder in her most private zone. She feels robbed of her sexuality. She narrates her husband’s understanding, “... how unaware he was of *everything* but of what was to happen between us, making us truly husband and wife.” (TIAOS 38) She finds it to be extremely startling and reproachful to see him calling out her name with so familiarity. She is reluctant to acknowledge his attempt to maintain the mundane affair of husband-wife relationship which is still under construction. Out of fear of rejection that crouches in her, she eats all her fears of “exposing the mysteries of her body to him.” (TIAOS 40) However, her attempt to convey the strangeness of relationship is completely ignored by him whereas for her it brings “a light-hearted sense of escape.” (TIAOS 40) Her relieved state of existence evaporates only to throw her into a daylight humiliating fact of his merciless bodily assault on her. She cries out “not for the physical pain” but she says, “for the intrusion into my privacy, the violation of my right to myself.”

(*TIAOS 41*) Thus, the husband reacts in a very neutral manner by neglecting her feelings.

Shashi Deshpande possessed keen awareness of the time she lived in and she was also very much interested in the various social dynamics of the society. Moreover, she was the real fighter for the cause of women. In her stories, she depicts different shades of woman facing distinct kind of challenges and struggles to secure a place in the world. The concept of time reflects in the conservative beliefs of the contemporary Indian Society (both rural and urban).

Her story “My Beloved Charioteer” is based on the perspective of three different generations, Grandmother, Mother and daughter with different timelines and mental spaces. She is the towering and strongest figure in the story that takes care of everyone in the physical space of the domesticity. Her daughter Arti is shown as depressed as she had lost both her father and her husband; she is left alone in this world taking care of her daughter but she doesn’t talk to her daughter. She spends most of time in seclusion looking at the walls of her house. She is obsessed with her past and doesn’t accept the changing present circumstances. She builds her space in her room and doesn’t let anyone in it.

The third individual space and representative of new generation, the daughter Preeti is the youngest and the most energetic and lively person in the household. She has lost her father and grandfather and her mother doesn’t talk to her and only person whom she is very much connected with her granddaughter. Shashi Deshpande adroitly weaves three different timeline and separate mental spaces in her story “My Beloved Charioteer”.

“Why a Robin” is the story that captures the plight and inner struggle of a mother who is not able to be close to her husband and her only daughter, because of lack of proper bonding and she is not treated properly by both her husband and her daughter she is considered to be “foolish”, “stupid”, “inarticulate”, and “dull and brown” by them and this makes her feel that she has “lost, misplaced so many things” in her life.

She craves to build a strong bond relationship with her daughter hence, she thinks to help her daughter write an essay on peacock instead of robin as she doesn't know anything the bird but the daughter doesn't want her to write an easy on peacock as her teacher told her to write an essay on robin.

Shashi Deshpande is very much concerned with the space of family and inner space of ladies and the place of women in that space, and how their individual space evolves as in the story "Why the Robin", the mother thinks herself to be a failure as she has been neglected by both her husband and daughter, she is not allowed an entry in their personal space. At the same time, the understanding and bonding between the father and daughter is remarkable because of their selfish and self-centeredness, her role is reduced to just a domestic help and she feels alienated in her own house. However, the situation changes dramatically when the daughter touches womanhood and seeks comfort in her company.

The mother relieves her fears, "I talk to her gently, trying to make her feel it is natural, a part of growing up, something to be welcomed, accepted." (*TIAOS* 22) It is the adolescence of the daughter that makes her realize her real self and feel one with her mother who has been suppressing her motherly instincts. The family survives in better ways by building a comfortable and mutual bonding where they try to be strong and caring parents for the daughter.

"Why a Robin" concludes on a salutary note of emotional reunion between mother and daughter. The woman's struggle to win over her feelings of an irrelevant outcast and failure in front of determined daughter. She overcomes the feeling of loneliness and begins to take pride in her motherhood. As it is rightly said by Singhi, "Man's definition, desire and demand for sexuality were enshrined and thrust upon woman's management and negotiation of her body" (Singhi 56).

The revelation of the real dominating inhuman and cruel character of her father and the suppression she has felt, makes her daughter realize the truth resulting in the reconciliation between the mother and the daughter. This

realization of truth that it is inescapable destiny of a woman to compromise a lot for the successful running of a family and “Why a Robin” is a picture-perfect presentation of it. Both the stories illustrate the strong impact of a father upon a growing daughter. The women characters are required to live within the confines of relationships. Hence, the women characters are destined to live on compromise in Shashi Deshpande's stories.

Women in Deshpande's stories are essentially human like us; they are compliant yet rebellious, they fight against the injustice whenever it is required and they don't wish to be fooled by the andocentric culture and its dehumanizing customs.

Deshpande sensitively portrays a mother's helplessness; a father's anger and the trauma of the girl. The motif of silence is very powerful source and strategy in stories — how the girl walks into the trap of an offender. In spite of all the boundaries of patriarchy and violence to which women are subjected to, there is a scope of positivity.

Shashi Deshpande talks about the day to day alienation and violence which is experienced by women, but she also discusses the powerful approaches of these women towards the male-dominated society.

Throughout the story the writer exploits the motif of first person subjective narration so as to heighten the inner psychological torment of the protagonist. Deshpande has strong sense of her time and the space with knowledge of prevalent social evils that reduced the status of women only to a sex object and child bearing machine, in her stories and novels she strongly condemns these socially prejudiced institutions of society and family and urges women to come forward and raise their voice against the attitude of the patriarchy and its values.

She picks up the setting of middle class urban society, moreover the status of women in the urban middle class society. She vigorously speaks about the modern educated self dependent women who fight tooth and nails for their own

space, for their place in the family and in their social and cultural setting. This setting of home is the backdrop to almost all her stories. Deshpande has depicted women in her stories as victims of circumstances, of family, of society; they suffer from a sense of self consciousness till the end of their lives. Hence, over the period of ten years that Deshpande's genius evolves, they come out of the confines of the domestic walls to revolt firmly against the inhuman treatment of society and patriarchy. She emerges as self-assured, self-empowered, articulate personalities. The psychological being of a woman doesn't have any value to the male chauvinistic nature. Throughout the story, the female protagonist's sense of suffering makes no room in the traditional sociological approach and she has no way left but to surrender. Although marriage is a legal institution by which a man can have sex with woman freely, but the writer is of the view that one should develop a friendly relation before indulging into sex.

It's extremely disgusting for her to find herself "with a strange man in strange room."(*TIAOS* 39) She narrates quite convincingly, "And at present we were not friends, not acquaintances even, but only a husband and wife."(*TIAOS* 38) The protagonist in the story appears to be a victim of body-mind conflict who finds her husband's gaze in her husband's eyes revealing and demanding. She cries out loudly as her privacy has been encroached upon by her husband whom she regards as an intruder, "For the intrusion into my privacy, the violation of my right to myself."(*TIAOS* 41)

To sum up the characteristics of the personalities projected by Shashi Deshpande, one can say that most of the characters of the men and women projected in most of her short stories belong to the middle-class. Money is an important factor in their everyday existence. Hence the wife who brings money is "kept" as a hen that lays golden eggs. The man is the dominant factor in the Indian family set up. He exercises his superiority, not by winning better bread than his wife but by inflicting physical abuse and having brutal sex with the wife who is, after all, his slave. She may be a big person in society; she may be famous; she may earn more money than he does. Yet, within the four walls, he

makes it very clear as to who the real master is. The woman stoops only to conquer herself and the difficult situations, later. She does not try to conquer or override the man. In most of the stories that we have analysed so far, we do not see the existence of true love though there is a tendency towards altruistic love. The woman seems to be bearing the yoke more with resignation and not with dedication and love. This may be so because there is no expression of true love and affection from her counterpart, the husband. The give-and-take of familial life is almost never present. There is always an ulterior motive for the husband which puts off the wife from truly loving her husband. In the story, "The Stone Women", the female narrator is in a dilemma after seeing the sculptures of a temple which covers the physical space and which attacks on her emotional and inner space. She starts feeling a disgust towards her husband's attitude and concern for sex, here it is worthy to quote Simon de Beauvoir's ideas where she says, "The purpose of fashion to which woman is enslaved is not to reveal her as an independent individual, but rather to offer her as prey to male desires; thus society is not seeking to further her projects but to thwart them." (Beauvoir 543) Women are denied of their personal spaces in all times. The spaces may change but the reactions remain same and that is a complete denial. In the story "Ghosts", the lady has to accompany her husband to a foreign land and this change in space doubles her alienation where "the grey fog cut her from everything" (*TIAOS* 92) Here, the change in her physical space saddens her condition and the voices which are telecast on television are the only companions for her, thus it is just to quote what Robin Cohen says, "The emphasis on collectivity and community is very important, as is sense of living in one country but looking across time and space to another." (McLeod 207)

Without being feminist in approach it cannot and should not be taken for granted that the women have been victimised and it is time now to turn the tables against the men. But what emerges from Shashi Deshpande's writing is precisely this point that men may try to be strong and dominating but women are determined enough as not to surrender to adverse circumstances and they keep

trying to do better. Of Course there are exceptions. There are men of undaunted spirit and women who are villainous, selfish and weak-spirited. However, here we are looking at Shashi Deshpande as a spokesman for those classes of women who go unsung and unnoticed by the society, and who need to be projected as rare specimens who have evolved themselves from utter subjection to the freedom of the spirit at last and are celebrated. Deshpande`s female characters have similarity to Nergis Dalal`s characters but Dalal`s characters bring a positive change in their lives.

Her collection of short stories called *The Nude* captures the concept of time and space very well, as she writes on various themes in various time periods along-with different internal and external landscapes. The collection has remarkably grasping compact nineteen stories in it and each story reflects the genius of the writer regarding her attention to details, her understanding of time and her sense of topography both physical and mental.

Nergis Dalal can't be categorized as feminists as she never wrote for the issues of women while she can be termed as the most sensualist and aesthetics Indian English Writer. In her interview to P.S. Javalegi, she said, "I wrote in order to learn more about people and what makes them tick. Also because I like to tell stories." (Javalegi 148) She is rally a writer who depicts the real incidences whole heartedly. Her stories unfold the evolution of hers as a writer as she deals in different themes, and time and space settings.

In the opening story of the collection, Dalal puts forth the realistic setting of the plight of Mr. Kapoor who has recently lost his wife Mrs. Kapoor. Writer seems to have keen observation skills to picture the setting of Indian society during such incidents like death in neighborhood. Dalal presents such a lively description of Mrs. Kapoor and her cooking in the inner physical space of her household that she appears in front of readers` eyes alive, "I don't know how you do it, they would say half admiringly and half envious."(*The Nude 2*)

With the passage of time, she changes the furnishing of the room and the food shifts are noticeable. To quote from the text:

The strip –lighting, so bright and cheerful, was gone. Instead, there were table lamps dotted all over, spreading a subdued and tinted light. Instead of all the pretty pictures of fat babies and scenes cut out from calendars, the walls were bare, except for a single picture of what appeared to be a woman with two heads. All the gaily embroidered cushions seemed to have disappeared and the sofa had a brightly coloured scarf thrown over the back. They thought it most depressing room – somber, cold and unfriendly. Mrs. Mehra, in fact, even felt slightly threatened. (*The Nude* 7)

Here, the physical space appears to be unfriendly to the neighbours who were very friendly with Mrs. Kapoor`s wall posters and colorful curtains and cushions. The picture of two headed lady represents the two shades of new Mrs. Kapoor who ultimately leaves for France due to lack of personal space and a craving for own physical space.

In “A Taste of Blood”, the lady waits for the right time and succeeds in winning her son`s heart back. Her husband was a male chauvinist who never allowed her to be in her personal space with her own son, on the contrary the son was taught to be a hunter. His approach caused destruction to himself. “Once for the Asking” is again a story which draws our attention towards geographical space where the man feels comfortable with Eiko on a foreign land who shares a perfect personal and emotional space with the man and he feels very cool in her company, to quote:

Everyone should have an Eiko in their lives. She made me happy. Sometimes I would think it was all a delusion and that I was suffering from a sort of madness and that if she existed, it was only in my imagination and then I would rush home and stagger through the door, and there she was. She would be padding around the flat in bare feet and a little green kimono, her face and mouth lightly painted, her long hair caught with a ribbon and smelling of the scented soap she used in her bath. She was always smiling. I never knew her to get cross or lose her temper.

When I asked too many questions she would close her face up and make it blank, and that was all. (*The Nude* 25)

The story “The Sacrifice” deals with the myth of rain where Mr. Tiara is sacrificed by the villagers for the sake of rain. Similarly, in the stories like “The Alabaster Goddess”, “The Seller of Mantras”, “The Temple of Shiva” and “Silver Stallion” talk about the myths and superstitions which connect to the spiritual, religious and cultural space. Jaya Sharma rightly says:

The stories of Dalal are the reflections of faiths and beliefs of Indian people. Consciously or unconsciously these beliefs are in blood of people, in the darkness of pessimism these give optimism to people and they come out of the calamities. The themes are so beautifully depicted or entwined in the story that the readers not only enjoy but also feel happy to find the reflections of his heartfelt beliefs. (Sharma 86)

In the title story “The Nude”, Nergis deals with the setting of world of modeling and fine arts, as she belongs to the post modern world of glamour and fashion, in this story she openly mentions, “Some women should never wear clothes. Clothes hides the shape and colour of skin.” (*The Nude* 51)

This story captures the quest of a painter who desperately searches for a model to paint the nude but he doesn't find a suitable woman with exact same curves that he needs. He is taken to Mrs Oliver whom he finds utterly unsuitable for the kind of painting he wishes to paint but when she poses in front of him naked he realizes that some women look good in nude.

The setting and timing of this story is comparatively brave and rather surprising as far as Indian tradition is considered but Dalal with her ingenious creative skills dealt with the theme of nudity as a graceful virtue for women. Here the physical space and the woman's nudity act as a catalyst for the high sentiments of the photographer as he says:

Snatching up his brushes and mixing furiously, Robie knew exactly how he would paint her. But glancing at her again, he was forced to stop.

Unexpectedly, desire for this immense nude body rose in him. It was sudden and in its immediacy and urgency, a hunger which would not allow him to work until it was appeased. It was a desire so elemental, so disturbing and purely physical, that he felt it almost as a pain. (*The Nude* 54)

In the story “Christmas means Love”, the story takes place just a week before Christmas and adequately captures the concept of time and inner space of the growing kid named Arun who has grown six now and who feels boring now just a week before the festival of Christmas, “It was a week before Christmas and the house Smelt of Mince Pies and rich Fruit cakes and puddings and pine cones” But the enthusiasm for this annual Christian festival for Arun has deteriorated and he feels depressed, turned six, can’t cry because his mother told him so.” (*The Nude* 71))

The story suitably draws the setting of a typical Indian household during festivals like Christmas. The time of Christmas is the time for family, togetherness and happiness while Arun Feels lonely as his father has not yet appeared for Christmas celebration.

Arun desperately yearns for a miracle to happen so that he could be united with his parents and play with them especially his father. The story digs deep into the inner space of the psyche of a six year old kid who becomes nostalgic to relive his past experiences of Christmas during the current season.

The Inner space of children is all receptive and very sensitive; they don’t have the sense of time and cry for when they miss their near and dear ones. For most people, the Christmas spirit was about family, togetherness and happiness. And yet, here was Arun, spending his Christmas in hope, and yearning for a miracle. A miracle that would somehow bring the same Christmas spirit into his home. A perfect story that will leave you warm and fuzzy this holiday season, “Christmas Means Love” depicts the importance of family and love and why they matter more than anything else. The child in his present condition and changed physical space, recalls his past time and space thus:

This was the time of the day when he would have leapt joyously into his father`s bed for a rough and tumble which would leave them both with their hair on end and their pyjamas slipping off , looking astonishingly alike in spite of the difference in their ages. But now the bed lay empty and his mother went around with shadowed eyes and tightened lips. With the instinct so strong in animals and young children, he knew that there was something really wrong –that this was no ordinary trip his father had taken. Though nothing had been said to him and he had long forgotten the raised voices and angry words, a sixth sense told him that his life, his whole small world, was threatened.(*The Nude* 72)

In yet another story “Roses, Roses, All The Way..”, Nergis Dalal strongly expresses the need of following one`s heart and soul as in living up-to the expectations of society and social norms. Humans tend to follow the voice of their heart. All her stories cover a particular time period in the year. She exploits the settings of all four seasons and all the important festivals and significant events like birth, death, marriage anniversary and acquisition of some valued possessions in her stories.

Dalal believes that the path and span of life is full of liveliness and bright offering like roses. Nergis exploits the time setting of morning. The very first sentence in the story reads, “It was Sunday morning and I was working in the rose garden. They were in their full march blossoming; rich, green leaves and the petals are multicolored sea of foaming light, the scent elusive and fragrant.”(*The Nude* 80) The leading character in the story doesn`t let anyone enter his personal space especially when he is working in his garden on his favorite flowers of roses.

The first person narration in her stories represents her keen sense of individuals and their private mental zones. She writes from the spatial settings of her characters. Here, Miss Malik is a spinster who remained busy in looking after her mother and comes to an ashram after her death where the change in geographical and physical space changes her emotional space. She stops drinking tea due to Swamiji`s instructions but when she see him enjoying tea one day, this

reality connects her to her past and she starts living her life again. In this story, the title suggests the importance of physical and external space in one`s life where roses, being physical space, matter a lot in everyone`s life and they add beauty to life.

In the story “Happiness is a Box of Fudge” again the concept of time and space play key role in understanding the characters and theme of the story. Here two girls have to spend some more time than usual with a decent yet irritating neighbour Mr. Krishna who is an old family friend and who had the habit of holding the girls by hand tightly, hugging them longer than usual and noisily kiss them, rubbing his hand up and down their backs which seemingly ungentlemanly. This Mr. Krishna encroaches in the personal spaces of these two girls while his own daughters are studying in university.

Yet again Nergis raises the questions that Indian parents should never let their relatives and neighbours transgress the privacy of their children and keep protective eyes on their children especially daughters so as to protect them from vulture eyes of even the closest of neighbours. Nergis expresses her concern towards abuse of girls in the name of overly delicate treatment. Here in this story the girls are forced to read the entire newspaper to Mr. Krishna as they are very fluent in reading English for box of fudge which is also the favourite chocolate of the girls. The thing which is source of happiness for the girls becomes a reason for their exploitation and they have to tolerate a person whom they hate most in the story. Time plays key role in the story as one of the girls is eleven years old and other one is fourteen years and both the girls are growing adolescent where they need to build a private space for themselves at the same time Mr. Krishna is a widower who is seemingly unscrupulous in her demeanor with the girls. Nergis raises a question of child abuse here which turns into depression in the kids and delivers a message for parents to be very much concerned pertaining to the private space for their daughters in their growing age. “Happiness is a Box of Fudge” by Nergis Dalal uncovers a disquieting reality that unfortunately plagues countless homes across the world. Heartbreakingly powerful and delicately crafted, Dalal, truly shows her skills in the form with this beautiful short story. Similarly, the

story “The Intruder” also talks about the role of time and space in a short story. In this story, Mr. Vale marries a second time and the new Mrs. Vale does not find any personal space due to the busy schedule of Mr. Vales which does not allow him to come out of his study. She becomes very weak emotionally that she starts feeling the presence of old Mrs. Vale. Here, Dalal has focused on the psychological space of family where the woman is not able to adjust in a new surrounding due to the lack of attachment, emotions and concern. Thus, it can be said about Dalal’s stories that her characters get deeply affected by changed spaces and surroundings and time plays the role of catalyst in her stories.

This chapter takes up the concept of time and space in the noted writers’ works post 1990s and the writers discussed in this are in proper chronological order of their literary lives. Nandita C Puri ventured in the literary scene in recent years and she became renowned for her collection of story titled *Nine on Nine* where she like other feminist writers voices the concern for women liberation.

The collection has nine stories and all the stories are set in Mumbai and Kolkata as she spent her childhood in Bengal and started her career in Mumbai. She has chosen modern educated women who hail from urban life and who behave quite mature to the hardships of life. They have learnt the art of dealing with the odds of life. In Indian tradition women are treated as goddess and they are assigned the role of staying happy in all circumstances, they have to provide for the needs of men. Like a mother she is believed to bear and rear the child of a man, like a daughter, She has to observe discipline and bring reputation and goodwill to her parents, like a sister she has to take care of her siblings and be a source of strength for them, like a wife she has to provide sexual pleasure to man, bear his children, cook food for him and take care of the family without asking for anything in return.

Each tale is a story of an urban woman in urban space in modern times, who is able enough to question the orthodox norms of a patriarchal set-up. Most of the stories are inspired with real life incidents, mostly of disappointments, from real-life encounters and experiences of friends and family, almost every story has

a unique shade of betrayal by men, as father, husband, lover, coworker, brother or son. Puri herself separated from her late husband, the veteran actor Om Puri, on the pretext of irreconcilable differences reflects the pain of breach of trust in her stories. She has vivid space settings in her stories from arranged marriages to beauty parlour conversations; the collection covers subtle meanings of a woman's life. As far as concept of time is concerned the stories are written at intervals over the duration of three years. All nine stories are fairly interesting and make for quick reading. There are, however, no literary decorations and Puri does not pay too much attention to portray characters in such a way that they create their own spaces. She presents her women in a better way with a better psychological, mental and inner strength which is a good presentation of all the related spaces. After reading Puri's stories, one can easily agree with what Mishra has talked about:

As the women novelists of India were moved emotionally and psychologically by the plight of the depressed women, they felt impelled to externalize their repressed psychic mind and highlight their issues in the novels with a view to arousing public consciousness in favour of women's emancipation and amelioration of their condition in the prevailing social situation. (Mishra 163)

The first story titled "Arranged Marriage" is based in a Marathi household. It is definitely remarkable for the way it is told. The whole story revolves round a phone call between a mother and daughter and Puri has tried to touch upon the inner spaces of a mother and daughter in her stories. Readers find a conflict in this relationship but an unsaid affection and bonding is always there. Time also plays a significant role in this story where three generations are discussed and compared under a canopy. Puri has also poured light on the reactions of society and families to inter-cast marriages. Whole story takes place in present but the parents and the daughter keep recalling the past to compare the present conditions. For instance, when the daughter Rekha was talking to Rani on phone, her daughter was pulling her dupatta and she scolded her saying, "Stop pulling at my dupatta" (*Nine on Nine* 18) and the mother warns her by taking her to her childhood, "Bas kar .Wabu dia. Bachdan Bai. At her age, you were so handful." (*Nine on Nine* 18) Further, the

mother has to live with her daughter as the son does not take her with him after her husband's death. Here, Puri has tried to dive deep into the woman – woman spaces where sometimes, women are appreciated but most of the times, they are victimized in one or the other way as Beauvoir very aptly says, “The situation of woman is –that she – a free and autonomous being like all human creatures – nevertheless finds herself living a where men compel her to assume the status of the other.” (Beauvoir 295)

In the story “At Jenny's”, the physical space changes the whole narration of the story where all the ladies gossip at a parlour and they talk very boldly about the temperament and male dominance. They are housewives and they are least bothered about the approaches and activities of their husbands. Their psychological and personal spaces are portrayed in a very firm manner by Puri. At the same time, she also talks about the molestation of a girl Alia by Sonika's husband and she is unaware of it. Here, the time plays dual roles and the private space of the girl is intruded by a married man in a cheated manner.

