



FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY: A STUDY OF THE SELECT NOVELS OF INDIAN ENGLISH WOMEN WRITERS

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ABSTRACT

The discourse of female subjectivity elaborated in the theoretical and a detailed analyzing of fictional works produced via the Indian English females' writers explore how lady's self-evaluation in their connection with the sector has advanced with the passage of time. This dynamic process of defining the relation among the female-self and the world is specific because it proves to be general as well as time-space-individual particular on the equal time. The texts dealing with women's subjective assertions bear some not unusual thoughts and stories in them from which a fundamental idea can be derived. However, as the concept of subjectivity is greatly associated with time, area and the person, it will become apparent that some theories and formulations are not enough to embody the sizeable volume of such human stories. As a consequence, the discourse of female subjectivity is constantly an ongoing method and includes new components of stories, constantly demanding contributions to re-furnish the thoughts regarding ladies, society and their mutual negotiations.

Key words: Female subjectivity, Indian English

INTRODUCTION

Beginning from the Sangam period till the present day, women writings have contributed much to the growth of literature and have presented issues highlighting a women's world. However, the success of women writings is highly acclaimed that it has won international recognition. Indian women's fiction is dealing with multiple issues concerning self and society. Trapped in a socio-cultural milieu women suffer inwardly, hence much of women's writing is primarily a critique of social justice and equality in a patriarchal society. Today fiction by women writers contributes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. Contemporary women's fiction is a challenge to master narratives. It focuses on "differences that make a difference" to women in dominant masculine culture. It is also significant that women writers have not simply been confined to the private realm but have moved beyond it. It provides insight, a wealth of understanding, reservoirs of meaning and basis of discussion. The world is being seen in a new dimension through the eyes of women fiction writers. This thesis will focus on the writings of novelists like Gita Mehta's *Raj*, Githa Hariharan's, Anita Nair's and Meena Alexander's. They have chosen the problems and issues faced by the women in today's male dominated world as the theme of their novels. They have visualized the spirit of Indian cultures and its traditional values.

Confrontation between the east and the west, the strange love - hate relationships, cultural alienation and loss of identity faced by the expatriates and immigrants are some of the aspects presented with a deep insight by writers like Kamala Markandeya, Ruth P.Jhavbala, Anita Desai and Nayantara Saghla. The Indian women novelist like Bharati Mukherjee, Gauri Deshpande, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri used realism as the main theme of their novels.

It is a matter of great pride that Indian women's fiction has come into its own and is recognized as literature with a substance. Over the past few decades women have contributed significantly to life and literature by interrogating and exploring their own lives and that of other women. Today Indian women's fiction is dealing with multiple issues concerning self and society. Much of women's writing is primarily a critique of social justice and equality in a patriarchal society.

Indian women novelists are progressing leaps and bounds. However, the success of women writings is highly acclaimed that it has won international recognitions breaking the barriers of Gender, Race and Region. The image of women in fiction has undergone a change during the last four decades. Women writers have moved from the traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women towards conflicted female characters searching for identity, no longer characterized in terms of their victim status rather they assert themselves and challenge marriage and motherhood.

The discourse of female subjectivity has become the focal point of discussion in contemporary feminist debate. Female subjectivity includes two very important words within its purview — 'female' and 'subjectivity' — both of which have been parts of two widely debated and impressively influential discourses. The discourse of subjectivity and the discourse of feminism have evolved and transformed a lot during their constant growth over the centuries. At the same time, these discourses have made an impact on social, political, cultural and religious discourses to become some of the widely discussed subjects even in recent times. So, a comprehensive discussion of female subjectivity demands a minute and sustained study of the discourses on subjectivity and feminism so as to reach at an idea regarding what constitutes and informs female subjectivity. Such detailed discussion also helps in locating the causes of why female subjectivity has attained prominence as a subject of study in the present times and find out the responses to and developments of the idea of female subjectivity in contemporary literature.

The discourse of feminism can be seen as the confluence of various theories of feminism where the term 'female' as a subject captures the central part of the discussion. While talking about 'female', the allied ideas like gender, sex, identity, agency, subjectivity, selfhood etc. inevitably come to the foreground. When contemplated, it can be found that all these sub-issues are interrelated and work together in the development of the discourse of feminism. The discourse has become vast and complicated as we have moved a long way from the typical notion of feminism, and today, it is not simply about the conflict between male-domination and female-subordination. With the passage of time, society has changed a lot and keeping pace with this change our relationship with the society has also undergone a definite transformation. Likewise, the concept of the 'female' and her relation with the society has also altered. The notion of subjectivity that talks about a person's relation with his/her society helps to elaborate and examine the relationship of the female with the society she lives in. The feminist theorists have been constantly engaged in their attempt to explain whether this relationship is compatible or there is any need to readjust the positions of the female within the space of the society to usher in a better and widely acceptable co-existence.

