



# **IMPACT OF FEMINISM UPON THE INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE OF THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA**

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## **Abstract**

feminism is a movement which advocates granting the same political, social, and economic rights to women as those enjoyed by men. Throughout the world, women have been deprived of their basic socio-legal rights by a patriarchal order. In the domain of patriarchal culture, woman is a social construct, a site on which masculine meanings get spoken and masculine desires enacted. Feminism in Indian literature, as can be most commonly conceived is a much sublime and over-the-top concept, which is most subtly handled under restricted circumstances. With advancement of time, however, feminism has been accepted in India, setting aside the patriarchal predominance to certain extent. Leaving aside the activists and crusaders of the political and social scenario, perhaps massive work of feminism is also accomplished through Indian literature. Prior to the rise of the novel, many Indian women composed poetry and short stories in Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. Women were the chief upholders of a rich oral tradition of story-telling, through myths, legends, songs and fables. Once literacy began to filter through society, those stories were transformed into poetry and drama. The novel was not at first a common form, perhaps because the majority of women had less access to education than men. It was not until prose began to be used in the late nineteenth century by Bengali writers who had been exposed to European culture that the novel form took hold in India.

*keywords: patriarchal predominance, Feminism, socio-legal rights, Post-Independence literature*

## **Introduction**

The volume of Indian literature written in English is smaller than that written in the various regional languages, and spans a smaller range of time, having only commenced with the spread of the English language and education. But in the last two decades there has been an astonishing flowering of Indian women writing in English, the literature of this period being published both in India and elsewhere. The authors are mostly western educated, middle-class women who express in their writing their discontent with the plight of upper-caste; and lower and lower middle class traditional Hindu women trapped in repressive institutions such as child-marriage, dowry, prohibitions on women's education, arranged marriages, Sati ritual and enforced widowhood.

In the 20th century, women's writing was considered as a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statements. The last two decades have witnessed phenomenal success in feminist writings of Indian English literature. Feminism in Indian literature, as can be most commonly conceived as a much sublime and over

the top concept, which is most subtly handled under restricted circumstances with advancement of time, however Feminism had been accepted in India, setting aside the patriarchal predominance to certain extent. 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 third phase, Post Independence, which has focused on fair treatment of woman at home after marriage, in the work place and their right to enter in political parties. Indian feminists present altogether different picture sequence. The long and painful sufferings of Women, the bitter struggle for the conception of the idea of equal pay for equal work, the continuing battles on behalf of woman's rights to any gender inequality. Indian society has always been highly hierarchical. The several hierarchy within the family concerning age, sex and ordinal position, congenial and fine relationship or within the community referring to the caste lineage, learning, occupation and relationship with ruling power have been maintained very strictly.

Unlike the western feminist movement, India's movement was initiated by men and later joined by Women. Much of the early reforms for Indian women were conducted by men. However, by the late 19 century, they were joined in the efforts by their wives, sisters, daughters, protégées and other individuals directly affected by campaigns such as those carried out for women's education. The most distinctive feature of this movement is that it was initiated by men. It was only towards the end of the century that the woman joined the fray. The list of the champions for the cause of women is long - Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Phule Ranade, Agarkar, Ranade Karve to mention a few. It reveals that their efforts spanned action to abolish the practice of Sati, the custom of child Marriage, custom of distinguishing widows the ban on remarriage of upper caste Hindu widows and lots of other evil practices that affected woman. By the late 20th century, women gained greater autonomy through the formation of independent women's own organizations, the Indian constitution then granted equality, freedom from discrimination based on gender or religion and guaranteed religious freedom. Also seven five year plans were developed to provide health, education, employment and welfare to women. Feminism in Indian English novels is not at all a new-fangled concept and over the years many new writers have broken into the literary circuit and have successfully created a reach base. Indian women writers, composing their thoughts in different English genres range from an array of authors like Toru Dutt to Kamala Das and From Sarojini Naidu to Arundati Roy to Shashi Deshpande. These female Indian writers tell the astonishing variety of themes, in style that poetry and novels are capable of offering each writer a collective tone emphasizing the sovereignty of Woman. Indian Women's writing in English is considered to have started with Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu. These great poetesses charmed the readers with their writings.

