CHAPTER II

FEMINISM
One of the major developments in literary studies in the past twenty-five years has been the emergence of feminism in literature. Feminism literature is particularly concerned with women characters. It is true that the history of mankind was one of man's. Evidently, man became the law-maker, imposing authority on the 'Other' (woman) who followed rules. One enjoyed the limelight and the other remained unseen and obscure. As Sushila Singh observes it:

Human experience for centuries has been synonymous with the masculine experience with the result that the collective image of humanity has been one sided and incomplete. Woman has not been defined as a subject in her own right but merely has an entity that concerns man either in his real life or his fantasy life.”

*(Sushila, Feminism and Recent Fiction, P.7.)*

The place of women in society has differed from culture to culture and age to age. Woman has never been considered equal to man. But in modern age, social environment has changed. Women writers in the contemporary world enjoy a greater measure of freedom and no area of life remains untouched by them. Women are exploring an unusual sense of candour and boldness. The feminist movement started in the west in the 1960's. The programme of Feminist movement is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adopt male models and theories.

The term 'Feminism' was first used by the nineteenth century French Dramatist, Alexander Dumas. This movement influenced the whole
world, securing complete rights for women—political, social, economic and educational.

While discussing Feminism, it is confronted with parallel models from different countries. For example, if we take into account Simone de Beauvoir’s *The second sex* is very much concerned about the physical suppression of women. According to Chaman Nahal, “feminism as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the independence syndrome. There is a dependence syndrome: whether it is the husband or the father or the community or whether it is a religious group, ethnic group.” *(Sushila, Feminism, P.17.)* He says if women free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life than they will have feminine ideology. So women should break down the orthodox model from society.

Toril Moi, French feminist, has used the term “Post Feminism” to cover the different configurations of feminism and post-modernism present today. According to her, “feminism is committed to the struggle for equality for women, an effort to make women become like men.” *(Toril, Feminism, Post Modernism, P.22.)* But women could not have equal right just as men and this situation must be located as difference, not as equality. Feminism is very wide concept and it is considered differently. According to Alice Jardine, a French writer, “Feminism is generally understood as movement from the point of view of by, and for women.” *(Sushila, Feminism, P.25.)* Jardine does try to provide some specificity to this general position. Jardine views Feminism as a movement by women, which takes on different and very specific form in different contexts. The word ‘gynesis’ is also neologism by Jardine. Gynesis is the name for textual process, which she describes in the following way: “The putting into discourse of “woman” as that process diagnosed in France as intrinsic to the condition of modernity; indeed, valorization of the Feminism, woman, and her obligatory, that is historical connotations, as somehow intrinsic to
new and necessary modes of thinking, writing, speaking". (Sushila, Feminism, P25.)

Karen often has different concept of feminism and she divided into two strands: "Relational" and "Individualist". The relational feminism thought proposed a gender based but egalitarian vision of social organization. It mainly featured the primacy of compassionate hierarchical, male – female couple as the basic unit of society. On the other hand, individualist arguments emphasized the individual, irrespective of sex or gender, as the basic unit. The interplay of these two strands can be seen in the later eighteenth – century British writer on women’s right, Mary Wollstonecraft, and then nineteenth-century American Suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Wollstonecraft in her "Vindication of the Right Women" in 1792 showed a clear sense of women’s role and responsibilities as mothers. Cady Stanton argued in 1869 that "because man need women’s complement of one another we need women’s thought in national affairs to make a safe and stable government and later in 1892 insisted on woman’s right to "her birth – right to self –sovereignty." (P.27.)

Today feminism must be considered as a rapidly developing major critical ideology or system of ideas in its own right. This concept has international scope. In words of Karen often: "Feminism emerges as a concept that can encompass both an ideology and movement for sociopolitical analysis of male privilege and women’s subordination within any given society." (Karen, Defining Feminism, P.119.)

Here Karen often emphasized that women have important role in society. Her concept opposes the philosophy of life that woman should subordinate to men in the family and society. The present day feminist thought seeks to destroy masculinity hierarchy but not sexual dualism. It is necessarily pro – woman, but this does not mean that it has to be anti-man.
According to Offen, men and women are rebalancing factor of social, economic and political power of a society.

The British philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch has articulated such an ethic in her works. This ethic emerges out of the structures of women’s experience. The primary condition of powerlessness makes them hypersensitive to their surroundings to survive. She says, “Women have been able to carve out a separate space of their own. In domestic sphere also, the fundamental interruptibility of women’s projects contributes to a sense of personal vulnerability to environmental influence, fostering a sense of being in control of one’s world”. (Michelle, The Resonance Of Interruption,”P.29-37.) They should develop a consciousness of flexibility, of relative and of contingency. Another writer Robin Morgan proposes that the new feminist moral vision is in many ways analogous to the vision of reality offered by the new physics. She has seen feminism as, “crucial to the continuation of sentient life on this planet.” It is the key of our survival or transformation. Today, women have been the custodians of humane values for centuries. They know their primary values and reverence of life.