It is important for us to look at women's writing not as a monolithic whole dealing with the question of self and identity. Much of Indian women's writing in English is focusing on the middle-class woman and her subsequent roles in an upwardly mobile society. These roles are well within the parameters of a family. Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by a patriarchal society.

Thus, the theme of growing up from childhood to womanhood, that is, the Bildungsroman, is a recurrent strategy. Ruth Praver Jhabvala's first novel *To Whom She Will* (1995) and her later *Heat And Dust* (1975) which was awarded the Booker Prize, and Kamala Markandaya's *Two Virgins* (1973) are good examples. Sex is implied on these novels, but depicted more explicitly in *Socialite Evenings* (1989) by Shobha De, in which she describes the exotic sex lives of the high society in Mumbai.

Contemporary women's fiction is a challenge to master narratives. It focuses on "differences that make a difference" to women in dominant masculine culture. It is also significant that women writers have not simply been confined to the private realm but have moved beyond it. It provides insight, a wealth of understanding, reservoirs of meaning and basis of discussion. The world is being seen in a new dimension through the eyes of women fiction writers. Today fiction by women writers contributes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English.

Trapped in a socio-cultural milieu women suffer inwardly in the novels of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur. Marriages fail due to lack of understanding between man and woman. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in *The Mistress of Spices*, (1997) uses magic realism in her novel. Suniti Namjoshi stands out for her use of fantasy and surrealism and Anuradha-Marwah's *Idol Love* (1999) presents a chilling picture of an Indian dystopia in the twenty-first century. Other novels deal with various aspects of college life, such as Meena Alexander's *Nampally House* (1991) and Rani Dharker's *The Virgin Syndrome* (1997). Another theme to emerge is that of the lives of women during India's struggle for Independence, as seen for example in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998).

There many Indian women writers based in the USA, Canada, Britain and other parts of the world. These authors write about their situation in cross-cultural contexts, states of 'in-betweenness'. The East/West confrontation, the strange love-hate relationships, the clash between tradition and modernity, cultural alienation and loss of identity faced by expatriates and immigrants are some of the aspects that are presented with a deep insight by writers like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Jhumpa Lahiri, Meera Syal, Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Baldwin, Chitra Banerjee and Kiran Desai. The theme of migration that leads to self-discovery, with a negation of the traditions of the country of origin, is the recurrent theme among the migrant authors, Bharti Kirchner's *Shiva Dancing* (1998), Ameena Meer' *Bombay Talkie* (1994) and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) being good examples.

The image of women that we chiefly get in Indian Writing in English is an ambivalent one. Sometimes she is presented as meek, passive and obedient as Sita or Draupadi; and sometimes a defying and rebellious, recalcitrant and self-assertive. Women now are no longer controlled and regulated to gratify their sexual needs. Shobha De, Shouri Daniels, Arundhati Roy, Uma Vasudev and Kamala Das have dealt with such type of women protagonists in their novels. Shobha De's women like Karuna and Anjali project their passions on to others as female power in order to deconstruct the male ego. Her novels evince the struggle of women against the predatory male dominated society. Her novels are pulp fiction, which sell well and are read well but fail to meet the aesthetics of feminism.

The dominant and leading woman novelist, Shashi Deshpande is the second daughter of the famous Kannada dramatist and Sanskrit Scholar Shriranga. The ten novels, six collections of short stories, four books for children and a screen play prove evidence that Deshpande is one of the most prolific women writers in English in contemporary India.

The novels of Shashi Deshpande are a realistic and an optimistic portrayal of the Indian middle-class educated women. Deshpande successfully presents these women as they are engaged in the complex and difficult social and psychological problem of defining an authentic self. Deshpande's novels remind us of the reality that traditionally India has a malist society and culture. Her first novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is an anti-matriarchal novel where Saru, the protagonist is discriminated against by her mother who values her son Dhruva above her daughter. Saru, through marriage wants to assert and affirm her feminine sensibility. Against her parental wishes she gets married to Manu, to secure the love which she had longed for in her parental home. Manu's male ego asserts itself through nocturnal sexual assaults on Saru who bears these sufferings silently. Saru wants to leave her profession but Manu doesn't allow her because it will affect the family budget and she is allowed to live with her father as it will affect the family prestige. She left like an

abandoned and deserted child, severely constrained by her womanhood, and further burdened by her family responsibilities. There is no way that she can wrest a second chance of life. She cannot control events, but only acclimatize herself to them.