Toru Dutt was the first Indian woman poet to write in English and French, and her work depicts archetypes of Indian womanhood, such as Sita and Savitri, showing women in suffering, self-sacrificing roles, reinforcing conventional myths in a patriotic manner along with nature poems. She is also referred as Keats of India as she also died in her twenties, and wrote romantic poetry like him and their themes were very similar.

She belonged from a rich and respected family of Dutt from Calcutta. Her father was Govin Chunder Dutt, a good linguist and a literary activist himself. Her mother was deeply involved with Hindu myths. Her family converted to christianity, when Toru was very young. Beauty and tragedy and fatality criss-crossed in her life. Her brother passed away at a young age of 14, in 1865. After that the family moved to Europe,

where Toru and her sister learned French, a language in which they attained proficiency to use it for creativity. On their return to India in 1873, Toru and Aru engaged themselves in literary pursuits. During this period she completed the translations of poems from French into English. She titled it "A Sheaf Gleaned From French Fields"(1876). Meanwhile, goaded by a desire to bring out "another sheaf gleaned in Sanskrit fields", Toru started studying Sanskrit with her father.

Toru Dutt's literary achievements lay more in her poetic works than in her prose writings. Her poetry is meagre, consisting of 'A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields' and 'Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan', but she "compels attention" as KRS Iyengar puts it. Her poetry has sensitive descriptions, lyricism and vigour. The poems that she wrote or translated were probably those which could touch the cord of her imagination and sentiments - patriotism, loneliness, dejection, frustrations, illusions, exile and captivity.

One remarkable thing about her translation is that she has been able to capture the spirit of the original. No wonder, then, that Edmund Gosse, in his review says, "If modern French literature were entirely lost, it might not be found impossible to reconstruct a great number of poems from its Indian version". Not that she has blindly translated, in fact, she has changed words and phrases of the original and substituted them by more appropriate ones without any hesitation which make her work exact and yet free. The verses maintain the rhythm of the original. Though European by education and training, Toru was essentially an Indian at heart. From her childhood her mother had imbued in her love for the old legends from the Puranas, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Her readings of the old Sanskrit classics gave her first-hand knowledge of the charming stories.

Her woman's imagination wove myriad coloured pictures. Toru wrote two novels - Bianca and Le Journal de Mademoiselle d' Arvers. The former, an incomplete romance, is in English and the latter, in diary form, is the story of Marguerite in French. The manuscripts of these works were discovered after her death amid her papers. Both these works have simple plots which sustain the story element, the language is poetic and the characters are clearly drawn. E.J. Thompson wrote about her, "Toru Dutt remains one of the most astonishing women that ever lived .... fiery and unconquerable of soul. These poems are sufficient to place Toru Dutt in the small class of women who have written English verse that can stand".

Sarojini Naidu, one of the India's feminist luminaries, is the poetess of agony and ecstasy. In her perfect lyricism and mellifluous melody, she is indeed a charming 'Nightingale'. Sarojini Naidu began writing at the age of twelve. Her Persian play, Maher Muneer, impressed the Nawab of Hyderabad. Her father was also a linguist, a crusader, who established the Nizam's College in Hyderabad in 1878, pioneering English and women's education. She studied at the King's College, London and Girton College, Cambridge.

In 1905, her first collection of poems, named 'The Golden Threshold' was published. Her poems were admired by many prominent Indian politicians like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi, J.L. Nehru etc. During 1903- 17 Sarojini came into contact with Gokhale, Tagore, Jinnah, Annie Besant, C.P.Rama Swami Iyey, Gandhi and Nehru. After 1917, she stepped into active politics. From 1915 to 1918 she lectured all over India on welfare of youth, dignity of labour, women's emancipation and nationalism. Sarojini Naidu also led an active literary life and attracted Indian intellectuals to her salon in Mumbai. Her first volume of poetry "The Golden Threshold"(1905) was followed by the "Bird of time"(1912) and in 1914 she was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Her collected poems, all of which she wrote in English have been published under the title "The Sceptred Flute: Songs of India" (1928) and the "Feather of

the Dawn"(1961), the later was edited by her daughter Padmja Naidu. Her poem "Gift of India" was recited by Sarojini Naidu in Hyderabad Ladies War Relief Association in 1915 and it expressed her anguish against the British exploitation of soldiers and how it impacts the mothers of these young soldiers. Her speeches are also available in "The speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu"(1918). Her birthday, 13 February, is celebrated as Women's day to recognise powerful voices of women in India.

**Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain** was born into a Bengali Muslim upper-class family in the small village of Pairaband (Rangpur, now Bangladesh), which was a part of the colonial British province of Bengal Presidency then. Rokeya and her sisters could receive traditional education at home as was the tradition in high-class Muslim families. However, Rokeya's eldest brother who was exposed to Western education, was in favor of educating women and he secretly taught Rokeya English and Bengali at home. Later, her husband encouraged her to articulate unconventional thoughts in writing and to publish them. She became a Bengali writer, educationist, social activist, and advocate of women's rights. Considered the pioneer feminist of Bengal, she wrote novels, poems, short stories, science fiction, satires, treatises, and essays. In her writings, she advocated that both men and women should be treated equally as rational beings, and the lack of education is the main reason of women's lagging behind. Her major works include *Abarodhbasini*, a spirited attack on the extreme forms of purdah that endangered women's lives and thoughts; *Sultana's Dream*, a science fiction novella set in a place called Lady Land, a world ruled by women; *Padmarag* ("Essence of the Lotus", 1924), another feminist utopian novel; *Motichur*, collection of essays in two volumes. Rokeya suggested that education of women is the foremost requisite of women's liberation; hence she established the first school aimed primarily at Bengali Muslim girls in Kolkata. Rokeya is said to have gone from house to house persuading the parents to send their girls to her school. Until her death, she ran the school despite facing hostile criticism and various social obstacles. In 1916, she founded the Muslim Women's Association, an organization that fought for women's education and employment. In 1926, Rokeya presided over the Bengal Women's Education Conference convened in Kolkata, the first significant attempt to bring women together in support of women's education rights. She was engaged in debates and conferences regarding the advancement of women until her death on 9 December 1932, shortly after presiding over a session during the Indian Women's Conference.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's short story 'Sultana's Dream' remains a prominent and important example of feminist fiction, especially since it was written by a woman in the subcontinent—an area that is still trying to shrug off the dirty overcoat of patriarchy and colonialism. Hossain's story is a charming, funny and sharp analysis on subcontinental life at the time, especially for the Muslim women for whom it was the norm to remain illiterate and in purdah. *Sultana's Dream* was written in English, and it begins with an unnamed narrator, who may or may not have fallen asleep in her 'easy chair', thinking about the state of Indian womanhood. It's interesting that Hossain slyly pointed out back in 1905 what is often discussed now, particularly in the subcontinent. Hossain doesn't just subvert the traditional role for subcontinental women in the Twentieth Century, she is downright disdainful and critical of women who have allowed themselves to be trapped within a limited role. What makes *Sultana's Dream* particularly pleasing as an early feminist text is the ease with which Hossain casually dismisses the myths perpetuated by parochial patriarchal systems of the time—she's so confident in her belief that every aspect of male-dominated society can be challenged if women were to accept that there is more for them than basic domestic duties. Hossain's explanation for why women should have equal rights was simple and remains applicable, probably everywhere in the world but especially in the Indian subcontinent where women are struggling against a male-dominated society more so than in the west. As we move forward in history, women writers started

writing openly, they started publishing their works more. The themes of their writings changed as per the conditions and circumstances around that time.

Feminism rose in India and had its effect on literature as well. Literature became a platform for raising voice for Women equality and demanding their rights. They slammed the old, traditional ideal image of a woman as being inferior to man. During that time, Kamala Das emerged as a vigorous and poignant feminine confessional poetess, whose writings explore the man-woman relationship. This style was subsequently taken up by other women poets such as Gauri Deshpande, Suniti Namjoshi, and Chitra Narendran. The predicament of a single woman, spinster or separated, has also been a prominent theme in women's poetry. Tara Patel shows in *Single Woman* (1991) that in the harsh reality of the world, the quest for companionship without strings is a difficult one. Anna Sujata Matha in *Attic of Night* (1991) writes of the trauma of separation and the travails of a separated woman. Poetry for her seems to be an act of transcendence of agony, in the name of survival. But the image of woman she projects is strong and determined, and she argues for a sense of community, justice and companionship. While in women's poetry we hear the voice of the New Woman's definition of herself and a quest for her own identity, we hear the conventional male voice and see a conventional, often negative portrayal of women, in men's poetry. An example is the six volumes of Nissim Ezekiel's poems, which depict women as mother, wife, whore, sex object or seductress. Feminist poets raise their voices against such image depiction of women. They fight for gender equality and demand justice for women's status in society. Moving on, Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai have discussed problems and issues faced by the women in today's male-dominated world as the main theme of their books.