Women’s Movement was started in search of an identity. The radical movement of the late sixties and of the seventies raised the question of personal identity, which could not be tried by any political movement. Feminists found this too. At first it seemed enough for women to speak out. Many of journals and books of the movement have suggested this. For instance, ‘Women’s voice – Another voice – Call to woman’ shows typical literary form of feminism. Feminists have turned to testimonies written by women. In many testimonies, feminist theories are based on valorization and speaking of women. Feminist literary theory began by looking at the images of women in literary texts. Feminism is an idealist position but it remains always in touch with the knowledge that the real should be changed. There are many definitions of feminism so it has changed
opinion. For example, French writer, Mary Ell Mann published *Thinking About Women* or Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex*, and they argue different developments of feminist theories. Feminist theory is not prescriptive. It does not tell its practitioners what to do, think or read. Rather it offers possibilities of approach, things you might do, say, think, read, if you find it appropriate and helpful. They must always offer some commitment to reality, to real women’s lives. In the beginning, the feminist literary texts were largely male – authored, and the women in them were generally stereotypically represented either as ideal (virginal, beautiful, passive, dependent, nurturing) or monstrous (whorish, sexually voracious, independent and dangerous). First, male writers wrote unrealistically about women; second, male writers produced these images to enforce their own ideals of femininity on women. There were honorable exceptions, but they were few and far between.

There have been many commentators who have simplistic approach to the literary text. In the next phase of feminist approach, writers moved towards the consideration of women as producers of texts as well as consumers of them. For example, Elain Showalter named ‘gynocritics’ is considered women as writer. Women writers also write about female characters in their fictional texts, and represent woman as in poetry and drama too. But the shift to the consideration of the woman writer was significant for several reasons. It is a historicist and materialist approach, which considers the practical issue of writing for woman – their relationships with education, with publishers, with reviewers, with spaces to write in and with language itself. This was the revolution in the academy, especially in terms of thinking about how the literary text might be female writers, their opportunities to write and their critical reception. It also suggested new places to look for literature and a project of rediscovery was inaugurated to find the women writers who had become hidden from
literary history, to republish their works and to establish female tradition of literature to set beside the tradition of great man.

More recently still, from the late 1980's and early 1990's feminist theory has started to engage with its own inherent essentialism by revisiting the question. What is a woman? Judith Butler (1990-93) and Diana Fuss (1989) have eschewed the commonsense biologist position that we all know what a woman is. They argue instead that sexual identity is a kind of masquerade or performance. Their arguments arise the feminist thinking with queer theory, in which sexuality rather than sex is the basis of the argument.

There are multiplicities of ideas that inform about feminism but there is no simple answer. Ruth Robins given the mechanistic criticism about feminism that operates certain structures of oppression just as—“economics, sex-based, gender-based, class-based, race-based. She suggests that not all modes of theory work equally well for all writing: Cixous and Jane Austin are not an immediately obvious pairing and while it would be possible to read Austen in the light of Cixous, a reading of this kind probably inflict damage on both of them.” (Julian, Literary Theories, P.55.) That Feminist theory is about the choice you make.

Feminist theory has diversified in the past few years in which the ‘image of women’ dominated as the central theme for literary study. Through this theory writer determines how women characters are presented in literature. Usually the writer discovers that the images are other, and therefore that the literature is alien. Feminist theory is rooted in the fundamental a priori intuition that women are seats of consciousness: are selves, not others.... Women in literature written by men are for the most part seen as other. Such literature is alien from a female point of view because it denies her essential self hood.
On the other hand, much of our literature depends upon a series of fixed images of women, stereotypes. These reified forms, surprisingly few in number, are repeated over and over again through much of western literature. They define the woman insofar as she relates to the interest of men. In the western tradition these stereotypes tend fall into two categories. According to Josephine Donovan, female stereotypes symbolize either the spiritual or the material, good or evil. For example, Mary, the mother of Jesus, came through time to exemplify the ultimate in spiritual goodness, and Eve, the partner of Adam, the most sinister of evil physicality. He represents the following diagram, which shows how this dualism is conceived:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spiritual</th>
<th>Material</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virgil ideal</td>
<td>Sex object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Eve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Seductress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>evil</td>
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(*Newton, Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*, P.213.)