In another story “Flashback”, time becomes the catalyst where history is repeated by the same man by getting in relationship with the ladies of a same family and who are his neighbours and the most shocking thing is that, he gets into the relationship with his own biological daughter and both of them were not aware of it but the mother tells this to the daughter. Here, the time plays with the emotion of two ladies and the emotional space is misused.

There is another good story “Pages from Indulata Debi's diary” where the female protagonist feels about her relationship with her estranged husband, “Marriage had not been a rosy experience for her but she was determined to save it at all costs. It is better to deal with one wolf than to be left at the mercy of a whole pack” (*Nine on Nine* 108) Here, Indulata's struggles are depicted beautifully by Puri. She emerges as a new and confident woman who denies the orthodox norms of living a widow's life and gets married. She starts paving her way on her own which becomes possible due to the internal space which she finds for herself and external space which makes her bold to face hurdles. The story shifts from the

time frame of her childhood to her death but by covering all the spaces, she lives a life of her choice. The story also talks about the external spaces at work place where her colleagues don't want her to progress and they try to create problems for her but she emerges to shine.

Her story "Bhabhiji" deals with many spaces in a set time period where Bhabhiji takes complete command of the family and the story progresses rapidly from her marriage to the marriage of her four children. Her brother-in-law Gautam gets married four times but is still all alone due the failure of all the marriages which happens because of Bhabhiji's involvement in his personal life and her entrance into his personal space.

Puri's story "Waiting" is a story of Nita who falls in love with Promit and gets married to him. Here, the time notices a sudden and swift change which changes Nita's life miserably and she starts feeling alienated and sad. She is diagnosed with ovarian cancer and her physical space, therapies, and hospital make her completely devastated and helpless. Here, the time plays a great role in changing her life completely and at the same time, she receives no emotional support from her husband who shares no personal and emotional space with her and waiting for her to die as he is already in an extra-marital relationship. Here, a mother's emotional space is covered beautifully by Puri when she says:

I am not a fool. I do have cancer. It came as a big shock to her. Why me, she cried silent tears for several days. When the tears were exhausted, she asked herself, how bad was her illness. And hoped desperately that she would be well someday. Soon. I have to be. Atleast for Rumki and Jhumki's sake. Ten is a crucial age for girls and they will need their mother around for the next few years at least. God, just give me five-six years more. That is all I ask. I have to live for my parents. Ma is not keeping well. (Nine on Nine 200)

In the story, "The Piano Teacher", the story revolves around an old piano teacher who shares her personal space with her students and neighbours and the time has changed a lot. Her husband died long back but she deals happily with all the odds of life. She pours light on the perspective of time-shift in her story

“Remembering Little Dee” where the protagonist Deepa recalls her childhood memory and her journey. Time has changed a lot for her and her physical and personal spaces have also changed. She used to accompany her mother to Mohapatras` house where she used to work. She starts learning, shifts to other place, takes tuitions and becomes an educated and successful lady in life. It is pertinent to mention that Puri`s stories deal with generations and her characters throw flashes on generation gap. One can find mother- daughter relationship and sharing of personal spaces in change times.

All the stories taken here for examination of the concept of time and space have one thing in common that all these women writers love to portray small household experiences in their stories. All these and most of the writers of the world acknowledge the fact that home or household is the universal geographical space that a man can build around and possess. The domestic space setting is conducive to adequate evolution of characters and theme of the stories.

A few of the writers have introduced the concept of gendered space like Male space and female space or male walls or female walls especially Indian writers like Shashi Deshpande and Githa Hariharan and many others advocate the need to build a female private space away from the male dominated patriarchal houses, they fight for the cause of women and seek liberation of women in all the spheres of society. Time is universal, the cycle of time never stops; in the stories discussed above Time is embodied as someone working at the backdrop of all the stories and creating urgency of the action that causes significant effect in the lives of the characters.

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Chapter-6

The Art of Narration

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The Art of Narration

Everybody is a storyteller, in fact, human life is an unending tale of struggle and suffering, yet some tales survive the upheavals of time and they are repeatedly told in almost all ages, they represent humanity through history. The world has numerous stories but some really talented people, in our case, like, writers are capable of translating those stories in written language in the form of a short story with their acute narrative skills. This Chapter focuses on the narrative techniques of select Indian Women English story writers and analyses their distinctive narrative style in which they have raised the voice of women in their stories. In his “An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative”, Roland Barthes quotes:

There are countless forms of narrative in the world. First of all, there is a prodigious variety of genres, each of which branches out into a variety of media, as if all substances could be relied upon to accommodate man's stories. Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all these substances -narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, drama [suspense drama], comedy, pantomime, paintings (in Santa Ursula by Carpaccio, for instance), stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversation. Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups have their stories, and very often those stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds: narrative remains largely unconcerned with good or bad literature. Like life itself. It is there, international, trans-historical, and Trans-cultural. Narrative, indeed universal and infinitely varied, may be defined as the representation of real or fictive events and situations in a time sequence. (Barthes 1975)

Barthes has truly defined the role of narrative. A narrative is based on facts and fiction. A factual story discusses the real life events in a real manner whereas a fictional story is narrated with the help of imagination where characters are imaginary and events are created. A factual story writer tries to tell the reality to readers whereas a fictional story teller wants to convey a message and for this, he builds characters specifically. Memoirs and biographies can be taken as a part of factual narration but novels and stories come under the category of fictional narration.

The events are always narrated in a systematic and chronological manner in any form of narration where there is always a beginning, middle and end. They are dependent on time. It is quite significant to mention the difference between narrative and narration. A narrative is a story whereas a narration is the process of telling the story.

A writer can select the type of narration. He has full liberty to go for any kind of narration. He can choose multiple narrations at a time. First person narration gives him the liberty to be personal with his readers. He seems talking to his readers and he tries to convey his feelings in a straight forward manner. The readers can easily get a glimpse of what is told to them. First person narration allows him to address the readers directly where they can listen to what the narrator has got to tell.

Second person narration adopts an instructional form of narration which is not much popular. Third person narration is used frequently since it wins the hearts of the readers.

The narration and narrative both play a remarkable role in any form of writing. The art of narrating is equally as important as the story is. The characters, events, setting, time and space play a very important role. The use of diction and language are very important in any writing form. Setting and time are interlinked with the art of narration and K. Ayyappa Paniker truly mentions that the *Jatakas* usually start with the setting of Varanasi in Kashi region or the fables of

Panchtantra with a mention of the city of Mahilaropya in the southern region of India. He, therefore, expresses the opinion that the Indian narrative “can be said to be a spatial one and this makes for a more free handling of the time factor”. (Paniker 200)

Style is an inseparable element of any kind of writing and it adds to the beauty of any narrative. The Indian narrative shows a wonderful bonding between style and narrative technique. Writers across the world experiment with distinctive narrative techniques in their creations; as there is humungous variety in human nature, problems and challenges faced by people and the distinctive ways they address their problem. Likewise, Indian writers also employ various narrative techniques in their works; they also see through the inner psyche of their characters especially women.

The Art of Dying and Other Stories contains twenty stories with Death as the dominating theme in most of the stories. Several Indian writers have experimented with the theme of death in their works and it seems to be their pet theme. Hariharan’s choice of this poignant theme represents her keen concern towards the conditions of women in Indian contemporary society as well as the temporariness of human life on earth. Moreover, her microscopic observation and crystal clear way of narration arouse an intensity of emotions in the readers. All the twenty stories of contemporary Indian life demonstrate the range of Hariharan's writing and art of creating lifelike characters with distinctive characteristics of their own and with first person subjective narration in most of the stories, executed with a precision of style and magical imagery.

In *The Art of Dying*, Githa Hariharan presents Death as a natural and inevitable phenomenon; she explores the philosophical concept of death with natural narration by her characters. She pictures the attitude of the dying and the responses of the living towards the dying with similarly natural and clever style of narration. Her narration does not exaggerate the consequences of death. “The Remains of the Feast” is from her short story collection entitled *The Art of Dying and Other Stories*. It is written in a feminist vein. It focuses on an old widow’s

revolt against patriarchal tradition, and cultural discourses. In fact, it is a story of an old widow named Rukmini. She is a village bred widow who is near about ninety years old. Ratna, the narrator, is her grand daughter-in-law. Rukmini is a cancer patient but a typical old woman, the narration Githa employs is in first person which means the writer explores the attitude of the younger generation towards those who are dying. These two Characters seem to have a strong bonding between them. As per the words of Ratna, her great grandmother is always full of life and vivacity, her welcoming attitude towards what comes in the way of life helped her bear the unbearable shock of the death of her only son and his wife and survive longer even after his death. She remarks about her superficiality hilariously, “That she, an ignorant village bred woman, who signed the papers my father brought her with a thumb-print, should survive; while they, city-bred ambitious people, should collapse of weak hearts and arthritic knees at the first sign of old age.”(TAOD 9)

Her description of her late husband about how he used to faint on seeing his own blood is also given humourously. Along-with her utterances her demeanors were also creating a subtle kind of confusion. The chief narrator Ratna herself keeps giggling about while faring on narrating her story and sometimes the silly humor turns into bursts of laughter yet with tears flowing down her cheeks which indicates that this laughter is not because of something spontaneous, instead because of depression- of losing husband, son and daughter-in-law. She has killed her emotions and sometimes the emotions erupt in laughter on the margins of hysteria.

The narration throughout the story is a work of master in the hands of Githa Hariharan. She has captured the very soul of the ninety year old lady from the mouth of the twenty year old great granddaughter. Even more realistically, the description of her two months before her final hour is very much Indian and human which describes the attachment and importance of family in Indian society. On the diagnosis of some cancerous lump in her body, Ratna becomes upset, while the reaction of her parents is different from that of the child. The father becomes anxious about coming to any decision while her mother takes the matter

in her hand and warns everyone not to reveal this to the old lady or anybody else as she (Ratna) is having examinations and the outbreak of news might invite visitors to house thus would create disturbance in her work. The description of the dying old lady makes the reader visualize her with tears in their eyes, Githa Hariharan successfully paints the scene of every house hold in the story, hence from the narrative technique's perspective, "The Remains of the Feast" can be truly lauded. For example, at a place, we are told, "Only in her case, it is not raving, but craving. The way she is asking and the way she is devouring the forbidden food is, of course comical and unbelievable for she is "a Brahmin widow who had never eaten anything but pure, home-cooked food for almost a century." (TAOD 12)

Post modern writers try to blend genres and narrative style and they use all sorts of style. Githa Hariharan is a postmodern author who shows feminine inner world of women in postmodern way. In the present story, she forges anew the image of Indian woman. She is of the view that the needs and wishes, aspirations, dreams of men and women are common but in case of women, they are traditionally suppressed. The narrator and the protagonist of this story Ratna, is a postmodern woman who deconstructs the subaltern voice of her grandmother. Hence, instead of putting her grandmother's body under the medical gaze, she interprets her as a woman suppressed by the traditional patriarchal power.

She doesn't like to focus on the traditional marginalized woman but constructs her protagonists Ratna and Rukmini in a postmodern way as bold, free-vocal women who courageously cross the traditional boundaries of restrictions. As a postmodern feministic writer, she deconstructs the inner spaces of Rukmini subverting the traditional icons such as patriarchy, womanhood, widowhood, motherhood, etc. Hence, she empowers the widow Rukmini. In fact, Rukmini, a widow is a cancer patient yet she struggles to reconstruct her existence not as a pitiable widow but as a free independent woman in contemporary India. For this, she throws away all the socio-cultural restrictions imposed on her on the grounds of gender, caste and religion.

In most of the stories in the collection, Githa Hariharan has exploited the first person point of view but that first person perspective is essentially not auto-biographical, the narrator is relating the emotions and problems of the other person connected with him/her. Hariharan is a post modernist feministic writer and she hates to portray woman in the same old stereotypical marginalised way in her stories hence her stories are innovative in narrative technique that set new dimension for her followers.

In the story “The Art of Dying”, the narrator is the daughter of the widow whose son dies in Australia, Githa Hariharan, in this story delineates the damaging impact of bad news of the son’s death on the mother and relates how miserable the life of lady becomes when she loses both her husband and her son in her lifetime. The description of the pain felt by the mother on the news of sudden death of her son is incomparably striking and shocking, the mother becomes stunned and she spends days without blinking her eyes, tears don’t stop flowing from her eyes and she doesn’t even care for food, no other writer can relate the pain of loss like Hariharan in her stories. When the mother, a widow hears the news of death of her son, her immediate reaction is shock. “She was completely dry eyed without a whimper or a moan; she groped for her widow’s narrow bed. She lay there for days, eyes open, arms frozen by the sides of her body playing dead” (*TAOD* 67). For three days, she survived without food but on the fourth day, her daughter forcibly fed her as she was leaving for Australia to bring the body of her brother. The daughter informs the readers that her mother is a “full – time trader in memories.” (*TAOD* 64) She is lost in the memory of her son and her husband; she has become totally and completely oblivious of her surrounding and keeps communicating about her past. The daughter herself is the healer for her mother who takes care of as a professional with total objectivity, readers of the story can’t continue reading further as they need a break to cope up with the gush of emotions they feel within.

The details about the dying woman in the story are excruciatingly painful for the readers as the woman admits that she wished to die after her son’s death but maybe her love for her son is not sufficient to die. She feels guilty of not

spending much time with her son and not showering enough of her love on her son. It does not matter whether they are really responsible for their child's death. The feeling of guilt always persists. According to them, they should die before their children and their question why it is reversed in their case cannot be answered by anyone. In the words of Miles and Demi, it is called survival guilt. She also suffers from recovery guilt which is nothing but her continuation of life. (Miles and Demi 1992).

She is quoted as saying, "If I loved him...I should have stopped breathing the moment I heard. Instead, I was stunned. Something in me, a vital organ, disconnected itself and turned a clumsy somersault. I cheated myself: the heart, the lungs, ruthless survivors, betrayed my love. One continued to beat; the other inhaled and exhaled callously." (*TAOD* 68)

The compelling statement of the mother shatters the heart of the readers as every Indian mother would feel the same on hearing such unexpected and unseemly bad news. The scenic description of the emotions resembles the universal Indian Motherhood. Here, Githa Hariharan sympathises with the dying woman who has lost all hopes of life after these two life shattering experiences, she doesn't communicate with her daughter like a typical Indian Mother who values her son more than her daughter. Still, the daughter, being a product of the imagination of a post modern Indian feministic writer does not resent this partial treatment and takes care of her mother till the end. Githa Hariharan exploits daughter as the motif of her narration in the story through which the reader hears the confessions of her mother in bits and pieces where she reveals about her feelings towards her dominating husband. She speaks about her husband with bitterness and disgust in her voice. She is not willing to forgive him even in her death bed. She keeps complaining of her husband's overly jealous behavior which is later backed and justified by the narrator herself; her husband was a domineering kind of person who used to keep reigning over all the members of the family which the narrator recalls as a damaging influence on their lives. His memories also evoke pain in both the mother and the daughter. He dominated his children to a great extent. The daughter reveals the height of her father's

domineering attitude by recounting that how he sent his picture to be framed even when he was alive. One can very well visualize the suppression of the dying lady and hence her son's death is a great shock to her. In "The Art of Dying", the dying woman unlike the old woman of "The Remains of The Feast" expresses her anger upon her weakness in accepting the reality, she wishes for pain as a sign of confession for her sins. The daughter of the dying woman reminds the reader of the mother of Ratna who is a practical woman; she assumes the role of counsellor or healer even for her mother. She listens to all the exhortations of her mother with the objectivity of a doctor and doesn't respond sentimentally.

Githa Hariharan, though a post modernist writer, yet reveals the changing attitude of the younger generation towards death at the backdrop of traditional beliefs in her short story collection, *The Art of Dying*. Death of a person is seen in different shades with her acute narrative techniques, she presents death as a change agent, a balancing force and a source of new opportunities and discovery of self. She attaches despair and sense of loss with death and mentions death as commonly shared destination of entire humanity on earth; with her unique narrative style, she creates characters and informs us about their response towards death. In fact her characters are more of her own mouthpiece they reveal the attitude of author towards the inescapable phenomenon of death. Some time a near one's death causes pain but sometime, it gives a relaxation.

Githa Hariharan's short story collections, *The Art of Dying and Other Stories* is remarkable for its literary style of writing includes several modes of narration, knitting the outward features of the physical existence to the inner thoughts of mind. In her stories, she challenges the old standards of writings by women and about women, both. She experiments with several techniques, where it is not necessary that the narrator is a woman alone, but in several stories, by her, the narrator is a male. She focuses on subject matter, theme and issues that are assertive to give rise to matters of social relevance. "The Art of Dying" as the title suggests, is a story about death and dying. The story traces a number of incidents related to death. The story introduces death as a part of life itself and the narrator's continuous thinking over death raises the question whether death is

larger than life. The story begins with the description of death as an art. The word 'art' signifies technique, craftsmanship or a skill. In the story, the focus is on the technique of death, a process of dying. The narrator of the story traces the journey of her old and ailing mother towards her death. The metaphor of time as a machine depicts that they are leading an involuntary life, in which the determinant factor of their life, is time. They are trying to match their pace with time. The mother also compares her body to a machine. In her youth, she remembers that her body was full of excitement. At present, it has become like a machine that needs to be, "oiled and exercised at right time" (*TAOD* 63). The major difference in her body, then and now, is of a buffer: "I had a buffer between me, that living, demanding things, and death" (*TAOD* 63). Her memories of the past only bring loneliness and aloofness to her life. The narrator recalls the past throughout the story and that adds to the beauty of narration. She recalls her childhood pranks. His dead brother Ram was in love with Janet and this all is recalled by her at many places in the story. Githa Hariharan has used many examples in her stories, like in the title story, the narrator talks about the reality of death by giving the example of lizard and moth incident where the lizard easily eats moth:

I switch on the tube light by the lizard and the moths flutter nearer. Even before I can settle down on my chair to watch, the lizard's tongue darts out like an invisible magnet and draws in the bigger of the two moths. It opens its mouth for an instant so that I can see the moth stuck on the tongue. The wings of the moth are folded; it refuses to struggle. (*TAOD* 78)

Similarly, death is another major theme in "The Remains of the Feast". The story is about an old woman, a great grandmother, who towards the end of her life gives up all rules to be followed by the Brahmin widows though she had followed them throughout her life. "Revati", another story, that is about a child widow, who suffered throughout her life, highlights the plight of Revati who passes her entire life in loneliness. She is considered to be a burden on society. She is considered to be an unnecessary interference in the respective families. People around Revati made fun of her and intolerant of her behavior. The narrator too avoided her. S.A. Bagul in her article "Gender Issues and Marginality" says,

“A Study of Githa Hariharan’s Short Story “Revati” explains that ...female identity becomes highly problematic, being positioned within a rigid familial system results in a crisis and even more so when this position is threatened or lost. (Bagul 1) After her husband’s death, she spent her life in isolation, and even her presence in the family was not considered because she was widow. Though she was independent throughout her life but her loneliness converted into her greed for food. The loneliness of a widow in “Revati” is contrasted with that of a widower, in another story, “The Reprieve”. The protagonist of the story and his wife Mangala spent good years together. But with the passage of time, his wife Mangala, became a victim of cancer and died. Her death changed the life of Nagraj Rao. This story is narrated in third person and the perception is completely objective since memory plays a significant role in the narration as the husband keeps on thinking about his dead wife Mangala. The story revolves around the conflicts arousing due to the shifts from rural to urban area. It is now that he begins to relive his relationship in the past with his wife. In the small flat of Bombay, he often hears whispers of his son and daughter-in-law at night after the lights are switched off. He also does so because in some way this fulfills his own emptiness. These are small talks related to routine affairs, quite similar to those that he had shared, in his youth, with his wife.

In another story “The Will”, the protagonist widow wife gains strength from her husband's letter that is addressed to her as a will. Though, the title signifies that the matter is about the division of property, the story is about the treasure of good faith and guidance that Raghu leaves behind as a will for his wife Sushila. The story emphasizes on control exercised by the father on members of the family. Similarly, Raghu had controlled the entire family through his control of money that gets distributed amongst his children after his death. He had divided amongst his children but nothing for his wife except a letter in which he had written his feelings for her. She kept this letter as a means of survival but at the end of the story, she lost the letter, and two lines by her grand children made her understand that life is not only stuck to the letter. The scene of reading the letter by Sushila is narrated in such a manner that it becomes real:

Dearest Sushila, she read, and the tears welled up and ran down her cheeks. Oh, how could he leave her like this—he had always been so careful – and how was she to manage? Wipe your cheeks, she read. Don't be afraid. Raghu, she laughed with relief, clutching the letter to her breast. He knew, of course. By the time she came down to them again, she was perfectly calm. They were even more surprised when she smiled at them, a gracious, serene smile. You will be with them, Raghu had told her, but not of them. You will stand apart like a friendly, tranquil island. (*TAOD* 148)

Here, the lady becomes so confident just after reading the letter from her dead husband and this is narrated in such a manner that the readers can feel the beauty of the purpose of writing. “Gajar Halwa” is about how poverty leads a teenage girl to work as a maid at Delhi. The story is written from the perspective of a small girl. It is about the exploitation of the poor by the rich. One can find the same confidence like Sushila (“The Will”) in Perumayee who is a servant but by recalling her past, she becomes happy and confident that Chelamma taught her that she can cook anything, whether it is Gajar Halwa or any other thing. Another story “Field Trip” is a story about child, who comes to spend his vacation in the village of his maternal uncle and the difference between rural and urban life is perfectly portrayed in this story. Krishna who has come to village is not comfortable and the way Githa has delivered the conflict, through which he is going, makes the narration interesting:

I am ten and half years old, said Krishna to himself, over and over again. I am not a sissy from the big city. And he forced himself to look at the green stretches of the fields; they bumped past, breathing in great big lungs full of dusty air. He stole a look at the big, dark man who sat next to him, frowning at the fields of sugarcane on either side. (*TAOD* 27)

Githa Hariharan's depiction of green fields is noteworthy and so is the dilemma which is narrated in the form of a monologue by Krishna. Most of the protagonists in her stories are women or girls who become victim of social rigid norms like in, “The Art of Dying”, “The Remains of the Feast”, “Gajar Halwa”, “Love Poem” and “Revati” but unlike to give voice to the woman identity, she

also tries to capture the feelings of male and in her stories like “The Reprieve” and “Field Trip”, the protagonists of the stories are males. In Hariharan`s works, readers can find that professionalism merges with personal themes. Like in “The Art of Dying”, the narrator of the story is a counselor, and through her profession she learns the ways of life and death. In “The Remains of the Feast” the narrator of the story is studying medicine who understands that body is not merely a bunch of bones but a desiring subject. Due to this, she tries to fulfill the prohibited desire of her grandmother.