The novels of Anita Desai like 'Voices in the City' and 'Where Shall We Go This Summer' portray the complexities in man- woman relationship. She has tried to explore the psychological aspects of the lead protagonists. Anita Desai, in her psychological novels, presents the image of a suffering woman preoccupied with her inner world, her sulking frustration and the storm within: the existential predicament of a woman in a male dominated society. Through such characters, she makes a plea for a better way of life for women. Her novels have Indians as central characters, and she alternates between female-centered and male-centered narrative. Her later novels, written since she moved to the USA, reveal all the characteristics of diasporic fiction, that is, a concern with the fate of immigrants, and a growing distance from the reality of India, which is viewed from the outside. Feminism themes have also been used by authors like Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Das, Anita Nair and Susan Viswanathan have a special place in Indian English writing by women. During the 1990s India became a popular literary nation as a number of women authors made their debut in this era. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Suniti Namjoshi and Anuradha Marwah Roy used realism as the main theme in their novels. The list of novelists also comprises popular names such as Bharati Mukherjee, Nergis Dalai, Krishna Sobti, Dina Mehta, Indira Goswami, Malati Chendur, Gauri Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Ruth Jhabvala, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri. They are known for the contemporary approach in their novels.

### **Role Of Feminism**

In Indian society, a woman's place has traditionally been lower than that of a man's. The people of India speak a variety of languages. There are towns spread throughout a considerable portion of the land that are actually rural. The condition of the Indian lady from the province is really poor. The landless impoverished women in a considerable number spend around four to five hours in the woods every day in order to seek

fuel or food. When compared to their husbands' caloric intake, urban women expend just 70% of the energy they take in, and they consume only one third as many calories as men do in the same setting. It is estimated that four million of the twelve million young women every year in India will pass away before they reach the age of 15. In the past, it was frowned upon for women to pursue educational opportunities such as reading and writing. Mahatma Phule established the first school specifically for young women in the year 1848 in the city of Pune. Since that time, only young women have been allowed to attend schools. At the predetermined moment, they gave evidence that not only were they excellent in their abilities, but that they were also as daring as young men. Training in English was not available to Indian women and so was not an option for them. Instead of emulating courageous women such as Rani Lakshmbai and Jijamata, it seemed that we gave Savitri and Sita too much influence on Indian women. It seemed as though there had been some sort of recognition of the goddess image that had been presented to them by a culture that was predominated by males. In point of fact, the arrival of British colonists was a driving force in the advancement of women's rights. A number of educated people in Maharashtra, like Agarkar, Maharshi Karve, and Ranade, had their perspectives altered as a result of the instruction that the British provided. Karve had started to elaborate on women's difficulties and their situation in society, and as a result, he opened the door of opportunity for women. During that time period, women struggled against societal segregation. They were victims of child marriage and the tragic loss of a young spouse. The young widow was forced to participate in a number of deplorable customs, such as shaving her head and dressing in a manner that was repulsive, in order to protect herself from the lust of men. Taking everything into consideration, if she did end up pregnant, the only option left for her was to commit suicide. (Mangala Athalekar, 2004)

An Indian woman needs to continually prove herself to be a good young girl, a devoted wife, a kind mother, and lastly a caring grandma. In her new life as a wife, she needs to take precautions to protect herself from the mental, physical, and emotional stress that her in-laws might cause. She would rather be a humble person than a lady who is full of herself. She gives off the impression of being completely selfless and charitable at all times, earning her the reputation of a goddess. The Indian woman is still acting in the role of "Sita," and she is still attempting to prove that she is virtuous and innocent of any wrong doing. Sita, Mira, Savitri, and Draupadi are the legendary names of some of the ladies whose stories provide light on the characteristics that are to be inculcated by Indian women.