According to male critic, under the category of the good – women come those who serves the interest of the hero, are the patient wife, the mother / martyr and the lady. In the bad or evil category are deviants who reject or do not properly serve man or his interests: the old maid, career woman, the witch or lesbian, the shrew or domineering mother or wife. In western literature, women are not human beings, seats of consciousness.
They are objects, which are used to facilitate or redeem the projects of men. On the other hand; in some western literature women are the objects, the scapegoats of much cruelty and evil.

That's the reason that Feminist criticism becomes political when it asserts that literature and the standards of critical judgment should be changed, so that literature will no longer function as propaganda furthering sexiest ideology. The feminist critic recognizes that literature is an important contributing element to a moral atmosphere in which women are derogated.

Feminist criticism can be divided into two distinct varieties. The first type is concerned with woman as reader in which woman are presented as the consumers of male produced literature. Its subjects include the images and stereotypes of women in literature but they have omissions and misconceptions about women. Thus literature has fissures in male constructed literary history. It is also concerned with the exploitation and manipulation of the female audiences sexually in popular culture and film. The second type of feminism is concerned with women as writer in which women are presented as the producer of textual meaning with the history, themes genres and structures of literature by women. Its subjects include the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics' and the problem of a female's language; literary history and studies of particular writers and works.

In feminist theory produced by male we find stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles of women played in literary history. In contrast to male literature, the programme of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature. They also develop new models based on the study of female experience rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocritics emphasis that women should free themselves from the male literary history and they should
establish their world of female culture. The literature of woman should be
different and special so that they should recreate the chain of writers in this
tradition, the patterns of influence and response from one generation to the
next and also begin to challenge the periodicity of orthodox literary history.
Elaine Showalter called three stages of woman Feminine, Feminist and
Female stages. During the Feminine phases, dating from about 1840 to
1880, women wrote in an effort to equal the intellectual achievements of
the male culture, and internalized its assumptions about female culture. The
distinguishing sign of this period is the male pseudonym, introduced in
England in the 1840s, and a national characteristic of English women
writers. The feminist content of feminine art is typically oblique, displaced,
ironic and subversive. The feminist phase, from 1880 to 1920, women are
wining of the vote. Women are historically enabled to reject the
accommodating postures of femininity and to use literature to dramatise the
ordeal of wronged womanhood.

The Female phase, ongoing since 1920, women rejected both
imitation and protest. They turned to female experience as the source of an
autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and
techniques of literature. Representatives of the formal Female Aesthetic are
two English writers – Virginia Wolfs and Dorothy Richardson who begin
to think in terms of male or female sentences, and divided their work into
‘masculine’ Journalism and feminism’ fictions, redefining and sexualizing
external and internal experience.

Trying to account for these complex permutations of the female
tradition, feminist criticism has tried a variety of theoretical approaches.
The introduction of feminist literary theory published in English and it was
intended for the general reader as well as students of literature. In the 1960
s for the first time since the women’s vote was won and feminism again
surfaced as an important political force in the western world. They’re many
writers Just like Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Elaine Showalter, Myra
Jehlen, Simone de Beauvoir, Jacques Lacan, Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Germaine Greer who established this their in their own way. Feminism is a kind of social revolt against convention, live living outside marriage. Betty Friedman’s book *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, as the first sign American women were becoming unhappy with their lot in affluent post – war society. The early initiatives towards a more specific organization of women as feminist came from activist in this civil rights movement, and later also from women involved in protest actions against the war in Vietnam. Thus the ‘New feminist were politically committed activists who were not afraid from society.Since patriarchal times, women have been occupying a secondary place in the heterosexual world. Simone de Beauvoir is the greatest French feminist theorist of our time (1908-86). She is an existentialist philosopher, left wing political archivist and writer of both-fiction and non-fiction. Her pioneering work about the oppression of women-*The Second Sex*-comes out in 1949. She points out that womanhood as we have known is a social construct. In her introduction to The Second Sex Simone de Beauvoir says,

Thus humanity is male and man defines women not in her self but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being..... For him, she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject; he is the Absolute – She is the other.

*(Joshi, Shashi Deshpande’s Fiction, P. 135.)*

Beauvoir says that women are always dominated by male. In this male dominating world they do not have their individuality and instead of it they are known through their husbands. This is misfortune of a female in
this world where they have only second position. Thus the term ‘Other’, which was elaborated upon by later feminists, was originally introduced by Simon de Beauvoir. Woman may be considered second sex. Women are seen as imperfect creature not an autonomous being but always relative to man. She has been the victim of male domination and oppression and treated like a beast of burden and object of pleasure. Women’s First and major limitation is that she is physically weaker than man. Simon de Beauvoir considers, why women do not dispute male sovereignty. She says that in order to fight male – domination it is necessary for women to organize themselves into unit. It is true that they share their womanhood, but is equally true that they are dispersed among the men. Both man and woman are co-dependent on each other but man possesses the power to gratify himself through actions. Men hold better jobs and have greater opportunities to get ahead.