In the story “Revati”, Revati is a retired school teacher and child widow. Another noticeable aspect of Hariharan`s work is widowhood which plays a vital role in her stories. Most of the protagonists in her stories are experiencing death or the stories concerning widows also raise several questions. Though Revati was a widow but she was independent. At the end, when she retired from her work, and visited her family, no one treated her as a family member. The only companion in her life is a weak-minded fellow. The beauty of narration can be noticed in the following lines where Hariharan has compared Revati to “An undesirable child” (92), “I was embarrassed at first. Later I found that no one in my my new family noticed that I avoided her. They sometimes humoured her, as long as it put them to no great trouble. The rest of the time she was merely tolerated, as if she was an undesirable child, but also an orphan who required occasional appeasement.” (TAOD 92)

In this story, the newly married woman was shocked to meet Revati as she was a sort of object for everyone who was not treated well by others. Further, she has been portrayed as, “Revati had grown even fatter and she spoke and moved slowly, like a soft, swollen balloon filled with still air. Otherwise she was just the same: she still ate too much, sighed greedily when she saw our new saris, and bathed for hours on end.” (TAOD 95) Here, the reader can easily notice the plight of widows in India and Hariharan has truly tried to convey this pathetic condition of widows who are instructed to keep mourning throughout their lives. While in “The Will”, the protagonist of the story is a widow and after the death of her husband, she lives according to what her husband wrote in letter, but when she

lost the letter, she realized that it was not the only source to live life. A few lines of the poem, recited by her grandchild, arouse feelings in her to live life again. Another major theme of poverty and economical domination is visible in “Gajar Halwa”. It reflects a real picture of the society. It is more about struggle of life and about survival. Thus Hariharan’s diversity of themes accounts for her concern for society that gets depicted in her stories with utmost truth, reality and simplicity. She takes technique on equal priority and that is why, she writes in her essay “Discrete Thoughts”, “For some reasons all of us like to imagine that a writer is a writer because he has a great deal to say (message) or is a good egg (social concern) . Both these should be there, but really, in the ultimate analysis, writer is a writer because she has a narrative skill- a balancing act she can perform”. (214)

Tom Bailey has truly mentioned:

Character in literature is the always shifting and changing element that makes each story different no matter how similar the plot. Character, in fiction in general and in the short story in particular, acts as the x variable in what could otherwise be a too obvious and easily enumerated, fused equation. Character plumps as the heart of fiction. (Bailey 26/27)

Character plays significant role in short stories and Githa Hariharan’s stories present a wide variety of characters which range from a young boy Krishna in “Field Trip” to great grandmother in “Remains of the Feast”. Her art of portraying the character of ninety year old Rukmini in “The Remains of the Feast” is remarkable and it makes the narration hilarious. To quote from the text, “She could fart exactly like a train whistling its way out of the station and this achievement gave her as much joy as a child might get when she saw or heard a train.” (TAOD 10) In some of the stories, the characters are sketched in such a way that they add humor to the stories and on the other hand, some of the stories portray the old characters as the representatives of conventional societies. The father in “Forefather” can be taken as the seminal example. She does not focus on old ways of narration but she focuses on the inner psyche of characters and that is why her writings have got qualities of post modern writings. She throws light

on the recent happenings but at the same time, she also talks about the changing patterns. Her narration is best known for its uniqueness. She uses first person narrator, second person narrators and even multiple narrators. “Voices in the Twilight” has three narrators whereas “The Warden” has two narrators and if we talk of most of her stories, than they have first person narrator. In the story “Voices in the Twilight”, Aryan, Vidya and Shaku come together for the last time to mourn their mother`s death and that is how the narration takes place in different manner. The first person narrators participate in the narration in the stories like “The Rainmaker”, “Revati” and “Retrospective”. The story “Virgin Curry” can be considered bit different in terms of narration as Brenda Lobo, who is the narrator, is also a character. Hariharan can easily sketch dull, romantic, young and energetic characters and her stories are the best examples of it. The retired salesman who likes to write poems (“Untitled Poem”) is a representative of romantic personality and on the other hand the protagonist of the story “Retrospective” is busy with his office work and the daily schedule makes his life even duller.

Githa Hariharan is a master of style also and the use of images and metaphors in her writings is remarkable. Her comparison of human beings with animals is appreciable. For example, in the story “The Remains of the Feast”, the great grandmother is portrayed thus, “Her neck was a big hump, and she lay in bed like a moody camel that would snap or bite at unpredictable intervals.” (TAOD 9) Her images are drawn so beautifully that they draw a crystal clear image in reader`s mind. The description of classroom in the story “Love Poem” is worth appreciation, “The benches and desks ...formed a close, tight square, like an airless box; or like an orderly phalanx of identical, blank-faced strangers advancing on her.”(TAOD 119) In the same story, the poems which are quoted at various places are full of metaphors and similes:

There is one hour alone, long as an artery,
And between the acid and the patience of crumpled time
We voyage through
Parting the syllables of fear and tenderness
Interminably done away with, done to death. (TAOD 119)

In the story “Voices in the Twilight”, the use of imagery to describe city is noteworthy, “The city is a big insect with its beady, wandering eyes. Nothing escapes its hunger. It sucks golden honey. It smells of sweat and rotten tears. It grows an evil flower in its heart of deeply –scarred stone. Everything is found in the sweet, heady poison that oozes out of the loving tarantula.” (*TAOD* 145)

In the story “Field Trip”, Krishna enjoys sugarcane and this is depicted in superb manner with the help of simile, “Then the crisp sweetness inside trickled into his mouth like a warm, mysterious secret.”(*TAOD* 31) In another story, “The Warden”, the depiction of the pathetic condition of widows makes the readers sentimental, “She lies there like a broken tree, not a leaf on her for years and you are afraid? You make me laugh. I hold her in my arms and weep all over her. The tears flow from my face to hers. She is a broken, mangy old woman, just like me, and we lick the tears of each other`s faces.”(*TAOD* 40)

The reader can find the picture-perfect view of landscape in her stories and the very interesting thing is that most of the stories are combination of tragic and comic events, for example, “Revati” is a tragic story of an old widow but the characters make it comic at times and even Revati herself is the centre of ridicule, “There are three kinds of burps, she would lecture to him, heaving herself into my father-in-law`s favorite chair. Her body filled up every inch of it. You have the deep, satisfying burp that races up all the way from your stomach. It is as if you have nothing to do with it .It comes up on its own, as loud and relieving as a good fart.” (*TAOD* 95)

This depiction of a normal digestion related problem is enough to applaud the comic element in the story. In another story “Virgin Curry”, the title is appropriate and ironic and readers must appreciate Hariharan for her art of narration. The narrator recalls her past with her friend Patricia Menezes who has been dating so many boys and falls in love with married Samit. Here the writer deserves an appreciation for the superb usage of diction in the following lines:

I went up to the counter and piled a big heap of rice on to my plate, then reached for the dish of mutton curry. There was not a single piece of meat left in it. It was all gravy, oily and slimy, and I was only twenty minutes late! Spooning the gravy on to the rice, I remembered Pat's laughter. Virgin curry again, she would pretend to growl on meatless days. (*TAOD* 110)

Hariharan's language and her art of playing with words create interest in reading. For an instance, the story "Retrospective" is a story of a clerk who follows his daily routine religiously and at a place we find him saying, "But that morning, I wanted for some reason, to bathe. My wife grumbled about heating the water, but after thirty-five years of marriage, a little muttering is permissible to both husband and wife." (*TAOD* 98) Further the readers come to know that his bathroom's drain got chocked and due to which things were uneasy but the narrator is able to relate that condition to his office when he says, "Drying myself in the bathroom, I noticed the murky water standing around my feet like two stubborn puddles. I looked away quickly, like I did when that baggy old woman stood in front of my office desk, her face twitching as if she was going to cry any minute. It was none of my business anyway." (*TAOD* 98)

In "Close -Up", The first customer of that day to the narrator's studio, was Urvashi who is depicted thus, "Her violet nylon sari is covered with gigantic orange roses at regular intervals. They are bordered with gold sequins that glitter like sharp little teeth. She sits very still, like a tame, obedient animal awaiting its master's orders." (*TAOD* 85)

Shashi Deshpande remains outstanding in her contribution towards Indian women writing in English, be it fiction, non-fiction or short stories, her pen writes with fiery aggression towards the emancipation of women in the contemporary Indian society.

Deshpande considers herself as a crusader for the female liberation from the clutches of patronizing male dominated society that, since ages, has denied

women, even their basic right to existence, the society that doesn't care for the opinion of women, that turns deaf ears to the voice of women and that is extremely chauvinistic in its attitude towards women. Although initially she began writing short stories, she also has to her credit four children's books and six novels. In this collection *The Intrusion and Other Stories*, she proves that she is a master of the genre of short stories. The nineteen stories are narrated in a lucid and well-framed style. She used simple sentences and tries to avoid any kind of artificiality. First person narration sounds authentic. She takes up women as central figure who are educated but live in a dilemma.

Shashi Deshpande's creative genius is evident in her command over the technique of fictional creation which is adeptly blended with her deep insight into female psyche. The ideas Shashi Deshpande wishes to bring to consideration are animated and implemented via exploitation of effective narrative technique in her short stories and other fictional works. Her use of metaphor is equally thought provoking as her manner of communication of the message. She also makes clever use of other prominent narrative tools and techniques in her works like the use of symbols, mythological references and the stream of consciousness or interior monologue techniques to enable the reader understand the context properly. In addition she takes help of flashbacks and rhetorical devices in her stories. Shashi Deshpande always foregrounds the setting to grab the attention of her readers for an atmosphere for the currents of thoughts which she weaves into her short stories. Her father was an important influence in shaping her creative genius as a short story writer, his liberal and radical views assisted in the shaping of her sensibility as a creative artist. She is bestowed with the intellectual bent of mind and unconventional attitude by her father. Since her childhood she had unbridled passion for a spectrum of words. She was an avid reader, and her broad reading shaped her sensitivity towards different human experiences. This exhaustive reading complemented with reflection and deep thinking transformed her creative genius into something extraordinary. She roughly rejects the idea of male gender supremacy over the fair gender and shatters all the conservative traditional biased approaches against women in her short stories. She is a staunch

promoter of gender equality. All the stories in the collection *The Intrusion and Other Stories* are representative and illustrative of her rebellious attitude towards the patriarchy.

In the stories under examination, Shashi Deshpande employs metaphors, interior monologue and point of view technique. Her narrative technique makes her stories realistic, and credible. Her narration is in very plain English and she does not believe in any fancy presentation. She talks about the middle class Indian society and especially women. She pours light on the middle class societies where women have to abide by certain sets of norms. In her stories Shashi Deshpande employs first person narration which makes her stories believable as if she has been relating some of her experience from her personal life. To her, past and present are inseparable.

“The Intrusion” is the title story of the collection of short stories where the narrator is a woman who is recently married to an insensitive husband, her dreams of a happy married life full of love and affection are shattered when she realizes that her husband doesn’t treat her in the way she expected. She soon starts disliking her husband and develops a disliking for sex act.

Shashi Deshpande in this story with first person narration gives us a glimpse of the condition of women in middle class society, she also questions the institution of marriage that allows a man to treat woman less than a human being. According to her, the significance of marriage is reduced to merely a certificate allowing a man to have sex with the woman and bear kids. The protagonist in the story feels as if she has no privacy. The narration in the story is exceedingly authentic and the writer succeeds in winning the sympathy for her protagonist in the story. The story depicts men as illogically dominating sex seeking insensitive human beings who strongly deny the woman the fundamental right to their individuality. The narrator is in a position to accept the proposal without any refusal. She worries that no one has asked for her acceptance. She says, “No one had asked me if I had agreed; it had been taken for granted.” (TIAOS203) If the daughter is the first girl child of the family, parents think that she is the hindrance

to the next children. The narrator's father forces her to accept the proposal by saying that "What's wrong with him? I have two more daughters to be married. Why are you so silent?" (*TIAOS* 203)

Being an obedient daughter, a devoted wife and a caring and loving mother are the three ideals of womanhood in Hindu society. Being an obedient daughter she prepares herself to be a devoted wife. As a devoted wife she has to satisfy her husband's wish. Like Sita who followed her husband in the forest, the narrator follows her husband to a 'fishing village' which is unknown to her. The place they visited was not a planned one. The narrator's husband tells in a boastful manner that, "how fortunate he was to get this place for our honeymoon. What luck, he said, that one of the top executives, who was to have come here, had cancelled his visit at the last minute, so that we were here all by ourselves" (*TIAOS* 202) The narrator wonders about the place that it is suitable to come and stay with the family. In the male dominated society women are oppressed and have no scope for identity. The story has a number of instances which state that she is oppressed. She wants to create a cordial relationship. She finds him as an intruder. She narrates, "I had a great longing to go down, to scuff my bare toes in the sand, to pick up shells and sit on the rocks, ... He would swim, I thought, and call out to me in a lazy and friendly way and I would respond with a wave and a smile." (*TIAOS* 204)

The story clearly depicts the means of a devoted wife submitting to the wishes of a husband who is very often, a total stranger for her and who will take her regardless of her fears and emotion. Deshpande writes in a clear and lucid manner. Readers feel attached to her way of delivering thoughts. She says in an interview given to Lakshmi Holmstorm, "Craftsmanship is so important in writing.....And the short story was perfect form to learn from, because one had to be brief. One had to be careful...I am very careful about not using extra words." (Pathak 242)

She uses a language which is easy and spontaneous and that adds to the beauty of narration. Her fiction can be applauded for mythic allusions. "Hear Me,

Sanjay” and “The Last Enemy” are the best example of mythological incidences. She has reinterpreted the mythological episodes. She has examined the character of Duryodhan in the story “The Last Enemy”, where she depicts his agony and inner conflict at the end of war and like Hariharan`s narration, she too pours light on the inevitability of death thus:

That hatred of his, the hatred he had nursed for so long, seemed to have strangely unreal quality? Only this truth shone clear in the darkness ---that Bhima who had sworn to kill him, would do so now. Somehow it did not seem to matter very much anymore. On the contrary, a strange pity filled him at the thought of poor, stupid Bhima gloating over his dead body, imagining himself the victor. Bhima would never learn what he just had -----that is the dead who always win, the dead who are the real victors. (TIAOS 112)

Similarly, “The Inner Rooms” and “Hear Me, Sanjay” are also based on the great epic *Mahabharata* but readers can notice the contemporary and problematic variations. The voices are lent to women in both the stories as Amba speaks in the story “The Inner Rooms” and Kunti speaks in the story “Hear Me Sanjay”. Kunti accepted Madri as King Pandu`s second wife but the narration throws light on her inner agony when she speaks:

And yet there was a time when I used to brood over them, every minute of the day. Do you know how unfair life is to a woman who does not have beauty, Sanjaya? The day they brought Madri home I knew I was not beautiful. Until then, I had not known it, perhaps I had not thought about it all. But after that, every day, every moment of every day. (TIAOS 141)

In “The Inner Rooms”, Amba breaks away the traditional and patriarchal norms and runs away to burn herself as she does not want to be humiliated by the Bhishma who abducts her along with her two sisters, as brides for Vichitravirya. She chooses death and her inner conflict and mental condition is narrated beautifully in third person narration:

The thought carried her on for some time until she had neatly arranged herself in the midst of dry wood, dry leaves carefully spread in between.

Once again, the minor discomforts mattered most. The sharp twigs hurt her body, her hair was entangled somewhere. In her impatience to be free of these small pains, she rushed to the task of lighting the fire. A spark, a small glow. And suddenly she was confronted by flames. There was a moment's panic as she realized she was trapped again. But where would she go?

She uses metaphor of dark, silence and death in her stories. The metaphor of dark is beautifully used in the story "It Was Dark", where dark represents submission as the daughter is molested by a stranger and the whole incidence takes place when it was dark:

What is it? I had asked her, a kind of terror gripping me. I had put my hands on her face, but she had jerked it away and said, 'It was dark'. The words had been said matter-of-factly, I could almost hear a shrug in them. It was like someone speaking of faraway fears, an experience outdistanced and left so far behind that it had ceased to matter. After that, there had been only silence. (*TIAOS* 38)

Here, dark is evil also as she is raped by a man and is not able to come out of the trauma. Mother feels very sad for her daughter's condition but she related the same to her life as she was asked to break the wall and surrender herself to her husband on their wedding night. Deshpande uses loneliness as a recurring theme in her stories where her female characters feel lonely and alienated and become restless. For instance, the wife in the story "An Antidote to Boredom", is so lonely that she falls in love with a widower but at the same time, is not able to continue the relationship due to an unknown guilt. Her characters are typical Indian women who cannot do away with the norms of society.

The Story "It was the Nightingale" is narrated in first person where Jayu loves her husband deeply but decides to go abroad for her growth and progress and here Deshpande tries to introduce the shades of modern woman. In another story "The Stone Women", the statues of women in the temples are strong representatives of condition of contemporary Indian women.

In the decades of 80s and 90s Women's issues captured international momentum as it is quite evident that in most modern societies, women are subjected to unequal treatment; they suffer discrimination, exploitation and subjugation all over the world. The notion of equal justice for both the genders is still not addressed with due seriousness.

The patriarchal hegemony only relegates awareness of a woman's inferior, secondary status in the society. Sacrifice, submissiveness and tolerance are supposed to be her inherent qualities. Her individuality is recognized very little in the patriarchal society and so self-effacement is her normal way of life.

In yet another story titled "Why the Robin", the narrator is again a woman, mother of a daughter and wife to her indifferent husband. In the very opening the woman narrates that her daughter asks her help in writing an essay on the mysterious bird Robin about which she has a little knowledge. She is felt inadequate here by her daughter as she could not help her in her writing, the indifferent attitude of her daughter makes her feel alienated in her own house. She is also marginalized by her husband who has also built his own specific zone in the house where she is not allowed to go. She feels locked out in own house. She feels like the bird Robin herself as she is denied her existence by her husband and daughter for whom she has been doing all kind of domestic work, and they also don't treat her more than a domestic help.

Shashi Deshpande accurately captures the inner psyche of a woman in Indian middle class family in the form of the narrator of the story "Why the Robin". She becomes the representative of all the women in Indian middle class households.

In the story "The First Lady", the narrator is a woman who marries a man whom she likes for his political inclinations. As the man becomes a strong political figure and she is addressed as first lady, she suddenly starts feeling a vacuum in her life and the title which is given to her, is nothing more than a remark for her. She is aloof and she does not want to live such a life. "We have

lived too long,” (*TIAOS* 16) she says to herself. For Deshpande, self-revelation is a cruel process. The narrative techniques of the story is filled with several surprising and shocking revelation which the hallmark of Shashi Deshpande’s literary genius.

In a typical middle class Indian family as a woman grows, she is inculcated with the sense of self-denial, of pride in patience, of the need to accept a lower status as exemplified by ideals of Sita, Savithri and Gandhari. Indian woman is expected to accept the given role passively and comply with the norms of society in shaping her destiny. Providing comfort (physical and emotional) to her husband, cooking delicious food for the members of family and nursing the kids and senior members of the family are some of the assigned duties to women in Indian middle class family.

Women in Indian family are taught to make sacrifices and be dependent on man for survival. Woman is the central object of her stories. Her women characters are born out of a typically Indian situation. They represent middle-class society.

In some of the stories, the female protagonists emerge as rebellious and in some the protagonists surrender to the social forces silently and accept their destiny. The duality of existence is the central concern as well as double standards of the male dominated society are also to be exposed in her stories through various rhetorical devices.

The women in the world of her stories are caught in margins; they are caught between tradition and modernity, between family and profession, between culture and nature, between freedom and loneliness.

In the stories titled “The First Lady”, “Can You Hear Silence”, “An Antidote to Boredom” and “The Wall is Safer”, Shashi Deshpande uses the first person point of view technique. The first person narration makes the story appear more realistic and more credible. The first person narration allows the author to dwell deep into the mind of the protagonist, exposing her confusions, fears and

anxieties. It mirrors different aspects of female consciousness that cannot be presented through the traditional narrative method. She captures the intensity of emotions of her characters through the use of the first person narration. The narrators are participants in the stories. They are young women writer who face their own challenges in their distinctive ways and find themselves intrigued by the indifferent attitude of their counterparts. They have strong urge of breaking the glass ceiling and come out of the confinements of the age old slavery module of patriarchy.

In some stories like “The Wall is Safer”, “Ghosts” and “Lucid Moments”, Shashi Deshpande experiments with the technique of stream of consciousness, the conscience of the protagonists gets stirred in a specific moment of time and a chain of subsequent events. Shashi Deshpande successfully uses two narrative points of view - one, an I - narrator, and another a third person story teller - in a fascinating manner of unfolding the past and the present without using the conventional flashback method.

In the story “The Cruelty Game”, the writer presents a realistic portrayal of the psychological problems encountered by the protagonist. The narration achieves a rare combination of authenticity and reality because of shifting of the narrative from the first person to the third person in every alternative way. In her stories, Shashi Deshpande skillfully keeps experimenting with the third person and the first person narration. The story “And Then” unfolds itself through the flashback technique. Like the protagonist of “The Intrusion”, the narrator of this story too recollects her own experiences as girl as well as her relationships with her parents and with her husband.

Hence *The Intrusion and Other Stories* is collection of stories by Shashi Deshpande which is very much an evidence of her narrative genius. She never misses an opportunity to try new ways of expression in her stories. She adopts the stream of consciousness technique, the flashback technique and other innovative methods to make her stories seem real, authentic and a running documentary on the contemporary society.

