

Chapter I

Introduction

Contemporary writings on women usually focus on the emphasis and need for freedom, awakening and equality between the genders and thus making an attempt to diagnose the interdependence and there by visualizing a healthy co-existence between man and woman in the society. The end of the twentieth-century proved to be a period of uprising and questioning in which the rise of issues concerning the various taboos and social custom that have governed human behavior for centuries were debated.

Literature of any country is the storehouse of information on the cultural and sociological aspects of its people. Literature and society are reciprocal because both serve as cause and effect to each other. Any literary creation does not come into existence by itself but its emergence is determined by social situations and individual experiences. Literature reflects not only the social reality but also shapes the complex ways in which men and women organize themselves, their interpersonal relationships and their perception of the socio-cultural reality. The changes in the social, cultural and moral norms of the society are reflected by the writers who focus on contemporary problems. They not only explore the vital areas of individual consciousness but also project the fascinating images of changes that occur in the society.

The social order in the present century began to experience a revolution with regard to the notions of sexuality and gender issues that have always been at the nucleus of many proscribed norms which functioned in the past as a powerful instrument of repression. Such notions were profusely discussed by both women of conservative ideologies and those with liberal thinking in public debates as well as in academia. This attitude gave rise to feminist discourse in literature.

Women writers in particular have depicted their antagonism towards the patriarchal society which coerces them from empowerment at the social, economic and political front. Women writers have come out of the usual framework of writing about domestic predicament and their fight for freedom from patriarchal domination and have started to speak about emotional independence and individual liberty.

Humanity recognizes no sex--mind recognizes no sex--virtue recognizes no sex--life and death, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, recognize no sex. Like him she comes involuntarily into existence; like him she possesses physical, mental, and moral powers, on the proper cultivation of which depends her happiness; like him she has to pay the penalty for disobeying Nature's laws, and far greater penalties has she to suffer from ignorance of her far more complicated nature than he; like him she enjoys or suffers with her country. . .
 .(Rose, Ernestine 107)

The times have changed and women no longer fight for their freedom, instead they realize their potentials and various opportunities in the society. Women have grown much beyond this stage and their focus is on their self development.

The origin, evolution and the growth of feminism is often studied under three different waves of feminist movement. The first-wave feminism which began in the nineteenth century focused mainly on the issues of inequalities, primarily on gaining women's suffrage. It was basically a political movement for acquiring woman's rights. The first wave was felt throughout the world, particularly in the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands and the United States of America.

The second wave feminism began in the year 1960 and lasted throughout 1980s and it focused on issues like sexuality, position of women in the family,

condition of women in the workplace, reproductive rights, and official legal inequalities. The second-wave feminism also focused on the battle against violence inflicted on women with proposals for marital rape laws, establishment of laws to deal with rape and battered women's protection, and changes in child custody and divorce law. "The second-wave feminism relates to the historical context of patriarchy and oppression and attacks the male domination in aggressive, militant tone" (Shukla 20).

The first-wave of feminism was immense and without the continuing second-wave, there would be no hope for feminism in current times, for each wave is connected and dependent on the other's history. This feminist movement encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives and ponder on the gender based hierarchical power structure that operates in the society. The main motto of these movements was to ensure education, equality, economic independence and freedom of choice to women on par with men. Feminism is a diverse collection of social theories, political movements and moral philosophies, largely motivated by the experiences of women, especially in term of their social, political and economic situation.

Feminism which can be considered as a prevalent social movement fundamentally focuses on preventing or wiping out gender disparities and the movement also endorses women's rights and gender related social issues. Within academia some feminists focus on documenting gender inequality and changes in the social position and representation of women. Others argue that gender, even sex, are social constructs, and research the construction of gender and sexuality, and develop alternate models for studying social relations.

The third wave feminism is born with the privileges won by the first and the second wave feminism. It challenges the gender discrimination and attempts to find a

rationale for the identities of masculinity and femininity separating men and women and critiques the second wave feminism. “The third wave feminists generally see themselves as capable, strong, and assertive social agents” (Krolokke 15). “A common American term for third-wave feminism is ‘grrl feminism’ and in Europe it is known as ‘new feminism’” (Krolokke 17). This movement criticizes the use of sexist language, derogatory terms that are used for referring to women or girls in general, it also raises voices against trafficking and violence against women.

Postfeminism concurs with this concept of existing feminism as well as acts as a continuation of the long history of the women’s movement. Postfeminism is the next level of development in the doctrine of feminism. Women of the present epoch have grown in the direction of higher existence after the first two waves of feminist movement. Women benefitted much because of the long and tedious struggle put up by the feminists of the previous generations for their rights and they are able to look forward towards future with much anticipation. Postfeminism is defined as:

...an active process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 80s come to be undermined. It proposes that through an array of machinations, elements of contemporary popular culture are perniciously effective in regard to this undoing of feminism, while simultaneously appearing to be engaging in a well-informed and even well-intended response to feminism. It then proposes that this undoing which can be perceived in the broad cultural field is compounded by some dynamics in sociological theory which appear to be most relevant to aspects of gender and social change.

Finally it suggests that by means of the tropes of freedom and choice which are now inextricably connected with the category of “young

women,” feminism is decisively aged and made to seem redundant.

Feminism is cast into the shadows, where at best it can expect to have some afterlife, where it might be regarded ambivalently by those young women who must in more public venues stake a distance from it, for the sake of social and sexual recognition. (McRobbie 255)

This aspect of feminism is most appropriate to discuss the aspects of gender and social change in this era. Women have more freedom and choices to such an extent that women empowerment and emancipation has become the hallmark of this aeon.

Postfeminism, as an expression of a stage in the constant evolutionary movement of feminism, has gained greater currency in recent years. Once seen, somewhat crudely as “anti-feminist,” the term is now understood as a useful conceptual frame of reference encompassing the intersection of feminism with a number of other anti-foundationalist movements including postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism. Postfeminism represents, as Yeatman (1994) claims, feminism’s “coming of age,” its maturity into a confident body of theory and politics, representing pluralism and difference and reflecting on its position in relation to other philosophical and political movements similarly demanding change. (Brooks 49)

After the year 1960, the feminist movement underwent lot of variations and took many diversions. Feminism, as a critical theory evolved in various dimensions by affiliating itself with numerous philosophical prepositions. It branched into many sub categories such as radical feminism, socialist feminism, liberal feminism, marxist feminism, black feminism, lesbian feminism, bourgeois feminism, materialist

feminism etc. There was difference of opinion among feminists in various issues thus leading to these diverse divisions of feminism.

Backlashers of the feminist movements and postfeminists converge in the belief that there are fundamental differences between men and women that cannot and must not be ignored. Not only do they call for a return to traditional gender roles, but, postfeminists believe that “the victimization of women is exaggerated and/or all in feminists’ minds, and that feminist orthodoxy is disempowering women by encouraging them to see themselves as victims” (Dow 205).

The time period after the third wave can be vaguely termed as the era of Post feminism. “Postfeminism broadly encompasses a set of assumptions, widely disseminated within popular media forms, having to do with the “pastness” of feminism, whether that supposed pastness is merely noted, mourned or celebrated” (Tasker 1). The Post feminist culture accentuates and proliferates educational and professional opportunities for women, freedom of choice with regards to work, economic freedom, domestic life, parenting, physical and in particular sexual freedom. Thus postfeminism proposes to empower women in the emotional or personal sphere of life.

This period in particular “lays emphasis on individual women’s inner freedom and awakening, on resolving the issues and problems raised by feminism and on understanding the relationship of interdependence between man and women” (Shukla 20). The term postfeminism has many folded implications such as seeking equality of gender, and rebuffs the elements of patriarchal system in a matured manner with a less aggressive approach.