But with the industrial revolution, women entered the field of productive labour and they acquired equality with men in economic basis. Simon de Beauvoir is not pessimistic about woman’s feature. She warns us that economic equality was not a total victory; what was needed was a change in woman’s total life pattern. Even the working woman has to reconcile her career with her marriage, which is something that man does not have to do. In spite of her outside work, she has to do household work for the family. Simone de Beauvoir rightly says that even after the attainment of equality, woman’s identical world would remain different from man’s. The emerging feminists were inspired by the ideas in The Second Sex and her personal life. Simon de Beauvoir says;

In my definition, feminists are women – or even men, too – who are fighting to change women’s condition, in association with the class struggle, but independently of it as well, without making the changes they strive for totally dependent on changing
society as a whole. I would say that, in that sense, I am a feminist today, because I realized that we must fight for the situation of women, here and now, before our dreams of socialism come true.

(Toril, Sexual/Textual Politics, P.91.)

Another writer Betty Friedan is probably the one feminist who is most relevant to the predicament of the middle class woman in India. Her most important work, The Feminine Mystique, which set in the second wave of American Feminism, came out in 1963. Friedan was more concerned about the educated, middle-class women of America who had everything that was supposed to make them happy and comfortable but with some secret sense of longing. Friedan wrote occasional articles for popular magazines. As a part of her job, she also had to interview women. Friedan’s questions were about their present day lives, their problems and satisfaction. In answer she realized that most of them have decided to trace the root cause. Out of this search and struggle was born Friedan’s memorable book, The Feminine Mystique.

Friedan observed contemporary problems and began to feel that there was a deliberate campaign to convince the American women that marriage and motherhood was the only way to be happy and live a perfect life. Friedan described this ideology as The Feminine Mystique. Friedan realized that inspite of our modern ways of life, material progress and progressive ideas; women had dissatisfaction because there were the problems of identity.

The Feminine Mystique had, of course, its own limitations. It detected the problem but not proposed any specific solution for housewife. How ever for most women, The Feminine Mystique transformed their lives miraculously and it has changed the thinking of men as well. Besides, Two of Friedan’s subsequent books It Changed My Life (1976) and The
Second stage (1981) dealt with feminism and women’s movement respectively. In the second stage (1981) Friedan says that women’s compromise is essential for the survival of humanity. In the first stage, women break the strangle hold of the feminine mystique and in the second stage, Friedan emphasis on women’s abandoning their rage, their anti – family and anti – male position and going back to family. Thus femaleness, according to her can become the source of women’s power.

Kate Millette emerged as one of the major American Feminists, with her most famous work ‘Sexual Politics’ in 1970. Sexual Politics is divided into three parts : Sexual Politics, Historical Background, and Literary Reflection. The first part presents Millette’s thesis about the nature of power relationship between the sexes, and the second part surveys in the fate of feminist struggle and its components in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and final section sets out to show how the sexual Politics described in the preceding chapters is enacted in the works of D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Normal Mailer, Jean Genet. The book establishes the feminist approach to literature as a critical force to be reckoned with the ideology of American New criticism.

Sexual Politics marshaled the historical argument for feminism that women ought to be given equal treatment in society. There is politics in the relation between sexes whereby ‘one group of persons is controlled by another’ (P.35). According to Millette Sexual difference is cultural in origin and women’s status has been demeaning one ….. homemaker, Chattel….. Since the establishment of patriarchal society. The aim of freeing women is to free them from the ‘immemorial subordination’ which in the process can bring us a great deal ‘closer to humanity’.
Another feminist was Germaine Greer, with her most famous work *The Female Eunuch* (1970). The aim of this work was to restore to women their uncastrated femininity and it worked as a part of the second feminist wave. In the book, the discussion of the body assumes that everything that we may observe could be otherwise. It shows how, ‘Female sexuality has been masked and deformed by most observers, and never more so than in our own time.’ *(The Female Eunuch, P.5.)*

Greer also argues that the natural differences between men and women have been exaggerated due to social factors. She agrees with Beauvoir’s central thesis that ‘women’ is a social construct devised by man. She adds that women try hand to fit themselves into this model and this process, lose their natural human qualities.

