Soyinka’s caveat to the writer to be at once local and universal, to avoid the threat of being swallowed by a faceless globalization fits the Indian writer today – cosmopolitan and eclectic, globally popular and multicultural – yet drawing strongly on native sources (Kottishwari 89).

Both Hariharan’s and Nair’s fiction have all the essence as mentioned by Kottishwari in her book Postmodernist Feminist Writers. Both the writers are Indians to the core as they have lived and experienced Indianness all their lives. They are cosmopolitan but at the same time culturally rooted and aware of the diverse cultures prevailing in India. Both have achieved popularity in their homeland and abroad. The reason behind their success can be credited to their indigenous knowledge. The striking difference between the two Indian women writers is that Hariharan’s fiction deals with the northern and southern part of India whereas Nair merely deals with South India in her fiction. Otherwise their variegated themes and varied characters represented in their fiction reflect the cultural ethos of India.
Indo-English literature, an offshoot of the British Raj in India, came into being early in the eastern province of Bengal. Three stages are discernible in its development. Early Indo-English literature is characterized by imitation of the English Romantics and early Victorians. The second stage consists of natively nurtured writers who were either naturally or intentionally inclined to create an Indo-English idiom and atmosphere in their work. The third stage, which overlaps the second to a greater degree than the second overlaps the first, comprises writers who sooner or later became so anglicized as to be alienated from the heartbeat of Indian life (Parameshwaran iii).

She further adds that in South India, the writers who contributed to the Indo-English writing also followed the same pattern but the first stage was relatively short owing to the writers contributing in English only in the last decades of the 19th century. Now, when the focus is shifted to writers like Hariharan and Nair – both South Indians writing in English and with almost same volume of contributions, where do we place them? After having done a detailed analysis of their fictional narratives, which includes both the genres – novel and short stories, they can easily be placed into the category of ‘natively nurtured writers’. As seen in the previous chapters these writers are very ‘Indian’ with their literary output – themes, settings and characters. They are concerned about Indian life but a study of their works show that because of the rapid adaptation of literary experiments conducted in Western
literatures and because of their contact with the essential Indian life, their literary output is not only more prolific and popular in India but also outside India where there is a growing market for writing from the East. Both the writers have won international recognition for their first novel. Hariharan won the prestigious Commonwealth category for the best novel and Nair has also won the Orange prize for fiction for *Mistress* in 2008. The Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction is one of the United Kingdom's most prestigious literary prizes, awarded annually for the best original full-length novel by a female author of any nationality, written in English and published in the UK in the preceding year. *Mistress* was also a finalist for the LiBeraturpreis 2007 in Germany and for the PEN/Beyond Margins 2007 Award in the U.S.A. Anita Nair was also recently awarded the FLO FICCI Women Achievers Awards 2008 for Literature.

Their works cater to the global audience as their works are translated into at least twenty-five languages in the world such as Germany, Spanish, French, Italian etc. and therefore these two writers have attained immense popularity outside India too. They are neither ‘anglicized nor alienated from the heartbeat of Indian life’. Earlier in the nineteen sixties and seventies novelists like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Arun Joshi, Anita Desai and a few others have won recognition both at home and abroad. Similarly, both Nair and Hariharan have earned national and international recognition. There are two specific reasons for the growing popularity of Indian literature in the global arena – (i) The curiosity to know about Indian life that is rich in its culture, tradition and heritage and (ii) Its availability in English, a global language and translations in more than 25 foreign languages. The IWE is
different from many other offshoots of the colonial and missionary empires as it is only a minor facet of the complex, crystalline structure that characterizes Indian civilization. The richness of Indian heritage can be made widely available to the outside world through literature and through their translations. Earlier Indian themes were available in the Indian languages with no access to readers abroad. Today, Indian English writers have variegated themes to offer about Indian life. Both Hariharan and Nair are based in the metropolis, Delhi and Bangalore respectively and grapple with its life in their works. It is their metropolitanism that relates them to global culture. Hariharan and Nair like other writers of their generation are preoccupied with contemporaneity. With the onslaught of globalization and metropolitanism pertinent questions are raised by critics about the authenticity of Indianness in the Indian novel. The Indianness lies in the soul of the country wherein lies its culture from the ancient times to the present comprising thought, philosophy, science and technology. In *Indian Writing In English: Prospect and Retrospect* well-known critic K.R. Srinivas Iyengar declares “the Indianness of Indian writing consists in the writer’s intense awareness of his entire culture.” (8) Both Hariharan and Nair’s awareness of Indian culture is visible in their fiction where they use Indian epics, history, culture and philosophy to make their narration of contemporary India.

