Chapter - II

FEMINISM – AN OVERVIEW

“You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation”.— Brigham Young

Feminism is often identified as an organized movement that promotes equality among men and women in political, economic and social spheres. Feminists deem that women are exploited simply due to their sex and this is based on the dominant ideology of patriarchy. The Oxford Dictionary identifies feminism “as the advocacy of women’s rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes”. (2) For most Indians, the term “feminism” means nothing, if anything and the term has acquired many negative connotations in recent years. There is a general skepticism about its usefulness. Patriarchy is the system which oppresses women through its social, economic and political establishments. Right through history, men always have had greater authority in both the public and private realms. To uphold this supremacy, men have created boundaries and obstacles for women. This makes women struggle for freedom from their power but the access to power is so disproportionate. Nabar comments “Patriarchal religious traditions and overt or covert conservative super structures have kept it from becoming widely apprehended phenomena”. (Nabar 7)

The ideology of feminism can take many different dimensions. In the 1970's, women started developing a theory to explain their plight of oppression. This resistance of women spread rapidly and began to confront patriarchy. By the
1980's, feminists started disagreeing on particular issues linked to feminism. What was once one theory began to branch out into many theories that began to focus on different feminist issues. Of late, there are as many definitions of feminism as there are feminists. Each definition of feminism depends on a number of factors including one’s own beliefs, history and culture. (Pradhan 15)

Defining “feminism” can be challenging, but a broad understanding of it includes women and men acting, speaking and writing on women's issues and rights and identifying social injustice in the status quo. Activists who discussed women's issues prior to the existence of the feminist or women's rights movements are sometimes labelled “proto feminist”. (Botting 270)

Maggie Humm divides the emergence and the growth of the modern western feminist movements into three “waves”. (Humm 251) All the feminist waves deal with different aspects of the same feminist issues. The first wave of feminism refers to the movement of the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, which dealt mainly with the sufferings, working conditions and educational rights for women and girls. The second wave that occurred between 1960 and 1980 dealt with the inequality of laws, as well as cultural discriminations and the role of women in society. The third wave of feminism that started during the late 1980s till the early 2000s is seen as both a continuance of the second wave and a response to the perceived failures.

The United Kingdom and the United States witnessed an array of feminist activities in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The focus was
primarily on gaining the right of women's suffrage. The term, “first wave”, was coined retrospectively after the term “second wave” feminism was used to describe a newer feminist movement that focused as much on fighting social and cultural inequalities as on political inequalities.

Activists within the first organized women's movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found that women were largely absent from standard history texts and this inspired them to write their own histories. Detailed studies of women's work, trade unionism and political activities were produced by authors such as Barbara Hutchins’s *Women in Modern Industry*, Barbara Drake’s *Women in Trade Unions* and Alice Clark’s *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*.

The first wave of feminism paved the way for the Second Wave Feminism and further continued to coexist with the Third Wave Feminism. The principle behind the second wave feminism was its concern against cultural and political discriminations as inextricably linked. The second wave feminism encouraged women to understand the aspects of their own personal lives as deeply politicized, and reflective of a sexist structure of power. If first-wave feminism focused upon absolute rights such as suffrage, second-wave feminism was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as the end to discrimination.

The third wave of feminism started from the early 1990s. It was also a response to the hostile response against initiatives and movements created by the second-wave. The Third-wave feminism is against the second wave's “essentialist”
definitions of femininity, which gave much emphasis on the experiences of upper middle class white women. A post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality is central to much of the third wave's ideology. The Third wave feminists often focus on micro politics and questioned the second wave's archetype as to what is good and what is not good for the womenfolk. (Tandon 61)

“New Woman” was a feminist ideology that emerged in the late nineteenth century and had a deep influence on feminism that continued well into the twentieth. As pointed out by Hugh Stevens, the term “New Woman” was popularized by American writer Henry James to describe the growth in the number of feminist, educated, independent career women in Europe and the United States. (Stevens 27) The New Woman thwarted the limits set by the patriarchal society and this type of new woman is modeled in the plays of Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906). Ibsen's work examined the realities that lay behind many facades, possessing a revelatory nature that was disquieting to many contemporaries.