Germaine Greer made a very convincing analysis of woman’s neutrality but she did not offer specific formula by which women could regain their human qualities or their natural ‘selves’. She advised women to have power and boldness. She implored women to avoid artificiality. She also advised them not to marry or live in a monogamous relationship. She believed that love need not necessarily be exclusive; it can exist outside marital relationship. In short, for Greer, her body was the only effective means that women possessed; She could use it to attain emancipation. Greer also published *Sex and Destiny, The obstacle Race, The Fortunes of Women painters and their works, The writing and The change: Women, Ageing and The Menopause.*

During 1970, a group of radical feminists advocated their theory of equality. During the same period, Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dilectic of Sex*, Eva Figes’ *Patriarchal Attitudes* (1970), and Juliet Mitchell’s *Women’s Estate* (1971) appeared.
These feminists reject discrimination as the basis of sex and declare in the epigraph of one of the books.

the fault lies not in our stars, our harmones, our menstrual cycles or our empty internal spaces but in our institutions... Woman is made, not born.

(Woman in a sexist Society, P.289.)

The social and family structures based on patriarchal structure of feeling are responsible for women’s oppression. The problem identified was that a woman’s identity was expected to be merged with and grow from her roles as wife and mother. Female children grew up with indoctrination that held up, overtly and covertly, this ideal as the only one a ‘good’ woman was to aspire for. The cultural conditioning was the culprit and not only biological differences. So the radicals urged women to fight such conditioning by attaining position of power and prestige and by eliminating gender difference. The radical groups reject out-right the institution of marriage and consider it as an organized rape but less militant feminists like, Friedan, seek fulfillment within marriage itself but oppose nuclear family system. The radicals evolved their new vocabulary viz. sex object (a woman seen primarily in terms of sexual attractiveness to men) and full humanity (a full human being).

They advocated a drastic reorganization of society and gender roles besides equal education and career for women. So they urged women to be united in order to achieve self-reliance, self-sufficiency and not to aspire for the favours of men. These feminists also plead for control over one’s own body and freedom from male oppression to promote women’s rights and thereby, break down stereotypes.
Bourgeois Feminism became known during the mid-century. These feminist believed that their demands can be met within the context of the present capitalist society.

**Socialist feminist**, like Toril Moi believe that women’s inferior status is rooted in private property and class-divided society.

Socialist feminists, while arguing that there is something timeless and universal about women’s oppression, have instead it takes different forms in different settings, and that the differences are of vital importance. (1985: 108)

**Black feminists** alleged that the radical group was dominated by white women who were racists. These feminists discuss female sex openly, and believe that women are not merely vassals of male sexual.

Anglo – American Feminist critics have been mostly indifferent or even hostile towards literary theory but from 1980’s this attitude has changed and feminist criticism has its theoretical reflection. One of the first texts to break the theoretical silence among Feminist critics was Annette Kolodny’s some notes on defining a “feminist literary criticism”. After a brief survey of the varieties of feminist criticism, Kolodny turns to her main subject: the study of women’s writing as a separate category. She is also considered about what she sees as the ‘abiding commitment to discover what, if any thing makes women’s writing from men’s.’ According to Kolodny, “Feminist critics always seek the reality behind the fiction and therefore must ‘trade very carefully before asserting that the some times grotesque are apparently outré perceptions of reality granted us by women writers and their female characters are a distortion of any kind.” (85) She makes a difference between male and female:
A man’s sense of entrapment on the job and a woman’s in the home may both finally share the same psychiatric label, but the language of literature, if it is honest, will reveal to us the building blocks, the minute — by — minute experiences of what it feels like to be trapped in those very different settings.

*(Feminist Literary Theory, P.85.)*

Kolodny even recommended that feminist criticism should be obliged to separate political ideologies from aesthetic judgments. She ends her essay by claiming that the aim of feminist criticism must be the reenfranchising of women writers into the mainstream of our academic curriculum through fairer, non sex biased, and more judicious appraisals of their work.

**Elaine Showalter** is also one of the most important Feminist critics in America. Her theoretical observation has particular interest. She examines two articles on feminist literary theory, *“Toward a Feminist poetics” (1979)* and *“Feminist criticism in the Wilderness” (1981).* In the first article, Showalter distinguishes between two forms of feminist criticism. The second type deals with woman as writer, and Showalter calls this ‘gynocritics’ **Feminist critique** deals with works by male authors. Showalter tells us that this form of criticism is a historically grounded inquiry which proves the ideology assumptions of literary phenomena. In second category, we find the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women. This, feminist critic must realize that the women-produced text will occupy a totally different status from the male text. Showalter Writes:

One of the problems of the feminist critique is that it is male-oriented. If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women
have felt experienced, but only what men have thought
women should be.