Postfeminism is different from post modern feminism because the post feminist theories were built on the ideas of Foucault, Simon de Beauvoir, as well as

Derrida and Lacan. Postmodern feminists accept the male versus female binary opposition as a main categorizing force in our society. Following Simone de Beauvoir, they see women as having being cast into the subordinate role of the other. They criticize the structure of society and the dominant order, especially in its patriarchal aspects.

Postfeminism is a reactionary phenomenon to the popular assumptions of feminism and nevertheless the goals of feminism have been attained. In fact, postfeminism is more insidious than the backlash feminism. Postfeminism employs the ideologies of postmodernism such as challenging notions of identity and decentering the accepted hierarchical opposition. Post-modernism embraces the anti-essentialist perspective where women's identity is challenged in favor of claims about gender instead of just women's issues. Postfeminism is not about what comes after feminism, but about the conceptual shifts within feminist discourse.

The gender equality traits of postfeminism can be visibly seen in cinema, mass media, and advertisements and also in literature in the form of avoidance of depicting women as passive, inferior, weaker and subordinate to men, thus strength of women power is acknowledged. “Women are represented as more assertive, self-assured and confident. Women are shown as having equal footing with men. Even if some portrayals appear sexist, women are not shown as ‘victims’” (Shukla 20).

The term ‘postfeminist’ was probably for the first time used by Carol Rumens in her anthology *Making for the Open: The Chatto Book of Post-Feminist Poetry* 1964-84. In the introduction to the anthology she writes:

Those writers concerned with ‘the stern art of poetry’ as an end in itself have tended to be swamped by the noisy amateurs proclaiming

that women, too, have a voice.....This anthology is different from its predecessors in that the poems proclaim only themselves. That women poets have a voice, and the right to be heard, goes without saying.... not a work of opposition to feminism but it undeniably opposes the feminist *aesthetic*; in its extremer forms. (Rumens 18-19)

By introducing the term ‘postfeminism’, Carol Rumens clearly states that she deprecates the extreme feminist ideologies and appeals for an identical, rational, objective and sagacious approach to women’s issues. She also advocates for freedom of thought and expression in literature in general and poetry in particular.

Postfeminism is often associated with the backlashers of feminism. There are not many differences between postfeminists and antifeminist backlashers. “The primary difference between Postfeminists and antifeminist backlashers is the latter’s unwillingness to allow for positive effects of women’s liberation...for backlashers, women’s liberation was a mistake—for women and everyone else” (Dow 93).

Postfeminists, on the other hand believe that good has been done for the progress of women but now it is time to shed the fury and head for reconciliation. Basically, postfeminists argue that women have reached the zenith of achievement in all spheres; social, political, domestic and that there is no need for the feminist movement any longer.

Postfeminism became a cultural phenomena and discursive system of the late twentieth century, yet the reference of postfeminism could be traced in earlier times in *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* by Nancy Cott, where she states:

Already in 1919 a group of female literary radicals in Greenwich Village...had founded a new journal on their thinking, ‘we are

interested in people now- not in men and women.’ They declared that moral, social, economic, and political standards ‘should not have anything to do with sex’, promised to be ‘pro-women without being anti-man’, and called their stance ‘postfeminist’. (282)

The notion of postfeminism is to promote women and her freedom. The concept of the equality of the genders is often misunderstood. It is not an attempt to attain equivalence between both the genders; it is rather about the understanding of their differences. The gender- free hermaphrodite androgynous society is just a utopia.

The post feminist realizes this eventual truth and thus make people understand that the biological differences between man and woman are inevitable. Anne Clark Bartlett views postfeminism as:

Cool and its complex logic of alliance and attitude resonate deeply with the “girl power” movements A prominent constituency of “cool post feminism” suggests that an egalitarian future can only be founded on the erasure of a patriarchal past. As feminist theory, this strategy is naïve at best. (35)

Different notion are covered under the term ‘Postfeminism’. “It covers the concept of the ‘brave new world’, ‘the girl power’, ‘cyberspace’, ‘androgyny’, ‘pluralism’, and to the certain extent the doctrine of ‘multiculturalism’” (Shukla 22). The concept of ‘brave new world’ and ‘the girl power’ refers to the world of young women who are audacious, self-assured, self- confident and highly competitive. Sometimes postfeminism portrays the bad girl images that have the capacity to counter men by their feminine wiles with their aggressive assertive sexuality. This image of women is strikingly visible in the writings of the post-feminist era.

The 'Cyberspace' presents cyber-fem or a kind of utopia where women find space in the internet where they can voice their opinion in the social network without the label for being gender biased. 'Androgyny' is a term which denotes a situation where men and women will acknowledge and respect each other's differences and subjectivities. "Pluralism' and 'multiculturalism' stands for a coalition of plural, cross-cultural identities belonging to different clusters of sex, gender, race, class, colour, religion and ethnicity" (Shukla 22).

The attributes of postfeminism is often associated with popular culture, neoliberalism and the glamorous world of cinema. Postfeminism creates interrelatedness between culture, politics and society. The postfeminist consciousness is noticeable in popular culture. From 1980 onwards, different ways of conceptualizing the relationship between postfeminism and popular culture have emerged.

Angela McRobbie who is a feminist cultural analyst has pointed out in her popular essay titled *Post Feminism and Popular Culture* that popular culture during the early 1990 is represented by various setbacks from the achievements of the past feminist movements. For McRobbie, contemporary popular culture expresses what has been termed 'postfeminism' because postfeminism relies on the achievements of feminism. Thus popular culture and postfeminism are interconnected.

The accomplishments of the feminist movements in the past are obvious socially oriented and the post feminist movement is culturally oriented and therefore has spread itself to the media. This allows popular culture to portray women characters who lead an independent, equal and free lifestyle and who no longer wait for men to grant them freedom and equality. Such postfeminist portrayal of bold women can be seen in the famous television serial such as *Sex and the City*. Some of

these popular culture depictions of modern women who use their freedom to choose in adopting female behavioral patterns such as: subjugation, total surrender to male fantasies, and treating men as superior and admitting their inferiority which feminism tried to abolish.

The famous movie *The Bridget Jones Diary* is a standing example for postfeminism in popular media. Postfeminist popular cultural material also includes all forms of reality shows in television. The famous television series, soap operas and films such as *Sex and the City*, *Desperate Housewives*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Bridget Jones' Diary* etc are termed as 'Chicklits'.

Postfeminism has become one of the most vital ideas in the arena of feminist media and cultural studies. Postfeminism is also a diverse documentation that is mainly located in the academic context with reference to cultural studies and in the media context of popular culture is represented within consumer culture. The concept of postfeminism is appropriate for the current socio-cultural milieu because the ideologies of postfeminism is in alignment with its other contemporary counterparts such as neo-liberalism and late –capitalism which is in turn characterized by consumer culture, individualism, postmodernism as well as the various institutions which support the interest of women through activism and political support.

Postfeminism is a form of empowerment of which not only focus on freedom from subjugation, as it stresses upon a woman's independence, her individual choices, her awareness of the arenas of her body and sexual pleasures, fashion, and a renewed focus on her health, career and to have a control of her own body. Thus making postfeminism is the most needed contemporary feminism of women which gives a wide understanding of feminism and the world around her. Media discourses play a crucial role in the representation, evolution and development of this new feminism.

Postfeminism is entrenched with neo-liberal society and consumer culture. Thus Postfeminism and neo-liberalism is concomitant. Postfeminism can be situated within, and is closely related to neo-liberal ideologies and shares the same late-capitalist values. It is not only a mere rejoinder to feminism but also an awareness moderately constituted through the pervasiveness of neo-liberal thoughts. Rosalind Gill places the collaboration of postfeminism and neo-liberalism into three levels.