James popularized the term “New Woman”, a figure who was represented in the heroines of his novels, such as Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady*, and Daisy Miller in the novella *Daisy Miller*. According to historian Ruth Bordin, the term New Woman was

Intended by him to characterize American expatriates living in Europe: women of affluence and sensitivity, who despite or perhaps because of their wealth exhibited an independent spirit and were accustomed to acting on their own. The term New Woman always
referred to women who exercised control over their own lives be it personal, social, or economic. (Bordin 2)

The term “New Woman” has come to signify the awakening of woman into a new realization of her place and position in the family and society. Conscious of her individuality, the new woman has been trying to assert her rights as a human being and is determined to fight for equal treatment with man. The feminist movement in England had its supporters in Mary Wollstonecraft, Sarah Grand and Olive Schreiner. In this context, Ellen E. Jordan observes:

the English feminists endowed the new women with her hostility to men, her questioning of marriage, her determination to escape from the restrictions of home life and her belief that education could make a woman capable of leading a financially self-sufficient, single and yet fulfilling life. (Ellen 19)

The outcry of women is that literary criticism, since the days of Aristotle, has constantly undermined and barred their achievements. By way of redressing the balance, feminist criticism seeks to challenge conventional notions and establish the perspectives and experiences of women which had been marginalized for ages and ages. The first axiom on which feminism is built is that the gender difference is the foundation for structural inequality between men and women by which women suffer sympathetic social injustice, and the second axiom is that the inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity, but is produced by cultural construction of gender difference. (Tandon 62)
The prime agenda or the focus of feminism is to understand the social and psychic mechanism that constructs and enables gender inequality and transform it. The feminist literary criticism that is associated with literature intends to study the ways in which cultural representations challenge and reinforce the social, political, economic, and psychological suppression of women in the society. The feminist movement, women’s liberation movement etc., are active social bodies and institutions which fight for women’s rights. Of late, this has even become a global phenomenon.

The academic discipline, as it prevails today as a self-conscious movement, should be understood as the direct product of the “women’s movement” of the 1960s. This is considered as one of the most important practical means by which the ideals of freedom and equality could be spread and transformation of patriarchal notions can be made. Literary study is the most powerful medium to stimulate public minds.

Until the nineteenth century, women were scarcely an influential presence in public life, even in the developed countries. The women were so weak that they could not counter the customary view of male supremacy and even felt that male supremacy was even desirable. In that era, a woman was supposed to be in the home. She was the “angel in the house”, as the poet Coventry Patmore called her (Patmore 27). It still works the same way in many countries, where woman is meant for bearing and rearing children. In the western world, women were largely preoccupied with getting access to voting, to support the family and for
preservation. They were content with the private world of family and domesticity and were wives, mothers, caretakers, nurturers, and homemakers. The cultural anthropologist, Levi-Strauss considers that women have always been passive objects in the final decisions of marriage as brides were chosen by men. Aristotle, Aquinas, and Donne held the view that form is masculine, while matter is feminine. The mother was supposed to be no parent at all in Greek mythology. Milton wrote in his *Paradise Lost*, “He (Adam) for God only: she (Eve) for God in him”. (Milton 325)

There are some landmark studies on this subject like Shelley’s mother-in-law Mary Wollstonecraft’s book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), and John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* (1879) that deserve a special mention at this juncture. At a time when female survival was taken for granted in politics, property rights and individual reputation, as they all rested with men, it was an unwritten convention that a woman should obey a man. Such works mentioned above, articulated, the sense of discrimination created by such an inequity between the sexes. Since then feminism has sought to make up for the complacent certainties of patriarchal culture, assert sexual equality, and eradicate sexist domination. Women writers have always had to work “against the grain”. Feminist criticism seeks to free itself from time-honored and naturalized patriarchal notions by subverting them. The goal is to expose the misogyny involved in the literary production and practice of the past. To do this, there is no
one method, but a plurality of methods. In recent times the term “cultural politics” is preferred to feminist theory. (Deshmukh 515)

