Introduction:

The present study aims at understanding the representation of women in the post-independence Indian English novels with the sense of sex, caste and class. This study requires to a vast survey of socio-cultural perspectives in the depiction of feminine life conditions and regulations laid down by the age old Indian society for the ages in the narrative texts. The present research work will be the amalgamation of all the strains and tensions laden on the female faculty of humanities in India. The status of women in patriarchal society is always inferior. Indian women are always playing a secondary role and placed dependent. After the Independence, Indians have been thoughtfully trying to change the approaches of society in general and towards gender in particular.

• Aspects of Socialization Processes

Socialization is the process through which individuals learn about cultural norms and acquire the necessary behaviours and skills. Literature is a dynamic presentation of contemporary human society. Sometimes, it guides and helps to the society to change attitudes and approaches. Therefore, discourse studies of novels will give the ideas about trends and dynamics of such changes.

Recently, our society is passing through a crucial stage due to artificial high pre-birth mortality of girl child. Sudden reduction in number of girl child birth and extremities of exploitations of women at most of the places are very serious problems. The women discrimination has been deeply rooted in the religious and cultural aspects of the society (Choudhary, 2011).
Gender inequality is perpetual and vested problem in India. Improved access to the technologies is necessary to control the fertility to achieve personal goals of individual welfare and happiness and essential demographic balance at the country and global levels (Potts, 1997). Women can be free when they have freedom to choose the pregnancy instead of being forced access to her fertility.

‘Sex’ is biological term fixed at birth of the person, but socio-cultural aspect decides ‘gender’ after the birth. The biological differences between women and men, boys and girls, are limited to the differences in their sexual and reproductive organs and functions. The term ‘gender’ describes a set of qualities and behaviours expected from men and women. The differential expectations of the individual - girls and boys are not born knowing how they should look, dress-up, speak, behave, think or react. This differential approach towards women can promote for sex-determination and selective abortion. The demand for women’s right and access to safe abortion (Johnston, 2002), issue of sex-determination and sex selective abortion as well as right of birth are complex and the top priority issues in India (Mallik, 2003). Gendered equality is not only linked to multi-sector development, political decision and power, economic and social demands, health and sustainability (Unterhalter, 2006) but also to process of gendered socialization.

• Social Situations and Indian English Novels

The socio-cultural situations remain the subject matter of novels including Indian writings (Singh, 2010). Therefore, representation of women observed in the novel reflects their role in contemporary society. The latest novelists like Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Chandra, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Meena
Alexander, Kamala Markandaya, Shobha De and other Indian novelists have presented women’s world and their psychology in the context of traditions, conventions and social changes. Therefore, the proposed study would be devoted to study the representation of women in the post-independence Indian English novels by applying the feministic approach.

Traditionally, education mainly for females, legal rights and economic participations etc. are widely suggested for gender equality. However, decline in number of girl child in India; exploitations of women at work place, in family, social places, etc. inferior quality life, desertification, prostitution, etc all prove inequalities. This kind of status of contemporary women presented in the novels would give the most reliable sketch of change and dynamics of the society. Therefore, the proposed study could be useful to understand the trends of changes in personal attitudes and gendered socialization.

**Feminist studies**

Religious approach to the origin of the nature coincided with philosophical idealism and idealism claims that world is not cognisable (Sen, 1998). Therefore, the religious idealism is supporting for ignorance of slaves, shudra as well as women. On the other hand, the materialism is the philosophy built based on the reading of human surroundings i.e. the sun, moon, mountains, rivers, plants, animals as well as human beings, etc. The philosophy claims the human is element of the great world and the world is cognisable. Therefore, the inferior status of women in family and society is cognisable. This cognitive nature gives birth to feminism.

Feminist research is that research by, about, and for women. However, it is not true that all research by or about women is feminist, but, the research conducted by and about men may be feminist (Cosgrove and McHugh, 2000). This kind of research includes women’s lives,
equalities, empowerment, socialization and improved status. Cosgrove and McHugh (2000) suggested feminist research for (1) giving voice to women’s experience, (2) moving away from dichotomous thinking, (3) incorporating reflexivity, (4) adopting a collaborative approach and (5) using research as a tool for emancipation.

Campbell, and Wasco (2000) characterized the process of feminist research into four primary groups i.e. 1) expanding methodologies to include both quantitative and qualitative methods, (2) connecting women for group-level data collection, (3) reducing the hierarchical relationship between researchers and their participants to facilitate trust and disclosure, and (4) recognizing and reflecting upon the emotionality of women's lives.

Feminist philosophers are engaged to project two significant areas of concern i.e. historical exclusion and negative characterization of women (Witt, 2004). Philosophical interpretation of feminist criticism includes (a) the explicit misogyny of great philosophers (b) gendered interpretations of theoretical concepts and (c) synoptic interpretations (Witt, 2004). Hemmings (2005) has highlighted the restricted nature of feminism to figures and their histories and secondly ongoing contests and relationships. The feminism strongly connected to western feministic theory which emerge as startlingly singular and bonsai. The women were considered as a subject and object of feminist knowledge. Hemmings (2007) denied the views of Wittig, Foucault and Butler as refigure sexuality as both pleasure and constraint.

Women in Indian English literature

Indian English literature has been begun with poetry in 1930s and fictions of Mulk Raj Anand, R K Narayan and Raja Rao (Paranjape, 1999). They have raised the sociological, nationalistic and philosophical issues. Whereas, Bhabani, Abbas and others have focused on
secular India free from old superstitions, exploitations and western dominance. The women novelists i.e. Kamla Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal deals with humanism and social justice in 1950s. Some of the writers covered the issues like political problem, metaphysical explorations as well as hilarious, energetic and stylistic exhilaration. In this background, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande have depicted the Indian middle class women in their novels. R. K. Narayan has presented active but unreliable, hard-hearted and selfish women in his Malgudi with contrast ineffective, foolish, incompetent but successful men. The foreign fiction market guided to Indian elite writers for narrative writings and criticism. The focus was given on quest for an identity through autobiography, problems of partition, minorities, etc in 1980s and 1990s. Therefore, post-independence Indian fictions have focused on women lives but issues were related to middle and upper class women. However, Arundhati Roy has covered the violated relationships between the higher and lower castes. Here, she tried to project the crises of the society when woman is from upper caste and untouchable man. Therefore, Indian English literature was confined to urban, middle class and largely westernized issues and society. Whereas, rural experience was absent and Dalit literature was at very meagre side.

Women exploitation in religious caste based hierarchal Indian society is horizontal (man woman in family or caste) as well as vertical (inter-caste most probably from upper side). Marxist analyses have presented the vertical nature of exploitation in class society (Patil, 2010). Indian economical classes are distributed into castes. Therefore, the caste is coincided to class in gender discriminations. Women of depressed castes are exploited by male from same caste, families, classes and from upper caste and class. The level of exploitation increased as declining the level of caste and class resulting exploitation doubled, tripled...... The issues and problems of women discrimination presented in post-independent fictions were mostly horizontal in nature.
Therefore, these fictions could be examined critically for the understanding women representation with the sense of sex, caste and class.