The myths are exploited by the writer to illuminate the inner landscape of women's mind. She is a rational and practical person who doesn't save any space for sentiments and romance in her fictional world of stories while publishers in India would love to publish love stories. The literary artist in Shashi Deshpande makes use of devices such as the choice of English, the narrative structure, the use of interior monologue, the deployment of myths and folktales, the employment of metaphor. These techniques reinforce the central burden of her stories, and contribute to the totality of their meaning. She captures things from a broader perspective where she depicts the reality of middle class societies where women are supposed to live in a dilemma and identity crisis.

Her stories are told from a feminine perspective where the speaker is a girl, mother, daughter or wife and her inner thoughts are delivered in a fantastic manner and her style is characterized by "economy, brevity, concreteness, clarity and vividness."(Scott and Madden 94)

It can be said about Shashi Deshpande's writing that she uses simple and short sentences and her language is lucid. She uses interior monologue and stream of consciousness to reveal the thought process of her characters. According to Mala Rangnathan:

Shashi Deshpande excels in the ability to create poetry in fiction, mainly due to her repertoire of images and symbols used in a contrapuntal style, as seen in the contrastive symbols of robin versus peacock, nightingale versus lark, light versus dark, silence versus noise, etc. For these symbols occurring in contrapuntal rhythms create conflict in her fiction. The digressive quality in her novel, due to the use of dream sequences, flashback techniques and memory recall, significantly makes a rare appearance in her short stories. Hence her stories are more focused and concentrated in their narratives. They have a compassionate and an all-encompassing mood of understanding and concern for women who haunt these narratives. Through these female characters, Shashi Deshpande is able to illuminate female lives, their joys and woes, their peevishness and puzzles about life, society and their inner selves, and finally the female

philosophy of the need to ‘keep the light within always burning’.
(Bhattacharya 123)

Deshpande`s characters are rooted in the Indian soil and the same can be said about Nergis Dalal`s characters. In her volume *The Nude*, she has been extremely interested in the intimate side of man-woman relationship in her stories. She also presents a dark and dismal side of life but with a shade of humour in them. Nergis Dalal`s short stories always serve the readers with good thoughts and develops their critical faculty. They are able to be at one with the stories. A link between the reader and society is established. Nergis Dalal is one of the revolutionary women writers of Indian English Writers writing in English, in her stories she endeavours to display various colours of Indian society in her stories. The role of women as writers is a topic of concern in the present scenario. Though most part of Indian writing in English was developed by male writers, women writers had to fight hard to secure a place for themselves but Dalal has a unique perception of life in the world.

Women short story writers have achieved remarkable success in translating their experiences and imagination into words blended with sternness, tenacity and novelty of ideas. They have introduced their own technique of storytelling or narration in their stories, they are written from the perspective of women mostly, and they are the expression of angst and rebellion against the stereotypical social traditions. Any literature written by women is an expression of defiance of set standards of society that limit the role and potential of women in the sphere of society.

Nergis Dalal is an iconic modernist writer as she defied all the set patterns of storytelling in her collection of stories titled *The Nude*. Her narrative technique is unique and very much an expression of her iconoclastic ways of life.

Women today are no longer the victims of patriarchal society that has suppressed their voice since ages. The image of the new woman and her struggle

for an identity of her own also emerges as a dominant theme in the Indian English literature especially produced by women.

In the beginning, Indian women writers tried to throw some light on Indian myths and beliefs but Dalal has always tried to discuss the minutest details related to it. She discusses the inner and psychological condition of her character and presents it in totally different manner.

A large number of stories in the collection focus on the psyche and its inner conflicts of the leading characters, Nergis Dalal was not essentially a feminist writer, she loves to be called a versatile modern writer and that's why her writing attempts to investigate into problems of humanity which they face in their daily lives.

Nergis Dalal examines the reactions of her characters in various situations of life mostly situations of disappointments, failure, grief and death. Her stories are like a running commentary on the ways of life and she teaches us to live life the way it should be lived, she communicates a sense of optimism towards life.

Several new trends have been introduced in literature, psychoanalysis or stream of consciousness or interior monologue is one of them, from the very introduction of the field of psycho-analysis which has shown solid connectivity to literature which talks in detail about the psychology and suffering of women. Women writers try to shift from endurance to exploration, from suffering to soaring and from violence to victory.

Dalal's narrative technique in *The Nude* is more of character portrayal and description of situation which can be categorized into the category of response to situation literature. The very first story in the collection, "The French Wife" records the attitude of people towards the death of Mrs. Kapoor, especially her husband, the story unfolds into flashback in the memories of Mr. Kapoor and through the conversations of their neighbors and well-wishers.

The story unfolds mostly via the technique of flashback; the readers come to know about the inner psyche and nature of Mrs. Kapoor as well as connection between the husband and wife. The narrator is anonymous in the story, maybe the writer herself, as the lively description given by the narrator about Mrs. Kapoor, it seems that the narrator used to know her very well and others as well. The description of the graceful movements of Mrs. Kapoor are very serene, the story substantiates the statement about Dalal's accurate and minute observation. She provides her readers with each and every detail about characters as well as the surroundings of the characters. In "The French Wife", Dalal's narrative art is at par realistic that introduces everyone with what is happening in the story. Readers may tend to forget that they are reading a story; they feel that the happenings are based on real life events; her use of stream of consciousness technique unravels the deeper inner psyche of her characters.

Mr. Kapoor who is a devoted husband really feels the loss of absence of Mrs. Kapoor, the description of pain and suffering while remembering his dead wife simulates with every Indian devoted husband.

Dalal unmistakably describes Mrs. Kapoor and her cooking and performing different household chores brings her back to life. The writer cleverly imagines all her gracious household movements with flair and makes her a living embodiment of perfection. Similarly, in the story "A Taste of Blood", the mother feels alienated due to male-dominated approach of husband who wants his son to be like him and they go for hunting where she speaks clearly about the act of hunting, "You are corrupting my child, teaching him the taste of blood. It is corruption worse than that of sex---more perverse than any perversion." (*The Nude* 17) Here it is significant to notice the aptness of the title of the story which clearly talks about the problem of hunting.

In the title story "The Nude", Nergis Dalal tells a story of disappointed painter of Nudes, she tells the reader that Mr. Oliver was once a very successful painter of nudes but nowadays he is struggling in his career, he needs a model to paint a nude for his high society clients in the world of modeling and fine arts, as

she belongs to the post modern world of glamour and fashion, in this story she openly mentions the reaction of the painter on seeing Mrs. Oliver, "Some women should never wear clothes. Clothes hide the shape and colour of skin." (*The Nude* 51) This story narrates the attitude of modern generation towards female beauty and being a modern writer, Dalal believes that real beauty of a woman can be seen only when she removes her clothes. The description of frustration of an artist and his dislike for Mrs. Oliver at the first sight is quite symbolical of the modern generation who tries to perceive beauty through first impression while the writer conveys that sometimes you should stay patient to enjoy or capture the beauty. Mrs. Oliver is described in the following manner:

At first when she turned towards his stairs, he did not connect her with Mrs. Oliver, the model who would pose for him in the nude. She was a monstrous woman, broad and tall, encased in a sack like dress and loose sweater that must have taken all of three pounds of wool. Her face and hair were hidden by a faded scarf, tightly bound around her head. She had on thick stockings and her massive legs ended, surprisingly, in tiny, slippered feet. Feet that looked as if they had been bound and shortened by some Chinese amah many years ago. She walked with a curious lurching movement as though her feet were too small and fragile to bear the burden of her enormous weight. (*The Nude* 52-53)

Further, the readers notice a drastic shift in the depiction of the same lady and that too in nude:

For some moments he remained with his eyes fixed on her, as though he could hardly believe what he was seeing. She was naked, lying on the couch which seemed to have shrunk under her so that she spilled out luxuriously over it. Her nudity was immense, expansive, disturbing. She lay with one arm around her head and the other trailing over the carpet. She was half turned, her face hidden, one leg comfortably tucked under her. Her scarf, removed, revealed a mass of dark brown hair, glossy and thick. But it was not this which held this painter's eye. It was the quality

and color of her skin. It had the sheen and shimmer of apricot – colored silk, firm and unwrinkled. (*The Nude* 53-54)

The story creates sufficient ripples in the course of time and establishes nudity as virtue and inspires her followers to more realistic with their concept of inner and outer space. Dalal's narrative genius in arousing sympathies in the readers is displayed in the story "Christmas Means Love" where the narrator is a six year old boy who is alone during Christmas days and who feels bored just a week before Christmas. The description is identical of Indian household during festivals but the rat race of the world had made humans disinterested in festivals especially the growing up kid whose father is away from him during Christmas days. The writer uses the motif of flashback in portraying the environment during Christmas season but the enthusiasm for this annual Christian festival for Arun has deteriorated and he feels depressed, turned six, he can't cry because his mother told him so.

The narration in the story suitably draws the inner psyche of the six year old kid who has lost all enthusiasm for the festival. Here Nergis Dalal sends a message to all humanity with the help of this six year old kid that festivals are the time of togetherness and the kids suffer most when any of the parents is not present on such occasion.

The story digs deep into the inner space of the psyche of a six year old kid who becomes nostalgic to relive his past experiences of Christmas during the current season. The Inner psyche of children is all receptive and very sensitive; they don't have the sense of time and they weep for their near and dear ones when they miss them.

The narration in the story also exposes the final realization that one should follow one's heart and soul in living one's life. The narrator regrets not living the life on her terms. She has wasted her life in making others happy, Dalal adeptly delivers her message via the lead character of the story that life should be lived after one's heart and soul otherwise one has to regret when the time is lost. The

writer uses the motif of stream of consciousness and Flashback in this story to unfold the events in the story. The first person narration imparts authenticity to the description and her keen sense of individuals and their private mental zones.

In the story “Happiness is Box of Fudge”, the narrators are two adolescent girls who are harassed by their family friend Mr. Krishna. The girls don’t like the old man but they are forced to read English newspaper to him much against their will. Their hatred and disgust is reflected in their narration. Nergis Dalal with alarmingly compelling narration in the story presents an eye opening scenario of Indian Society and degradation of moral standards in Indian families.

The very opening statement of the story in the first person plural pronoun shows the total disgust of the two girls towards a widower. Dalal like other women writer is a master of the art of narration, all the other stories in the collection proves this statement at best. She has studied India microscopically and knows a lot about Indian traditions, festivals and emerging trends and evils in the society. She tries to expose the evils in the society with her flamboyant narration in her stories. In the story “Happiness is a Box of Fudge”, the narrators are two adolescent girls who have to suffer the plight of reading English newspaper to their next door neighbor, “I was twelve and sister was Fourteen. When he came to see us, or we visited him, he had a habit of grabbing us by an arm and pressing us against him, noisily kissing our faces, rubbing his hand up and down our backs, and all the while exuding that faint, un-disguisable, repugnant, old man smell.” (*The Nude*, 150)

Here, once again the title is appropriate, as the box of fudge becomes source of real happiness for the girls which they receive by the relative of the widower after his death.

Dalal in her subtle and detailed style quite adeptly touches on a number of social problems prevalent in the subcontinent and resultant behaviors that emerge from these problems in family and social settings. These include mixed marriages, belonging to a minority group, dowry, and infidelity and inheritance issues among

others. The author in her simple yet controlled style manages to intricately weave all these themes in her novel, ensuring that the focus never moves away from the central characters. Nergis Dalal's narration is remarkable for the recurring theme of superstitions and myths. For instance, the stories like "The Sacrifice", "The Alabaster Goddess", "The Intruder", "The Temple Bells", "The Temple of Shiva" and "The Seller of Mantras" have got mythical references or superstitious approach. Most of the stories are in a third person narration where the events take place in a sequence. "The Sacrifice" is a story which deals with the ancient superstition of sacrifice to pour rain and Mr. Triana was killed for the same reason and this is the symbol of victory and is depicted in following words, "Out of a clear sky, cloudless and blue, the rain hammered down with a thundering noise. And through the rain, they could still hear the drums, powerful, triumphant, exulting and coming from the very bowels of the hungry earth." (*The Nude* 38)

Similarly, the story "The Intruder" deals with the psychological aspect where the second wife of Mr. Vale feels alienated in the house and starts feeling the presence of the first wife and finally dies:

She opened the window before getting into the bed, and at once the curtains swung inwards, billowing out as though they had a life of their own. The cold made her shiver and tremble. With the opening of the window, the grey shape had come back—the light was dim and misty but she could see the staring grey eyes in the pale face, the thin, fleshless hands curved inwards. Though no one had spoken, the words fell distinctly into her mind--- Go away ---go away ---go away. A sort of soundless whispering that made her throat go dry. (*The Nude* 108)

In another story, "The Temple Bells" the theme of superstitions makes the narration interesting where Akhtar Singh finds himself unable to steal the jewels of the temple due to sudden ringing of the bells which he related to age-old superstition, "I told you about the bells. You did not believe me." (*The Nude* 148) "The Seller of Mantras" is again a picture-perfect narration of the condition of Indians who blindly believe in prophecy and that is how the protagonist survives with the new job of predicting future and remedies. The other story "Roses, Roses

All the Way” talks about the Indian belief system where people blindly follow the instructions of so called babas and when the female protagonists come to know the reality, she starts enjoying her life back and living her ways:

‘Well’, she said, ‘they say no experience is wasted. Now, I know what I am going to do with my life, I am going to enjoy myself. I shall go back to my house and renovate it —new carpets, curtains, furnishings and the most sybaritic bathrooms you have ever seen. I shall read enormously----- every new book that comes out, and listen to music. I shall grow roses and drink tea.’ (*The Nude* 90)

Jaya Sharma in her paper entitled *Indian Belief in Short Fiction of Nergis Dalal* writes:

The Nude, a compendium of twenty short stories presents a tableau of different perceptions. The stories are representatives of twenty different shades of life and leave some untold eruditions for the readers to understand. Portrayal of beauty tickles us, description of love moves us, east and west encounter compel us to think, and the description of Indian culture and tradition mesmerizes us with its genuine, picturesque depiction. All these themes enthrall Dalal and a sumptuous feast is doled out for the readers. Besides the universal themes some psychological and social themes also adorn her stories and she uses melodrama to describe them. But the theme of Indianness is dominant in most of her stories. A new dimension has been given to Indian short stories as Indian beliefs peep in all her stories whether the setting is urban or rural or of remote area. India, a land of spirituality, a land of myths and beliefs, and of culture and reverence, and of fairs and processions has allured from time immemorial the writers to give voice to this rich heritage. (Sharma 2013)

Nergis Dalal has truly included all the above mentioned themes in her stories where they talk about the myths which are passed on to other generations and that is why when Dilip Singh and Akhtar Singh try to steal jewels from the temple, people relate the ringing of bells to the myth and become confident of their belief. Similarly, in the story “The Silver Stallion”, the father the son go to

sell the horse but Bishen does not want to sell his favorite and dear animal so he firmly believes what was told by people about the legend in Pushkar, “On the night of full moon, if you float a lighted wick down the waters of the Pushkar lake, and it reaches the temple in the middle, than whatever you have wished for, comes true.” (*The Nude* 93) It may be called as a coincidence that the priest was planning to save villages from draught and he chooses their village first which to quote in P.G. Javalgi’s words, “Bishen attributes this good luck to his floating of lamp in the lake in front of the temple of Brahma.”(*The Nude* 99)

The same belief can be noticed in the story “The Seller of Mantra” where people’s belief about Ganga is told in the following manner, “People sought here an adjustment between reality and dreams, secure in the knowledge that no matter what they did, a plunge in the holy water washed them clean of all sins.” (*The Nude* 206) In the story “The Temple of Shiva”, peacocks are considered as pious and sacred birds, “The peacocks are sacred – beloved of the gods they are to be cherished and protected. Even to point a finger at them will bring misfortune.” (*The Nude* 186) Thus, Dalal is a writer who uses the myths, superstitions and beliefs in writing and comes up with a beautiful blend. She is a contemporary writer who has touched upon all aspects of contemporary India. Like Dalal, we have got one more writer who has touched upon the modern themes of writing and who tries to present modern women who are liberated and who want to do something on their own.

“Nandita C. Puri may look like a quiet reserved person but she is very eloquent with her pen. Absolutely talkative and unreserved. One hardly suspects that she observes so much, and so meticulously, the realities which fly around her quite often bruise her sensibilities.” (*Nine on Nine* Foreword)

Above mentioned is an opinion expressed by Gulzar in the foreword of Puri’s collection of Stories *Nine on Nine*, Nandita C Puri, in her collection which has nine vigorously flamboyant stories on various theme with lifelike narration presents struggle and plight of humans of Mumbai and Kolkata, her themes are a

lot about contemporary problems, her narration is full of vividness and vivacity, she animates her characters to the readers.

Nandita is recognized as being very reserved and quiet yet equally observant of minute details, she looks deep into the psyche of the people and creates her characters microscopically to make her story one with reality. With her unique narrative techniques she captures the very soul of Indian Metropolitan cities and how the humans of these urban metros keep running to secure happiness for their families and people.

In the stories, the characters and situations are described in such a honest and straightforward way that nobody can deny the relevance of the significance of them in Indian Urban lifestyle, In her stories, Puri openly uses archaic or regional racial language inspire the reader to see the world from her point of view. She experiments with all three kinds of perspective in her stories i.e. the first person, second person and the third perspective in her stories. The narrator goes to the extent to justify the ways of the protagonist of the stories.

As Gulzar says, “The most important aspect of her writing is the range of the cross section of society that she deals with and narrates so successfully. Her expression is precise and brisk. The details of the milieu in every story are remarkable for its region and class.” (*Nine on Nine* Foreword)

Nandita Puri has a unique imaginative faculty which she is able to associate with the vivaciousness of linguistic fervor; she knows how to make her characters appear real and natural. The opening lines of the story titled “Bhabhiji” are funny:

“Ek Di maaandhi,
Do di maa kaani,
Teen di maa tikkhal,
Chautha di maa rani.”

(The mother of one son is blind, the mother of two is one-eyed; the mother of three sons is unlucky; but the mother of four sons is always a queen.)
(*Nine on Nine* 69)

Here she has chosen the Punjabi old saying to begin the story with and similarly such regional language and words are used quite on and off by her. Further, Bhabhiji is considered as “Sakshat Chudail” (70) by the neighbor due to her above average looks. Nandita in her story narrates the politics of brothers and their women in a typical Hindu family, she relates about Gautam, “With a mix of surprise and relief, he suddenly realized that he no longer cared. Gone was that feeling of responsibility towards his elder brother that had dogged him after his father’s death and throughout his three marriages. Devarji khalagaye? Shall we lay the table? It was bhabhiji. (*Nine on Nine* 94)

Nandita has painted inner world of a typical Indian Household and realistically given a peep into the rivalry of brothers for distribution of property and responsibility after the death of the father and how a Bhabhi-like maternal woman is supposed to treat all people (old and young) with equal respect and affection as well as take care of everyone in the household. Woman is presented in the story as a connecting link and soul of the household. She takes all as she is believed to possess super human qualities but she is also presented as a figure who dominates to such an extreme level that she does not allow any woman in the house as her brother-in-law’s wife and that is why he lives alone throughout. Her language is colloquial and dialogue delivery is fine which adds spice to the story.

Nandita Puri’s matchless humour and vibrant tone reflects her rare perception of human nature. Her protagonists are mostly women with their own intellectual perception, their own motives which sometimes are configurable and sometimes not to the readers.

In the story, “The Arranged Marriage”, the writer skillfully captures the spirit of Indian Middle class family when it comes to making arrangements for an arranged marriage, they have high hopes with the celebration as well as with the would be daughter-in-law, writer gives an unexpected turn to events in the story that shatters all hopes. “All this time we had been shopping for Anu, and her family”. Rani was referring to her future daughter-in-law, “sarees for her mother and aunts and kurtas for her father and brothers. Then we had to get the bride’s

jewellery. Especially order the mangalsutra and the engagement ring.” (*Nine on Nine 1*)

The over enthusiastic preparation by the mother for her son’s wedding and extravagant shopping is questioned by her married daughter who resented the over spending on his brother’s wedding, she questions her mother, “But you never bothered at all when I got married. You never even came with me to buy my wedding sarees. Remember?” (*Nine on Nine 2*)

In the same story Nandita Puri makes her readers look into the secret mysterious gossip like conversation between Shivani and the mother of the groom:

“Tai, Can I make a request?” Rani asked Shivani suddenly.

“What?”

“Will you promise not to tell anyone at home about Girish? Please.

“Oh. I see.” Then with a naughty grin Shivani said, “Alright. But what do I get in return?”

“What do you want?” Rani asked apprehensively.

“Let me think. Hmm……. Okey…….maybe a weekly treat?”

“Uhh. Okey. As you wish.” Rani was relieved. (*Nine on Nine 5*)

The technique of revealing characters through their dialogues is uniquely expressive. Nandita loves to record real life in her stories. She hates to insert any unnecessary details in her stories to create sensationalism among readers. Her stories are mirror-like showing the real face of the society. Similarly, many a times, we notice the remarkable and require use of native words during conversation, for instance:

“Faltu nako, Aai. It is the plain truth. And it hurts.”

“Yes, yes. I know. But what could we do? It was your entire fault.”

“What do you mean, my fault?” Rekha asked.

“You chose Shiva, we did not. So why should we spend on your wedding?”

“But Aai, this is ridiculous. What if the boy you chose for me turned out to be a rascal? And how do you know your future daughter-in-law may not turn out to be one?”

“Ab bas karo. You should learn to hold that tongue of yours. Do you want to come with us or not?” Rani told her daughter angrily. (*Nine on Nine* 3)

Puri's stories pour light on the mother-daughter conflict and relationship. This is a recurring theme in her stories. Similar relationship can be seen in the story “Pages from Indulata Devi's Diary” where the father wants her daughter to study well but the mother and the grandmother are totally against it. Her stories are in the form of flashbacks where the characters start thinking about the past events all of a sudden. For instance, in the story, “An Arranged Marriage”, Rekha who is the daughter of Rani and Girish keeps on thinking about the past events and this all takes place throughout the story. She thinks at a place how afraid she was to marry her love Shiva, “Lucky girl, good catch. Abhi fasao hero ko. Kisi tarah bhi” her friend Smita had advised her then.

“Arre no. Can't do. Besides Aai – Baba will not allow a love marriage. I will have to settle for an arranged marriage.”(*Nine on Nine* 11)

This is the conversation between Smita and her which she recalls after her marriage with Shiva. There are end number of places when the conversation takes place in the regional language and Puri tries her best to give the story Indian look and in that too, the region to which the characters belong to. In her another story “At Jenny's”, the same narratology is adopted by her where women come to a parlour for their make-over and start gossiping with each other, “Going out for a party?” Jenny enquired, breaking into Sonika's thoughts.