First, both appear to be structured by the current increase of individualism that has invaded major parts of the social or the political, and that has pushed any idea of the individual as subject to pressures, constraints or influence outside themselves, to the margins. Second, the entrepreneurial, independent, calculating, self-governing subjects of neo-liberalism bear a strong resemblance to the dynamic, freely choosing, self-reinventing subjects of post feminism. Third, the synergy is even more significant in popular cultural discourses where women are called upon to exercise to self-management and self-discipline, to a much greater extent than men. (*Post feminism Media Culture* 163-164)

Postfeminism is embedded within a neo-liberal cultural context and thus can be located in postmodern popular culture.

Postfeminism implores that every woman must recognize her own personal identity but in the present scenario a woman takes up multiple identities which fits within a neo-liberal individualistic society with its emphasis on flexibility.

Postfeminism questions all the binary categories of opposition and employs a monolithic conception of women.

Post feminism, like post modernism, offers a critique on these modernist, enlightened models. This critique is mainly articulated by post feminists' focus on 'difference', anti-essentialism and hybridism, where fixed binary categories are pierced and multiple identities are promoted. This multiplex of identities operates through the generation of contradictions in someone's concept of self-feeling. (Featherstone 3)

In popular culture, this positioning against binary thinking is expressed by the increased attention gained for themes such as androgyny, queer theory and LGBT theory which focuses upon the marginalized section of the society.

Second wave feminists stand for a pessimistic vision on sexuality and mainly emphasize the dangers and disadvantages of the biological vulnerability of women with regards to sex. Second wave feminist literature focuses on the themes of sexual abuse and sexual objectification of women in media. Thus a negative image of sex is portrayed by the second wave feminism. Postfeminism discards these unyielding and pessimistic standpoints and in its place supports the basic right of a woman to know and explore the limitations of her own body in terms of sensual pleasures. In the background of neo-liberal society with its stress on personal choice, postfeminists focus on the importance of women's declaration of independence to ascertain emotional, physical and sexual choices and freedom.

For example in magazines aimed at young women, sex is discussed through a vocabulary of youthful pleasure-seeking (indicating a blurring of boundaries between pornography and other genres), and sex is constructed as something requiring constant attention, discipline, self-surveillance and emotional labour. (Gill. *Post feminism Media Culture* 151)

This point of view fits itself within neo-liberal discourse where women of the contemporary society take up highest positions in various public and private sector enterprise and so women have transformed their self perception and every aspect of their sexual conduct has undergone a drastic change. Associated to this changed representation is the shift from sexual objectification to sexual subjectification; from a focus on a powerful male observation to a self-regulating narcissistic individualistic scrutiny. In postfeministic studies, the emphasis is placed on sexual subjectivity, of women who are always projected as opposed to being passive. In such studies, women are depicted as sexually aware of their selves.

The conventional manners of articulating femininity in association with lipstick, high heels or glamour do not identify with female power anymore. In post feminist era of media culture feminism focused upon its preoccupation with the body itself and not with artificial make ups. "Possession of a sexy body is represented as women's key source of identity" (Gill. *Post feminism Media Culture* 149). Looking good physically, working out in gym, rise of fitness centers exclusively for women and maintaining a well-toned body is also a feature of post feminism.

The attributes of postfeminism is discernibly present in popular literature. Popular fiction or Popular literature is also termed as 'Paperback fiction' or 'Pulp fiction'. The popular fiction is highly post feministic in nature because of the depiction of sex and glamour. Most of the pulp fiction deals with the real life of the celebrities and stars. The popular fiction may not be categorized into the main stream literary fiction. But there is a possibility that these works may get appreciation in the future.

The popular fiction is realistic in nature. It portrays the stark realities of a section of people of whose life the contemporary readers may not be aware of. Thus

pulp fiction may sound too superficial, but in due course of time may find recognition.

Jim Emerson in his article, *Pulp Fiction Nothing Serious* observes:

The distinction between high brow and low brow—is actually fairly recent. Dickens, as we’re always being reminded, wrote mysteries and horror stories, only no one thought to call them that. Jane Austen wrote chicklit. A whiff of shamefulness probably began attaching itself to certain kinds of fiction—and to mysteries and thrillers especially—at the end of the 19th century, with the rise of the “penny dreadful,” or cheaply printed serial. The market and public appetite for this stuff became even larger in the early years of the 20th century with the tremendous growth of pulp magazines (1)

Harold Robbins is the pioneer in writing this sort of ‘pulp fiction’ that mostly described the exploitation of the urban upper class woman. His novel *The Dream Merchants* is about the Hollywood film industry. In his book, *Never Leave Me*, the protagonist Brad Rowan, an owner of a small advertising firm, struggles against the temptations of money, sex and power. His other novel, *Where Love Has Gone* is about Hollywood gossip and personalities.

Pulp Fiction refers to the literature printed on a cheap quality which was accessible and affordable to American in the beginning of 19th century. Evidently, quite a few writers gained their name and fame through pulp fiction those days. Noticeably, the beginning of some renowned litterateurs showcases the firm roots of pulp fiction. The steady progress of pulp fiction secured considerable readers and best sellers all over the world.

The sudden boom in the pulp-fiction has encouraged many young and talented writers to showcase their capabilities. These budding writers not only attain fame they

also gain manetary benefits by choosing writing as their carrier as most of the pulp fictions are the best sellers. The reasonably priced pulp novels in addition to the unremitting increase in the literacy rate have opened up the opportunity for the unparalleled progress of pulp-fiction.

The literary style of Pulp fiction captivates the readers because it exhibits attractive narration, picturesque description of flamboyant scenes, astonishing romances, nail-biting suspense and thrilling encounters, tales of bravery, projection of professional challenges and casual romance even during incredible situations in the continuous flow of the fiction makes the reading interesting. Pulp fiction readers include people from all ages and people from all walks of life. The reader need not be a literary scholar who is familiar with literary jargons or he need not be a literary critique. Simple and readable language is the hallmark of pulp fiction.

Literature is analysed starting from its genre, style, content, fine twining of literary terms besides free flow of literary forms on several stringent parameters. Artistry is a quality that describes a novel's ability to reveal and convey hidden truth and beauty. The second literary quality is suggestiveness, which is the novel's ability to appeal to the reader's emotions and imagination and to open them up to new possibilities. Intellectual value is determined by the novel's relevance to society and its ability to stimulate thought. Permanence is determined by how well a novel endures through the ages. There are many novels that have been popular in their time but gradually fade into obscurity and irrelevance. Universality is defined as a work of art that can appeal to a great number of people, regardless of gender, race, nationality or income. Works that appeal to a person's heart or describe

the condition of human nature are considered universal texts. The final criterion is style, which is the author's unique way of expressing his or her thoughts. All of these elements combine to determine whether or not a novel is a lasting and important work of art. In fact, every piece of literature is closely studied for its literary standards sometimes despite its attributes of a plausible crux and submerged commercialism. On that ideology pulp fiction may also be analysed as it exhibits enormous fanatic readers of discrepant age-groups. (Malathy 4)

Jackie Collins is a novelist who illustrates cultural swing and debauchery of modern society in her fiction. Her stories gyrate around lust, love, power, and violence in Hollywood giving hidden references of well-known celebrities. Her first book, *The World is Full of Married Men* has achieved overnight success but sent shocking waves because of its explicit sexual content. Her novel, *Hollywood Husbands* narrates the dissolute lives of three rich and famous movie stars, who experience expensive divorces and a number of relationships. Her novels are dominated by women, who strive to reach the pinnacle of their career by using sex as a means.