(Elaine, Women Writing and Writing
About Women, P.25.)

Thus, the implication of a feminist critic should be to turn
‘gynocritics’, the study of women’s writings and what women have felt and
experienced, but also that this experience is directly available in the texts
written by women. Gynocritics is related to feminist research in history,
anthropology, psychology and sociology, all which have developed
hypotheses of a female structure.

Annette Kolodny and Elaine Showalter Marilyn French (1986:478)
support Friedan’s views by defining feminism as,

a political movement demanding access to the rewards
and responsibilities of the ‘male’ world but it is a
revolutionary movement intending to use political
power to transform society, to feminize it.

The quintessence of her definition is that we can really change
society only when men influenced by the values of feminism, replace
power with pleasure, competitiveness with cooperation, individual with
community, transcendence with joys of living and render their priorities
accordingly.

Lynne Segal also puts forth a similar question in “Is the Future
Female?” Thoughts of Contemporary Feminist (1987) and argues that in
order to alter and understand the power-relation between men and women,
one must look at the diverse patterns of dominance and exploitation in the
home, at work and in our cultural and political lives and work for strategies
to forge a new future for women and men and give significance to feminine
values.
These feminist proposes to bring about a moral revolution for betterment of the world and seek more meaningful reality based on trust and companionship than on power polities where one sex dominates the other.

**Nancy Chodorow**, an American psychoanalytic theorist, seeks to explain difference in the psychological developments of girls and boys. She says that almost all of us are mothered by women, children of both sex assume women’s capacity for sacrifice and nurturing.

**Claudline Herrmann** has said that a woman is always conscious of not being dominant. “Woman, who is always obliged to take others into account, and also to consider a material reality from which she escapes less easily than men, can only conceptualize a cosmos of which she is not the center. Women…. have long since learned to respect not only the physical and mental space of others, but space for its own sake, empty space”. *(Joshi, Shashi Deshpande’s Fiction, P.135.)*

So these feminists purpose is to bring about a moral revolution for betterment of the world and seek more meaningful reality based on trust and companionship than on power politics where one sex dominates the other. Thus these feminist have produced some brilliant theories about the role of women. They emphasized on individuality of women. These writers are conscious of gender roles; the works of most women will differ from those of most men in some ways. So far as Indian literature is concerned there are many writers like Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahagal, Kamala Markandaya, who have proclaimed that they write as women. Their works also consider as a feminist work because they have written for women’s purpose and to define their selfhood in their life.

**Anita Desai** is one of few Indian novelists in English who have tried to understand intimately the predicament of female character. She also delineates the inner world of her characters. Her novels reflect the hazard
and complexities of man-woman relationship and the establishing the
individualism in her characters. It is only the individual who is of primary
interest of Desai. She dose not show any predilection for the political or
social issues that prevail around these character. She has admitted to an
interviewer:

I am interested in characters that are not average but
have retreated, or have been driven into some
extremity of despair and turn against or make a stand
against the general current. It is easy to flow with the
current, it makes no demands, it costs no efforts, but
those who cannot follow it... know what the demands
are, what it costs to meet them.

(Anita Desai Interview by Yashodhara Dalmia,
P.13.)

Desai’s women characters of her earlier novels particularly the
protagonists prove the truth of this statement. In cry, the Peacock, voices
in the city, where shall we go. This summer, Fire on Mountain, clear
Light of Day, etc. Desai presents this problem of alienation being faced by
most of her protagonists. They find that they are unable to fulfill social
expectations or play their ordained roles. Hence, they face a sense of
rootlessness, isolation and alienation. Desai’s novels are a probe into the
dark interiors of the human psyche. Being over -sensitive, sentimental and
imaginative, they have a total contrast to the national, logical sense.

The childhood experience of Desia’s women characters have left in
indelible impression on their minds. For most of them their childhood
holds the key to the type of adults that they have grown into. Most of the
protagonists have parents who are incapable of helping their children to
grow into mature, balanced adults:
There are neurotic parents suffering from their own inadequacy; hypocrites who distort a child’s vision of the world; selfish elders who neglect their children; and a host of dominating, over-protective, partial and erratic parents.

(Usha Bande, “childhood in Anita Desai’s Novels: A Psychological Interpretation”, P. 122.)

Martial discord and maladjustment from an important part of the life of her protagonists. Incidentally, many of the marriages in Desai’s novels are business transactions where love and emotional considerations have no role to play. Desai does not portray an idealised version of love in any of her novels. Instead, she is concerned with the existential predicament of an individual which is projected through incompatible couples acutely sensitive wives, and dismal, callous inconsiderate, ill-chosen husbands.