The twentieth century witnessed the continuance of the efforts of the previous century with some highly reputed women writers articulating their views and raising fundamental issues. Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* (1969) are significant studies that are still indispensable to an understanding of the case of feminism. Since the 1970s, there has been a proliferation of feminist writings world over. Some of the basic issues raised by feminist literary criticism can be classified as follows: first western society is entrenched in patriarchal ideology and controlled by it and due to this women are kept in subjugation. Secondly norms are always established by men and women are defined as the “other” with reference to these norms. Thirdly sex and gender are entirely different from each other, and need to be distinguished. Sex is biologically determined, while gender is created by society. (Bina 121)

Feminist theory, broadly, chooses two areas to tackle these issues and develop what critics call a “criticism of their own” - woman as reader, and woman as writer. The first task is to scrutinize the literature of the past with a view to exposing the notorious patriarchal ideology inscribed in it, and subject it to a revisionary, re-reading from the perspective of the woman. This task has involved a re-interpretation of the classics. The curriculum of women’s studies begins with a project that encourages students to read literature afresh.
The second on the agenda of feminism is woman as a writer. Here again, two factors are involved. The first is to unearth the forgotten genius of women and bring to limelight those women writers of the past who are unheard of. The second function is to create a whole body of literature by women and of women. Elaine Showalter gives the term gynocriticism to describe literary criticism based in a feminine perspective. The goal of gynocritics is not to erase the differences between male and female writing but to understand the specificity of women’s writing not as a product of sexism but as a fundamental aspect of female reality.

Quite a few works have successfully implemented this concept. Elaine Showalter’s *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) are two excellent works which have accomplished the task of rediscovering neglected women’s talents. Less known authors like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elizabeth Gaskell, Christina Rossetti, and authors who have been overlooked or elbowed out by literary historians have been brought to a clearer focus. The existing order is sought to be altered. To achieve this, they redefined the literary canon, jettisoned the unwanted baggage of male writers, and planted a newer one in place of the old. Rang out the old, and rang in the new, was formed as the motto. They started to promote scholarship pertaining to women’s studies in order to rewrite literary history with this vision in mind, the outlook of transforming the existing literary study, and creating a unique female
literary tradition. By way of an example, the tradition and the surfacing of modernism can be approached from this feminist point of view.

Historians define tradition as the movements in various ways. Tradition is defined by the historians as a reaction to Victorianism, the after-effects of World War I, the ills of industrialization, etc. The conventional view is that modernism, in art and literature, was born to work against the tendencies of the age. From the feminist perspective, modernism can be interpreted as an apparent expression of women’s movements fighting for suffrage and equal rights. Modernism can also be inferred as reflecting the changes in the relationship between men and women in a growing, permissive society. Evidence can be shown in the emergence of experimental literature in fiction. (Warhol 45)

In almost all the countries, in the academic field and in woman’s forum, the main focus is to bring into light the oppression faced by women in various forms. The enforcement of the feminist movement, the establishment of various woman study centers and the formation of various welfare organizations are the indication of the fact that the voice of women is being heard. In order to reach the stage of being listened to, the woman writers had to struggle much and through their writing, they have been projecting their points, pleading and fighting for a change in the attitude of society towards woman. Bhatnagar aptly remarks:

Values need to be redefined, so also human relationship, especially within the family. Such is the dilemma of the middle class. An adherence to the traditional values has become difficult. New values
Feminism is a multicultural movement and it is a proven fact that women, in general, are subjected to patriarchal oppression which operates in different forms in different countries. It is also true that women’s problems are shaped by their class, race, nationality, religion and many other factors. The woman being treated as “the angel in the house” and the woman being placed on the “pedestal” are some of them. Feminist critics try to go against the grain by exposing the patriarchal ideology of literary texts. It is wide in its range, because it accommodates cultural, social, political, and psychological issues. The ultimate goal is to widen our comprehension of women’s experience of the world, and their importance in the world. As a critical movement, feminism is of recent origin. Yet, its growth is phenomenal in terms of the volume of books and articles written about it. Specialized journals promote critical reassessments and feminism has become a productive industry that has an enormous impact on the centers of teaching and learning.