Nikki Turner is one of the most popular best-selling authors and admired for pioneering the hip-hop style in fiction. Her novel *Ghetto Superstar* depicts the tale of a young woman Fabiola Mays who tries to resist the rich musical industries tycoons and thugs from the ghetto and from men who are ravenous for her flesh. Her other novel *Riding Dirty* and *The Glamorous Life* deal with the sexual exploitation of women in the upper strata of society.

Pulp fiction is supposed to be marketable, sensational, melodramatic and sentimental. It always appeals to the mass audience who are from all walks of life. In the present-day scenario, the publishing houses encourage pulp fiction because they are lucrative in nature and best sellers. It can be rightly said that this is the era of popular fiction and postfeminism. Any work of art should be considered as a piece of literary work. Pulp fiction is in no way lesser than any literary genres. As literature is the reflection of life so is pulp fiction. Pulp fiction has the capability to catch the pulse of the young generation and various other section of the society and thus reveals it to the world through their writing.

Mr. (Chetan) Bhagat might not be another Vikram Seth or Arundhati Roy, but he has authentic claims to being one of the voices of a generation of middle class Indian youth facing the choices and frustrations that come with the prospect of growing wealth. (Greenlees)

India has produced a large number of popular bestselling authors like Shobha De and Chetan Bhagat to name a few.

All who have written about Bhagat, in India or elsewhere accept that the Chetan Bhagat “phenomenon”, in brief, has something to do with middle class youth in India, and something to do with India’s progressive affluence besides its existence on the global perspective which in fact has reinstated the national identity. Therefore, instead of misinterpreting the commercial approach of the best selling Indian English pulp fiction for its assumed lapse of literary standards, a positive approach by creating an avenue for this new genre shall be a right discretion at this point. While, the pulp fictions of Chetan Bhagat and Ravinder Singh climb to the next level of producing box office hits

as feature films, why not a space be created for this genre of pulp fiction with elevated literary norms? Consideration of the pulp fiction as an additional genre in Indian English literature undoubtedly shall extend the hope and scope of the emerging Indian English writers all over the nation. (Malathy 5)

The other most famous pulp fiction writers are Carroll John Daly, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Max Brand, H.P. Lovecraft, Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammet, Ray Bradbury, Sidney Sheldon, John Grisham, Michael Crichton, Irving Wallace, Frederick Forsyth, Robin Cook, Ian Fleming etc. Most of their novels are pictured as movies in Hollywood.

Jackie Collins in America and Shobha De in India are the most famous writers who fictionalized the lives of the celebrities of their respective countries. They concentrate especially on the lives of women celebrities. They introduce to the readers the new lifestyle of women celebrities in their novels. These pulp fictions are sprinkled with vivid description of sex and portray sex as a power tool used by women as a form of dominance. These works can be rightly categorised as post feminist in outlook.

Fiction as a form of writing arrived much later in India. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's, *Rajmohan's Wife*, is considered to be the first Indian novel in English in which romanticism and the nationalism of Bengal are blended together. Rabindranath Tagore has portrayed the psychological struggles of his characters in his fiction. During the period before the independence, Indian English novels mostly depicted contemporary India's social setting under the impact of Gandhian principles. Bhagabat Nayak's states , " The resurgence of English education, rise of India's Bloomsbury intellectuals, political unity between Hindus and Muslims, vision of

imagined India and sway of Gandhian ideology of the nation favoured a few elite Indians to write fiction in English” (114).

The writings of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan during the 1930s are a noteworthy augmentation the history of Indian English fiction. They are often hailed as the great trio and their works created an identity for Indian English fiction by drawing kaleidoscopic view of Indian geography and traditions. Mulk Raj Anand expresses his concern for the society in *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936). These novels highlight the evils of caste system which suppressed Indian downtrodden and the most unfortunate people who live in the society. In the novels of Anand, marital relationships are visualized from an outsider’s perspective. The maddening abnormality of human nature is justly viewed in Victor’s fatal infatuation for his mistress, Gangi, in *The Private life of an Indian Prince*.

The crux of R.K. Narayan’s novels is related from the point of view of male characters while women characters are given secondary importance. The married life of Savitri and her husband, Ramani is wrecked with the intrusion of the ‘other’ woman, Shanta Bai in *The Dark Room*. In *Mr. Sampath* the artist Ravi falls in love with the actress, Shanti. Raja Rao has painted the East-West confrontation through the themes like true love and marriage. The gulf between Indian and western concepts of love, marriage and family is clearly understood when Ramaswamy marries a foreigner, Madeline and later falls in love with Savithri who is educated of Indian origin in the novel *The Serpent and the Rope*. The success of these three famous writers inspired the emergence of novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar and Kushwant Singh in the future years.

Themes like spiritual pursuit, psychological problems, historical stories, and social problems were given importance by the novelists of the post-independence

period. Bhabani Bhattacharya's fiction was considered to have themes of societal problems. Manohar Malgonkar's fiction deals with domestic life yet they are not women centric. His writings focus only on the lives the male characters in his novel and a very diminutive place is given to women characters. The theme of love and lust are proficiently sketched in the relationships of Winton, Jean, Eddie and Ruby in *Combat of Shadows*.

Khushwant Singh is a novelist who dexterously engraves the ordinary things of life in an extra ordinarily beautiful manner in his novels. "Khushwant Singh's obsession with sex results in exercises in copulation involving major characters as well as minor practically in every chapter in *I shall not Hear the Nightingale*" (Naik *Twentieth Century Indian English Fiction* 220). "The Development of Indian English Fiction however the 1970's was also the gestation period for the revolution in fictional technique and sensibility that was to occur the 1980's" (Smitha 3). In 1981, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* registered the significant change in Indian English fiction which shadowed the arrival of a new creative genius. Among them, the notable novelists are Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Chaudhury, Raj Kamal Jha, Kiran Nagarkar, Ruskin Bond, Shiv K. Kumar, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Chandra and V.S. Naipal, etc.

The literary representation of Indian women writers was underestimated owing to patriarchal ideas of male domination. In the early phase, these women novelists restricted themselves to the themes of encased domestic life hence their novels were labeled as undeveloped. Krupabai Sathianathan exposed the cultural discord faced by a Hindu woman, who is caught in between western and Indian cultures in her novel, *Kamala* in 1895.

Shevantibai M.Nikambe throws light on the contemporary women in her novel, *Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* written in 1895. Antonia Navarro-Tejero states, “Since proficiency in English is available only writers of the intellectual, affluent, educated classes, a frequent judgment is made that the writers, and their works, belong to a high social strata, and are cut off from the reality of Indian life” (6). The women writers of fiction always make an attempt to reinstate the mottled image of women. One evident trait among all the contemporary women writers in India is the revolutionary spirit with which they strive to write.

The second phase of women novelists, belonging to the post-independence period attained a certain maturity in delineating socio-psychological problems of women showing a steady development from modernism to postmodernism (1950-1980). During this period, the novelists have dealt with Indian ethos and multi-cultural elements. A host of Indian women English novelists like Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Santha Rama Rau, Nergis Dalal, Attia Hosain, Shakuntala Shrinagesh, Raji Narasimhan, Bharati Mukherjee, Shanta Rameshwar Rao, Kamala Das and Rama Mehta formed a sizeable school in fiction.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala’s novels ridicule the urban middle class Indian life using irony in a gentle manner; she also sometimes uses satire as tool to depict the society. The theme of romance and marriage between pretty Indian girl who is very dull witted and a snobbish colonial-minded English emigrant proves to be a debacle in her novel, *Esmond in India*. A young man and woman savor the apparition of romantic love though they accept a separate arranged marriage in *To Whom She Will*. M.K. Naik in his book, *A History of Indian English Literature* says: “The most distinctive feature of Jhabvala’s novels is the subtlety and adroitness with which she

unravels the gossamer threads of intricate human relationships-especially among the women in the Hindu joint family” (235).