About Indian fiction in her book *Postmodern Feminist Writers* Kottishwari further says:

Indian fiction in English has taken a “regressive” turn by seeking literary antecedents in traditional narrative forms. This can be considered to be a decentring impulse by producing counter-discourses
and most importantly, the Indian writer's experimentation with form constitutes an attempt to write difference (Kottishwari 87).

Characteristics of postmodern literature can be found in Hariharan's fictional works, where she has attempted to re-explore stories from the myth and history with great inventiveness. She skillfully weaves into her narrative, the flux of tales from traditional texts. Her experimentation of this technique in her earlier texts has been already mentioned in Chapter Two. Her third novel, *When Dreams Travel* (1999) is the re-exploration of *The Arabian Nights* or *One Thousand and One Nights*. Hariharan, with great inventiveness tries to re-work the historical tradition with her control of the language. *The Arabian Nights* is based on the cruelty and hypocrisy of King Shahryar who married a virgin every night, deflowered her and then executed her the next morning. This act of the king continued till he married his Vazir's daughter Shahrzad, who turned up to be a perpetual storyteller and kept the Sultan on tenterhooks. She was forced to create new stories in the grim nuptial bed of the palace dungeon. She talked with a sword hanging over her head. The novel begins at a point of time long afterwards. *The Arabian Nights* or *1001 Nights* ends with Shahryar's happy married life and Sharzaad returning to a life of domesticity. Hariharan finds this ending unacceptable and therefore she twists the tale by resurrecting Shahrzad and giving her a voice. *The Arabian Nights* has universal appeal and therefore, Hariharan was apt in choosing this text for re-writing the old story wherein the female protagonist was suppressed. In *1001 Nights*, Shahrzad was silenced by patriarchy and here Hariharan has tried to dismantle patriarchal structures as postmodern women writers have attempted to do. In her earlier novels, she has laid claim to the cultural
authority of the Mahabharata, Panchatantra Tales, Charaka Samhita and Indian
text. In The Ghosts of Vasu Master, the author is influenced by A.W. Ryder’s
translation of the famous collection of the Panchatantra Tales. The stories told by
Vasu Master to young Mani are the reworking of ThePanchatantra. Here, the author
is more concerned with the domestic space than the epic canvas of history. The novel
explores what it means to be a good citizen and places the problem squarely in
relation to the question of what constitutes Indian modernity. Vasu comes to
recognize the necessity of reconstruction from the dismantled parts of various ideas,
beliefs, and models that are his inheritance. His willingness to use whatever lies at
hand as material for the stories that eventually seem to heal the boy suggest an
attitude to traditional culture which treats it as an open resource for the future, not a
closed, epic authority, but something that can be rewritten for present needs.
Hariharan rewrites the stories to heal the ailing society of the present times. The
protagonist takes resort in the ancient healing system, Ayurveda, while tried to cure
Mani. Hariharan skillfully employs her knowledge of The Panchatantra and Charaka
Samhita and weaves them into her fiction.