“Well...not really. Going out for dinner at Marriott. Today's our anniversary. Congratulations.” Jenny came over and hugged Sonika. “Thanks” Sonika muttered.”(*Nine on Nine* 26)

Puri's women characters are modern and educated women who converse in such a manner that readers get a message that today, women really have to

come up with new approaches and they must try to find their happiness in their own way. Her language is vernacular and this can be noticed at many a places. In the same story “At Jenny`s”, the girl Aalia who is in love with a married man unknowingly and that too, with the same one with whose wife, she shares her experiences in the parlour, the story progresses in the form of real conversation, to quote:

“Just a second,” Aalia said as she took out her cellphone.” “Let me feed it in. Shoot.”

“9819133001. It is a roaming number but you can only SMS. No calls. When he travels abroad, he prefers to take thisyou know the number of local calls he has to avoid. SMS him and he will reply you or call you back. Just a second...” (*Nine on Nine* 46)

Nandita`s all the stories are narrated with the help of past-present narrative where the readers read the story in present and all of a sudden, is asked to go back in the past to be acquainted with past events but she writes in such a manner that the reader feels connected throughout and that makes her narration interesting. In the story, “Flashback”, the daughter falls in love with the same NRI neighbor with whom her mother fell in love years back and who is her biological father but this is revealed to the readers at the end and in such a manner, that the readers are bound to be connected till the end:

“Seven long years passed. And then I met a man – good looking, caring, humorous, everything your father was not. He was a good ten years younger than me .But I succumbed to his charm like a school girl. We had a beautiful relationship, one of the most memorable phases of my life. He was leaving for States for higher studies when I discovered I was pregnant with his child. My husband was absolutely livid when I told him. I threatened to expose his sterility if he did not allow me to keep my baby. He kept quiet and went along with my plans. Then you came along Simu. Yes, you are that child, born out of wedlock.”

“Ma! You mean to say...” Srimoti choked.

“Yes, Simu and your father is Arijit Ghose.”(*Nine on Nine* 67-68)

In the story “Radha’s Journey”, in the very beginning, Radha thinks of her childhood when she along with her sister would go out in heat and heat had no change on her but in present time, AC hotel rooms have spoiled her. Similarly in the story, “The Piano Teacher”, readers can find the use of stream of consciousness technique where the lady recalls the suggestions of her neighbour Mr. Kichlu and bursts into laughter:

“Why don’t you walk around the building atleast, Mrs. D’Souza? You will feel a lot better. Look at the amount of weight you have put on. You will end up with a stroke one of these days.”

“How does it matter, one way or the other, MR. Kichlu? I am alright. What do I have to look forward to now? At least, let me enjoy my last years, eating and lazing around. Whether I diet or exercise, I will have to go one of these days. See I might as well live it up. What do you say, Mr. Kichlu?” The memory of that conversation made her laugh. (*Nine on Nine* 171)

Thus, we can say that she is a writer who tries to deliver her stories in a very colloquial manner and the readers feel quite attached to her stories.

Thus, it can be said that the narrative technique of Indian women writers has set new benchmarks for the future writers as well as for the readers. These women are more iconoclastic, beyond the limit thinkers and visionary they have increased the outreach of Indian English literature across the globe and make the world acknowledge the contribution of Indian English writers in the world literary community. Several Indian writers have secured a name for them in the world and made significant contribution for the development of Indian tradition of short story writing.

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Chapter-7

Insights

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Insights

19th Century is remarkable due to the introduction of English education in India and it served as a source of social reforms and psychological changes. Indian English Literature developed gradually; it was not a day's toil. It was a consistent effort of many intellectuals who gave worldly fame to our literature. Indian English literature has witnessed changes with time. Women writers started using pen as a weapon to give voice to their muted experiences but it was not easy to break through the social taboos, male dominance and beliefs which were deeply rooted in the society. Women writers have tried to touch the untouched aspects of the lives of women. They have given voice to the voiceless experiences of women in the society. They have talked about their role-definitions, their personal plight and erased experiences. Women's writing is a great connective between the male viewpoint and a female perspective. Women writers in India have done a good job in delivering the appropriate themes and they have tried to make people aware of the rigid norms laid down for women everywhere.

Indian English writings of women writers have achieved pinnacles of success and short story writing has contributed to great extent in this context. This chapter is an attempt to conclude the thematic and narrative changes in the short stories of proposed four women writers of Post 1990 Women Short Story Writers in Indian English. Githa Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Nergis Dalal and Nandita Puri are prominent short story writers who have touched upon the common and mystified experiences of women in a very firm and thought-provoking manner. They have depicted the condition of women in the society. They deliver the dilemma through which women continuously go through in day to day life. Women experience an inner conflict as they work extreme hard for the success of the family and in return, they get nothing, not even a few words of praise which makes the things even more complicated for them. Women are the central figure of a family if we talk in terms of sacrifice and devotion but they are always ignored. A woman goes beyond her limits to establish the roots of her family. She

has to compromise a lot but she is ignored most of the times to such an extreme that she starts feeling lonely and helpless. These women writers have talked about this alienation, anxiety, identity crisis and various role plays of women in the society. They talk about the similar experiences of all the women and their different reactions and approaches. This chapter is a modest attempt to brief the thematic and narrative changes in the proposed collections of short stories of these four writers.

Githa Hariharan is a distinguished writer who has tried to pour light on the mystified experiences of women in the form of twenty stories. Her stories deal with the dying and reaction of family members towards the tragic happenings. Rajul Bhargava opines, “Her stories are inner workings of the protagonists who are enmeshed in the lateral mappings and the relationships which reveal the cartography of power and social control.” (Bhargava 226) Bhargava’s opinion is apt in context of Hariharan’s stories where female characters are truly enmeshed in the boundaries of patriarchal set-up and the inevitable death. In the story “The Remains of the Feast”, The great-granddaughter recalls her grandmother’s memories of how she died gradually. She was helpless in the hands of destiny. Hariharan has narrated the story in first person where the girl recalls all the major incidences and starts missing her grandmother. She has served her whole heartedly but she died at the age of ninety. Hariharan’s art of narration is remarkable in all the stories where most of the times, she uses first person narration to deliver the stories. Her past–present narration raises the level of interest of the readers. Her characters dwell from present to past and from past to present. Similarly in the story, “Halfway Animals”, the narrator keeps on recalling present–past incidences of his father and grandfather. In this story, Hariharan has tried to depict the concern of a woman how she remains concerned throughout her life for her children and this is depicted with the beautiful example of chimpanzee which is concerned about its baby and this is observed by the narrator who is a frequent visitor of a zoo. Her story “Field Trip” is a comparative study of city life and village life where with the help of past –present narrative, again Hariharan has tried to touch upon the theme of rootedness. In the story, “The Warden”, the care-

taker of the old lady (who has been kept in the outhouse) narrates the whole story with the sudden use of past-present narratives and each description reveals the pathetic condition of the old lady and the unexpected treatment which is given by a husband to his wife. She has been treated as a sex object who is visited when needed and otherwise ignored all the time. The care-taker recalls all these incidences which make the narration intact and eye-opening. "The Reprieve" is the account of dwindling of a husband between past and present. Nagaraj misses his wife deeply after her death and he recalls the slightest moments and he compares the relationship of his son and daughter-in-law to his relationship with his dead wife. He starts making guesses about the topic of their late night gossips and he starts longing for his wife, "She is dead, he thought, and he felt first astonishment, then a shock of pain in his chest. Here I am, alive and filled with a longing more insistent than I have ever known, and Mangala is dead." (*TAOD* 45) This is a real description of a husband's unexpressed love. He ignored his wife when she was alive and now he misses her badly and in bits and pieces of things. Hariharan has tried to depict the condition of a helpless husband in first person narration and also the fact that women are never given due regard in the families. They are ignored most of the times. In "Forefathers" also, she has given the account of a middle class family where the son narrates the story and he considers himself as the only bread-earner of the family and he has been given due respect also. The first person narration makes the story interesting. Similarly, in the story, "The Summertime Incubus", Manoharan recalls his old days with Rajam and the whole story revolves around his past memories of grandmother's house and present situations at office. Here, Hariharan has depicted Rajam as a strong determined woman who became successful in her career and moved on but Manoharan still recalls her. "The Art of Dying" is the account of a dying mother's pains and a serving daughter's concerns who is the narrator of the story and who has tried to pour a daughter's heart out. The incidences related to her counseling centre are also narrated time to time and they are narrated in the form of old memories. A day dreamer, a medical student and a shy couple are the beautiful examples which make the narration purposeful. At a place, when the narrator tells us, "The last two days my mother has insisted that I sit by her all the time. Her

tenacious attachment to the past, an old woman's lust for living, is now an open declaration" (*TAOD* 77), Hariharan has tried to depict the helplessness of a woman in the tyrant hands of death. Hariharan's narrative skills describe the courageous approach of her dying characters. Krishna Daiya says, "She shows her characters fading away, thinning away to embrace a slow, sure death. They are also aware of this unavoidable end towards which they are advancing." (Daiya 47) Further, Hariharan has tried to throw light on the power system of the society where power men and they use it in any manner they want. Foucault expresses, "Power is everywhere: not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.... Power is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a possession. It is the name we give to a complex strategic situation in a particular society." (Foucault 93) Foucault's views are absolutely correct in context of Hariharan's stories. These inequalities are social and men made. Power is retained by men as women have been instructed to be subordinated. Hariharan's stories reveal the same subordination of women. In the story "The Art of Dying", the narrator works for hours at her counseling centre and she has to take her of the household as well and her inner frustration reflects in following lines, "Death- or madness is far too sudden, dramatic. The tenor of my life-wifing, child-bearing has been determined by the subtle, undulating waves of progress creeping over my body. Bleed, dry up; expand with life, contract with completion. A peaceful, gentle existence; motion, not quite blunt-edged change." (*TAOD* 64) Similarly, "Gajar Halwa" also deals with the story of struggles of women where Perumayee is the narrator and she recalls the care, responsibility and concern of her mother towards the family and she relates it to herself that she is equally attached for the upliftment of her family.

In "Close-Up", Hariharan has depicted the feelings of a photographer who gets fascinated to a customer who visited him once for a photo and he starts thinking about her. "Revati" is narrated by a newly married lady and it is a story about child widow. Hariharan has projected the condition of child-widows in India who are treated harshly. The scenario is changing slowly but this change is very slow. Revati's psychological condition is elucidated in wonderful manner

and which makes the readers think about the adverse circumstances of the society. Hariharan has picked up the art of past–present in most of her stories. In the story “Retrospective” also, the narrator swings between his office and house. She takes the common themes and talk about the genuine issues but she conveys an intense message. Hariharan`s each story comes up with a different theme. She has touched upon the most sensitive issues, for instance, she talks about the will of a dead husband who has given nothing to his wife but a letter and this letter makes the wife so confident that she emerges as a determined woman. Here, Hariharan has poured light on the role that a male plays in the life of a woman. They accept the societal set up and they allow men to be superior and accept to be dominated by them. Indian stories remain incomplete without the touch of myths and supernatural elements and perhaps Hariharan is fully aware of the fact that is why, she has added the story “Rain Maker” to the collection. It is a story of a daughter whose mother died recently and who misses her a lot. She assumes as if the mother comes to see her daily and observes her by sitting under the people tree. Here, the care and unconditioned love is shown by adding the supernatural element to the story. According to Jasbir Jain, “This becomes important because sex, marriage, fidelity within marriage, motherhood are acts which are rooted in culture.” (Jain 139) Indian culture is known for its values and motherhood is the highest virtue. Hariharan`s stories depict the unconditioned love and bonding of mother-daughter. Here, Mahatma Gandhi`s views are apt to be quoted, “The duty of motherhood, which the vast majority of women will always undertake, requires qualities which man need not possess. She is passive, he is active. She is essentially mistress of the house. He is bread-winner; she is the keeper and distributor of the bread. She is the care-taker in every sense of the term.” (Gandhi 34)

Hariharan`s stories are truly dipped into the coatings of motherhood, caring daughters and loving wives. She has picked up all these themes and delivered them with the help of first person narration. Her story “Voices in the Twilight” is remarkable due to different narrations. Three siblings visit their parental house to attend the funeral of their dead mother and they recall their childhood memories. Hariharan has tried to narrate the different approaches of

two sisters and a brother. It can be said for Hariharan, that her women are true representative of the subordinated women who cannot think beyond family. Similarly, Shashi Deshpande's Collection of stories also talk about women's alienation and identity crisis and her stories fascinate the readers due to their simplicity and realness. Nityanandan opines, "Being trapped in this woman's world of experience, she hopes to be known as kind of female Tolstoy who can create real, rounded characters and not only women characters created for men." (Nityanandan 40) Deshpande's women characters are real ones who struggle hard for their identity and one can feel the identity crisis in her stories. "The First Lady" is the account of a woman who is very lonely and she keeps dwelling in her past which was full of romance and fancy and her present old condition reminds her of her false decision of getting married to a man who later became extreme ignorant and busy in his political life. This lady longs for love and romance which she is denied by her husband. Here, Shashi Deshpande has portrayed a real character who feels alienated and cheated but she has no other way than to remain silent and adjust. Similarly, "Why a Robin" is also a story of a mother's loneliness which is narrated by the mother and who feels aloof due to the neutral behavior of her husband and daughter. Her daughter does not want to listen to her mother's views and finally her entrance into feminine world connects her to her mother. Her daughter's menstruation becomes a key to open her daughter's heart. Her loneliness is depicted by Deshpande in a fantastic manner when the narrator says, "Two single beds. Two islands that nothing can bridge." (TIAOS 21) for the relationship which is shared by them. She is not able to understand her husband as "Music is as incomprehensible to me as he is." (TIAOS 21) Deshpande's stories are mirror of the society as in the story "It was Dark", she has talked about a very sensitive issue of the society where a girl is molested by a stranger and the mother is unable to accept it but she links it to her wedding night when she had no other option than to surrender. Deshpande has delivered the helplessness of a girl and a mother who don't have any reaction to this tragic event. Deshpande has tried to draw our attention towards the helplessness of a female in the hands of the tyrants of the society. Women are treated as commodity and this is what is picked up as a theme in her other story "The Intrusion", where the newly married girl is nothing

more than an object of sex for the husband who is least bothered of getting acquainted with her and ultimately she has to submit herself. Deshpande has poured light on these unheard voices of home makers who are mere sex objects for their husbands. Similarly, in the story “An Antidote to Boredom”, the wife feels alienated due to the monotonous routine of her husband who ignores her emotions all the time and that is why, she falls in love with a man but she cannot do away with her husband and ultimately holds herself back to the boundaries of her family. She faces an inner conflict and consciousness together and it is apt to quote Juliet Mitchell here who says, “The process of transforming the hidden, individual fears of women into a shared awareness of the meaning of them as social problems, the release of anger, anxiety, the struggle of proclaiming the painful and transforming into the political.” (Mitchell 61) Deshpande`s stories try to touch upon all these aspects. She also depicts the mother-daughter relationship like Githa Hariharan but Hariharan`s daughters are caring and one can find a conflict in the mother-daughter relationship of Deshpande`s women. Her women characters are aware of their condition but still they are not bold enough to break through the orthodox chains. They keep longing for love, comfort and care but they cannot speak it out. They are educated and can try to do something on their own but they don`t wish to do so because they are not keen to break the set up of the family. For instance, Sushma in the story “The Wall is Safer” is an educated lady who has been a lawyer but she stopped practicing it once she got married and she has a desire to work but she surrender to confine herself to the boundaries of the family. On one hand, Deshpande has projected her women in such a manner, and on the other hand, she has sketched the characters of Jaya and Pramila who are firm and determined to decide the direction of their lives. Jaya in the story “It was the Nightingale” decides to leave for abroad for better career perspectives and Pramila in the story “The Cruelty Game” decides to go for a second marriage after her husband`s death. These approaches can be considered as a formation of new society and it would be appropriate to quote Beena Agrawal here, “The fictional world of Shashi Deshpande is not directed towards the annihilation of the existing order but it seeks a re-orientation of society.” (Agrawal 217) She truly tries to seek a re-orientation but it is quite difficult in a male – dominated society. Amba

of the story “The Inner Rooms” is a true representative of a determined woman who chooses death over a worthless life. She cannot live behind the closed rooms and cannot compromise to be taken for granted as a sex object. She denies all these male – defined norms of the society and jumps into fire so that she can choose death on her own.

Deshpande`s stories are narrated in first person by her women characters and her women are aware of their condition. They are not ignorant but they pretend to be ignorant as they have no other alternative. They are well – acquainted with their surroundings but they are not courageous to rebel. They are industrious ladies who work round the clock but they are not determined to take a stand for their betterment. They live in dilemma and they struggle with identity-crisis. Her language is lucid and she leaves the audience with a message.

Her women characters accompany their spouses till end, they cannot leave them or one can say, they cannot dare to do so. They are firmly rooted in the concepts of family, compromises and struggles. They accept that they are destined to be subordinated and they get adjusted to their surroundings but Nergis Dalal`s projection of her female protagonists are a slight different. Her female characters are spinsters most of the times who live life on their own terms. They don`t give marriage extreme importance and they choose to take care of their mother and be spinsters. “The Connoisseur”, “The Red Pavilion” and “Roses, Roses, All the Way...” are the stories of spinsters who take care of their mothers and in due course, they don`t get married. With the gradual passage, they realize a vacant space in their lives and they feel it impossible to fill that vacuum. Krishna of the story “The Connoisseur” is a spinster who does not marry and later she realizes that she has been living a kind of life which has no fun. In this story, Dalal has touched upon the psychological aspect of society where a woman`s beauty is given high importance. This is reflected in Miss Krishna`s personality who is not beautiful and beautiful thing attracts her to such an extent that she steals them. She is not a habitual thief but she just keeps beautiful things quietly in her bag. The narrator comes to know about one such incident when she stole a cup from

Lall's house and the owner was not even aware but the narrator started keeping an eye on it as she says:

I let it go, but I was very careful to keep a sharp watch on my cups and spoons when she was around. From time to time, she would show her latest acquisition –a beautiful crystal candle-holder made in the shape of star; a polished wooden statue, a delicately embossed silver vase to hold a single flower; a tiny jade Buddha and once , a jeweled watch with a fine , gold mesh strap.(*The Nude* 180)

In the story “Roses, Roses, all the Way...”, Miss Malik is a decent lady and a spinster who is happy in looking after her mother and after her mother's death, she decides to join an ashram and she has to lead a life full of compromises. She gives up the habit of drinking tea and starts living a simple life but the real face of the baba of the ashram opens her eyes and she decided to live a life of her choice and that is why “She glanced once at the ashram, now wreathed in mist and practically invisible. She snipped off a rose and tucked it into her hair. ‘In fact, you might say, it is going to be roses, roses, all the way for me.’” (*The Nude* 90) Here, Dalal has conveyed a very strong message to us that it is not impossible for a woman if she decides to do things on her. She has portrayed perfect shades of Miss Malik who was earlier feeble but when she was exposed to reality, she became determined and self-driven.

“The French Wife” is a third person narration where the writer has tried to showcase a contrast between an Indian wife and a French wife. Mrs. Kapoor was totally devoted to Mr. Kapoor and she never tried to think of her personal space. She found her happiness in serving Mr. Kapoor and she was busy in taking care of her home. Mr. Kapoor gets married a second time to a French wife after Mrs. Kapoor's death. This lady is also loving, caring and affectionate as most of the women are, but she cannot continue to live with Mr. Kapoor as she is unable to live in a surrounding where her personal space is zero and she leaves for her country. This contrast opens the eyes of other neighbors also who were thinking that Mr. Kapoor was lucky a second time. Dalal has narrated the story in a beautiful manner with a strong message. Dalal has touched upon the strongest

theme in the story “A Taste of Blood” where the wife feels suffocation in her house. Her husband is a dictator who does not allow her to suggest anything. He wants to dictate and she is not even allowed to teach values to her own child. By this story, Dalal has projected her woman in a strong manner. She gets fed up with this kind of living where her own son is going out of her control due to her husband’s wrong guidance. He allows him to hunt and kill innocent birds and animals. She willingly and very cunningly helps the child to shoot in a direction where her husband moved to and the child unknowingly shoots. This way, she feels happy as she gets her child back. Here, Dalal has presented the picture of a lady who decides to live independently with her child than to live a kind of life which may be full of terror and disgrace.

Dalal’s title story is a striking one which tries to bring out the condition of women in the society who are still treated as commodity. Here the nude model becomes the centre of attraction for everyone and she becomes beautiful all of a sudden for everyone. “The Beautiful One” is again narrated in third person where the narrator tells about the journey of a beautiful lady Neena who remains a victim throughout her life due to the kinds of men who come in her life. She gets married to a man who is over possessive and suspicious. Her ex-boy friend was also of the same nature and the one who was not of this kind, was fully ignorant. He never had time to spend with her. With this story, Dalal has portrayed the condition of many women of our country who are either ignored to live in alienation or are supposed to live a life full of chains and boundaries. “Christmas means Love” is again a story of a wife who has to think of her child’s happiness and she forgets about her conflicts with her husband and chooses to go back for her child’s happiness. Dalal has again tried to depict the reality of the society where women live a dull life for the sake of their children. They cannot imagine giving their children a wife without father so they compromise and adjust.

“Ranjit’s Wife” is Dalal’s projection of a determined woman who was totally devoted to her husband earlier but when he demands of divorce due to his affair, she decides to live a second inning for herself where she will be doing all what was denied to her. Dalal has sketched Lila’s character with perfect colors of

self-esteem, determination and liveliness. Lila starts enjoying her life. She gives herself a second chance. She determines not to suppress her desires but to do whatever was forbidden to her. She goes for shopping, starts wearing revealing clothes and goes for parties. Whole story goes in third person narration where the readers come to know about the transformation in Lila`s character thus:

She dressed with care. It was exciting to learn, all over again, how to dress. She wore supple gold silk, her choli plunging down to her waist at the back, and around her neck a twisted string of pearls. She heard Kamal Bhat`s car drive up and went down to open the door. He stood just within it, leaning against the side and looking at her. ‘How can one person be so beautiful’, he murmured. Lila laughed. (*The Nude* 136)

Thus, it can be said about the Dalal`s stories that she uses all kinds of narration to deliver her stories and her women characters are strong Indian women who are symbol of devotion and sacrifice but they cannot tolerate injustice and they can they stand apart if needed.