In India, a woman has always been inferior in the society for India has a multi-lingual society. Villages or rural areas are plenty in this country and they supersede their urban counterparts in their size and population. The condition of the rural Indian woman is very bad and the landless poor women spend about four to five hours every day in the forest in order to search fuel or fodder. In the past, women were not allowed to learn, read and write.
The first girl school in India was started exactly 165 years ago, Savitribai Phule and her associate, Fatima Begum, set up the school at Bhidewada, Pune, on January 1, 1848 and only after this, girls have been going to schools. In due course, they proved that they were capable in talent and equally adventurous as boys. The education in English was far out of the reach of Indian women. The impact of the mythical Savitri and Sita on Indian women seemed to have had a wrong impact. They would have rather preferred the brave women like Rani Lakshmibai and Jijimata. Indian women seemed to have an acceptance of the image of goddess and that too had been given to them by patriarchal society. Only after independence, Indians started to think about women’s problems. Actually, the arrival of the British provided an impetus to the upliftment of women. The educational facilities introduced by the Britishers brought education and it changed the attitude of few thinkers like Agarkar, Maharshi Karve and Ranade. Karve started to write about women’s problems and their situation in society and thus opened the door of freedom for women.

In those days, women were facing social discrimination as they were victims of child marriage and child widowhood. The immature widow had to face many bad traditions like cutting hair and making herself ugly in order to prevent her from becoming the possible victims of the lust of cruel men. In that case, if she became pregnant, the only option remained for her was to commit suicide. (Athalekar 11)
An Indian woman has to play multiple roles as she has to prove herself persistently as a good daughter, a faithful wife, a devoted mother and at last a caring grandmother. Even in her married life, she has to defend herself against her in-laws and save herself from psychological, physical and emotional exasperation. She understands her role and she prefers to be humble than to be arrogant and she seems always dedicated and kind and so keeps up with the tradition and so she is regarded as a goddess. In *Ramayana*, Sita had to walk through the fire to prove her purity, but unfortunately, no one had doubted ‘Rama’, though he too had spent fourteen years in the same forest. Since a long time, the tradition of blaming women for various reasons continued. The Indian woman is still playing the role of ‘Sita’ and is still trying to prove her purity and virtuousness. Sita, Mira, Savitri, Draupadi are the names of those women whose story tells us the characteristics of the Indian women. A woman who devotes her whole life to prove her love for the husband is found only in India. The male partners never suffer the same order.

In the domain of literature, feminism has its own roots in Europe through the writings of women in England. Just as Jane Austen had addressed the restricted lives women faced in the early part of the century, Charlotte Brontë, Anne Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot depicted women's misery and frustration. The American journalist Fanny Fern in her autobiographical novel *Ruth Hall* (1854) describes her own struggle to support her children as a newspaper columnist after her husband's untimely death. Louisa May Alcott penned *A Long Fatal Love Chase* (1866) a strong feminist novel, that
concerns a young woman's attempts to flee from her bigamist husband and become independent. (Bicknell 349) The injustice faced by women was acknowledged by a few male writers too. The novels of George Meredith, George Gissing and Thomas Hardy, and the plays of Henrik Ibsen, also focused on the plight of women of that time. One critic later called Ibsen's plays “feministic propaganda”. Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) is a description of Caroline Norton's life. Subsequent to the changes in women's consciousness provoked by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in the 1970s new feminist activists took on and they began to write more on political and sexual issues in their writings.

Feminist writing in the early 1970s ranges from Gloria Steinem to Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970). Millett's *Sexual Politics* uses her bleak survey of male writers and their attitudes and biases to demonstrate her hypothesis that sex is politics, and politics is power imbalance in relationships. From the same period emerged Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Sheila Rowbotham’s *Women's Liberation and the New Politics* (1971) and Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate* (1971). Firestone based her concept of revolution on Marxism, referred to the ‘sex war’, and interestingly, in view of the debates over patriarchy, claimed that male domination dated to “back beyond recorded history to the animal kingdom itself”. (Halbert 115)
Greer, Rowbotham and Mitchell represent an English perspective on the emerging revolution. Juliet Mitchell claims that this should be seen as an international phenomenon inclusive of the different manifestations involving local culture. British women too organized small local discussion groups. Although there were marches, the focus was on what Kathie Sara child of Red stockings had called consciousness-raising. One of the functions of this, as Mitchell Juliet describes it was that women would “find what they thought was an individual dilemma is social predicament”. (Juliet 61) Women found that their own personal experiences were information that they could trust in formulating political analyses.