Indian English Literature has come of age and has transcended the local and
transformed into global literature. Hariharan and Nair’s fiction are now appreciated
by foreign readers for their Indian content. The growing interest of the West to know
about India draws readers and translators towards their fiction. Both the writers enjoy
more literary space than their regional counterparts in India. Hariharan and Nair do
not restrict themselves to feminist writings though they do respond to feminism in
some works as a necessary tool because it has become a universally dominant
discourse. Thematically, both the writers have written on female issues but they are not prejudicial. They have both male and female characters in their works drawn from wide variety of Indian population placing them in their proper context and background revealing how the Indian middle class suffer. Hariharan’s Devi, Vasu Master and Shiv Murthy are not the traditional heroes we find in classical literature. Nair’s Mukundan, Akhila and Koman are also not depicted as larger than life. None of these characters are physically stronger, braver, cleverer or charismatic than the average Indian. They are average-looking and ordinary human beings and not conspicuously flawed. Their women characters Devi, Akhila, or Radha are bolder than their male counterparts who appear timid, passive and indecisive at times. The portrayal of these strong female characters reveals the writers’ innate desire to perceive women in strong roles unlike the weak, subservient and stereotyped roles of ideal Indian women of the past.

Bijay Kumar Das in his book Postmodern Indian English Literature opines that the Indian English literature in the post-1980s era can be termed as postmodernist. Sheobhushan Shukla and Anu Shukla in their book, Indian English Novel in the Nineties state about the characteristics of postmodernism found in the Indian novels written in the 1990s:

In the nineties we can see the attempts made by Indian writers to nativise postmodernism, to see how ancient and modern discursive and signifying practices prevalent in the homeland can be interpellated into the novel, a Western genre. They have framed their narratives in the epic, puranic or other Indian structures. They have exploited the form as well as the contents of Panchantra, Kathasaritsagar and other
Indian narratives. Indian myths, symbols and though have been used as intertext to suit contemporary context. (8).

Postmodernism is about accommodating the voices of the ex-centric and the marginalized. Hariharan through her fiction influences attitudes, reviews authoritative voices and represents different voices of different societies and different cultures. She asserts her feminist ideology which is more culture specific. Since India is a multicultural, multilingual and multireligious country, writers have to analyse the workings of patriarchy keeping in mind these pluralities and diversities. To achieve this goal, writers like Hariharan have used their energies to deconstruct the past and reconstruct a more meaningful present. Hariharan often uses “feminine strategies of (re) naming and (re) affirming their identities seeking to expose the mechanisms of their representation by restoring their past, generating accurate representation for the future and by projecting their equivocal future” (Kottishwari 90). Hariharan attempts to project the women in India differently by depicting them as moving towards self-perception, self-expression and self-determination. As mentioned earlier, Hariharan has also attempted to construct ‘narrative mappings of alternative India’ through her novels and short stories. Hariharan’s first novel can be read as revisionist myth-making program in which she attempts to renew the whole community of women through representation of myths. In When Dreams Travel she incorporates the past into the present by resorting to the past tale of The Thousand and One Nights. As a typical postmodern novel she has effectively used parody in contemporary context with a view to mock and comment on the original work. Even in her short stories she stresses on the strategies women adopt to assert themselves. “In her collection of short
stories *Art of Dying and Other Stories*, Hariharan resists and renegotiates the ideologies of gender inequalities. She defies the codes of conventions and revolts against the patriarchal orientation by projecting the incomplete and the marginalized into positions of prominence.” (Kottisswari 99). Nair and Hariharan belong to the post-modernist period as they started writing post 1990s. According to Bijay Kumar Das, Indian English Literature from 1930s to the end of the 20th century can be divided into two phases: Modernist and Post Modernist, the former beginning with Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* and the latter beginning with Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and Nissim Ezekiel’s *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982). Das further adds that in the 1980s, Indian English writers came under criticism by *Bhasa* literature critics. The works of Indian English writers were blamed for their lack of authenticity and Indian sensibility. These writers were also accused of not having contact with the ‘live language’ because most part of the year they either stayed in Britain or America. The present Indian English writers prefer to stay in India and have contact with the ‘live language’ and have also “gained inwardness with it.” (Das 4). These writers have also succeeded in making Indian English idioms and expressions acceptable to the Anglo-American readers. In this way postmodern Indian English literature has come of age, meets the challenges of the *Bhasa* literature and the literature abroad. The characteristic of good literature is its acceptance by the readers at local and global level. By that definition, both Hariharan and Nair have received recognition in India and abroad.