Nandita Puri writes about the experiences of urban middle class women who are not only educated but also determined. They know the art of being happy. They know how to survive in this changing world. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra opines, “Though the literature`s past does not reflect its present, may be its present, which has increasingly become self-perceiving and self-recognizing, holds in it the seeds of its future.” (Mehrotra 26) Mehrotra`s views deem fit to the stories of Nandita Puri. Her collection has nine stories where each story presents the woman as a strong and firm lady who is least bothered about the approaches of their husbands. For instance, in the story “At Jenny`s”, the women gossip about their married lives and day to day happenings. Jenny is a beauty parlor of Jenny and these women come here for their beauty treatments and they are strong women who are aware with the psychology of men and that is why they have made up their minds accordingly. Petula who is one of the customers says, “Yes, all dads are wonderful so long as they remain dads and not husbands.” (*Nine on Nine* 29) Further Sonika also confesses that “We want to chill out without the men.” (*Nine on Nine* 40) She does not want to go for any foreign trip with her

husband. She is not that kind of lady who will feel lonely or ignored but she knows how to be happy. Puri`s women characters are focused and they try to be happy on their own. They don`t give the remote of their happiness to anyone. They are independent and cheerful women. Puri has tried to deliver two shades in her story. On one hand, she portrays these strong women and on the other, Alia is depicted as a victim. She is a girl who falls in love with a man who is already married but he cheats her and does not reveal this to her. She is cheated and she gets disturbed by this completely. Puri has portrayed both the approaches. The married women become mature with the passage of time and they don`t react to unpleasant things whereas a girl gets completely disturbed due to a cheated behavior of her lover. Similarly in the story “Flashback”, Puri has talked about the extra –marital relationship of a man with mother and daughter. The daughter falls in love with her own biological father who never tells her that he is married. He fell in love with her mother years back and did not marry her. He settled abroad and the same is repeated with her. Here, Puri has taken a very rare kind of theme which makes the reader think about the possibilities of cheating in life. One can never imagine of such a story but Puri has made the readers think about the worst circumstances of life.

“Bhabhiji” is an account of a lady who manages a big family and she is not at all bothered about others opinion. Her brother-in-law takes care of his elder brother and his family due to which, Gautam is not able to live his married life peacefully. Here, Puri presents the women characters very strongly who are not bothered about the mishappenings of their life and they move on. Gautam`s three wives are not able to survive due to the extreme interference of Bhabhiji but they don`t have any regrets for the same. This is narrated thus:

Seema would have none of it. Independent by nature, she felt Gautam`s inquisitive relatives had invaded her privacy in every way, apart from the fact that Bhabhiji tried to rule their lives with her subtle ways. Needless to say, the marriage did not last more than six months. Two years later, when the divorce came through, Gautam felt sad. Lonely, because, in spite of being surrounded by his relatives, he had nothing in common with them. He was a lonely man at forty. (*Nine on Nine* 78)

Puri's each story presents a confident and courageous woman who create their own destiny out of the odds of life. They work hard to prove their identity. They refuse to be framed in a set framework of orthodox norms and they create their own frames. For instance, Indu of the story "Indulata Debi's Diary" is an industrious lady who travels a long way to be a successful lady doctor. Puri has narrated her struggles as a widow and her sufferings as a wife. She never gives up and keeps walking on the tough roads and ultimately achieves her goals. Puri has shown her as a powerful woman and that is reflected in the supervisor incident where she slaps the officer because he entered into examination room without permission, to quote:

One day Indulata was examining a female muslim patient in her inner chamber, when Rawley suddenly barged in. 'I need to have a word with you Dr. Sen.'

Indulata was furious. 'How dare you come in like this without permission? Can't you see I am examining a patient?'

'I don't care about your patient and I don't need your permission to meet you . I am the supervisor of this hospital.' Rawley thundered.

'I don't care who you are. Don't forget this is a women's hospital and no man has a right to barge in like this when a woman is being examined.' Indulata retorted.

'Don't talk to me like this, you ignorant woman.'

There was a resounding crack. Indulata had slapped him with all her might. (*Nine on Nine* 112)

Puri's women characters struggle hard to be successful. Deepa in the story "Remembering Little Dee" is also a voyage of Deepa who took tuitions, did lot of extra work, rode bicycles for kilometers to be a lady of her dreams. Similarly, the story "Radha's Journey" is also an account of Radha's struggle as a woman. She is portrayed as a liberal woman who regrets her decision of getting married to Alok and considers it a marriage in haste. She leaves him and start living independently. She starts wearing revealing clothes, getting gifts from friends and starts enjoying her life. She starts the newly achieved freedom. Puri's women characters are firm ones who choose liberty over boundaries. They feel free to live on their own terms.

The old lady in the story “The Piano Teacher” is a self-dependent lady who does not want to take money even from her own kids and that is the reason why she earns by taking piano tutorials. She lives in a small flat and is happy in her small world after her husband’s death. Thus it can be very well said about Puri’s collection of nine stories that she picks up the modern and urban educated women as the subject for her stories and talk about their firmness and frankness. Her ladies are bold and carefree. Puri’s stories give readers a different feeling with each reading. Her narration is simple and first person narration most of the times. She presents the women as representatives of this changing world and portrays them as the women of the present world who don’t want to be exploited anymore but they want to flow with the flow and want to achieve pinnacles of success.

Thus, it is clear that these four women short story writers have tried to voice the muted experiences of women through their collection of short stories. They have tried to narrate the norms and condition of the society and its impact on women. They have attempted to present the reactions of women to different situations. Githa Hariharan’s women characters are truly responsible, caring and family- oriented and they come across a tragic procedure of their near ones’ death. Death and disease play a very important role in her stories. She chooses first person narration which sometimes shifts to third person narration. Her stories like “The Remains of the Feast”, “Forefathers”, “The Art of Dying”, “The Will”, “Voice in the Twilight” and “The Rainmaker” are the stories which pour light on the inevitable truth of life i.e. death and helplessness of her characters. She portrays the stories of a dying grandmother, a dying mother and a father. She portrays their courageous attitude so as to surrender and the caring nature of the daughter, grand daughter and son. In the story, “The Remains of the Feast”, a granddaughter looks after her dying grandmother and misses her badly even after her death. Similarly, in the story “Forefathers”, the son and the whole family look after the crippled father but ultimately he dies. In the story, “The Art of Dying”, the daughter is very dutiful and takes a very good care of her dying mother. “The Will” is a story of a woman whose dead husband’s letter and will give her a strength to live a peaceful life. “Voices in the Twilight” talks in detail about the

different approaches of three children of a mother who had come to perform her death rituals. This story is narrated by three narrators who are children of the dead mother. They recall their childhood incidences and the changes which took place. This story reminds us of Puri's stories like "Remembering Little Dee" and "Radha's Journey" where the female protagonists recall their past experiences and compare it to their present lives. Hariharan's story "The Rainmaker" shows the concern of an Indian mother towards her children. A daughter can feel her mother's presence under the tree of peepal even after her death. Here, Hariharan has given a touch of supernatural element. Her stories throw light on pre-marital and extra-marital relationship which is discussed by other three proposed writers also. Puri also deals with pre-marital and extra-marital affairs as in her stories like "At Jenny's", "Flashback" and "Radha's Journey". Alia in the story at Jenny is an unmarried lady who falls in love with a married man and when she comes to know about his marital status, she feels cheated and her world is broken into fragments. Srimoti in the story "Flashback" is not able to bear the tragic reality about her biological father that he is the same man with whom she fell in love. The mother gets fainted about hearing the daughter's affair with the same man with whom she fell in love years back and who is none other than Srimoti's father. "Radha's journey" is an account of a lady's journey who wants to live a life full of independent thoughts and firm decisions. Deshpande's stories don't deal with the theme of extra-marital or pre-marital relations. In fact, her women characters live lonely and they long for love but they cannot even imagine indulging in any relationship. The protagonist of the story "An Antidote to Boredom" starts liking her son's friend's father and she enjoys talking to him but she cannot continue her relationship due to an unknown guilt. Similarly, Dalal is also of the same view. One cannot see the depiction of extra-marital relationships in her stories, except for one story "Ranjit's Wife" where Lila decides to live her life to the fullest due to her husband's decision of asking for divorce. Dalal's women characters are spinsters and they are happy in their small worlds. Dalal has also talked about Indian myths, beliefs and superstitions in her stories like "The Sacrifice" and "The Seller of Mantras". She presents her women as typical Indian women who are devoted to their families like Mrs. Kapoor of the story "The

French Wife”, Nita of the story “The Beautiful One” and Lila of the story “Ranjit’s Wife” but she has also portrayed the other shades of these women who can raise questions if it comes to their self- respect as Lila decides to enjoy her life and live in her own way when she is asked for divorce due to her husband’s extra-marital affair.

Deshpande’s “The Cruelty Game” presents a widow in a very different manner. She is a determined lady who decides to get married a second time after her husband’s death. She is not bothered about what others will say and she is adamant on her decision. On the other hand, Hariharan’s “Revati” is also a description of a child widow who becomes a centre of laughter for everyone in the family. Puri presents Mrs. D` Souza in a different manner. She is also a widow but she is living independently and is earning her livelihood by taking piano classes.

Shashi Deshpande has poured light on sensitive topics like rape, marital rape and unwanted pregnancies by the help of her stories. “The Death of a Child” is the story of a woman who does not want to give birth to a child a third time. Here, Deshpande has tried to draw our attention towards the nuances of society where women are not even allowed to decide about family planning. Ultimately, she firmly decides and goes for an abortion but her inner conflict does not live her peacefully. With the help of mythological references, she has sketched the character of Amba in the story “The Inner Rooms” who cannot live in a society where women are nothing more than a companion of nights for men.

It is also noteworthy that the projection of mother-daughter relationship varies in the works of these four writers. For instance, Hariharan`s women character share a good mother-daughter relationship. Her daughters and granddaughters are caring and dutiful. They know the art of serving their mothers and mothers are attached to their daughter. The relationship goes in a perfect harmony. Her stories like “The Art of Dying”, “The Remains of the Feast”, “The Rainmaker”, “Gajar Halwa” and “Voices in the Twilight” are seminal examples to be quoted here. Nergis Dalal`s women are spinsters who remain spinsters to serve their old mothers which clearly shows a good bonding between mother and

daughter. Thus, Hariharan and Dalal`s projection of mother- daughter relationship is in perfect harmony but when we talk about Deshpande and Puri`s women characters mother – daughter relationship, we find a conflict which is not inner but outer. It can be seen as a difference of ideology. For instance, Deshpande`s daughters are not open to their mothers. The little girl in the story “Why a Robin” was not attached to her mother but she became affectionate gradually. In the story “My Beloved Charioteer”, the mother does not know how to let her widow daughter come closer to her who is much closer to her dead father. Similarly, Puri`s story “An Arranged Marriage” discusses the relationship of Rani and Rekha in detail who keep discussing their day to day issues over a phone talk. This story throws light on most of the Indian families where daughters love their mother from the bottom of their hearts but they always live in a conflict which is more of outer kind. “Pages from Indulata Debi`s Diary” is also a story of same relationship where the mother does not support her daughter`s education and marries her to an older man.

Thus, it can be concluded about the stories of these writers that women are still suffering. Women have tried to make their presence felt in many ways. They are doing superb jobs, playing multiple roles but still, women are living in a dilemma. They are the backbones of the families but they have no place in the society. A woman cannot raise her voice in public and if she decides to live on her own, than she is considered degraded. These writers have tried to portray the journey of women. They have poured light on their life- experience and have led a way forward for future generations, thus it would be apt to quote Dr.G.S. Balrama Gupta here to sum up the contribution of these women short story writers:

The foregoing rapid discussion suggests that Indian English women short story writers` contribution to the short story is substantial enough to deserve a full-length critical work. They have shown varying degrees of competence in handling the form of the short story and realizing verbal structures to suit the portrayal of complex human relationships, especially of the man-woman variety. (Gupta 53)

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Summary

Summary

A short story is the spontaneous form of writing which is as old as the other genres of literature. Stories can be found in various forms. It started emerging as a genre in the mid of 19th century where writers like Hawthorne and Poe made it popular.

A short story is accepted as a report of whatever occurs outside. We can also say that it is a blend of imagination and reality. One cannot deny the touch of flexibility in a short story which is less present in novels.

Short story emerged as a powerful genre in 20th century in India and it is deeply rooted in almost all the regional languages of India. Our country has an ancient heritage of writing short stories. We have *Jataka Tales*, *Panchtantra*, *Kathasaritsagar* and many more to our credit as the glorious heritage of short story writing.

Indian writers of English are masters of all genres of writing. They have been writing beautifully in all forms of literature. The Indian short story in English came into proper being in 1920s in India. It drew inspiration from ancient classics and contemporary issues. Gradually, women writers started to muster up courage to enter into the field of short story writing. They took up this form of writing and did justice. Short story is always written to impart knowledge to the readers. It is written with a purpose and that purpose is to enlighten people and to make them familiar with the odds of the society and the world. It conveys a message so that the readers get a glimpse of what happens around and what are the areas where society needs to improve and work upon. A society runs on many grounds but sometimes, the odds of a society are not even noticed by the people. They remain untouched to it. There are so many odds and vices that are prevalent in our societies but nobody raises voice against them.

A short story writer tries to bring these odds to our notice. These writers attempt to highlight these issues through their writings. A short story is a kind of

narrative which can be either factual or fictional. The writer`s narrative technique and style of narration are pillars of this genre of writing. The short story in India became famous as a form with the emergence of stories by Shankar Ram, A.S.P. Ayyar, K.S. Venkatramani and K. Nagrajan which continues by the writings of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan.

With the passage of time and due to social reforms and political awakening, women writers got a chance to enter into the field of writing. Women writers` role and contribution to short story writing is remarkable who wrote by heart and chose the themes of alienation, identity crisis and dilemma for their stories. Women writers in India gave fresh and new identity to this genre of writing. Shashi Deshpande, Gauri Deshpande, Tara Deshpande, Kamala Das, Manju Kapur, Anita Desai, Anjana Appachana, R.P. Jhabvala, Githa Hariharan, Nergis Dalal and Nandita Puri started writing short stories with a different perspective and a newer look. They talked about the contemporary issues. They tried to mirror the social and familial issues of the societies and they are still doing the same task.

Women are always considered to be feeble and they are treated as if they are not a part of the society and they don`t have any identity of their own. They are not given chances to speak and perform. They are not given due liberty to place their thoughts, ideas, suggestions and views. They are confined to set identities and roles. They are asked to play the predefined roles where they stand on a margin. They are marginalized and ignored. This has been the scenario since ages and though it has changed a bit and is changing in modern times but the change is minor.

Women short story writers try to voice the ignored and muted experience and struggle of these women who work a lot to run the family in smoother manner but are never appreciated for it. Indian woman has been a source of great inspiration. She is the epitome of sacrifice. She has to compromise at each step to avoid nuisance. She comes from a house which always teaches her to be married to a husband where she has to submit herself completely. She tries to do exactly

the same what is taught to her but in return, she gets alienation, dilemma, struggle and silence. Women short story writers have tried their best to sketch these themes on paper so that people can realize the pain of women and try to change the scenario and condition.

Indian women are worshipped theoretically but practically, the picture is completely different. They are the backbones of the family and they do lot many efforts for the survival of the family but their survival is endangered due to male dominance and patriarchal set up. Women short story writers have penned these issues through their stories.

In the present thesis entitled “Post 1990 Women Short Story Writers in Indian English: A Thematic and Structural Analysis”, the condition of women in present society that is based on the narrated reality of the proposed collections of short stories of Githa Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Nergis Dalal and Nandita Puri have been reviewed and studied in detail stories are which will open up new scope for future researchers.

This thesis attempts to pour light on the condition of women in Indian societies. Women work really hard for the establishment of family and their never-ending effort know no limitations but still they live in a dilemma and remain aloof all the time. The work aims at this untold alienation and struggle of Indian women. An attempt is also made to discuss the similarities and dissimilarities in the theme and structure of the proposed stories of these writers. In any form of writing, both narrative and narration play equal role and both add to the beauty of the form. It is attempted to throw light on all the aspect of their stories.

The research focuses on the following anthologies of the proposed writers:

Githa Hariharan`s *The Art of Dying and Other Stories*

Shashi Deshpande`s *The Intrusion and Other Stories*

Nergis Dalal`s *The Nude*

Nandita Puri`s *Nine on Nine*

In order to critically analyze and justify the stories, themes and narrative techniques, the thesis has been divided into seven chapters-

1. Theoretical Framework
2. Introducing the Female Canon
3. Defining Women: Protagonists of the Stories
4. Women: Muted and Marginalized
5. Unfolded Stories through Time and Space
6. The Art of Narration
7. Insights

The opening chapter is a framework which focuses on the wider aspect of proposed study. It talks about the objectives of this research where the main objective is: to analyze the short stories of the proposed four writers critically. The work aims at the thematic and structural analysis of the stories of the above mentioned four women short story writers. The thesis attempts to bring out the similarities and dissimilarities in terms of theme and structure in the stories of the proposed writers. An effort is made to sketch an outline of the role of society and outer world in shaping the characters and their psychological behavior. It is also tried to go for a comparative study of the proposed stories of these writers. An extra effort is put in to contribute to the field of Indian short story writing in English by placing an original point of view. The research methodology which is adopted for research is clarified which includes detailed study of the textual material of the writings of the proposed writers, complete study of the selected anthologies and study of previous research papers and critical articles and reviews. With the help of the available material, the stories are analyzed in comparison to each other thematically and structurally and also it is attempted to evaluate them in the light of the present patriarchal set up of our society where women have to remain silent and they live a life which is full of struggle and dilemma. The similarities and dissimilarities are highlighted. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* 8th edition has been consulted for the purpose of bibliography, quotations and documentation.

The next chapter is an effort to introduce the female canon i.e. the proposed four short story writers. The contemporary scenario of short story writing is sketched and the gradual and positive shift in the field of short story writing is discussed. This chapter tries to talk about the emergence of women short story writers in the fields of Indian short story writing in English. A brief introduction of Githa Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Nergis Dalal and Nandita Puri is given in special reference to their works. Their writings are discussed in general. The chapter is an introductory chapter which pours light on the general details related to the proposed writers.

The third chapter is a thematic analysis of the proposed short stories of these writers. This chapter takes up women as the central figure and talks about them as the protagonists. Their various roles, self-hood, self-sacrifice to establish the unit called 'family' and efforts are discussed in detail. An attempt is also made to study these themes in comparative manner to find out the similarities and dissimilarities. This chapter discusses the magnanimous efforts of women in the society and it also glorifies the roles and responsibilities which are performed by Indian women. Githa Hariharan's women characters are typical Indian women who are destined to suffer due to the death/dying of near ones and they try to caress and nurse the family member in best possible manner. Her collection has twenty stories where each story comes up with the role-definitions and efforts which are put in by women. They are playing various roles and they prove themselves in every role but they live in a vacuum. Shashi Deshpande's women characters are also confined to their house and house hold tasks. They feel a kind of suffocation and there is a quest for identity and love. They long for a companion who can understand their desires and pains. They work round the clock. They are modest homemakers who demand nothing in return. They are gentle wives, caring mothers and obedient daughters. Nergis Dalal's collection has twenty stories and her women characters are spinsters (in most of the stories) who are well aware of their condition and they keep themselves busy in taking care of their mothers. They start the second innings of their lives after their mothers' death but they live a dignified life. Her women characters are strong and

they perform their responsibilities with full dedication. Nandita Puri tries to portray a completely different picture of women where her characters are modern Indian women who are educated urban women and are fully aware about their rights. They are epitomes of self-hood and they enjoy their lives to the fullest. They take up good career and they try to soar high. She has also tried to pour light on the other aspect where women are cheated. This chapter is a study of all these roles which take women as central figure. The themes of mother-daughter relationship, husband-wife, extra-marital relations, granddaughters and great grand daughters are studied in detail. The discriminatory attitude towards women is depicted in full swing. Manifold aspects of womanhood are portrayed in the short stories of these writers. The stories reveal the dominating attitude of the male-dominated society towards women which tries to suppress their independent role-definitions.

Fourth chapter tries to mirror the female sensibilities. It discusses the loss and plight of women. This goes deep in the realms of man-woman relationship and tries to throw light on the reason of women`s alienation and muteness. The chapter is an effort to know why and how women feel marginalized. An effort is made to discuss how these writers castigate the pretentious attitude of men towards women which results into the ruination of their inner-self and identity. Githa Hariharan`s women characters are submissive and they surrender to the adversity of life. They are not courageous to revolt and they accept the circumstances as their fate. Shashi Deshpande`s women characters are paragon of sacrifice and compromise. They are ready to live in alienation and they concede to the circumstances and they do not utter a single word. They live in a dilemma but at last, they give stamp of approval to the adversities of life. They try to break through the stereotypes but they are not that much valorous as to be strict to their decision and they have no other choice than to be acquiescent. Nergis Dalal`s women characters feel bereaved due to the tragic loss of their mothers. They are rebellious in some of the stories and they try to mark their presence. Nandita Puri`s women characters are embodiment of modern women who are strong and tenacious and they try to look beyond the imperfections. They are bold enough to

do away with a complicated relationship and they do not hesitate to end a marriage if it has no meaning. The women characters are projected as buffeted by the complexities of life. The underlined cause for their alienation is lack of affection and bonding between a husband and a wife. The themes of loneliness are highlighted with the themes of strife, struggle and dilemma.

The fifth chapter and sixth chapters are structural analysis of the stories of these writers. Fifth chapter studies time and space in the proposed stories. Time and space have a lion's share in any form of writing and that is why the different spaces and past-present narratives are discussed in detail in this chapter. The writers try to capture the external events and happenings with the help of employment of various spaces and time behaves as the catalyst in all the happenings. The chapter has poured light on the manifold aspects of time and space. A narration finds its place in terms of temperament of time and place. Space has many dimensions as it can be personal, public, inner, external, psychological, physical, emotional, and mental and many more. These writers have given due space to all the spaces which means that all the spaces are covered beautifully. Time finds an equally important place in these stories. Githa Hariharan's narration emphasizes on the past present timing of events where the physical and emotional spaces are highlighted. Shashi Deshpande tries to be strict to present times but she has also highlighted the inner and psychological spaces in special reference to emotional and personal spaces. Nergis Dalal has touched upon all the spaces where physical surroundings are discussed with highlighted importance. Nergis Dalal has sketched the events in a very special manner where the change in the condition of women is delivered with the help of changing time and changed spaces.