Women in the United States were frustrated and this frustration crystallized around the failure to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment during the 1970s. Raised against this background was Susan Brown Miller's *Against Our Will* (1975) that introduced a more explicit agenda directed against male violence, specifically male sexual violence in a discourse on rape. Her most memorable phrase was “pornography is the theory and rape the practice”. (Miller 35) creating a nexus that would cause deep fault lines to develop, largely around the concepts of objectification and commoditization. Brown Miller's other major contribution is *In Our Time* (2000) a history of women's liberation. Less well known is *Femininity* (1984) a gentler deconstruction of a concept that has had an uneasy relationship with feminism.
Feminism in Indian English novels is an unequalled concept, which is most delicately handled under constrained circumstances. It has been established in India rapidly setting aside the patriarchal predomination to a certain extent for a substantial amount of work on feminism is accomplished through Indian English literature. It is essential to understand the crucial concept of the term ‘feminism’ in the context of India, beginning from its inception. The history of feminism in India can be looked at as principally a practical effort. Feminist writers in India today proudly uphold their cause of womanhood, through their write-ups. According to Bruce King,

A period in English poetry written by Indian women was moving from rewriting of legends, praise of peasants to writing about personal experiences. That was the time, when the poet like Kamala Das began to create her impact in literature. In earlier days, the subject matter of the women poet was often limited about romantic love, which was treated without depth, complexity and emotion.

(King 52)

Clear-cut evidences of feminine sensibility are seen in Kamala Das’ poetry. Das and the subsequent women poets have brought great variety into the feminine and feminist poetry. In fiction, Anita Desai is generally acknowledged to have depicted the women’s inner world, their sensibilities and frustrations. Bharati Mukherjee could not ignore her Indian origin though she projects herself as an American writer. Veena Paintal wrote about rebellious women and in An
Autumn Leaf (1976), she portrays a character named Charisma, who is an independent girl with her own views on love and marriage. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a Diasporic feminist reiterates, “women are universally oppressed by men”. (qtd. in Ray 21)

Of late, feminist writers in India, pompously endorse their cause of “womanhood” through their writings. The literary field is nowadays bolider enough to present feminism in Indian literature, making a link between sexuality and feminism and writing for the idea ‘a woman’s body, a woman’s ‘right’ in Indian languages. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, Leela Kasturi, Sharmila Rege and Vidyut Bhagat are some other group of critics and creative writers, who passionately write about the feminist sensibilities in Indian English literature. Feminist literature in India has existed in India from the Vedic period and continued to exist during the British period and is still deep rooted with the gradually changing face of women coming to light in every age.

Indian women Novelists like Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Shobhaa De, Veena Paintal, Kundanika Kapadia, Indumallah, Mrinal Pande, Gouri Deshpande, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai thought it would be fit to give expression to the feminist sensibilities of Indian women through their women characters. Anita Desai seems to have had a simple middle class upbringing with a German angle to it. Her mother, Toni Nime was of German origin and possibly that is why Desai has confluences of sorts in her writing. Almost all her characters strive to find a balance between their inner and outer
world. Desai portrays the woman who desires to be loved, seeks emancipation and embraces psychological pressures, mental disorders and even death. The woman is the most realistic and natural than the ‘Sati-Savitri’ and the “Pati-Vrata” of her earlier novels. De has had a diverse career with roles ranging from model to columnist. Her writings seldom fail to focus on the problems of women and her emphasis is on extra-marital affairs and has projected herself as a new post modern face among Indian women novelists. De has moved away from the beaten path and has actually undertaken a serious analysis of the man-woman relationship in marriages. She has made certain insights that will certainly help the reader comprehend the minds of the contemporary sensibilities on Indian women.