Kamala Markandaya, who is looked upon as the most exceptional writer, has investigated the individual consciousness analyzing the images of cultural change in her novels. In the novel *Nectar in a Sieve* the sad plight of Ira is portrayed very skillfully. Ira takes a drastic step of selling her body to nurture her young brother who was under her protection. Nayantara Sahgal’s novels deal with the modern Indian woman’s search for economical and personal freedom. She also writes on various political themes. The traditionally bound woman, Maya marries anglicized Harish but seeks escape through extramarital affairs in her novel, *A Time to be Happy*. Simrit escapes an abusive marriage with her husband Som, but finding love in another man named Garg who accepts her as she is in the novel *The Day in Shadow*.

Anita Desai’s works are different from other major Indian women novelists. Desai has depicted the psychic life of her characters, exposing tensions between family members and the alienation experienced by middle-class women in her fiction. Alienation created by the emotional incompatibility between Gautama and Maya forms the important theme of her novel, *Cry, the Peacock*. Desai’s characters suffer from the existential crisis as they struggle to maintain their individuality.

Bharati Mukherjee’s novel, *Wife* delineates the picture of exasperated Bengali wife, who suffers a sense of alienation in New York. Her novel, *Jasmine* is a dramatic story of a Punjabi girl who goes to the U.S.A. as an illegal immigrant. Bharati Mukherjee’s has delineated strong women protagonist who strive towards economic empowerment and seek self-actualization amidst various psychological and financial pressures.

After 1980, Indian English novelists moved towards values of the globalized world. Anita Singh observes: “Global communication technology, multinational capitalism and current configuration of the world system have altered conditions of production and reception of art. Indian English novels have thrown up new signs of identity, opened up innovative sites for collaboration and contestation” (88). During this period, Indian women novelists depict the true picture of Indian society and its treatment of women, highlighting the upper middle class society which they have known well. They depict women characters who search for identity and self-respect by erasing their victim status. The well-known women novelists of this age are Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Jhumpa Lahari, Arundhati Roy, Kavery Nambisan, Indira Ganeshan, Anitha Desai, Meena Alexander, Anjanna Appachana, Gita Hariharan, Dina Mehta, Anitha Rau Badmi, Chitra Diwakaruni, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Sunny Singh, Nina Sibal, Namita Gokhale and Shobha De, etc.

Shashi Deshpande’s women characters are victims of fate. Her novel, *That Long Silence* narrates the story of a middle-aged married woman, Jaya who lives an uninteresting and dull married life in a middle class home. This novel is a reflection of a life of monotony and silent suffering. In her novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* the woman protagonist is a doctor who rebels against the sadist husband and domestic violence and finally succeeds in her career with her reaching great heights. In the novel *The Binding Vine* and *A Matter of Time*, Deshpande focuses on the perpetual adversity of women. Arundhati Roy and Manju Kapur are the two novelists who have explicitly talked about sex, homosexuality and lesbianism in their novels without culpability. Ashok Kumar points out: “With the women’s awakening and with the assertion of their rights they have also asserted their right to their bodies” (30). Arundhati Roy’s novel, *The God of Small Things* records the silencing of women and

their victimization in the patriarchal society. Velutha, an untouchable, pays the penalty having fallen in love with a high-caste Christian woman. Manju Kapur's novel, *Difficult Daughters* presents the mother-daughter relationship in a rational compartment. Virmati has no inhibitions about having a physical relationship before marriage with the married Prof. Harish, and later she becomes his second wife by refusing to be labeled as a victim. Her novel, *A Married Woman* deals with the theme lesbianism which is considered a taboo in many cultures.

Githa Hariharan's novel, *Thousand Faces of Night* throws light on Devi's search for love in marriage. Devi is highly educated woman who had completed her studies in America. When she fails, she leaves her husband, Mahesh and then her lover to live life on her own terms. Her novel, *When Dreams Travel* narrates the predicament of a woman who becomes helpless victims of male chauvinism. Githa Hariharan presents reinterpretation of male text such as mythology and legends in order to set right to misrepresentation of the emotional crisis of women in the past texts.

Namita Gokhale's novels, *Paro* and *Dreams of Passion* throw light on Metropolitan society and the cocktail party circles in Delhi. Sagarika Ghose's *The Gin Drinkers* also explores the same theme of pub culture of urban middle class society. This novel reflects the trends of postmodern novel characterized by a surge of interest in the female body as a source of literary inspiration. Sunny Singh's *Nani's Book of Suicide* exposes the problem of cultural identity of an Indian woman in the process of her imbibing western culture. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* describes the consequences of colonialism and global issues of religion, race and nationalism. The Indian English novelists of the nineteen-nineties brought out experimentation both in delineating theme and form of the novel. Naik in his book titled *Twentieth Century*

Indian English Fiction claims that “The ‘new’ women novelists naturally share most of the preoccupations of their male counterparts, though in spite of what fanatical feminists would claim, they do have ‘a room of their own’ in the fictional mansion, in terms of certain pressing concerns and their attitude towards them” (Naik 210).

During the last two decades, the rising of Indian women fiction writers in English has significantly caught the attention of the world. As they have marked out variety of priorities and values, they have gained international acclaim in the form of literary awards. Meenakshi Bharat opines as thus: “Confidence of a timbre never sensed before, has started coursing through their veins infusing a rare, hitherto never experienced vitality” (12). Among them, Shobha De is one of the most prominent women novelists of our age.

In general Indian women writers are mostly known to write about their enclosed domestic spheres. They were ranked below the male writers who supposedly dealt with much important themes. As they started venturing out of their enforced comfort zones and charting virgin territories of extra-marital affairs, new found love, the quest for an identity and the so called male bastion of literary creativity started falling apart.

The social structure of man and woman as separate entities in the binary oppositional structure fell apart and women no longer are subjugated to the whims and fancies of the male sphere of the society. Shobha De’s writings in English- the language of the cosmopolitan society gave her greater reading audience.

Contemporary woman’s writing is a tribute to the resurrection of women from their subjugation to male authority.

Shobha De fictionalizes the lives of the elite, famous, rich, powerful categories of women belonging to the post feminist era. Shobha De can be termed as a post

feminist writer in the Indian literary milieu. Her very own statement in *The Hindustan Times* validates the point: “I write with great deal of empathy towards women. Without waving the feminist flag, I feel very strongly about women’s situation...(p3).” is a proof that Shobha De is not a rigid radical feminist. She is a post feminist precipitately located in India where Indian women still fight for their basic equality and rights.

Shobha De born on 7 January 1948 is a columnist and novelist often called India’s Jackie Collins. ShobhaRajadhyaksha belongs to a MaharasrtrianSaraswat Brahmin family. She is the youngest of the family and was considered propitious for the family by her father Shri Govind Hari Rajadhyaksha because soon after her birth her father was transferred to Delhi with a higher prospect. The family returned back to Bombay when De was ten. Her life in these cities gave Shobha De a firsthand encounter to the metropolitan culture of India which is reflected in her writings.

In school De proved to be a good athlete and was selected in State Athlete Team of Maharashtra. She graduated from St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai with a degree in Psychology. De took up modeling as her profession against the wishes of her father who was furious when he saw her photograph in a popular magazine. It was the entry into the modeling world at an early age commenced her association with the world of glamour, luxury and sumptuousness. The world of glamour was much different from the world she actually belonged to.