The sixth chapter is a detailed discussion about the art of narration in the proposed anthologies of these four writers. The chapter analyzes the narrative techniques, structure, language, style and overall structure of the proposed stories of these writers. Their dealings with the literary devices and use of language are remarkable. Symbols, imagery, metaphor and simile find significant place in their stories. They have used first, second and third person narration as per their

comfort and need. The common device which is used by all four of them is stream of consciousness and past present narrative makes it evident. There is a kind of coherence and flexibility in their stories and the language is lucid.

The conclusive chapter is an insight into the stories of the proposed writers. It is tried to brief their thematic concerns and structural patterns through this chapter. Their stories are seminal narratives which try to dive deep into the feminine psyche and try to discuss their alienation and identity crisis. These stories are true exposition of the complex man-woman relationships and hardships of life. The writers are blessed with a wider outlook and that is why they are able enough to lambast the odds of the male-dominated society. They are wise enough to feel a need to pen down these mystified and muted experiences of women. These writers have attempted to pour light on the pathetic condition of women.

The thesis tries to analyze the proposed stories of these four writers thematically and structurally. Their concern for women and projection of the condition of women find a place in their writing. They have tried to be the voice of the voiceless fellow beings of the society. Githa Hariharan's projection of the condition of women is different in terms of 'd' factor which is death and disease, her women characters are helpless in the hands of death. Her women characters are caring and obedient daughters, sisters, wives and mothers who perform their duties whole heartedly even in adverse circumstances. Shashi Deshpande projects the miserable condition of her women protagonists who live in a dilemma and complete isolation. They strive for affection, care and love and due to the lack of all, they remain silent. Nergis Dalal and Nandita Puri have projected their female protagonists in a different manner. Her female characters are lively, determined and courageous. They are ready to sketch their destiny on their own and they cannot afford to give the paintbrush to others. They are the own artist of their destiny. They are less hesitant in doing away with a conflicted marriage whereas Hariharan's and Deshpande's women characters are not rebellious as to stand against wrong and to speak for their rights and betterment. They are submissive and they accept the circumstances as their destiny.

These writers have discussed the mother-daughter relations with special care. Hariharan`s and Dalal`s projection of mother-daughter relationship is smooth and perfect. Their characters live in a perfect harmony where the mother is a leading model whom the daughter admires in youth and looks after well in mother`s old age. This projection slightly changes in Deshpande and Puri`s projection where the readers find a conflict in mother-daughter relationships. There is a generation gap between the mother and daughter and they are not able to enjoy a peaceful bonding. This does not mean that their daughters do not love their mothers or they don't have respect for them but these two writers have simply tried to draw our attention towards the untold gap which is always prevalent in mother-daughter relationships in Indian families.

The significance of this study lies in filling the research gap in this area as the proposed stories of these writers have not been studied and compared so far in detail with this perspective and it will definitely help in opening new dimensions and formulating a feminine consciousness in special reference to the stories. This will give a new insight in the field of the stories of these writers as no full length comparative study of the proposed stories of these four writers has been done. The research work attempts to draw attention towards the fact that our own experiences pave the path of life and one must be courageous to deal with the odds of life so to live it on their own.

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Short Story: A Perfect Form of Writing: With Special Reference to Nergis Dalal's *The Nude*

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ABSTRACT

*Literature is the soul of human beings. It distinguishes human beings from all other beings. There are different forms of writing and Short Story is one of them. Short Story Writing is a seminal form of writing and the purpose of short story is to impart knowledge and to convey message to its readers. This paper is an attempt to discuss Short Story as a form of writing and the vital role which it plays in Indian Writing in English and an attempt is made to make this clear with the help of the collection of short story of Nergis Dalal's *The Nude*.*

Keywords: Short Story, message, theme, purpose, society, problems

Literature is a powerful way of expressing emotions, imparting knowledge, spreading awakening and pouring light on contemporary issues. Literature is the mirror of the society and it reflects the contemporary issues. The purpose of literature is to convey message and to make people aware of happenings around them and the best thing about it is that it is done in a lighter manner where people take it up as a source of entertainment and it conveys a message to them and it forces them to think about the evils of society.

There have been various genres of literature and Short Story is one of them. It is one of the most powerful forms which not only entertains the readers but also educates.

A short Story always serves the readers with good thoughts and it helps in developing their critical faculty. It involves the readers and they can associate themselves with the story. It is a link between the readers and the society. G.H.Mair says:

The faculty for telling stories is the oldest artistic faculty in the world and the deepest implanted in the heart of man. Before, the rudest cave-pictures were scratched on the stone, the story-teller, it is not unreasonable to suppose, was plying this trade.(12)

Nergis Dalal is a prolific writer who has contributed a lot to the Indian Literature. Her anthology of short stories *The Nude* is a perfect example of beauty of short story writing. One can easily find all the attributes of short story in her collection. Each story serves a purpose and readers are left with a message to ponder over. We can find compelling issues in her stories. She talks about the condition of women in society. She pours light on the role of women as wives, daughters and mothers. The women in her stories are strong and readers can easily associate themselves with her characters. Her story "The French Wife" is a beautiful description of Indian wife who is the beauty of house and example of sacrifice. The same dilemma and sacrifice can be seen in the story "Christmas Means Love". Mr.Mehra in the story "The French Wife" was shocked to know that Mr.Kapoor's new French Wife was not comfortable with her new life style and was going back to her motherland as we come to know, " He looked at his wife --- fat, comfortable, always there for him."(11)This is a beautiful description of Indian Woman who sacrifices everything for the sake of marriage.

Her stories are full of various themes as she talks about superstitions and old beliefs also in stories like “The Sacrifice”, “The Silver Stallion”, “The Temple Bells”, “The Temple of Shiva” and “The Seller of Mantras”. Thus, it can be said that short stories strike on a reader’s mind and heart because of its strong theme. It makes the readers think about the topic which is generally picked up from the society. According to Edgar Allan Poe, “A writer must conceive with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out.”(54) Further he continues:

..Then invents such incidents and combines such events- as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tends not to the out-bringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design and by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction.(4-5)

Three ways of writing a short story are told by Louis Stevenson :

There are only three ways of writing a story—you may take a plot and fit characters in it or you may take a character and choose incidents and situations to develop it or you may take a certain atmosphere and get actions and persons to express and realize it.(358)

This classification is appropriate in context of Dalal’s collection as readers may find characters which fit into the plot. In the story “The Intruder” and “The Temple of Shiva”, there is an atmosphere, characters and persons are taken into consideration to continue it successfully. “A Taste of Blood” is a powerful presentation of one idea :Superiority of male and the characters play best of their roles to serve it. It ends with a heavy message. John Cournos observes:

A short story may, indeed, be long, even quite long, if conceptionally and structurally it creates a concentratedness of mood and single-mindedness of purpose which permit of no digression or deviation, no over-running of the frame.(3-4)

This is true in context of *The Nude* where each story delivers one single notion. It can be the theme of Indian Woman’s sacrifice, age-old myths, blind-faith, nostalgia and experiences of spinsters. “Ranjit’s Wife” is the story of an Indian wife who has strongly decided to live her life which she never did earlier and now is ready to live it to the fullest when she comes to know about her husband’s affair. “The Seller of Mantras” is a direct attack on the belief-system of Indians where an unemployed boy gets employment in the form of an amulet-seller. Thetreau Paul says:

While Story telling is as old as man himself, the short story, as an art form, is of relatively recent vintage for a long time, the short story papered only as either an illustration of a moral lesson(as in fables or parables from the new testament) or as one incident in a long adventurous account of the deeds and exploit of some heroic figure(as in *The Iliad*, *The Song of Ronald* or *The Arthurian Legends*).(1)

In *The Nude* where the theme progresses with the help of characters and situations. Continuity of thoughts and dialogue play a vital role in all of Dalal’s stories. “Roses ,Roses, All the Way” is a luminous approach of writing where one comes to know about the reality of belief system and it can be seen as a satire also. The theme is perfectly delivered when the female protagonist decides to do away with her thought-process and assures herself of a better life style and she books a hotel room and enjoys tea and food which was denied to her in the Ashram. According to Edgar Allan Poe, “A writer must conceive with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out.”(54)

Short Story contains characters, setting, plot, theme and conflict and all these elements are accumulated in a superb manner in Dalal’s volume. Characterization can be seen as the most important part of this writing. Characters play vital role in the formation of story. The characters of Mrs. Kapoor, Mr.Triana, Monk, Mrs.Oliver, Meena, Miss Malik and Lila are so wonderfully crafted by Nergis Dalal that they seem real.

Setting is the time and location where the story is set. It gives a background and it forms the atmosphere. All the proposed stories are set in different time and location. Some of them are set at homes, some in ashram, some in village area and some at parties or fairs.

Plot is the order of events in a story. It gives coherence to the story. This has played remarkable role in Dalal's stories as "Silver Stallion" progresses gradually and creates suspense to the readers. The same happens in the story "Roses, Roses..All the Way" where Miss Malik ultimately runs away from the ashram when she comes to know the reality of the ashram. According to Hugh Walpole, "A short story should be a story; a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and satisfying denouement."(117)

Conflict is the struggle and strife between characters that creates suspense and thrill for readers. Almost all her stories go through this strife or conflict and it is the reason of sudden change in the ending of the story. Tutun Mukherjee defines the short story as, "The short story has, along with the film, greatly altered the conventional notions of the narrative."(94)

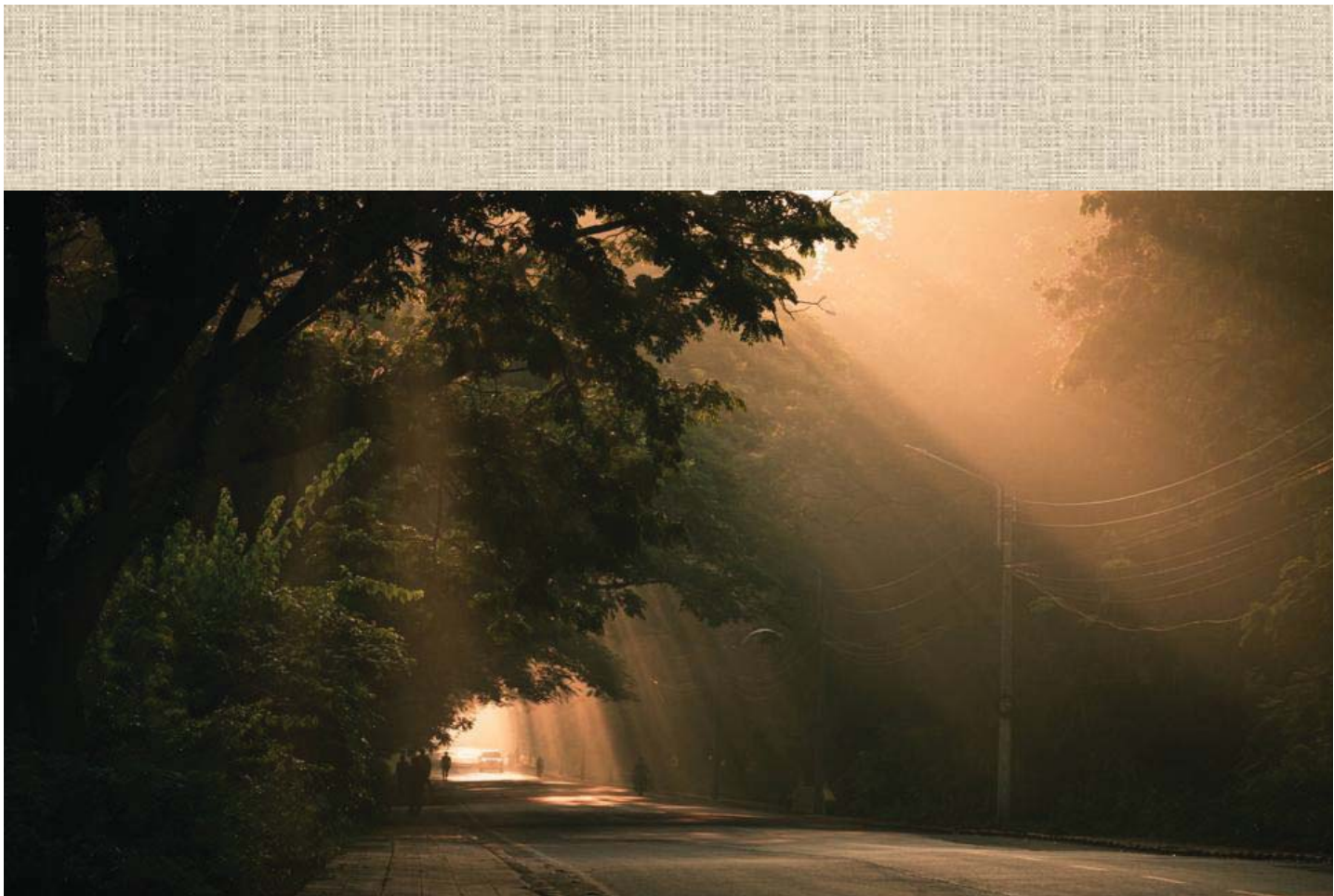
Theme is an important part as it is the backbone which reflects the society and it is a strong medium for the writer through which he/she can bring contemporary issues to readers' notice. H.G.Wells opines:

The short story may be horrible or pathetic or funny or profoundly illuminating, having only this essential that it should take from fifteen to fifty minutes to read aloud. But here is something very bright and moving to be achieved in a small place ...and short time.(176)

This is quite true in modern context as short story talks about the burning issues and it leaves an impression on the reader's mind. The reader can associate with it and can contemplate. Sometime, short stories are auto-biographical as writers are influenced by their own struggles and conflicts. Women writers write about the exile and loneliness. Thus, it can be said that short story is a form of writing which tries to serve the readers with a message. It tries to awaken people and allow them to think in a different way. Short story can be considered as a spiritual being who keeps its cool even in adverse times and tries to give its best to create a better surrounding and perfect world. Short stories are written with an intense purpose and they give their readers immense pleasure and the readers become carriers of change and transformation. As Nergis Dalal's has tried to bring to readers' notice the important roles that are played by Indian women, the pathetic condition of some of the villages which notice change due to famine and theft, the dilemma of spinsters, the inferior condition of women and the superstitions which are still alive in India.

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~Contents~

Editor's Note	02
Editorial Board	03
Contents	04

~English Literature~

Women as Agents of Change in Anita Nair's <i>Ladies Coupe, Cut like Wound & Lessons in Forgetting</i> D Ambika	05
The Voice of Brahman in Laxmi Prasad Devkota's "The Lunatic": An Upanishadic Reading Damaru Chandra Bhatta	14
Collective Unconscious in the Characterization of Hawthorne's <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> Gangadhar Tharala	27
Eco Feminism in the Select Works of Judith Wright Ummae Saba Shabnam	32
Nation as a Political Labyrinth in Basma Abdel Aziz's Novel '<i>The Queue</i>' Jishnu Prasad	43
Projection, Ethics and Cyberspace: Post-human Cultural and Political Construction of Sci-Fi Movie <i>Metropolis</i> Li Bing Yan & Li Siu Kit	48
Anti-Establishment: Questioning Caste System in Aahuti's Song "From the Hell You Confined" and Dalpat Chauhan's Poem "Untouchable" Nabaraj Dhungel	55
Ten on Ten To Nandita C Puri's <i>Nine on Nine</i> Jatinder Kohli & Neha Pareek	70
Images of Women in <i>Kanthapura</i> by Raja Rao Prashant R Panchal	75
The <i>Brihadaranyaka Upanishad</i>: A Paragon for the Application of Qualitative Approach to Research Sabindra Raj Bhandari	80
A Tale of Self Exploration and Silent Suffering: The Memoir of Malika Amar Shaikh Subhalaxmi Mohanty & Prajna Paramita Panigrahi	97
An Analysis of Biyot Kesh Tripathy's <i>Baba Bugi</i> Swayamshree Mishra	103
Color Blue as a Visual Storyteller in the Film <i>The Kite Runner</i> Tanveer Babar Ali Khan	109
Matters of Heart, Harmony and Psychology in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's <i>Heat and Dust</i> Vikas Sharma & Sumitra Singh	118

~English Language Teaching~

Turn-taking and Speech Disruption: Break in Conversation and Conversational Breakdown Dnyaneshwar P. Suryawanshi	126
Evaluation of the English Language Skills in Class X: A Teacher's Perspective R. Shobha Rani	133
Author Profiles	139

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Ten on Ten To Nandita C Puri`s *Nine on Nine*

Jatinder Kohli & Neha Pareek

Abstract

Short Story has always touched the hearts of the readers as it is always served with a purpose and a message. Indian Women Short Story Writers have written stories to throw light on the contemporary issues. They talk about the condition of women in our society. Nandita C Puri is the writer of anthology *Nine on Nine* and she has discussed the dilemma and condition of women in an immaculate manner. This paper is an appraisal of her anthology *Nine on Nine*. Nandita C Puri can be acknowledged as a prolific writer but this great writer is not discussed much so this is an attempt to bring her collection to the notice of readers and to make it worthy of the appraisal which it deserves.

Keywords: Urban Women, Identity, Dilemma, Freedom, Extra-marital, Exploitation

Introduction

Short Story has always been an area of interest for literature lovers. They find them interesting and such stories not only entertain but also instruct. Indian English Short Fiction is proud to enjoy the history of more than a hundred years. Sisir Kumar Das in his book *A History of Indian Literature* tells three stages in the development of modern form of story. According to him, "The first stage is that of anecdotes, second stage belongs to tales and fables and the third stage may be referred to short fiction." (Das) One can clearly observe the western influence on Indian Short Story but with the gradual passage of time, the social changes changed the themes of Indian short story. Shiv K Kumar opines:

The early Short Story, whether written in English or any Indian language, grew under western tutelage. The only difference was that while the writer in Indian language breathed in the western influence as a part of the zeitgeist, the writer in English was ostensibly conscious of his indebtedness to the western masters. (Kumar 2)

As per the views of Priyanka Tripathi and H S Komalesha in their paper:

Women writers in India were quick to realize the potential of this form and hence began using it as a powerful tool to critique the patriarchal values that proved detrimental to the place and position of women. The form of Short Story became quite hospitable to them because, unlike the novel which required considerable time and energy, the short story writing required less time which they could practice during their leisure from the household chores. Added to these advantages, the short story also proved to be preferred form because the marginalized position of the form of short story probably suits to express the voice from/of the margins. (28)

Nandita C Puri's writing can also be acclaimed of being the voice of urban women and their struggle to establish their identity. Nandita was born in Kolkata and was brought up by her mother as her father died when she was only ten. She worked as a writer and journalist with several newspapers. She is applauded for her collection of short stories *Nine on Nine* which was translated in German at the 2006 Frankfurt Book Fair. She married famous actor Om Puri in the year 1993.

Objective and Methodology

This paper aims at analyzing the condition and projection of women in Nandita Puri's anthology of short stories *Nine on Nine*. This collection has thrown light on a burning topic and it delves deep with the agony of women and the dilemma through which they undergo. This attempt will be a good help for researchers also as critics have not talked and discussed this in detail. This is an attempt to examine women's condition in our modern world. This is an endeavor to acknowledge the efforts of a versatile writer and the methodology is analytical. The work is designed as per MLA eight edition of writers. It is an attempt which will help the readers to understand Nandita's anthology in better ways. An effort is also made to make the readers understand women's plight and inner conflict.

Analysis

Nandita C Puri's *Nine on Nine* has nine stories and each story comes up with a special virtue and catches the attention of its readers. Her female characters are urban women who are not ready to accept their pathetic condition and who are skilled in the art of living life in their ways. Some of her women characters enjoy life to the fullest but some are exploited by the males. For instance: In the story "At Jenny's", Aalia was happy with her boy friend but she was not even aware about his marital status and at the end when she comes to know, she stands nowhere and she is not able to go to the same parlor where she used to go frequently as she feels

cheated and exploited. This is truly spoken by Petula one of the client of Jenny, "Oh, poor girl. She must be feeling embarrassed to come here too. Considering how we used to rib her about her boyfriend. It must be so upsetting. Imagine playing with innocent hearts. Men are such bastards at times."(52)

Here, Petula is a mature woman who knows the nature of men and can understand the plight of Aalia. On the other hand, Sonika is also exploited in some or the other ways, her husband is the same guy who is in a relationship with Aalia but she is not aware of it and she enjoys life in her own ways and she does not even bother to accompany her husband as she admits at a place, "No, he is too caught up with work. Might just join us in the last week. But I would rather he did not."(34)

In the story "Flashback", Srimoti is a decent and beautiful girl who is not treated nicely by her father who is not her father actually as the readers come to know at the end of the story and she falls in love with the same guy with whom her mother fell in love years back and gave birth to her. This is a real and superb depiction of merciless approach of destiny. Arijit enjoys this relationship and never discloses about his marital status. Puri's most of the female protagonists are exploited and they fall in love with married men unknowingly where male characters are real culprits and female characters become victims.

One such victim is Nita who marries Promit by her choice and again destiny decides and determines everything for her as she has to face the turmoil and trauma because of her cancer disease which becomes the reason of all miseries as at a place in the "Waiting", the readers become sentimental to read, "Promit is waiting ...waiting for me to die. So that he can marry Mallika. She must be praying too. For my death. It is two prayers against one. Do I still want to live? I don't know."(205)

Here, Nita recalls everything and becomes nostalgic. This story is again remarkable for its scrupulous depiction of an Indian married woman's life. Her husband is in an extra-marital relationship and just wants her to be away so that he can start a fresh.

Nandita has perfectly portrayed the character of Mrs. D Souza in "The Piano Teacher", who is a widow and is destined to live all by herself and she enjoys the job of piano teacher. She does not want to go back to her children as they are too busy with their lives. She is hopeful to get her money back which she gave to one of her students Ajay six years back. Gulzar in the Foreword of this anthology writes, "The character of Mrs. D'Souza in "The Piano Teacher" is a result of superb craftsmanship or is it a direct reporting from life?"(Foreword)

Pages From Indulata Debi's Diary is a precious pearl to this anthology and Gulzar rightly remarks, "It is again remarkable for its form and style in telling the story. It is biography, history and yet a perfect form of short story." (Foreword) It is based on the memoirs of Harimati Ghosh, one of the first women doctors in Bengal. The protagonist is Indulata who is married to a twice-widowed forty eight year old man with a son and daughter. Her husband would beat her in a drunken state and would say, "Why did I marry You? To pickle and pressure you in a jar?" (98) He dies after a year and this story depicts a woman's real struggle to be a success story. She becomes a lady doctor and even her second husband Kartik does not want her to be her ways but she has to save her marriage as she says, "It is better to deal with one wolf than to be left at the mercy of whole pack." (108) Here she is wise enough to manage as she knows that it is very difficult for a woman to live life on her own.