She is the winner of the Sahitya Akadami Award, for her novel 'That Long Silence'. The quest for an authentic selfhood on the part of the protagonist finds an artistic expression through the heroines' rebellion against the patriarchal core of society. Deshpande explores Jaya's public and private realms of experience. In this novel we are exposed to the life of the sense as well as the agonized feelings of the narrator- protagonist, Jaya, a housewife and an unsuccessful writer. She resolves to assert her individuality by breaking that long silence, by putting down on paper all that she had suppressed in her seventeen years' silence.

Shashi Deshpande delineates the hapless plight of educated middle class women under male domination. In *Roots and Shadows*, Indu struggles for the release from the clutches of the tradition and the tradition-bound institution of marriage. She is in search of an autonomous self, only to realize like them. *Roots and Shadows* comes out with its feminist approach in Indu's exploration into herself. It also moves beyond feminist boundaries into a realization of the predicament of human existence.

The Binding Vine is a novel with a difference. The protagonist, Urmila is regaining her composure after the sudden death of her infant daughter. She gets involved with Kalpana, a young victim of rape and wants people to realize the indignity that is heaped upon a rape victim by a man. Only the victim knows the shattering physical and psychological effects. Urmila is typical feminine voice who struggles through the gloom of her existence, not subduing but revolting, trying to sort out things for her. In her we hear the conscious-raising voice of the determined self-affirmation in itself. Deshpande makes it clear that women have to fight their own battles through the protagonist's conscious-raising voice, struggling to assert her femininity, Shashi Deshpande gets to the root of existence and gives vent to a kind of female subjectivity which refuses to reconcile and identify herself with a patriarchal and male dominated society. Through her female protagonists she seems to convey the message marital polarization curtails human potential and individual happiness.

Another renowned novelist of the modern Indian fiction is Kamala Markandaya. She moved to Britain after India's Independence and is known for writing about cultural clashes between Indian urban and rural societies. Markandaya has published her first novel, 'Nectar in a Sieve' (1955). It is a best seller and considered a notable book by the American Library Association. Her other works are *Some Inner Fury* (1965), *A Silence of Desire* (1961), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *The Rising* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) and *Pleasure City* (1982).

The most striking feature of Kamala Markandaya's fiction is that it reflects the changing ethos of the Post-Independence India. Her accurate and meticulous delineation of the social, economic and political changes with her special focus on the concept of cultural continuity reveal her extraordinary sense of historicity. The emphasis in her fiction is on the ideological speculations and the dilemmas in the interaction. She depicts the changing and varied image of man and society. Her novels reflect the changing traditional India in post Independent India. Kamala Markandaya is keen and aware of the moral, psychological and other human problems.

A Silence of Desire deals with the theme of clash between fiction and reason through the conflict between Dandekar and Sarojini. The novelist is basically concerned with traditional mode of spiritualism or superstitions and the scientific rationalism. Like V.S. Naipaul, her Indian sensibility is colored by her western outlook. She depicts the cultural dualism, but also seems to advocate a cultural synthesis through the complexity of human relationship. In *Pleasure City* the multinational corporation consists of foreigners and Indians. The project taken up by the company to build a holiday resort 'Shalimar' signifies the co-operation the both; transcending all cultural and national barriers. *The Pleasure City* is a blend of imagination and reality.

The village of fisherman becomes a haven for holiday maker. The excess money spent on holidays in 'Shalimar' mocks at the poverty of the villagers. Markandaya combines the contrary values and lifestyle of the two races; but also contrasts the economic backwardness and illiteracy of the Indian people with that of the scientific and technological advancement of the British.

In her first novel *Nectar In a Sieve*, Markandaya's focus is on poverty and suffering of rural life. Along with the simple inhabitants of the village, she depicts its simple beauty being bulldozed by the establishment of a tannery. On one hand the novel is a passionate cry against the social injustice on the other, it is critical of the technical progress and materialism.

In the *Coffer Dams*, Markandaya tries to fuse the traditional Indian values with the growing materialism. In this novel British Engineers set out to build a dam across a river in South India. Like the multi-corporation of *Pleasure City*, there are British technicians, Indian Engineers and the local tribals. The tribal settlement with its world of nature is in direct clash with the world of technology.