### **Post Independence Period**

In the period following India's attainment of its independence, a people group consisting of contemporary feminist authors writing in English emerged at a time when these individuals have a distinct sense of who they are as individuals. The sources, such as stories, folklore, legends, and folktales, are not conventional and are not driven by them in any way. They have done a lot of preparation, are nervous, and have a lot of influence. They understand what it is to have a macho presence. This period in time marks a shift in perspective, perspective point, subject matter, and symbolism. Creators like these demonstrate a sophisticated level of individual judgement and ladylike experience. They create their own literature and turn it into a respectable platform for conveying their feminist views and sentiments by addressing topical themes in their writing and assembling this literature themselves. They make an effort to unearth the aspects of the 'self' that have been buried behind the concepts of selfhood that has been socially male-centric. They discuss their experiences and the true circumstances that they are in. Rashmi Bajaj offers the following observation in relation to the recent literary output of Indian female authors writing in English: 'We also increased societal awareness, a robust sense of women's character, agitation for the cause of women,

questions of alienation and character crisis, a difficult representation of sex, and a concentration on the exploration of individual relationships'.

In the 1960s, there was a surge in the number of Indian women writing in English and making their debuts. Kamala Das, Monika Varma, Margaret Chatterjee, Ira De, Roshan Alkazi, Sujatha Modayil, Mamta Kalia, Gauri Deshpande, Sunita Jain, Lila Ray, Suniti Namjoshi, Mary Gupta, Indira Dhanrajgir, Shri Devi Singh, Lalita Venkateswaran, Gauri Pant, Tillottama Rajan, Chitra Pershad, Nasima Aziz, Vimla Rao, Malathi Rao, Dorothy Sinha, and so forth. They are authors who are endowed with fantastic virtuosity. In most cases, they take the form of confessional booths. They discuss their own experiences, reflecting the rationality that is characteristic of womanliness. They are bringing up the subject of the man-woman connection. They address the issues that women have when attempting to adapt to themselves while living in a society that is dominated by males. These issues include things like excitement, aspiration, sex, bitterness and distress among other things. They are the pioneers of certain remarkable fields for women to discover that have an alluring character and a sense of proximity to them. They don't make time to discuss topics such as abortion before the first trimester, the menstrual cycle, masturbation, lesbianism, and other related topics. As a result, the post-independence era produced an abundance of Indian woman writers who authored their exquisite manifestations.

### **Discussion**

Feminism in Indian literature, contrary to what is generally believed, is not a lofty or over-the-top notion. Instead, it is approached in the most subtle manner possible within certain constraints. However, as time has progressed, feminism has become embraced in India, and the patriarchal dominance has been pushed aside to some extent. Putting aside the feminist crusaders and activists active in the political and social landscape, it's possible that a significant amount of feminism's work has also been completed through Indian literature. However, before comprehending a more in-depth look into feminist literature in India, it is necessary to comprehend the fundamental concept of the term "feminism" in the context of the country in more detail, beginning from the movement's inception. One way to look at the history of feminism in India is as primarily an "attempt to put theory into practise."

There is a fascinating belief that Lord Brahma, the supreme creator of the universe, is responsible for the creation of woman. This tale begins with the very beginning of the universe. And certainly, the concept of feminism in Indian literature, both oral and written, had begun to be established even if it was probably not as overt as it is now, beginning with Brahma Himself. This was true for both oral and written works. It is stated that Brahma was the one who initially created man, and that in his kindness, Brahma wished to provide man with a companion. But at that time, he had used up all of the material in the process of creating man, and as a result, he had to steal several components from the beautiful creation that nature had fashioned in order to create woman from them. When Lord Brahma first presented his creation man with the concept of woman, he said something along the lines of "She will serve you lifelong and even if you cannot live with her, you cannot live without her."

It was not necessary to abandon the study of literature, which, with the passage of time, had acquired momentum and was thus beginning to carve out a new path for the incorporation of feminism in Indian literature. The fact that males in India were the ones who initially championed the cause of 'women's rights' is a situation that lends a certain air of irony to the situation. Life had started to change once more after the implementation of western education, which was particularly significant with the beginning of colonialism

in India under the rule of the British Empire, reformist movements, promotion of women's institutions, the freedom movement, and so on and so forth. In the years after India's independence, when female education had already begun, the concept of the "New Woman" was already taking shape there. Women's access to education has helped foster a feeling of individuality within them and sparked an interest in the fight for their civil and legal rights. It was during this time that the feminist movement began to take hold in Indian literature. At the same time, women were coming into conflict with the double standards of social law that had been passed down through the millennia as well as the conventional moral code. Because fighting for the human rights of women has been misinterpreted as a movement against Indian womanhood, feminism in Indian literature, which had come into India precisely from the west, and the women's liberation movement are not widely spread in India. Feminist ideology in Indian literature had come into India exactly from the west. The majority of depictions of women that can be found in Indian culture and literature, both historical and contemporary, fall into the second group. She falls into a more modern type, one that is more grounded in reality and more human.