Parody is one of the recognized postmodern ways of literally incorporating the textualised past into the text of the present. The intertextuality in Hariharan’s novel
When Dreams Travel envisions the indivisibility of past-present-future and manifests the ambition to rewrite the past in a new context. Her powerful use of irony is evident from the repeated reminder – "The 1001 nights are over" (WDT 21) – only to invite the reader to look back to those nights, and to a few more days and nights in addition, in the hazy and distorted calendar of an uncertain past. According to Linda Hucheon by using the intertextual echoes inscribing their powerful allusions Hariharan subverts the power through irony.

Minimalism, another trait of Postmodern literature, is, however, a style of writing in which the author deliberately presents characters that are unexceptional and events that are taken from everyday life. This is not an exclusive postmodern technique as, earlier, Earnest Hemingway, wrote in a similar style. Samuel Beckett, one of the most important postmodern authors, had perfected this technique. Nair in her well crafted novels has proficiently used minimalism through her keen observation and mention of the minutest details taken from everyday life. In her interviews too, she has reaffirmed her interest and penchant for ordinary characters taken from everyday life.

W. S. Kottishwari in her book titled Postmodern Feminist Writers mentions that Indian fiction in English has taken a "regressive" turn by seeking literary antecedents in traditional narrative forms; a decentring impulse by producing counter-discourses and most importantly, the Indian writer's experimentation with form constitutes an attempt to write difference. The label of Postmodernism though attached to the Indian English novels written in the 90s, is only because of the
experimental techniques used by the Indian writers of this decade. Hariharan, influenced by Rushdie’s works has used the grand narratives of the old writers and subverted them while adopting the deconstructionist strategies. This decade has seen writers like Nair, on the one hand, who have pursued the old traditional path and survived and, on the other, someone like Hariharan who has pushed the gender issues to the centre and decentred patriarchal authority. It is only in the matter of narration that the novelists of 90s like Hariharan are pre-eminently postmodernist as during this decade everything becomes narration whether it is history, fiction or reality. This new historicist attitude towards history/reality is visible in the works of Hariharan. For her, reality is not placed in objective description and analysis but in narratives which themselves are situated in specific cultural discourses. Hariharan’s works take recourse to magic realism, disorientation of time and space and fractured structure, which puts her closer to the West than a writer like Nair who is interested in the authentic narrative of India as a nation. It can be said that though postmodernism is a Western concept, writers like Hariharan have attempted to ‘nativise’ it, to see how ancient and modern discursive and signifying practices prevalent in the homeland can be interpellated into the novel, a Western genre.

Hariharan and Nair have also brilliantly used English as a key instrument. Both these writers were inspired by G.V. Desani’s experiments with all kinds of Indian English spoken by various sections of Indian society in his novel All About H. Hatter. As Franz Fanon puts it, the colonial’s disquiet stems from his recognition of his condition of perennial exile- shut out of his past by his language and education and rejected by the world whose ways he/she desperately apes. Fanon attributes the
native’s return to his roots to a desperate need for a ‘secure anchorage’ to fight off ‘estrangement’ and ‘contradictions’ and deems it necessary for preventing ‘serious psycho-affective injuries’ which might produce “individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless – a race of angels” (Fanon 135). Hence it becomes imperative to re-open a dialogue with the forgotten past. Fanon mentions that when the native intellectual, in the first flush of decolonization, tries to challenge imperialist hegemony by creating indigenous arts, he ironically borrows the colonizer’s techniques and seizes on an aspect of his culture that consists of “mummified fragments” thus exoticizing it in the process (Fanon 180). This can be further explained in the context of Hariharan’s novels where she has not only experimented with the English language but has reinvented the ancient myths in the context of modern times. To make narration of contemporary India, Hariharan uses old texts such as Mahabharata, Panchatantra and Charaka Samhita and incorporates them into her novel – a Western genre. Nair also attempts to revive certain aspects of her culture by reviving Kathakali – a forgotten and less preferred dance form. She does this ingeniously by incorporating the nuances of the dance form and the Navarasas. The two writers, in this manner, make their readers aware of the forgotten and neglected past, culture and history through their fictional narratives.