After establishing herself as a model, De began her career in Journalism as a temporary trainee copywriter in 1970. Writing career came in her way accidentally when she was asked by her friend to take up a position as a copy writer when she was on maternity leave. Within few months as a copy writer De established herself in the journalistic field and began to edit popular magazines such as *Stardust*, *Society*, and

Celebrity. While editing *Society*, De decided to start a magazine of her own: “Listen. You can do this on your own. Why work for someone else? Go on. Float your own magazine. Do it now’ . . . I’d always taken risks. And won. I liked risks. Risks liked me” (*Selective Memory* 201-202). De then started the magazine *Celebrity* which ran for three years. De was requested to write regular columns by editors like S. Venkat Narayan of *Onlooker* and Fatma Zakaria of *The Sunday Review*. She recalls about this experience as:

I wrote on television, food, movies, people, events, fashion, trends, developments and political happenings. These were comments (often sharp ones) that reflected my own outlook. Readers frequently disagreed, or hated what I’d said about a particular situation, but I strongly believed that the column was meant to generate debate, and a strong point of view was essential. (SM 292-293)

She was also a consulting editor for magazines such as: *Sunday* and *Mega City*. She was also actively involved in scriptwriting for various TV soaps including India’s famous soap daily titled *Swabhimaan*. De comments of her experience of writing fiction as:

Proof reading was an excruciating experience and once the book was over and done with. I felt completely disconnected from its fate. The book was then on its own . . . there was no emotional attachment left . . . no reason to perpetuate the association. The book was finished, so was the experience.” (SM 324)

At present, she is a freelance writer and columnist for several newspapers like *Times of India* and various other magazines. Shobha De has a number of fiction and non-fiction to her credit.

Shobha De's marriage with Sudhir lasted for eight years and their divorce was mutual. Even after divorce, Shobha maintained a cordial relationship with her in-laws and they wholeheartedly supported her. Shobha met Dilip De shortly after her divorce and decided to marry him. Randip and Radhika, Dilip De's children from his former wife, accepted Shobha De and were very cooperative. Since Dilip's children Randip and Radhika and her children through Sunil, Aditya and Avantika were school mates, it was easy for them to get along. Moreover, all the four children accepted Arundati and Anandita, Shobha De's children through Dilip happily.

At present Shobha is living with her husband and six children in Cuffe Parade, a posh locality in Mumbai. The most striking fact about De's life is her role as a mother of six children. She turned out to be a mother for Dilip De's children Randeep and Radhika. In this rapidly developing world where people do not have time to stand and stare, De balances her life and career in very proficient way. Shobha De is a multifaceted personality; she is a model, a copywriter, a Journalist, a socialist, a script writer, a novelist, a busy mother, a news maker and a media personality.

Shobha De is a significant social commentator and an influential critique on India's popular culture. She is well sort out popular figure in television debates and in popular channels like NDTV. She is also a regular invitee as a leading television panelist on national issues alongside India's top anchors like Arnab Goswami, Rajdeep Sardesia and Karan Thapar. De is also an active participant in Global Women's Forum at Deauville, France, Leadership Conclave in Delhi and has been a part of several literary festivals, including the prestigious Writers' Festival in Melbourne and the famous Jaipur Literary festival , Kitaab Literary festival in Mumbai and the Kovalam Literary Fest.

De became the first Asian woman to obtain Reuters Fellowship in 1983. Shobha De's novels featured in postgraduate curriculum by the University of London. *Starry Nights* was published in Italian translation; it is also the bestseller in Hindi. Two of her novels *Socialite Evenings* and *Second Thoughts* have been published in Korean editions. Malayalam, Bengali and Marathi editions of her novels are bestsellers. Few of her novels are translated in Spanish, Italian, German, Hungarian, Portuguese, Turkish, Russian, Polish and French languages.

Shobha De is one of the India's bestselling authors. All her books have topped the charts and each of her titles continues to remain commercially successful even today. De gives a new definition to the mass market bestseller with her writing in 1990s and all her novels have remained commercial success over the years. "*The Tribune*" praises her writings thus:

She slaughters macho males with vengeance, and rattles poison in her gender with disdain and disregard. She is Shobha De, and she is scintillating and straight. She is a ruthless writer with a ramrod of a pen, and a raging urge to kill somebody. She demolishes reputations and civilizations with effortless grace and one thing she doesn't stomach is hypocrisy of any kind. She wields a powerful camera and she needs to keep shooting that way, whether anyone likes to photo frame or not. (qtd. in Ningthoujam: 13)

Her first novel, *Socialite Evenings* (1989) is based on the lives of the elite premium class urban society of India. The novel came into existence when David Davidar, CEO of Penguin Books India, a regular reader of De's columns requested her to write a book on Bombay. De completed her work within a short span of time and sent it to David. Commenting on her experience of writing her first novel, De

says “It was over....One thing did change however—I had discovered the joy of writing fiction”(SM 327). She has portrayed the progression of Karuna from middle class girl to a self-sufficient woman. The novel deals with the middle class girl’s encounter with high profile people and their inexplicable lifestyle.

Shobha De’s second novel, *Starry Nights* (1990) presents the saga of a film star Aasha Rani in the backdrop of the glitz and glamour of the Indian film industry of Bollywood. This novel is an accumulation of knowledge of Indian film industry which she gathered while working for *Stardust* as its editor. De has revealed the truth behind a lot of issues like casting couch and the meteoric rise and fall of a Bollywood starlet. The character of Aasha Rani bears a striking resemblance to many famous Bollywood heroines. This novel exposes the real life stories of the bollywood industry because De was a model and editor of several bollywood tabloid magazines. De expresses her view on the novel in her autobiography *Selective Memory* thus:

People still ask me whether the book was based on the Rekha-Amitabh ... the novel but was by no means a faithful retelling of their off—screen lives. ...I can ruthfully say that their relationship did provide a few shades of Rekha in Aasha Rani, while Akshya is only a pale reflection of Amitab Bacchan. The events in the book are not real but based on reality. (331-32)

Shobha De’s third novel, *Sisters* (1992) reveals the picture of two corporate half-sisters, Mallika and Alisha, who struggle to find a place for themselves in the world of business after the death of their father Seth Hiralal. When her parents die in an air crash, Mallika suddenly finds herself the owner of the sprawling Hiralal industrial empire. Abandoning her studies in the United States, she returns to Bombay, only to find her father's business affairs in a mess. Almost bankrupt, beset

on all sides by creditors, takeover tycoons and unreliable associates, Mikki realizes there is only one person she can turn to for help, the beautiful Alisha, her father's illegitimate daughter. The novel is set in the corrupt world of big business.

Strange Obsession (1992) depicts the strange relationship of lesbianism between Amrita Aggarwal a budding model and Meenakshi Iyengar. De portrays an abusive sexual relationship between the two women. *Uncertain Liaisons: Sex, Strife and Togetherness in Urban India* (1993) is a book of essays edited by Shobha De and Khushwant Singh which concentrates on various realms of physical relationships in India. It points out on the changing attitudes of the modern Indian couple. The essays also focus on homosexuality, heterosexuality, divorce and dissatisfaction in sex life of married couples within Indian marriages.

In *Sultry Days* (1994), Shobha De has dealt with a completely new approach of tackling with the woman's quest for identity in the male dominated society. In this novel, Nisha longs to be with Deb but his strange way of life creates revulsion and estrangement between them. De deals with the pragmatic representation of distressed woman, who has challenged men at various stages in life. Shobha De skillfully explores the blemishes in the elite society.

Small Betrayals (1995) is the collection of short stories which exposes the different dimensions of betrayal and conflicts among men and women. De's another novel, *Snapshots* (1996) brings out a very pragmatic picture of the urban women and their freewill oriented lifestyle. It reveals the life of the six school friends Swati, Aparna, Reema, Rashmi, Surekha and Noor, who gives a different facet to moral issues in the society.