Throughout the history of Indian literature, there have been countless iterations of the development of femininity. These iterations have occasionally taken the form of feminism, which is particularly prevalent in Indian literature written in a variety of Indian as well as English languages. In such an article, however, it is just not possible with even the smallest quantity of space that has been determined in advance. It is possible to state with utmost sufficiency within the framework of Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan that, Indian literature written in twenty-two regional languages and numerous dialects not only reflect a common culture and a uniquely Indian version and way of life, but surprisingly the face of Indian woman in all Indian literatures has impressed upon a pan-Indian psyche with of course inevitable local touches and variations. Women have been a source of inspiration for writers throughout history, and the feminine theme has played an important role. She is not just a reader but also a writer, and her influence can be felt everywhere. This is likewise the case with Indian literary works.

The subject matter of Indian literature covers a vast array of topics, ranging from the theme of a traditional lady to that of a modern woman, and in doing so, it serves as a mirror for the transformations that have taken place in Indian culture. All of these movements and voices, the yearning of women for a better and more equitable way of life, are portrayed in the literature written in India after the country gained its independence. Over the course of many years, the classic depiction of the ladies appears to be progressively deteriorating and giving way to a fresh representation of her. Making a link between sexuality and feminism and writing for the idea "a woman's body, a woman's right" in Indian languages, the literary field is most bold to present feminism in Indian literature in the hands of writers like Amrita Pritam (Punjabi) and Kusum Ansal (Hindi), who count amongst the most distinguished writers. Another group of essayists and critics who write fervently in favour of feminism in Indian English literature includes Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, Leela Kasturi, Sharmila Rege, and Vidyut Bhagat. However, feminist literature in India has existed in India since the Vedic Period, with the gradually changing face of women coming to light in every age with its own distinct characteristics. This is true not only of contemporary times and British Indian times, but also of times before both of those periods.

The appearance of R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao on the literary scene in the middle of the 1930s marked the beginning of a period of significant advancement in the field of Indian English writing. Through their work, awareness was raised to the developing Indo-English literary canon. R.K. Narayan and Bhabhani Bhattacharya played contemporary woman characters in the films *Guide* and *So Many Hungers*,

respectively. Rosie from *Guide* and Kajoli from *So Many Hungers* are two examples. Both Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao portrayed emotionally complex female protagonists in their works of fiction. R.K. Narayan has portrayed two distinct types of female characters in his works: those who have a conventional way of thinking and those who want independence from restrictive societal standards. Ladies who are dedicated moms, aunts, grandparents, and wives are among the members of the traditional group. These women include the wives of Margayya (*The Financial Expert*), Srinivas and Sampath (*Mr. Sampath*), and Natraj (*The Man Eater of Malgudi*). Even though R.K. Narayan has written novels with strong female characters, the majority of his books still do not accord women the same level of respect as males. In contrast to his works, the novels written by Bhabhani Bhattacharya have well-rounded female protagonists who play important roles in the progression of the story. His female characters, although being somewhat overshadowed by the male figures in their stories and by patriarchal norms and traditions, are nonetheless vibrant and hopeful for a better tomorrow. Women who are hopeful include Kajoli from "*So Many Hungers*," Meera from "*A Goddess Named Gold*," and Sumita from "*Shadow from Ladakh*." According to Bhattacharya, women are a source of power, and as such, their contribution is vital not just to their families, but also to the country in which they live. Both Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand have not approached the topic of women's emancipation on their own initiative. The hard truths and realities of life are shown vividly in their novels, which focus on the socio-economic difficulties of the historical period in which they were written. Their primary concerns do not just centre on feminist problems but also include such.