Kamala Markandaya has also focussed on the themes of the man-woman relationships through her various novels. In *Possessions*, Lady Caroline Bell is an autocrat, typical of British colonizers. She symbolizes the dominating forces of the British. Her possessive nature proves suffocating for Valmiki. She exploits his talent, moulds him into a man, an artist and a lover, but takes away his Independence in the process. Valmiki, who stands for the spiritual strength of India, wrests himself free from Caroline's influence and comes back to India.

In *Two Virgins* the clash between the traditional Indian values and the modern Western outlook is represented in Aunt Alamelu and Appu. Here the feminine sensibility is fused with a rural background. The author has attacked modern society and materialism associated with cities. In the *Golden Honeycomb*, the honey comb symbolizes the union of the English and their counter parts. The rajahs begin to disintegrate because they alienate themselves from the aspirations of the common man. The novel also highlights the gap between the rich and the poor. In *Some Inner Fury*, the conflict between India and Britain is of central importance. It is dramatized in two ways; political agitation and cultural disparity.

Kamala Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice* fictionalizes the sociology of India by awakening the polite society to the plight of the rural people. The novel deals with hunger and poverty and the consequent degeneration of human values. The novel begins and ends with Ravi's struggle with hunger. Living in poverty, Ravi cannot hear the voice of his conscience. He drowns his morality and his misery in drink. Kamala Markandaya presents Ravi's moral dilemma quite convincingly. Torn between the worlds, one dead and the other yet to come, Ravi makes a choice which ultimately proves to be life-denying

Kamala Markandaya is one of the most gifted novelists to the Contemporary Indian fiction writers, who catches the spirit of India and its problems, to capture it with the modern age. Her novels portray the anguish of human beings trapped in circumstances beyond them. She deals with a diverse and varied themes ranging from the social, political, spiritual and feminine issues.

Anita Desai is the foremost Indian novelist of the post-Independence era. She is unquestionably one of the celebrated Indian - English fiction writers. Anita Desai holds a unique place among the contemporary women novelist of India. She was born of Bengali father D.N.Mazumdar, a businessman and German mother Toni Nime, on 24th June 1937, in Mussori. At just the budding age of seven, she began to show her literary spark by her creative writing and published her first story at the age of nine as a small piece of art in children's magazine.

She has published ten novels and other literary works of immense value. She interested in the psychic life of her characters. Her attempt is to reach the world of mind and penetrate into the soul of the character; particularly women very skillfully unveil the real self of a woman which is hidden beneath surface.

Anita Desai is a strong feminist writer with her delicate feminine sensibilities. Her dual heritage has strong impact on her writing at the thematic as well as stylistic level. Being a woman Anita Desai realizes the feminine sensitivity more intensely by exploring the emotional layer and the delicate heart of a woman. Desai portrays the different facets of feminine psyche, revealing an awareness of various deeper forces, nine-tenths of which submerged make up the truth.

‘Cry, the Peacock’, the first novel of Anita Desai is concerned with the protagonist Maya’s psychological problems. One cannot separate the body and the mind (soul) of a woman. A sound mind dwells in a sound body. Maya, the protagonist is a very sensitive woman who wishes to love and to live. She makes her mind to marry Gautama who is much older than her as chosen by her father. Maya is unhappy and unsatisfied with her husband’s rationalistic approach towards life. With his negation and denial, she feels alienated. Furthermore, to add to her miseries she haunted by the prophecy of albino astrologer, who creates a fear psychosis in her mind. Unable to bear with it she kills her husband and herself.

In her novel ‘Where Shall We Go This Summer?’ Anita Desai propagates the reality of a women’s plight and her agony to be a part of society with her own identity. Anita Desai describes the marriages in India and the various complexities involved with them. Self-revelation is the main thrust of the novel ‘Where Shall We Go This Summer?’ The entire story deals with mental and emotional struggle-an inner fury which makes us think about the various problems of the Indian women in society and life.

In the novel ‘Fire On The Mountain’ she explores the inner emotional world of the ageing women in India. The protagonist Nanda Kaul is not happy with the arrival of her psychological ill and unsociable great granddaughter, Raka. Nanda wants a complete isolation and alienation after her husband’s death and being deceived by her husband who had an affair with a teacher lasting all his life. As Vice-Chancellor’s wife and the head of a large family, Nanda had a hectic and disturbed life. She had longed for privacy all through her life and at last she got it in the hills of Kasauli. Now she does not want anyone and nothing else, a bare and empty life.