Shobha De's novel, *Second Thoughts* (1996) narrates the story of a higher middle class Bengali girl named Maya who settles in Bombay after an arranged

marriage with a foreign returned Bengali boy Ranjan. When her husband fails to fulfill her physical, emotional and psychological urges, she finds fulfillment outside the marital bond through an extramarital affair with her neighbor.

After the completion of *Second Thoughts* (1996), De transformed herself as a script writer. It was when Amit Khanna, the head of Plus Channel along with Mahesh Bhatt approached De to write a script for TV soap. She started writing with a temporary title 'The Mistress' which was later changed into *Swabhimaan*. She confesses that the central character for her soap was a shady imitation of a woman she once met in Bangalore. The soap was well received and she remarks that "unlike the book, the reaction is immediate" (SM 394).

Shobha De's book, *Shooting from the Hip: Selected Writings* (1996) is a marvelous collection of essays in which her keen observation and dissection of persons and events can be seen with a marked clarity. She has touched various aspects like politics, media, food, festivals, films, books, personalities, travelogues or articles relating to Bombay.

Surviving Men (1997) is a book which unveils the mysterious nature and attitude of men in her perspective. It is a guide to understand the mind of men.

Selective Memory: Stories from My Life (1998) serves as a source to understand the intimate details of ShobhaDe's life. Though De cannot unveil all the secrets of her life, she has focused on the image of herself, by cleverly delineating the incidents and accidents without destroying the finer qualities of an Indian woman.

Speed Post-Letters to my Children (1999) is a collection of letters written by Shobha De to her six children. It reveals undeniably the indefinable association between a mother and children. De has handled sensitive relationships with utmost

perception by giving appropriate conclusions, which are very much related to urban families. It reveals about living and coping with the reactions of the exciting new world.

In *Spouse: The Truth About Marriage* (2005), Shobha De defines the image of woman as a life partner to a man living in the changing world of post modern or post feminist society. This book reveals De's keen observation, her personal encounters in married life and lively illustrations of the urban upper class couples whose life is filled with dissatisfactions and compromises. The book is about trust, affection, sharing and companionship which are the pillars on which marriage is firmly rooted. De discusses how and why marriages work or do not work. She defies age old notions about marriage and discusses all the important issues including the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. She also warns about the alarming signals of a hopeless relationship.

In *Superstar India: From Incredible to Unstoppable* (2008), Shobha De deals with popular opinions which are prevalent in India. De presents interesting points of view about cricket, state policy and macro economics. She observes Indian people and their place in the large human society. She points out to India's glorious historical past. According to her, India has earned a superstar status and it will not lose its glow. She also surveys various contrary images in India. She points to the fact that Indians although they hate their colonizers, continue to cling on to the western tradition. She also highlights that though Indians flee to other countries in search of their livelihood, they return to India for a better life. She puts light on many issues like migrating to the west for jobs, aping the western culture and yet cling irrationally to tradition. She talks about the rapid changes in India both negative and positive, and the reasons behind them. She says, "I wrote this at a time when a lot of Indians started coming

back from overseas, while my generation had fled the country. I often feel my generation was disillusioned and did not invest enough in India."(Kumar, Ajith)

In *Sandhya's Secret* (2010), she draws the attention of the readers into a teenager's whirlwind world of emotions. This novel delves deep into the psyche of a teenager named Sandhya. Hero-worshipping and fantasising world all-too familiar heart breaks and joys of growing up, the endless squabbles with siblings, the urge of rebel against rules, the sweetness of friendship, the yearning of peer approval and above all, the encompassing warmth of family love. On the launch of her book Shobha De said, "I think today's teen in India is quite a confused creature not entirely sure about who they are or what their values are supposed to be, or what's next" (Sawhney). Shobha De tries to convey that parenting is not just sermonising and moralising but the children should be brought out into the open for discussion. She also addresses the issue of smoking, drugs, alcoholism and rash driving among the youth.

In *Shobhaa At Sixty: Secrets Of Getting It Right At Any Age* (2010) De offers honest, practical, and wise advice to people living in their sixties and above. Giving live examples from her own life, she emphasizes the importance of family relations and highlights the value of a spiritual quest to make life much more meaningful. She gives a message to all the senior citizens that in fact life begins at the age of sixty. Declaring sixty as the new forty, she comes up with potent elixir to rejuvenate life and provides practical tips on how to cope with physical and emotional down slides commonly experienced by the post sixty generation.

Sethji (2012) revolves around political life of a political party worker whose party is in coalition with the government. *Sethji* packs an ample amount of sex, sleaze, and greed with Indian politics as the backdrop.

In her novels, Shobha De portrays women who are talented and ambitious. But they are not acquiescent, leading a life of their own, aggressively ignoring the patriarchal norms of society. “De, while striking a pose of an informed woman writer with a certain stand on issues of women, reinforces most of the orthodox patriarchal assumptions about women and their desires and needs” (Karekatti 110).

Shobha De has risen to remarkable heights of artistic excellence because of the multifaceted talents with which she discusses the sensitive aspects of human life. “One of the major reasons for Shobha De’s popularity as a writer is her intimate understanding of women and their problems” (Dhawan 11). She supports the notion of equality of gender. Both in her works and in her columns, she exposes the socialite life of Bombay and the personal life of celebrities.

Her women are prototypes of Indian women who although educated and financially sound encounter problems while trying to establish themselves in their chosen professions. “De has designed an atmosphere where woman is not living as a victim but not a victor. In her works, she has advocated rebellious sort of woman ready to revolt against established social taboos which tie her to behave as passive one and always be subjugated by man’s authority” (Gupta, Dr.Ashish 4). These women are rebellious in nature and through varied ways they protest and try to sustain in this male dominated society.

Erotic nature of De’s writing has often been a subject of controversy but a major preoccupation in her writing is psychological realism; the delineation of her characters psychological process and subtle interpersonal relationship. In a culture where individualism and protest have often remained as alien ideas, and marital bliss and woman’s role at home as a central focus, it is interesting to witness in De’s novels

the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural displacement.

De's women characters are self-willed, self-reliant, rational and are aware of their own self. She says in *Shooting From the Hip*: "The whole question of the position of females in India is so wonderfully confused that it's impossible to take any one stand on it" (108). De, instead of providing fixed definitions of womanhood, concentrates on analyzing different forms of women's marginalisation and their response in her unique style. Thus, her works are sincere representation of a complex and transforming cultural ambience. De has consolidated the experiences of the new millennium women by decoding and overthrowing the canons of an andocentric discourse.

Currently, De is sixty-four-years old and lives with her husband Dilip De and their six children in Cuff Parede, Mumbai. Her familial, educational, cultural and literary background with an ambience of social consciousness and a love of excellence and work has gone a long way in shaping and molding her as a committed writer. She is, at present, a columnist and freelance writer for several newspapers and magazines like *Times of India*, *Asian Age*, *The Week*, *Statesman* and *Sunday Observer*. In her columns, she supports equality between genders, explores the socialite life of Bombay and exposes the hypocrisies of celebrities. Her degree in Psychology helps her to unfurl the hidden indentations of human nature.

In the postfeminist era only a few writers in Indian English fiction started writing this kind of urban fiction exploring the in-depth reality that reflects the lives of socialites, dwelling in the metropolitan cities in India, where the culture somehow matches with western culture.

Shobha De's women are free about their sexual expression. They will not tolerate infidelity on her or the part of their husbands. All sexual taboos are broken by them with gusto. The novelist makes them put forth candidly what they always feel but are afraid and inhibited to show. (Shukla 211)

The pop culture as well as pub culture is spreading in the streets and thus the age of postfeminism mushroomed in the streets of Indian cosmopolitan cities. Namita Gokhale, Geeta Mehta and Shobha De are some of the writers who have realized the truth that this is the world of social networking and women are post feminist in their approach to life.