Her stories "Remembering Dee" and "Radha's Journey" are seminal ones as they pour light on the struggles of women and their journeys. Radha is a projection of a confident woman who somewhere wants to live life on her own terms. Nandita's women are urban. They laugh out loud, they breathe freely and they have no time for any regrets. In the story "Bhabhiji", Gautam is bound to live alone because of the interference of his brother's family. He marries thrice but remains with none as his wives are not ready to be disturbed and they do not want any intrusion of his brother's family.

Conclusion

After analyzing the anthology, it is noticed that Puri has raised some very pertinent issues regarding the exploitation of women, their condition in our society and the inner conflict which they have to go through in terms of establishing their identity. They always struggle a lot for everything. They are never applauded for their never-ending responsibilities and they can never live life on their own terms because they have to always remember one thing that our society is a male-dominated society where women can never dominate and they are supposed to follow only. Nandita has beautifully tried to depict this dilemma in her stories and she has also tried to break away from these patriarchal set ups as her characters like Radha and Gautam's wife are best examples of it. To sum up, it can be said that her stories deserve ten on ten for their beautiful and modest presentation of urban women. One can find "inter-caste marriage" as a dominant theme in these stories. Her male characters die of either diabetes or BP or cholesterol. Her stories can be seen as a vivid presentation of so many themes but this paper was an attempt to touch upon "The projection of women" in her stories. The anthology is a praiseworthy Endeavour and to quote Nandita C Puri, "Wittingly or unwittingly, consciously or

unconsciously, I was to find out later that the underlying theme of my stories was the growth and spirit of women, mainly urban.”(Prologue)

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DEFINING WOMEN: ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SHORT STORIES OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THE INTRUSION AND OTHER STORIES (1993) AND GITHA HARIHARAN'S THE ART OF DYING (1993)

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ABSTRACT

Man and Woman form important part of our society but women have always been neglected. They do a lot for their families but they are never appreciated for their bounteous efforts. In all these role-definitions, women are assigned a pre decided and pre defined role to play which is the biggest reason of their existential loneliness. This paper is an effort to pour light on these defined roles of women in Shashi Deshpande's *The Intrusion and Other Stories* and Githa Hariharan's *The Art of Dying and Other Stories*.

KEYWORDS: Existential Loneliness ,role definitions ,freedom

To Feminism ,”Patriarchy” is the key word :Patriarchy as that social organization which produces and guarantees superior status for the male and inferior for the female ,a political concept ,that governs power structured relationships in which one group is controlled by another.(Chandra Nisha Singh 3)

These lines are introductory lines of Chandra Nisha Singh's Radical Feminism and Women 's Writing .It is true that women have always been inferior to men.They have to follow their husbands.The whole one group that is 'women' is controlled by another group that is 'men' .According to Jasbir Jain:

In all these role-definitions ,neglect, disposal and existential loneliness are recurring features. Women are disposed of ,discarded ,rejected and subordinated. They are able to redeem themselves mainly through devotion ,sacrifice and sublimation .And even when placed within family situations, there is a deep realization that they are alone, that they do not belong ,feel perpetually uprooted and on trial.They are also constantly exposed to male exploitation.(*Writing Women across Cultures* 98)

This is true in every context related to women .Woman has to sacrifice ,adjust,tolerate and redeem herself ,in order to be considered and accepted in the male-dominated society.Such image of women;why image it is the real condition;so such condition of women is the central theme o most of the feminist writings. Women writers, writing on any subject, definitely portray women in that way to depict their condition. There are changes, taking place in society but they are slow.

Shashi Deshpande and Githa Hariharan have a difference of theme in their short story collection but the projection of women ,can be regarded similar to some extent.Hariharan's women are caring wives as in “Untitled Poem”,dutiful daughters-in-law as in “The Remains of the Feast”,modest and caretaker wives as in “The Retrieve”,lovely mothers missing their daughters as in “Retrospective”,a shattered mother as in “The Art of Dying” and helping wives as in “The Closed Room”.Their children too,are dutiful,responsible and caring. Hariharan also talks about sexual relationships and pre-marital and extra marital affairs.Hariharan in her essay “Discrete Thoughts”,says;”I have considered myself part of the Indian women 's movement for the last 20 years.The extent of my day to day involvement has ofcourse been dictated by my juggler's life of earning a living,raising children,reading and writing.”(215)

Women's narratives in India ,irrespective of the language they are written in,revolve around the institution of marriage that has received social approval and sanction in all cultures and all times.The institution of marriage is the most glorified and sacrosanct pattern of existence socially ,religiously and sexually;hence ,ot is treated as an idea form for a civilized social organization and for the propagation of the species.But,it is also,significantly,the patriarchal weapon that finalizes the complete subversion and social obliteration of woman and although constructed as the apotheosis of fulfillment for both man and woman,it acquires centrality in woman's life only and contains both her space and her identity.According to Manu, ”Though destitute of virtue ,or seeking pleasure (elsewhere),or devoid of good qualities,(yet)a husband must be constantly worshipped as a God by faithful wife.”(*Manusmriti*,5-154,196)

This is true in Indian context, women consider their husbands as their gods. In Hariharan's story, "Untitled Poem", Sarla is the backbone of her family. Her husband was trying to catch a rat but "She gets him the first time." (8). It shows the role of Indian women in household. In "The Reprieve", Mangala was the whole sole caretaker of big joint family, and after her death, her husband misses her the most. In "The Art of Dying", the daughter of a dying mother is a dutiful daughter who looks after her mother as most of the Indian daughters do; "she lets herself be cleaned, bathed and dressed. She lies there, neither resisting nor actively cooperative, while I sponge her, pat her dry, and turn over." (67). According to Mahatma Gandhi:

The duty of motherhood, which the vast majority of women will always undertake, requires qualities which men need not possess. She is passive, he is active. She is essentially mistress of the house. He is bread-winner, she is the keeper and distributor of the bread. She is the caretaker in every sense of the term. (*Woman and Social Injustice* 34)

These ideas given by Gandhiji, can be seen in Hariharan's stories. Her women characters are taking charge of house. They look after everything. In "Gajar Halwa", Perumayee's mother works hard to feed her children. She could not let her children suffer. She is ready to work even if she is not well or she has not eaten anything.

In "Voices in The Twilight", the widow mother looked after her three children Arjun, Vidya and Shakuntala. She had done everything for them when they were young ones. Now when she has died, her two daughters have come for the funeral but they do not want to come to the same flat where they have spent their childhood.

In the traditional Indian society, as in all societies of the world, women have been defined in terms of their function as wives and mothers. Manu's famous dictum, "Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence." (Manu, ix: 3, 328) codifies woman's positions and rules out any interaction with outside social world. Hariharan's story "The Will", is a story of a mother, Sushila, whose husband has died and she goes in the protection of her sons and sons-in-law. It is true what Manu has said, that for a lonely, widow woman her sons and daughters (sons-in-law) are true support. Sushila has got a letter from Raghu's lawyer and that has provided her with real strength; "Raghu, Raghu, she laughed with relief, clutching the letter to her breast. He knew, of course. By the time, she came down to them again, she was perfectly calm." (148)

Hariharan's two stories are based on widows and their roles in the family. Marina Warner brilliantly links the usual old age of the story-teller to the post-fertility period, when "grandmothers" are allowed a voice because they have "less" of a wifely role. The symbolical content of this ageing, speaking figure is that fertile women have to be silent, erasing the subjecthood of a wife in relation to a husband. On the contrary the old hag, widowed grand mother or the old servant, are husbandless women; hence they are allowed a voice. (From *The Beast to The Blonde*, on Fairy Tales and Their Tellers 103.) Revati is the best example of it. She is the protagonist of Hariharan's story and is a child widow and through her, Hariharan has drawn our attention towards the social evils present in the rural India.

In "The Remains of The Feast", a Brahmin woman, who is widow also, wants to taste everything that is denied to her. Suddenly at ninety when she is dying of cancer, a new life bursts forth in a hitherto controlled appetite that declares its scandalous self. According to Sussie Tharu:

It desires everything that it has been forbidden: cakes with eggs in them, from the Christian shop with a Muslim cook, coca-cola laced with the delicious delight that it might be alcoholic, bhel-puri from the fly infested bazaar, possibly touched by untouchable hands, tweezed eyebrows, shaven legs; and finally in the flourish of death, a sari of bridal red. (*Economic and Political Weekly* 1/June/1996)

In "The Remains of The Feast", the future doctor Ratna is deeply rooted in culture and wears a red sari on Diwali and afterwards gives it to her dead grand mother as it was her wish to be wrapped into red sari. She looks after her in the hospital; "She was in the nursing home for ten whole days. My mother and I took turns sitting by her, sleeping on the floor by the hospital cot." (14). The daughter-in-law and great-grand daughter are aware of their responsibilities.

The same role-definitions are visible in Shashi Deshpande's *The Intrusion and Other Stories*. Tiffany K. Wayne's (2008:50) discussion of Margret Fuller's views on women's need to think about her own space and interest are expressed in her writing, *Women in The 19th century*:

What woman needs is not as a woman to act or rule, but as a nature to grow, as an intellect to discern, as a soul to live freely and unimpeded...

In "The Intrusion", the title story, the newly married woman finds herself unable to face the reality of husband-wife relationship where she can not accept her husband's strange demands and considers him as an intruder. This relationship lacks friendship and she finds it quite difficult to accept this strange relationship. She finds it almost disgusting to see herself 'with a strange man in a strange room' (P-39) and it truly convinces the reader when she says 'And at present we were not friends, not acquaintances even, but only a husband and wife.' (P-38)

In "The First Lady", the woman is fed up of playing an alleged role and she is totally unable to find her own status; she considers everything 'futile and meaningless' (p-4). In this story, the woman is deprived of her desires and she readily accepts it as she has to accept it.

The readers find a completely changed projection of woman in "Death of a Child", where the lady decides to abort the unwanted child whereas the husband thinks that the matter can be managed when he says, 'But if it has happened, why not accept it?' (P-44) Here the lady wants to give herself some time and Deshpande throws light on the need of understanding the fact that a wife's love should not be mingled with her desire of motherhood.

In "The Wall is Safer", the Wife Hema does not want to remember the fact of being a lawyer and readily accepts the role of a housewife as she says, "Oh, I am all right as I am. After all, I am a good housewife now." (P-119) She is struggling with identity-crisis and she is not more than a cook for her husband but still she does not want to come out of it as the wall is safer for her.

To sum up, one can say that both the short story writers have stated the real and present condition of women in Indian society. Though the circumstances are changing day by day and women are playing vital roles but on the other hand, one can notice the same identity-crisis which is prevalent in modern world. The patriarchal set up of Indian society which sometimes and at times, does not allow women to soar high but one must hope for a world where women will definitely be treated equally and we must admit the changing scenario and changing condition of women in modern world.

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Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* and Githa Hariharan's *The Art of Dying* :Unity of Thoughts and Diversity of Experiences

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Abstract

There are short story writers in India who can be known as “writers of India” because they belong to their own land, culture and rituals. They enjoy this status as they do not feel alienated but a Diaspora writer feels uprooted and can always feel a sort of loneliness .This paper is an effort to bring this diverse experience to the readers` notice by analyzing the proposed anthology of Jhumpa Lahiri and Githa Hariharan. This paper is a modest attempt to analyze the unity of thoughts and diversity of experiences in Githa Hariharan (Native writer)'s anthology *The Art of Dying* and Jhumpa Lahiri(Diaspora writer) 's *Unaccustomed Earth* .

Keywords: Diasporas, alienation, exile, women, death, roots, responsibilities

Women writers write in a different manner because they look at things with a different perspective and this makes their writings unique in one or the other manner. Jhumpa Lahiri and Githa Hariharan are Indians but with diverse experiences. Jhumpa Lahiri is a diaspora whereas Githa Hariharan belongs to India through and through. A Diaspora feels uprooted because he/she has to travel from one country to another due to ambition, study purpose , job or business. They go and get settled there but they always feel a sense of exile and alienation which can never be taken away from them. They find themselves in a totally new surroundings.

On the contrary the ‘at home’ or ‘natives’ feel deeply rooted into their culture. They are not lonely and need not to talk about a very different subject. They are not alien to their country and that is why they need not deal with delicate subjects of exile, mixed cultures , sense of belongingness and alienation.

When the word short story comes in our mind, then we are reminded of two versatile writers- Jhumpa Lahiri and Githa Hariharan. Jhumpa Lahiri was born in London ,on July 11,1967. She is the daughter of Bengali Indian Immigrants. Her family went to United States when shewas just three. She is an M.A. in English , M.F.A. in creative writing , M.A. in Comparative Literature and Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies. She married Alberto Vourvoulias –Bush (journalist) and lives in Brooklyn, New York with her husband and two children. *Unaccustomed Earth* was released on April 1,2008 and it was number one on the New York Times best seller list.

The Native writer ,Githa Hariharan was born in Coimbatore in 1954. She grew up in Bombay and Manila .From there she went to U.S. and continued her studies. She returned to India in 1979 and started her career initially as an editor and later as a freelancer. She comes from a conventional and middle class family but she was given full support by her parents.

In *The Art of Dying*, she has taken variety of themes in the form of twenty stories. The writer has taken up different characters and different topics .Death, aging, conflict, women's condition and loss are main themes of her stories whereas Lahiri's stories deal with the themes of immigrants and diasporas. Her writing

is known remarkably for plain handwriting and characters that are Indian Immigrants to America and are stuck between two nations and two cultures. Her anthology has got two parts and it has eight stories but the paper will lay emphasis only on first part. The title story is about three generations, their relationships and conflicts. It is the story of Ruma, her father and her son Akash where lack of communication can be seen due to the guilt of moving away from roots. "Hell-Heaven" delves into the complex human relations and emotions of loneliness, love and jealousy in the form of two characters Pranab and Aparna. According to A.N. Dwivedi, "A Choice of Accommodations" is completely about the physical fulfillment of married couple. (A Spectrum of Indian English Literature, Ch IV) "Only Goodness" deals with the failing dreams of parents whose only son turns into an alcohol drinker. "Nobody's Business" is the story of Sangeeta who is in love with someone who is engaged with some other girl.

On the contrary, Githa's anthology is full of variations. "Untitled Poem" is a beautiful description of Indian couple. "The Remains of Feast" is a pathetic and heart-touching depiction of a great grandmother who is on death bed but wants to taste everything that she has never eaten. This can be seen as an attack on Indian Caste System. On one hand, readers have stories like "The Warden", "Close-Up", and "Virgin Curry" which deal with the projection of women and on the other hand, we have stories like "Field Trip", "The Will" and "Gajar Halwa" which pour light on summer trips, Indian joint family, division of property and condition of servants in India. "Revati", the story of a child widow catches the attention of readers towards child-widows. The title story talks about the plight of a mother whose only son has died and she has to live. "The closed Room" depicts the slow end of a writer. Her stories are governed by the themes of death.

Githa Hariharan's style of writing is lucid and she considers technique as much a part of the story as the people, the events and language they use. In her essay "Discrete Thoughts", she says:

For some reason all of us like to imagine that a writer is a writer because he has a great deal to say (message) or is a good egg (social concern). Both these should be there but really, in the ultimate analysis, writer is a writer because she has a narrative skill- a balancing act she can perform. (214)

She has responsibility on her shoulders because she not only belongs but also lives in India and she knows everything that takes place in India. She is deeply rooted in the Indian soil and that is the reason why one can find variety of theme in her collection. The central theme is 'death' or 'process of dying'. The readers get different flowers in one bunch in the form of her stories because she depicts sugarcane fields in stories like "The Field Trip" and counseling halls in stories like "The Art of Dying". "The Reprieve" is a tribute to a dead wife and her stories also deal with pre-marital and extra-marital relations which can be found in Lahiri's anthology also. Hariharan gives an Indian touch to her stories as in her story "The Rainmaker", a daughter is able to see her mother, sitting under a Peepal Tree. She knows the Indian myths related to Peepal and that is why, it is mentioned in the story.

Lahiri's style of writing is also lucid but prosaic. Her stories are significant. The title story talks about changing places. Both the father and daughter change their places for one or the other reason. Lahiri has done justice with the title of her stories as "Nobody's Business" would have remained nobody's business if Paul was not there to tell Sangeeta the reality of her cheat lover Farouk. "Only Goodness" is the story of Sudha whose Child Neel finds her as the only goodness for him. In her stories, readers can find themes of extra-marital relationships as Indrajeet Hazra has opined the same about her story "Hell-Heaven" in *Hindustan Times*:

The story is told by the daughter of couple, who remembers, the delightful Pranab Kaku and his place in the household. Like Bhupati in Tagore's novella *Nashtanir* (The Broken Nest), the husband in this story is blind to the loneliness of his wife, and Pranab becomes more than a friend to this diasporic version of *Charulata*. (25-March-2008)

"Hell-Heaven" is a mesmerizing story of an arranged marriage which is not more than just a knot as the husband is too busy to feel his wife's loneliness due to his research and the wife tries to feel this gap in the form of Pranab who ultimately marries Deborah.

Thus, it can be said that these two writers have contributed to great extent to Indian English Writings and their writings are reflection of their own experiences in life where Lahiri writes of dilemma and loneliness of immigrants and their generation and Hariharan's women are lonely due to the condition of women in India and the inevitable existence of 'death'. Both have written stories in a language which is easy to

understand and good to appreciate. The theme can be taken as common in their writings because both talk about dilemma, loneliness and marital relations but experiences are different due to surroundings.

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Study of New Woman in Rama Mehta's Inside the Haveli

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Abstract: Indian women have always sacrificed their lives for their families. They are epitome of sacrifice and devotion but this has made them alienated also and now they feel a deep desire to be something on their own. They want to walk on the path of success, they want to achieve their goals and that is why the term New Woman has become quite popular. This paper is an attempt to analyze Geeta's character from *Inside the Haveli* in terms of New Woman. An effort is also made to depict the dilemma and struggle of woman .

Keywords: New Woman, identity, struggle, confident, dilemma, sacrifice.

The term 'New Woman' has become quite popular because of its powerful projection of woman who were earlier confined to homes and kitchens. Women have always sacrificed to extreme level to meet the expectations of family but they were never rewarded for this sacrifice and were reminded of their real condition in the family. This behavior gave them strength and courage to break away with the stereotypes and do something to come out of miserable condition. They have tried hard to do away with old and orthodox norms and they are now shining like gold and diamond everywhere.

They have started challenging their limits and can be seen all time ready for all tasks and women can be seen as warriors on frontline. They are trying to establish their own identities, they are earning for their family and children and they are educated enough to take care of themselves and their children.

The term 'New Woman' was coined by Sarah Grand who is a British writer and her real name is France Elizabeth Clark. She coined this term in 1894 and it was popularized by Henry James .To quote Friedan :

It was the need for a new identity that started woman a century ago on that passionate journey, that vilified, misinterpreted journey from home. That was an act of rebellion, a violent denial of the identity of women and it was then defined. It was the need for a new identity that led those passionate feminists to forge new trials for women.(80)

The term New Woman can be best felt by reading Ibsen's *A Doll's House* where Nora is the seminal example of new woman and when she walks out of the house, she walks in the world of freedom. In England, it was quite difficult for women to come out of Victorian image but in India, new women's quest for identity is portrayed well in novels. To quote Bhatt, "A person who is neither subjugated nor deified but a human person desirous of living in society as a responsible member with equal rights and freedom to pursue her own goals." (33) This is best description of new woman. Indian women are trying to work shoulder to shoulder with men. They want to reach the pinnacles of success and they struggle hard to establish their identity. Sudhir Kakar has best defined this:

An individual's sense of identity is neither completely conscious nor unconscious, although, at times, it appears to be exclusively the one or the other. At some place identity is referred to as a conscious sense of individual uniqueness, at others, to an unconsciousness striving for continuity of experience, and yet other places as a sense of solidarity with a group's ideal. (16)

Indian women don't have their own identity as an individual because they are associated with the unit called family and a wife is regarded only as a wife of a husband and her identity is related to her husband's identity. The rise of Indian English Literature in nineteenth century was an important step in Indian renaissance. This gave them a chance to educate themselves and educated women became the true reflection of new woman as Meena Shirwadkar opines:

As women received education they began to feel an increasing urge to voice their feelings. The awareness of individuality, the sense of incompatibility with their tradition-bound surroundings, resentment of male-dominated ideas of morality and behavior, problems at home and the place of work or in society — all came up in a welter for projection. (201)

Education played a vital role in the formation of New Woman as Rama Mehta's novel *Inside the Haveli* is the prominent example to quote here. Geeta is the female protagonist who is married to Ajay and she is forced to live in a surrounding which is totally opposite to her past surroundings as she is a city-bred girl and hails from Bombay. She is well educated and has studied in a co-ed school but when she enters into a new journey, she is warned in this way:

The moment Geeta landed in the platform of Udaipur she was immediately encircled by women singing but their faces were covered. One of them came forward, pulled her sari over her face and exclaimed in horror, 'where do you come from that you show your face to the world?' Geeta, bewildered, frightened managed to get into the car without talking to the women who followed her, singing as loud as they could." (17)

Geeta feels lonely and unhappy and at times, it becomes tough for her to survive in the Haveli where she cannot pass her time in any fruitful creation as she is never left alone. She confesses at a

place ,”Even after seven years I am a stranger to those that are mine, and I will always remain a stranger.” (103) Kamal Bhasin opines:

Geeta’s journey from Bombay to Udaipur is a journey from an open society to a cloistered one. It is a story of her own acculturation and assimilation into a more traditional society, where she embarks on yet another journey to throw open the gates of the haveli to things hitherto forbidden. (116)

Geeta is the best example of 'New Woman' as she rebels silently against the orthodox norms and she is firm for the education of Sita who further gets married to a good man and her decision is appreciated by all the *Haveli* members. She starts educating others and this way she enters into a new path of life which is clear reflection of new woman. R.K. Asthana comments:

She is filled with a sense of rebellion against the rigid customs of her society which do not permit the females the right to be their natural selves, who must live uneducated and unenlightened like dumb-driven cattle. (195)

Geeta is a perfect blend of modernity and moral values. She is educated and she brings changes in the Haveli silently and her immaculate efforts do not hurt the male ego of Haveli members. Rawat and Uppal think :“Geeta has to make a Herculean effort to adjust to the traditional values in the Haveli though she ushers changes in the Haveli itself.” (41)

To sum up, one can say that Geeta , a modern and well-educated girl finds herself stuck up in the orthodox norms of the Haveli of Udaipur but due to her continuous efforts and broad view , she finds a way for herself and a way to change the condition for not only herself but also for the ages to come.

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