Many critics have raised objections to the question of Indian postmodernism owing to various reasons. Primarily, the situations in the East and West are in many respects so different that, according to them, the application of postmodernism to the Indian context is not warranted at all. Secondly, ours is a post-colonial culture, a victim of western imperialism. However, Makarand Paranjpe admits that
postmodernism in India can be viewed 'as a kind of social criticism'. Postmodernist writers are 'glocal', which means they are local and universal (global) in their approach. Today Indian writer is cosmopolitan, globally popular and multicultural – yet drawing strongly from native sources. Use of irony and humour became the hallmarks of postmodernist writers. The most striking part of the Indian English novel is the broadening of the thematic range. Bijay Kumar Das in his book *Postmodern Indian English Literature* states:

There is a shift in emphasis – we have moved away from the Gandhian era of village centrism to the city centrism of the Post-Emergency era. The ‘locale’ has shifted from the village to the metropolis of our country and then abroad. East-West encounter which is explained in terms of hybridity in relationship by post-colonial critics, take ‘a space’ in Postmodern Indian English fiction. When the world has become ‘a global village’, no culture, or society is pure or insular today. That is why Indian English fiction now takes characters, situations both inside the country and abroad into its orbit and develops them (Das 56).

Besides Hariharan and Nair are witness to a fast changing society that is undergoing marked transformation under the impact of media, cyber culture and globalization. Therefore, their fiction projects the dilemma and expectations of the Indian youth such as relationship problems, cultural alienation etc. These issues can be effectively portrayed by employing some of the major features of post-modernist fiction, viz. use of dream and fantasy, fractured narrative, multiple endings and self-
reflexiveness. The locale of their fiction has also shifted to the metropolis to highlight the fact that a city breeds and promotes loneliness.

Some of the leading themes in the Indian English novel in the post-1980s include love, sex and marriage or the failure of it. Marriage as a social institution has lost its sanctity and relevance in this period. Hariharan in *The Thousand Faces of Night* and Nair in *Mistress* have depicted the failed marriages of Devi and Radha respectively. Lack of faith in religion and declining moral standard and behaviour, corruption in public as well as private lives of individuals and employing national myths and making allusion to the national epic like the *Mahabharata* are some of the predominant themes in their novels. Declining moral standard is depicted in all the novels of Nair when Akhila, Radha, Mukundan or Koman indulge in sex outside the institution of marriage. Magic realism or the fusion of realism and fantasy is a technique used by Hariharan in *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* and *When Dreams Travel*. Today, when the two contemporary writers, Hariharan and Nair have a volume of work to their credit to give them the stamp of scholarly respectability, their writings are to a great extent significant to crucial issues relevant to the present. Hariharan’s forte remains her ability to reinvent the ancient myths in the context of the modern times. She, in fact, adopts major features of the post-modernist fiction, viz, use of dream and fantasy, fractured narrative, multiple endings and self-reflexiveness. For achieving this she uses old texts as theme and intertext. In *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* and *When Dreams Travel* she uses metafiction – a story about story telling with the purpose to suggest the ulterior triumph of art over life, of imagination over mundane or the ennobling effect of art even on an insensitive/insensitized mind. Hariharan raises aesthetic issues, interrogates patriarchal assumptions in her novels. In her novel, *When Dreams Travel* Hariharan promotes the possibility of art as a liberating device
for a woman imprisoned in the ‘dungeon’. Hariharan makes use of irony and leaves the stories open ended with multiple perspectives. When quizzed about her status as a writer, she admits being a feminist particularly concerned with ‘women’s issues’. She also confides that all her works “grow out of her feminism and other political beliefs”. But she vehemently disagrees with the definition ‘women’s writers’, and adds that it is perfectly legitimate to look at women’s writing, women’s voices, or Dalit voices, Afro-American voices but if these categories become simple, easy labels it becomes self-defeating. An activist all her adult life, Hariharan has been involved in activities of women’s groups, secular cultural groups and anti-nuclear groups. All these experiences find place in her fiction. She upholds the fundamental values of peace and harmony to ensure a better life for every human. Coetzee is her literary model and Hariharan’s appreciation for *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* remains unparalleled. Among the Indian writers it is Salman Rushdie and Girish Karnad who have influenced her style of writing tremendously. Rushdie’s ‘magic realism’ and Karnad’s art of mining stories from history and mythology have been incorporated by her in her narratives. About her focus on rewriting of history, she confides to Chakradar in an interview, “History with all its ugliness and achievements should have access to explore and debate.” In her novel *In Times of Siege*, Hariharan gives her voice to a history Professor Shiv Murthy, who attempts to rewrite the story of Basava, a social reformist and becomes a victim of religious fanatics. As an engaged citizen of our multicultural society in contemporary India, Hariharan is not self-conscious of her Indian status when she writes. She firmly believes, that fiction has a thousand ways of giving us a new take on the dynamics of power relations. As a writer, Hariharan feels morally responsible for the strengthening of secular ideas and movements to combat growing fundamentalism. Moreover, she aims at revealing truths that are fundamentally
political. With no qualms about being labeled a feminist writer, she does not want to be compartmentalized into any specific category, which will leave her with limited scope for her writings.