Thus Desai’s protagonists all belong to the upper class of urban India. Economic independence is not an important issue for them But they are irritated by the sheltered, over protective life reserved for them and the condescending discriminative attitude adopted towards them and the not only by the society but also by the family. Though her themes, characterization and images about confinement and lack of freedom, Anita Desai has raised pertinent questions regarding the status and role of women in society. She takes up the most crucial issue about women’s freedom where her characters find difficulty in the present mechanical and urbanized set up.

Kamala Markandaya’s novels, in comparison with those of her contemporary women writers, seem to be more reflective of the awakened feminine sensibility in modern India. In her fiction she projects the image
of changing Indian traditional society in terms of the growth of the individual consciousness. William Walsh rightly observes,

Her particular strength lies in the delicate analysis of the relationship of persons, especially when these have a more developed consciousness of their problems and are attempting to grope towards some more independent existence. She has been most successful and at her best, an impressive best, in dealing with the problem of the educated and middle-class and she has a gift for delineating the self – imposed laceration of the dissatisfied.

(William Walsh, Common Wealth Literature, P.19.)

Markandaya describes relationship of man and woman and gives the description of their inner world. She expresses her views how an educated woman from middle-class faces many problems when she wants to achieve her selfhood. Indian has tradition bound society so it becomes difficult to change its culture. Markandaya, in her early novels dramatize the agony and ecstasy of cultural changes in India, involving innumerable persons. Her Indian sensibility enables her to grasp the plights of her Indian women more easily than her British women. She has been observation in the social life of India and her feminine sensibility brought international fame.

In her novels like, Nectar in a Sieve, A Silence of Desire, Possession, A Handful of Rice, The coffer Dams, The Nowhere man, Two virgins some Inner Fury etc. she has feminine approach. She explores the impact of change in terms of human psychology. Her characters seem of freedom – be it political, economic, social or domestic – and their senses of responsibility. However, there is no fullness of experience because fulfillment of daily and responsibility alone can bring
peace and security. Markandaya’s characters initially assume freedom from restraints by escaping whereas their prime need is to get related to the world in a meaningful way. In the need to be thus related, Markandaya’s characters return to society and recognize their responsibilities because security becomes more important than freedom from the traditional constraints. Markandaya reflects the concept of true freedom as enunciated in the Indian philosophy – in the Gita. According to Gita:

Freedom is ripeness and awareness through a total realization of the self. Maturity and thereby peace, is won through non-attachment of action and the fruits of action. (Second chapter of Gita.)

The entire second chapter of the Gita amplifies the meaning of the true freedom which is to abandon the sense of “I-ness” and thereby the attachment to desire the objects. It culminates in the verse: “that man attains peace who, abandoning all desires moves, about without longing, without the sense of “I-ness” and “My-ness.” So in her novels, we find that her woman submits initially in order to achieve some security, to the authority of society, but after sometime they realize that it's not the purpose of their life. So for achieving their selfhood they abandoned all things.

Another Indian Novelists, Nayantara Sahgal raises a voice for women’s Lib. Her The Day in Shadow is not a feminist novel, but it has given a sensitive account of the suffering of a woman in India Society. Sahgal has described irrational fear and tensions in her heroines. They do not recognize a woman’s identity apart from their husbands. Sehgal treats the man-women relationship which is based on her entrenched faith in ‘new humanism’. According to her women is not to be taken as mere sex object but as man’s equal and honored partner. Her concept of a free woman transcends the limits of economics or social freedom and becomes a mental or emotional attitude. Husband – wife alienation resulting from
the lack of communication and temperamental incompatibility forms the theme of Sahgal’s novel *Storm in Chandigarh*. Sahgal’s women seek to establish new order where women can be their true selves, where there is no need for hypocrisy and where character is judged by the purity of heart and not chastity of body.