Though she is not the first Indian woman novelist to deal with sex or lust, she is the first to cover all possible aspects of it in detail. By discarding all inhibitions she has completely changed the idea of literature by increasing interest in English pulp fiction. (Vats 104)

Shobha De is a post feminist writer who focuses on the sensitive issues relating to women. Narendra Kumar Neb in his article *Shobha De: To Read or Not to Read* observes:

The critics who reject De's fiction for being popular fiction fail to understand the fact that popular fiction has its own value. It doesn't remain limited to specific history of a particular period but forms a dynamic part of the history of that period. Popular fiction articulates the tensions and contradictions within the society giving them popular expression. (161)

This dissertation entitled 'Postfeministic Reading of Shobha De's Select Novels' examines the select novels of Shobha De in the standpoint of postfeminism.

The novels taken for study are *Socialite Evenings*, *Starry Nights*, *Sisters*, *Strange Obsession* and *Second Thoughts*. The hypothesis of this dissertation is to prove that Shobha De's writings are postfeministic in nature and her works are very much in vogue with the ideologies of postfeminism such as Power and Resistance Culture, Girl Power, Chick Lit, Do-Me Feminism, Raunch Culture, Queer theories, Micro politics and Enterprise culture which are the important aspect of postfeminism. This study applies the theories of various postfeminists who strongly voice their opinion for the cause of women to attain their self-identity and to assert their individuality.

The postfeminist ideologies of Amelia Jones, Angela McRobbie, Ariel Levy, Judith Butler, Naomi Wolf, Patricia S Mann, Rosalind Gill, Stephanie Genz, Susan Faludi and various other postfeminist critics are cited to substantiate the discussion of the dissertation and thereby to justify the objective of the dissertation.

The introductory chapter traces the development of feminist theories and its culmination in postfeminism. An attempt has been made to explain in detail the similarities and the differences among the first, the second and the third wave feminism, backlash feminism and the postmodern feminism. The ideologies and the theories of postfeminism are explained lucidly. The history of women creative writers and women theorists are recorded till date. Women writers who could be brought under the preview of postfeminism are discussed. Characteristic requisite of fiction is mentioned thus proving that popular fiction can be utilized for critical and academic research. The chapter also traces the life and works of Shobha De. Shobha De's novels show a real picture of contemporary Indian life style in the upper middle class society. She has projected the image of postfeministic women in her novels.

The second chapter titled '*Socialite Evenings*-A Prototype of Resistant Culture' presents a vivid description of the current scenario of women who are in the

high social position with economic and social emancipation. Shobha De's women are not victims; they are confident, daring and powerful. The characters in her novels revolt against the injustice inflicted upon them. The characters are ambitious and highly potential and they struggle the way up in a world full of corruption, exploitation, abuse and dominance. Shobha De's women are postfeminist in nature. They do not blame the society for subjugating them; instead they resist any form of injustice against them. Shobha De's protagonist Karuna represents the lone-rebel motif and thus symbolizes the validation of individualistic rebellion against the system.

The concept of power feminism is explained in this chapter. Power feminism is a concept which is completely opposite to the victim feminism where the women are always portrayed as suffering and subjugated and as helpless victims. Power feminism perceives women as human beings who are free thinkers and self assertive. Power feminism believes that one cannot attain power through an identity of powerlessness; in addition power feminism also believes that one should be resistant and strong in their endeavours. Thus the protagonist of the novel represents the aspects of resistance culture.

The third chapter 'Raunch Culture and Postfeminism in *Starry Nights*' makes a comprehensive study of the characters in the novel who are persuaded into the strong current of glitz, glamour, fame and wealth, sometimes willingly and sometimes by peer pressure and social necessities. This chapter deals with the Girl Power, Chick Lit and Do- Me Feminism which are an imperative facet of postfeminism. Chick Lit is a female oriented fiction which celebrates the sexuality of women. Girl power is a notion that combines independence and individualism with a confident display of sexuality. Do-Me feminism believes in consciously employing physical appearance

and sexuality to achieve objectives and to have control over one's life. It is a form of re-articulating sexual feminine identity.

The term Raunch Culture was first coined by Ariel Levy in her 2006 investigation of the overt or hyper-sexualisation of contemporary popular culture. In her book *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*, Levy uses the term Raunch Culture to describe the infiltration of contrived sexualities into mainstream society and culture which once existed solely in the realm of the sex industry and pornography.

The trend of writing unambiguously and candidly about sex not only diffused into twenty-first century mainstream culture but it also surprisingly resulted into normalization of soft porn images of the female body. Thus in this chapter the upward swing of the protagonist in the glamour industry and the aspects of postfeminism are established through the life of the protagonist.

Chapter IV is entitled 'Enterprise Culture and Postfeminism in *Sisters*'. This chapter deals with Enterprise Culture which is an aspect of postfeminism. This concept focuses on the long struggle of an individual who evolves herself to become an enterprising person or an entrepreneur or a person who initiates her own development. This ideology of enterprise culture reverberates with postfeministic beliefs of empowerment through realizing one's potential to achieve as well as to project themselves as potential candidate for a successful life and not as a victim.

Shobha De portrays an erroneous world where women have to struggle against various odds to become their desired selves. In many obvious and subtle ways, her novel explores the meaning of women's sexual equality. Postfeminist theorists believe in gender neutrality. In Postfeminist culture a woman is given freedom to do whatever

she desires and yet remain untouched by the fear of being judged by the operations of stereotypical patriarchal social power structure and authority

Chapter V is titled ‘Queer Theory and Postfeminism in *Strange Obsession*’ and it deals with lesbian relationship. The story revolves around the life and lustful relationship of two young women Amrita and Meenakshi. The chapter is analyzed by means of application of queer theories of the well-known critic Judith Butler. The novel is placed in the light of Postfeministic point of view in relation to gender related predicament.

Chapter VI is entitled as “Postfeminist Micro-Politics in *Second Thoughts*”. The novel *Second Thoughts* deals with the story of a young middle class Bengali girl who marries a Bombay based foreign returned Bengali Boy. The story depicts the disillusionment of a married woman and an explosive tale of love and betrayal that exposes the hollowness of human relationship especially within arranged marriages. This chapter deals with the concept of micro-politics which is a significant dogma of postfeminism. Micro-Politics believes that there has been drastic change in the position of women in basic social relationships, within the families, workplace and other public spheres. Postfeministic notion of micro-politics is intended to provide insight into the complicated nexus of relationship and also to rethink this same concept in terms of postfeminism.

Chapter VII, the ‘Summation’ validates the objective of the dissertation by substantiating postfeministic theory of various critics and by co-relating the postfeminist ideology with various incidents and characters in the select novels. This chapter concludes the entire dissertation and declares that the hypothesis has been proved. The chapter revisits all the ideologies of postfeminism and establishes that Shobha De is a postfeminist writer. The select novels taken for study are applicable to

the study of postfeminism. The chapter sums up the arguments of the preceding chapters and posits Shobha De as a postfeminism.

Shobha De's novels shows a real picture of Indian life style in the high society and dazzles the readers with her frank and candid tales of human relationships particularly men-women relationship and old and new value patterns. She has projected the image of a new woman in her novels by revealing both positive and negative sides of her personality. Her novels are intriguing and blatantly truthful images of the upcoming new women who has her own ambitions and aspirations.

The present study analyses Shobha De's novels in the light of postfeminism, by examining her women characters who aspire for a career as well as rewarding marital bliss. As she deals with elite and wealthy personalities on one side and a marginalized middle class on the other, this study weighs the pros and cons of the career oriented women of the present times. This study emphasizes the capability and talent of Shobha De's as a novelist.