On the other hand, Nair refutes the claim made by some critics that *Ladies Coupe* is a Feminist novel. She does not want her work to be categorized or compartmentalized on the basis of an ideology. In the recent past, however, a shift in the settled feminist psyche, that has hitherto been to challenge man’s attitude towards woman, has undergone a change as some modern feminist writers, like their counterparts across the world, are beginning to consider not the male but human existence and its absurdity to be the genesis of all the problems they encounter in their lives. Nair too belongs to this category as she has attempted 'to break free from the circumscribing feministic vision and has delineated her work in a universal existential hue thereby transcending the parochial feminististic perception'. Her characters, irrespective of their gender, appear to be human beings who stand alone in an incomprehensible world and confront meaninglessness in all human endeavors as the universe they inhabit, snubs them with its indifference. Whether it is Mukundan, Bhasi, Akhila, Koman or Radha, Nair is compelled to explore the intrigue that characterizes human life with all its inconsequentialities. The characters in her novels realize that all humans exist in a spiritual void and suffer from an insurmountable existential vacuum. Nair does not believe in writing feminist literature as she finds it too narrow and limited. She does not consider herself to be an activist who intends to bring in some revolution and solutions to various societal problems. In her interview with Bindu Menon, when asked about her being a feminist writer, Nair says:
I wanted to show the quality of strength in a woman, in *Ladies Coupe*. I am not a feminist but I feel strength is not considered a womanly thing. There is a lot of strength in women that doesn’t come out naturally, it has to be forced out of them – it could be a circumstance or change in lifestyle. Nair further adds that she’s more comfortable writing for men as one has to be very careful and politically correct while writing about men.

In another interview with Subramaniam she proclaims loud and clear of her stand on Feminism:

To me Feminism in the Indian context is about recognizing the importance of the female self and to be able to nurture it... Perhaps it is conditioning or perhaps it is a lack of self-esteem... we tend to put our needs and desires on the back burner. *Ever since Ladies Coupe,* I have been referred to as a feminist writer and I vehemently opposed this for these reasons. One, I do not set out to write what I write with the notion of ushering in change. The creative process begins for me when certain aspects of life trouble me. I then try and explore why it is the way it is. But in doing so I merely hold up a mirror to the society we live in. At no point I delude myself that by doing so I will help start a social revolution. It isn’t my intention in the first place. Secondly, while several women’s issues are close to my heart, I find I am unable to agree with everything that feminist theories propound. And hence to identify myself with something that I completely do not endorse would
be wrong and unethical. And finally as a writer what may interest me with one book may not matter to me when I am working on another book. Hence to bind myself to a particular ideology or writing would mean gagging my thoughts and limiting my boundaries. While I may return to female centric story lines, I am not sure that this is all I would ever write. Perhaps by failing to identify as a feminist, I am playing safe. But I believe that I owe to the writer in me to be unfettered. If I was a feminist writer, my work would dwell exclusively on women's issues. However, my concerns and interests straddle several areas and all of these make an appearance in my novels.