On the other hand, Anand's protagonist Gauri in *The Old Man and the Cow* is a shining illustration of his concept of an independent woman. After the nation won its independence, the administration immediately set about instituting a number of significant changes in order to pave the way for future progress. As time went on, a new subgenre of literature emerged, one in which authors wrote on topics that projected the tribulations and complexity of human existence while focusing on the plight of the individual. The middle of the 1950s and the 1960s mark the second significant stage in the development of Indian writing in English. This is the time when authors such as Arun Joshi, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Shobha De, and Nayantara Sahgal published works that fundamentally altered the appearance of the Indian English novel. They have shown us a fresh perspective on human nature as well as the connection between men and women. The difficulties that are covered in their books are specific to the characters in those books rather than being universal. These authors have shown the deep psychological anguish that people go through in order to survive in various parts of society.

The tyrannies, torture, and brutality that women in Indian society experience have been depicted by Anita Desai. She has placed an emphasis on women's troubled psyches, which gives the impression that women are neurotic. Her female characters are brought low by the oppressive environment they are forced to endure, and as a result, they suffer hopelessly. The majority of her female characters are unable to maintain an optimistic outlook on life and are unable to triumph over the anxieties and traumatic experiences they have already through. Maya, the protagonist of "*Cry, the Peacock*," is frustrated because she cannot comprehend her husband, who has a realistic perspective on life. In the book "*Fire on the Mountain*," the main character, Raka, is a child whose parents' marriage ended in divorce and who has seen her father behave violently toward her mother. Raka loses her humanity as a result of the cruel treatment she received from her father. She intentionally sets fire to the mountain, and she takes great pleasure in her deed. In the film "*Where Shall We Go this Summer?*" the main character, Sita, has a pleasant and carefree existence thanks to her accommodating and perceptive husband. Throughout the time of her fifth pregnancy, she finds herself falling victim to a mental disorder that manifests itself during the gestation period. She decides to

run away from the harsh realities of her existence and seek sanctuary on the island of Manori in the hope of receiving the blessings of his late father, who was revered on the island for his ability to perform miracles for the residents there. Not only does this throw off the normal flow of her married life, but it also drives her children further away from her on the island and into the shadows. In the play *Voices in the City*, the character Monisha takes her own life because she cannot see a way out of the routine of her existence.

In her novel *Clear Light of the Day*, Anita Desai uses the character Mira Masi to bring attention to the deplorable situation that many Indian widows find themselves in. She is one of those modern writers whose subjects are focused on women's issues and experiences. Her female characters, on the other hand, almost never have any power, vigour, valour, or hope, and they are almost never able to cultivate a constructive outlook on life. Her female characters are weak and preoccupied with their own suffering, which causes them to develop a deceitful frame of mind. As a result, they are unable to make adjustments in their life that are true and pertinent to their circumstances. The majority of them lack the capacity to analyse their pitiful condition and are unable to conquer their neurotic state because of this. Her works, for the most part, depict the troubled psychological state of widowed women and their listlessness as a result of the oppressive environment in which they are forced to exist. The emancipation of women, either intellectually or ethically, is not something that is discussed in her novels at any point. Her topics are not general; rather, they focus on specific women and the emotional and psychological agony that they experience.

Another modern Indo-English author who has featured powerful women in her works is Ruth Praver Jhabwala. Her books paint a picture of the post-independence Indian society, which include both native Indians and British residents. They provide realistic depiction of the British way of life as well as the culture of that country. In spite of the fact that she has alluded to the topic of human interactions, she has done it within the context of a framework that is latticed and consists of cultured Britishers and knowledgeable Indians. In addition to this, she has outlined the alienation of women that occurs as a direct result of the adoption of British culture by Indians and Indian culture by Britishers. Jhabwala has written about the increasing impact that Britishers had on Indians, which led to them becoming more materialistic. While she was discussing Indians and their families, she gave examples of ladies who were both traditional Indian housewives and contemporary, well-educated women. She depicts the mentality and temperament of Indian women living in Esmond. Jhabwala has provided us with a look into Indian culture, which he describes as one in which males hold the position of master and women occupy the position of slave. Women are conditioned to behave in a submissive manner toward their male counterparts because of the feminine features that are instilled in them. They are also perplexed by differences between cultures. Judy in 'A Backward Place', who was brought up in the United Kingdom, is unable to adjust to her life with an Indian husband; similarly, Gulab in *Esmond in India*, who was brought up in India, reticently bears the callousness of her British spouse. Jhabwala has confined her work to a certain era, focusing on a subset of Indian society that flourished not long after the country gained its freedom. This subset of Indian culture was known as the sikh community. Her motifs do not have an allure that is shared by everyone. Even though they are about women and the predicament they find themselves in, her writings do not qualify as feminist literature since they do not propose any solutions to the problems they face.