Trying to stop a child-marriage for monetary gains, Ila Das is ended up with rape and killing by the child-bride’s father, to prove women as the weaker section of society and he rules the women. Sexual violence in India has placed women even at her older age insecure and how violence can intrude in society and life.

In her another novel Voices in the City, Monisha is an intelligent girl. She is deprived of freedom like Maya. She is also worried and unhappy. Like Maya, she yearns for freedom. She wants to assert her individuality. So she has to face the hostile attitude of her father, husband and her mother-in-law.

Anita Desai, an expert in delineating the lacerated psyche portrays the ontological insecurity, alienation and anguish of uprooted individuals in Bye-Bye Blackbird and Baumgartner’s Bombay. Desai depicts the gnawing sense of immigrant sensibility in Bye Bye Blackbird through the three different yet related characters Dev, Adit and his English wife Sarah. Adit employed in England marries Sarah. In order to accommodate oneself in a new culture and country, one has to tolerate and adapt to the circumstances. When Dev visits England to pursue higher studies he is shocked to find Adit swallowing the humiliations thrown at him. But Adit loves the culture there, for the economic and social freedom. Adit slowly realizes that he is still a misfit and his final visit to his in-laws disenchant him. The truth that he is an Indian and can never breathe freely in England, dawns on him. Adit is shocked when Sarah shuts him out with a long and a snap.

Baumgartner's *Bombay* is the moving account of a homeless, nationless man. He has nowhere to go to regain his lost identity. Hugo is an exile driven out of Germany due to racial discrimination. Baumgartner's *Bombay* is the story of Hugo from his affluent childhood days in Germany to the horror of his murder in India by another German.

Desai has brilliantly portrayed the dilemma of uprooted individual through these two novels. Desai contracts the ways of the West with those of the East in her novel *Fasting, Feasting*, where socio- spiritual awareness results in lasting ecstasy.

Anita Desai has given a new dimension, vision and face to the Indian novel in English by emphasizing from outer to inner reality. She explores the inner world of her protagonists and reveals the deeper forces in creating the feminine sensibility. She also conceptualizes that feminism is never static; it depends a lot on their socio-cultural and regional background along with the traditions. She highlights that the body- psyche relationship is mutually interdependent and complimentary in nature.

In her novels, Desai broadly and effectively deals with the themes of alienation, marital discord, disharmony, seclusion, existentialism, quest for identity, rectitude and feminization of ageing. Anita Desai's characters can be classified in two distinctive groups- those who fail to adjust to the harsh realities of life and those who compromise. Like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, Desai's themes too deal with human nature and human relationship.

Literature reflects not only the social reality but also reflects the ever changing reality of life. The portrayal of the position of women in the society, their personal relationship and their perception of the socio-cultural reality helps to shape and organize themselves.

Among all literary forms, fiction reflects the contemporary social conditions. With the advent of the 20th century, the novels emerged with varied perspectives of the attitudes towards the imposition of traditions, re-interpretation of mythology, an analysis of the family structure, caste system and the status of women in the patriarchal social organization. The early writers presented the traditional image of a woman like Sita or Savitri but the contemporary writers emerged with a new woman, who does not want to lead a passive married life of sacrificial and shadowy creatures.

Recent writers depict both the diversity of women and the diversity within each woman, making society aware of women's demands and a medium of self-expression. Thus, not re-writing History of India but 'Her-story'. In this way, a brief survey of the works, especially produced by Indian English women authors elucidates the fact that contemporary women writers are taking up several crucial issues as the themes of their writing that connect them with the larger society. Following Rajeswari Suder Rajan's comment, we can say that "women's text cannot be regarded simply as the transparent medium of self-expression, but becomes a significant mediator between the private self of the writer and the public world of the letters" (223). Establishing a connection between the self and the world, the Indian English women novelists, as a part of the greater Indo-English literature, have showed an enthusiasm "to negotiate a place both within a rich and vibrant circle of Indian literatures as well as internationally among other literatures in English" (Chanda 15). In the attempt to establish the women at the centre-stage in the narratives, the Indian English women novelists simultaneously reflect the Indian ethos and sensibility which is definitely one of the reasons behind their tremendous success in the world of literature, particularly in the genre of fiction.