Kamala Das has excelled in her writings in her fight for the cause of Indian women through her poems. As a perfect home maker and a poet, her working table was the kitchen table where she used to chop the vegetables and after getting the table cleaned, she started typing. Indian women writers like Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Kamala Das and Shobhaa De, continue to bring laurels to the women folk through their writings in spite of the initial rejection, dejection, familial bonds and domesticity. It is astonishing that they all shot up to limelight only after very hard fought initial battles. Despite these setbacks, these women writers have given literary work in India an unmistakable edge. Their women are real living characters who compel the reader to look at them in fear with their relationships to their environment, their society, their men, their children, their families and their psychological problems. Their
writings are always original, versatile and had the indigenous flavor of the country. Gender is only incidental but, one must admit, it does spice up their work. Indian women writers have grappled with complex issues such as sensuality, servility, subjugation and society. They have handled them with a sense of balance, never disregarding our Indian traditions.

Indian women writers in English belong to diverged social strata. Some of the women writers belong to the “Westernized upper-class”. This naturally limits their social experience to a single echelon and Nayantara Sahgal is a writer of this kind. Iqbalunnisa Hussain, Mrs. F. Das, Padmini Sengupta, Santha Rama Rau, and Venu Chitale are some notable women writers whose novels are as vividly representative as they are diversified. In this context, however, Kamala Markandaya’s novels seem to be more reflective of the awakened feminine sensibility in modern India. In her writings, she attempts to project the image of the changing conventional society. Markandaya merits a special notice both by virtue of the variety and complexity of her achievement, and as representative of a major trend in the history of the Indo-Anglian novel. Indeed she projects the national image on many levels of aesthetic awareness. Markandaya’s novels like the novels of Kapur and Deshpande, seem to be uniquely reflective with the characteristic sensibility of the modern educated Indian woman. They are based on contemporary events and focus on the current social problems. Arundhati Roy’s style of writing is sole and in 1997 she won the Booker Prize for *The God of Small Things*. 
While these writers have denied that their novels have any feminist bias, the fact remains that almost all the novels written by them have a strong feminist intent and the woman issue lies at the heart of all their works. Some of the common features which prove this are: the presence of certain basic themes like the complexities of man-woman relationships, especially in the context of marriage, disturbed adolescence, the attempt to break traditional moulds in which women are trapped, sexual discrimination, introspection and rejection of the dependency syndrome. (Bai 138)

All the novels written by these writers have women as their chief protagonists. According to Elaine Showalter, feminism has evolved gradually from the past to the present—day. This development, she says, took place in three phases; (a) “Feminine: the phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of dominant traditions, (b) Feminist: the phase of protest against standards and values in favour of autonomy, (c) Female: the phase of self-discovery and a search for identity”. (Showalter 33) Most Indian English women writers of the younger generation belong to the third phase.

Deshpande’s writings do correspond to that of the feminist women writers in the West, in anxiety with the path of the feminists. Her concerns are essentially relational but these issues become individualistic in the west and her thoughts of women’s liberation and autonomy are intensely encircled in the Indian women’s state of affairs within the socio-cultural and fiscal spaces and archetypes of the country. Meanwhile, Kapur highlights the factors which curtail the liberty of the woman to live and nurture herself the way men do. The female protagonists of
Kapur defy and prevail over the ideological restraint and reshape ideals and existing value systems in order to re-invent themselves in a significant manner. Both the writers have succeeded in portraying the problems of the women and point to a resolution, at least partial, of the conflicts a woman has to face in society as well as when trying to live up to her ideal of a liberated woman in the Indian context.

In the book *Feminism and Post Feminism*, Kanwar Dinesh Singh studies modern Indian woman poets from the feminist and the post-feminist points of view in order to understand the lives and experiences, the norms and values and the psychodynamics and gender roles of Indian women in the new age. The book is particularly notable as it elucidates the difference between ‘feminism and femininity’:

Feminism is, indeed, a serious attempt to analyze, comprehend and clarify how and why is femininity or the feminine sensibility / experience / expression different from masculinity or the masculine experience. Feminism brings into perspective the points of difference and contrast that characterize the ‘feminine identity’ or ‘feminine psyche/ sensibility’ or ‘femininity’ of woman which can be studied by taking into an account the psychosomatic, social and cultural construction of femininity. Sex and gender are two distinct terms. ‘Sex’ is a biological identity while ‘gender’ is a social construct. (Kanwar 3)