Another contribution among female writers in India is done by **Shobha De**. The popularity of Shobha De’s novels is due to their contents, her mastery over the art of story telling and her use of the language. In fact her novels seem to be the modern version of picaresque novels of the Eighteenth century. The picaro in this case is a woman, but she, too is avid of experiences, in search of which she goes from place to place. Her novels also owe their incomparable popularity to her intimate understanding of the psyche of women and their problems. Shobha De claims to be “a pioneer” in the field of “popular fiction” writing. She also claims to be “among the first to explore the world of the urban woman in India.” *(Surendra, “Just Another De”)* Through her novels, De has tried to shatter patriarchal hegemony. Woman’s significant difference underlies her sexuality, and it is from her sexuality that most of her problems arise. Shobha De’s fictional world has aroused curiosity and interest on one hand and downright rejection and denunciation on the other. Her novels indicate the arrival of a new Indian woman eager to defy rebelliously against the well – entranced moral orthodoxy of the patriarchal social system. De herself considers the treatment of the woman question as the most significant contribution made by her work. She once said:

I write with a great deal of empathy towards women. Without waving the Feminist flag, I feel very strongly about the women’s situation.
The cardinal issue thrashed by Shobha De to power, the desire to dictate and direct action and thinking of others, which is uppermost in human psychology. She writes:

Eventually, every relationship is a power struggle either on an overt or subliminal level. Control over the situation has been a mal prerogative over the centuries women's destiny have been determined in that context alone. It is time they were made aware of their own potential and power. Shakti needs to be harnessed, directed and exploited for the furtherance of overall human development. The very concept of the sexes locked in eternal battle is negative and destructive... When one talks of Shakti unleashed, one also remembers the two connotations of Shakti; the destructive avtaar is as potent as the creative one. It is in maintaining the state of equilibrium between these two opposing forces that can lead to creative and dynamic harmony. Men will have to come to terms to woman power.

(Shobha De, Shooting from the Hip: Selected writing, P.13.)

So, here Shobha de describes that in ones life every one has power but they should use them positively. From the ancient time it is women who are dominated by male. But, time has changed. They should be aware of their power and Shakti. They should have balance in their relationship.
If they do not use their power, it will destroy the balance Shoba De says that man should also help for the women’s empowerment.

Shobha De also emphasized on economic power of women. She says, “Everything boils down to money – that great Leveler. There can be no talk of independence for women, without economic self-sufficiency. The new Indian women who have attained economic independence are “a breed apart” from others.

Veena Paintal is a lesser-known novelist of the Indian English Fiction. In her novels *An Autumn Leaf* and *Spring Returns*, she deals women’s survival and struggle for change. In all her novels, there is a striving on the part of the female protagonists towards arriving at a more authentic way of life than the one, which is available to them. Veena Paintal has tried to focus on the subservient status assigned to women. She also fights against the traditional expectations of society to become independent. She has endeavored to draw a pen picture of the Indian women, who are independent in every way but still remain slave of society, customs, parents, husbands and children. She frankly uncovered the long-standing inviolate world of women’s instincts and natural yearnings for love and understanding. She represents the young women who are capable of flouting convention and preserving her identity. She emphasized the dignified notions of mutual respect in marriage. Her characters are daring and also have balance in their personal and professional life. Her protagonist exemplifies the liberated and awakened Indian women with a will to shape their identity. They are generous, loving and unsuspecting women, who face the problem of preserving their self, and in their struggle for survival in a male-dominated society, they move towards freedom and wholeness.

Now a days Feminism is a historically specific movement, rooted in French Enlightenment through (Mary Wollstonecraft) and in British
liberalism (John Stuart Mill) consequently wedded in deeply critical style to notions of truth, injustice, freedom, equality. Feminism represents a particular development and it provides three conflicting discourse of feminism that is post-structuralism and post-modernism, post-feminism. Post-structuralism applies the stress on structure or technique rather than on theme. In most of the modern writings manner has become more important rather than matter. Post-modernism denotes place and role of individualism, worth of society as well as changes in human nature. Post-feminism means man and woman should have sufficient fluidity to enlarge each other and they should accept the new definition of space and freedom.

Since its beginning, the feminist movement has made long strides in almost every walk of life. It has elevated woman to such a position where her presence can not be overlooked or ignored. The most remarkable achievement of the women’s liberation movement is the creation of a change in female consciousness. Women have gained confidence to assert their distinct identity independently. The movement has improved women’s lives by equipping them to accept the responsibility and challenges of life almost equally with men.

This onward march of the women’s movement has made inroads in the closed system of the male – dominated society. Naturally, in recent times, the women’s movement has come to occupy a central position and has caused a great deal of controversial arguments regarding its success or failure, its impact on the life of men and women, and the challenges it has posed for the social structure accepted for centuries.

The success of the feminist movement is described in some set phrases and terms like ‘the barricades have fallen’ or women have ‘made it’.

The movement has done a great deal in gaining women recognition as a force to reckon with, as an integral part of domestic, social and
political life which can no longer be ignored, neglected or taken for
granted. S. Faludi, asserts (1992 : 09) that

in numerous national surveys seventy – five to ninety-
five percent of women credit the feminist campaign
with improving their lives, and a similar proportion
say that the women’s movement should keep pushing
for change.