In this paper, four contemporary Indian women novelists and their four select novels have been chosen in order to explore female subjectivity in the contexts of different time and space. These novelists and their respective texts are Gita Mehta's *Raj* (1989), Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music* (1997) and Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé* (2001). Among them, Gita Mehta, who

hails from a family that is associated with Indian national politics since the days of freedom movement, has shown her keen interest in portraying Indian society and culture from colonial to contemporary times. Her first work, *Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East* (1979), is a collection of essays that aims to expose how Indian traditional culture is being commodified and sold to western world. Mehta has proved her talent of storytelling in the novel *A River Sutra* (1993) where she has woven six different stories together with a river to present glimpses of the diverse Indian society and culture. *Snakes and Ladders: Glimpses of Modern India* (1997) is again a collection of essays that captures the struggling growth of the Indian state on traditional, political, economic and cultural spheres since independence. Her latest work, a non-fiction again, *Eternal Ganesha: From Birth to Rebirth* (2006), is an account of the Hindu deity Ganesha's place in Indian tradition. Her novel, *Raj* is different from her other works in its spirit and theme, as her first novel can be explained as a saga of colonial India's princely lives. Here the novelist has attempted to offer both history and politics through the eyes of a female protagonist.

Githa Hariharan has written many short stories and contributed several scholarly writings besides novels. *The Thousand Faces of Night* is her very first novel where she deals with women's issues. The novel won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and established Hariharan as an emerging women writer. Hariharan treated the question of human condition in her second novel, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), which is a bit philosophical in its intent. *When Dreams Travel* (1997) owes its idea of storytelling to the two storytelling princesses in the mythical *Arabian Nights*. But in the novel, Hariharan has made an effort to connect the two different periods and recreate the myth in its polyphonic structure. Her subsequent novels, *In Times of Siege* (2003) and *Fugitive Histories* (2009) deal with the situations of contemporary Indian social reality where multiple lives intersect with each other to find mutual support and a sense of identity of their own in times of trouble.

Meena Alexander, the renowned diasporic Indian author, is noted for her poetry and prose equally. Her book of poetry, like *House of a Thousand Doors* (1988), *Illiterate Heart* (2002), *Raw Silk* (2004), *Quickly Changing River* (2008), are as famous as her memoir *Fault Lines* (1993), or non-fiction like *The Shock of Arrival* (1996) and *Poetics of Dislocation* (2009). Her writings address and incorporate the themes of memory, nostalgia, dislocation, fractured identity and life as the female citizen of multicultural society. She has written two novels, *Nampally Road* (1991) and *Manhattan Music*, where autobiographical elements are mingled with her other chosen themes in search of an identity of the women who try to connect their past with the present. When the first novel is set against the backdrop of mistrust and violence in the Indian city of Hyderabad, *Manhattan Music* too talks about troubled time that affects the life of the immigrants. Alexander's works reflect the continuous search for a meaningful life through the works of art.

Anita Nair, the youngest among these authors, has proved herself a versatile writer. She is a novelist, a short story teller, a travelogue writer, an editor and a poet at the same time. Her first work, *Satyr of the Subway* (1997), is a collection of short stories. This is followed by her first novel *The Better Man* (2000) that portrays the transformation of its protagonist to understand the value of true human relationships. Her second novel, *Ladies Coupé*, translated into more than twenty languages so far, has been immensely popular among the reading populace. Nair here searches for women's self-sufficiency resulting from the unique bond they make among themselves. *Mistress* (2005) and *Lessons in Forgetting* (2010) are two other novels that depict the facets of human relationships. Her latest novel *Idris: Keeper of the Light* (2014), a historical one, is the adventure tale that dates back to the seventeenth century.

COCLUSION

The discussions will be theoretical debates and the four select novels by Indian English women authors examine the existing as well as the various possible aspects of female subjectivity. Deriving ideas from both the major western feminist thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler etc. and the significant Indian feminist scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Susie Tharu etc. I have attempted to explore the richness of theoretical and literary texts produced by the select female authors and the notions of subjectivity they will be introduced in the society.

Women's lives traditional literary works serve as fuel for thought and promote imagination and creativity, and literature not only portrays reality but also contributes to it via depictions of the thinking patterns and social standards common in society. The modern lady understands the complexity of human nature. They are aware that a person's outward appearance does not reveal all about them. The vast oral heritage of myths, stories, songs, and fables was mostly preserved by women. Poetry and play were developed from these tales as literacy spread across society. The past two decades have seen a remarkable proliferation of female Indian authors working in English, with works by these authors seeing widespread publication in India and beyond. The writers, most of whom are middle-class white women educated in the West, express their frustration with the oppression of traditional Hindu women of higher castes and classes through their works.

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