INTRODUCTION

‘INDIAN ENGLISH FEMINIST WRITERS IN POST INDEPENDENCE INDIA WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ANITA DESAI AND SHASHI DESHPANDE: A STUDY’

The recent change in the social scenario with regard to gender biases is the result of various writings to create awareness to acknowledge the dignity of women.

FEMINISM – IT’S MEANING

Feminism refers to political, cultural, and economic movements aimed at establishing greater rights and legal protections for women. Feminism includes some of the sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference. It is also a movement that campaigns for women's rights and interests.

Feminism is a set of social theories and political practices that are critical of past and current social relations and primarily motivated and informed by the experience of women. Most generally, it involves a critique of gender inequality; more specifically, it involves the promotion of women's rights and interests. Feminist theorists question such issues as the relationship between sex, sexuality, and power in social, political, and economic relationships. Feminist political activists advocate such issues as women's suffrage, salary equivalency, and control over reproduction.

Feminism is a social movement that seeks equal rights for women.

Feminism as we know it today is a product of the modern entity of nation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:
Feminists and scholars have divided the movement's history into three "waves". The first wave refers mainly to women's suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century’s (mainly concerned with women's right to vote). The second wave refers to the ideas and actions associated with the women's liberation movement beginning in the 1960s (which campaigned for legal and social rights for women). The third wave refers to a continuation of, and a reaction to the perceived failures of, second-wave feminism, beginning in the 1990s.

During much of its history, feminist movements and theories were led predominantly by middle-class white women from Western Europe and North America. However, at least since Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech to American feminists, women of other races have proposed alternative feminisms. This trend accelerated in the 1960s with the civil rights movement in the United States and the collapse of European colonialism in Africa, the Caribbean, parts of Latin America, and Southeast Asia. Since that time, women in former European colonies and the Third World have proposed "Post-colonial" and "Third World" feminisms.

**HISTORY OF FEMINISM IN INDIA:**

Unlike the Western feminist movement, India’s movement was initiated by men, and later joined by women. The efforts of these men included abolishing sati, which was a widow's death by burning on her husband's funeral pyre, the custom of child marriage, abolishing the disfiguring of widows, banning the marriage of upper caste Hindu widows, promoting women’s education, obtaining legal rights for women to own property, and requiring the law to acknowledge women’s status by granting them basic rights in matters such as adoption. The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases: the first phase, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, initiated when male European colonists began to speak out against the social evils of Sati; the second phase, from 1915 to Indian independence, when Gandhi incorporated women's movements into the Quit India Movement and independent women's organizations began to emerge; and finally,
the third phase, post-independence, which has focused on fair treatment of women in the work force and right to political parity.

Post independence feminists began to redefine the extent to which women were allowed to engage in the workforce. Prior to independence, most feminists accepted the sexual divide within the labor force. However, feminists in the 1970s challenged the inequalities that had been established and fought to reverse them. These inequalities included unequal wages for women, relegation of women to 'unskilled' spheres of work, and restricting women as a reserve army for labor. In other words, the feminists' aim was to abolish the free service of women who were essentially being used as cheap labour or capital. Feminist class-consciousness also came into focus in the 1970s, with feminists recognizing the inequalities not just between men and women but also within power structures such as caste, tribe, language, religion, region, class etc. This also posed as a challenge for feminists while shaping their overarching campaigns as there had to be a focus within efforts to ensure that fulfilling the demands of one group would not create further inequalities for another. Now, in the early twenty-first century, the focus of the Indian feminist movement has gone beyond treating women as useful members of society and a right to parity, but also having the power to decide the course of their personal lives and the right of self-determination.

ANITA DESAI

Anita Desai is one of the world famous and of India’s best modern novelists in English. She is an Indian novelist, short story writer, screenwriter, and story writer. She is a writer who has influenced generations of writers. She has enriched Indian fictional world with her significant literary outputs. Anita Desai, originally an Indian citizen, migrated to America. She has been living in America. She can be considered to be an expatriate writer of the Indian origin. Anita Desai was born on 24th, June, 1937, in Mussoorie; a hill station situated in the foothills of the Himalayan ranges, near Dehradun, in the North Indian State of Uttarakhand, India. She was formerly known as Anita Mazumdar, a
Anita Desai’s mother was a German Christian and her father was a Bengali Indian. This mixed parentage of complex origin gives Anita Desai the advantage of having double perspective when writing about India and Indians as well as about migrants in India and Indian migrants to the West. If seen from her mother’s side she is an outsider and if seen from her father’s side she is a native. She was educated in Delhi. She married on 13-12-1958 to Ashwin Desai – a Gujarati businessman and gave birth to four children. Her writing career was entirely subservient to being a wife and a mother. She lived the life of the typical Indian housewives: wrote in the gaps and hid it away, kept it secret. Later the family moved to Mumbai where she raised two sons, Arjun and Rahul, and two daughters, Tani and Kiran.

Having grown up in a houseful of books led her to the early decision that writing would be her life. While studying English at the University of New Delhi, Anita Desai dedicated herself to writing. At a tender age of nine, she had studied *Wuthering Heights*. Her career started with short stories which got printed in leading Indian magazines. Her first story was *Circus Cat*. Then she wrote one after another stories followed by his first novel *Cry the Peacock* in 1963 and many more.

Anita Desai is one of the best-known contemporary Indian English Novelists of our country and has endeavored to accommodate the native Indian tradition in English language. Mainly she portrays dilemmas and doubts of woman who are —misfits in their own way, who do not want to be heroic but all the time we find them struggling for what they do not have for example love, affection, attention, acceptance, recognition, or appreciation. Her novel focuses on the inner climate, the climate of sensibility. The interplay of thoughts, feelings and emotions is reflected in language, syntax and imagery aspects of existentialism are in evidence in the total framework of her stories. A modest attempt has been made to make a comprehensive study of the novels of Anita Desai.
SHASHI DESHPANDE

She was born in Dharwad in Karnataka as the daughter of the well-known Kannada dramatist as well as a great Sanskrit scholar Sriranga. She pursued her education in Dharwad, Bombay and Bangalore. She has completed her degrees in Economics and Law. She completed them with a gold medal. After her marriage, she was moved to Bombay where she undertook a course on journalism at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and worked for a couple of months as a journalist for the magazine, “On looker”. In 1970, she published her first short story. “Legacy” was the first collection of her short stories, which came out in 1978. Two years later, she published her first novel, “The Dark Holds No Terrors”. The subsequent year saw her next brainchild “A Matter of Time”, which was published in the United States of America. The Feminist Press of New York brought out that novel for the first time in that country.

Shashi Deshpande has made bold attempts at raising a voice to the disappointments and frustrations of women despite her vehement denial of being a feminist. Deshpande, thus, exposes the gross gender discrimination and its fall-out in a male-dominated society.