Kamala Markandaya has attempted to identify the pitiful state of Indian women by bringing up certain feminist topics in her novels. In *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice*, she discusses impoverished women who are imprisoned in their circumstances, yet in *The Golden Honeycomb*, she writes about ladies who come from wealthy backgrounds. She argues, contrary to Anita Desai and Ruth Praver Jhabwala, that

the underlying cause of all of the issues that women face today is their reliance on males for financial support. Her female characters, such as Premala, Sarojini, Vasantha, and Meera, convey the message that the financial autonomy of women is the key to solving the majority of their issues. These distinguishing qualities of Kamala Markandaya's female protagonists set them apart from the female characters shown in the works of other current Indian-English authors. Her works explore a number of feminist concerns and present a contemporary representation of women that is empowered and self-sufficient.

The fiction of Shashi Deshpande, which not only promotes feminist principles but also encourages women to comprehend who they are without clothing on, emerges as a breath of fresh air in the context of this entire scenario. The novels written by Deshpande provide the impression that in order for women to successfully establish their uniqueness, they need first recognise their shortcomings, then work to overcome those shortcomings, and last capitalise on their strengths. As a writer, she acts as a reflection of the shifting sociocultural backdrop of the transformation process. Her writings, specially the three novels, 'That Long Silence', 'Roots and Shadows' and 'Small Remedies' are reflective of the socioeconomic realities that exist in Indian society. They also reevaluate and reinterpret women's standing, which enables women to recreate both their identity and the roles, norms, and values that they play in their communities.

The lifestyles of metropolitan aristocratic ladies are the subject of the novels written by Shobha De. For them, being married is more about the money, the social standing, and the physical fulfilment, as opposed to developing an emotional and psychological connection to the other person. In her works, Shobha De portrays women who, in their efforts to find themselves, sacrifice their morality. Her heroines are twenty-first-century women who are sophisticated, well-educated, glamorous, ambitious, money-minded, and have a strong desire for sensual pleasure. They are doomed by their spirit of romanticism since they are constantly looking for a new life-partner rather than analysing the issues that they are experiencing in their marriage.

The Indian mind often equates marriage with a set of moral and ethical norms, yet her characters do not possess any of these characteristics. They don't consider cheating a sin because it's just part of their daily routine, therefore, they don't feel any guilt about it. Her books paint a picture of the urban elites, who have exchanged their principles and aspirations for more surface-level desires, such as the desire for wealth, sexual fulfilment, professional achievement, and social status. The feministic ideals of Shobha De are devoid of any Indianness. Her themes encourage women to weaken their relationships to their families so that they can advance their careers and attain higher social status, which is counterproductive. Despite the fact that she brings up a few issues concerning the lives of women, she does not offer any remedies that are either meaningful or pertinent to these issues.

With the use of evocative language and vivid imagery throughout her stories, Anita Nair, a contemporary feminist writer, captivates the attention of her audience. She is widely regarded as a skilled worker in the field of fiction, and this reputation precedes her. She gives off the impression of having a deep understanding of South Indian culture and has a good eye for expressing specifics. She focuses mostly on the interaction between men and women, and her writing is captivating because of the range of emotions she explores, from gentle sympathy to sensuality to flaming wrath.

## Conclusion

The term "feminism" refers to a collection of cultural, economic, and political groups whose primary goals are to achieve full legal equality for women and to provide legal protections for them. In Indian English literature, feminism has been employed as a humble endeavour to evaluate the true social environment as it relates to women's issues. This evaluation has been done via the lens of feminism. There are a number of writings in the English literature of India that accurately reflect the position of women in Indian societies. Indian women writers have frequently brought assortment of feministic topics up in a style that generally poetry and novels are fit to showcase their cause. Thus, the study endeavours to encapsulate the writings in different genres which provide a peep into the feministic approach of the authors.

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