A well-read author, Nair is influenced by many writers. The present importance of intertextuality is seen in her writings. She feels that her icon, R. K. Narayan gives "little things great meanings." Therefore, one finds Nair writing about small things based on her observation of people and things around her. It is the British fiction writer Paul Bailey's words that gave her the courage to write the way she wanted to. Nair spoke to Geeta Doctor in an interview where she said that Bailey's words that inspired her to write and which resonate in her ears, "if 20 readers understood what you have written, that was good enough" made sense to her. Regarding her craft of writing, she admits that she took to writing at a very young age but it was her stint at advertising that helped her immensely craft her writing. As an author, she is a multi-faceted and multi-talented individual. In addition to her fictional works, she has also written a collection of poems titled, Malabar Mind, a play A Twist of Lime and also the screenplay of an English film, an adaptation of her latest novel
Lessons in Forgetting. Apart from writing children’s book two very significant contributions by Nair include *Puffin book of World Myths* and *Puffin book of Indian Myths*. When she wrote *Ladies Coupe*, Nair had in fact resorted to one of the oldest ploys. Geeta Doctor, a reviewer has mentioned that Nair has “taken a leaf out of Chaucer’s mixed crowd travelling to Canterbury telling tales to each other.” (Doctor).

A well-known American author, Joyce Carol Oates in an interview with Leif Sjoberg has stated:

I am very sympathetic with most of the aims of feminism, but cannot write feminist literature because it is too narrow, too limited. I am equally sympathetic with male characters as with females...an unfortunate situation, but which I cannot help (273).

Joyce’s views on feminism are similar to the views held by Nair. She too firmly believes that holding on to any ideology does not serve her purpose as a writer. She feels that being labeled a feminist would only limit her choice. In Nair’s novels, we find a comprehensive vision of the author, where the oppressed and the oppressor appear equally out of sorts. When the author delineates her apathy towards Radha, the female protagonist in *Mistress*, Nair does not portray a picture of a woman who has been victimized by the male dominated society around her. She unmistakably captures the mood of apathy and the matrimonial boredom as Radha is shown to have “drifted into marriage”. Radha, being a mistress to a stranger like Chris, may have its justification in her disgruntled sexual life with her husband Shyam, who leads an
incompatible life with Radha. Shyam is calculative and commercial in his attitude to life, unlike his wife Radha. Having thus established the futility of such a relation, Nair reveals that Radha certainly lacked clarity, ambition, force or even purpose, as she walked into Shyam’s life as his bride. Her marriage therefore does not appear to be the realization of a well-cherished dream. As a novelist, Nair distances herself from her female protagonist and this suggests a significant shift in the perception of the modern Indian women writers. The intention of the author is not to highlight the atrocities of a male against a female but to depict the journey of two outsiders who struggle to relate to each other in the course of their life. The story of Radha and Shyam revolves around the concept of matrimonial boredom in which both the male as well as the female feel trapped and nowhere does the author suggest that it is the male who has engineered this emotional incarceration. Many other Indian women writers like Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri in their works have depicted the women characters as human beings and not only as women. These women are depicted as complex and confused, and struggling to scrutinize and decode the unyielding mysteries of our existence. This existential and metaphysical anxiety distinguishes her women characters and is seen in many other feminist writers. Thus in all her works, including *Ladies Coupe*, a subtle but sufficiently explicit manifestation of human dilemma of choice, struggle and survival provides the author an elevated pedestal from where she communicates the reality that transcends the parochial walls of gender.

While Nair’s writings focus on the southern part of India, Hariharan is comfortable writing about both, the Northern and Southern regions of India because
she has lived in both parts of the country. Hariharan’s first two novels *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* and some of her short stories represent the south Indian life. Having now settled in Delhi for quite some time, her later works *When Dreams Travel*, *In Times of Siege* and *Fugitive Histories* represent the northern landscape. This happens to be one of the major differences in their literary output but the commonality lies in writing and experimenting with the known territory. Nair, having settled in Bangalore and also having lived in Kerala and Tamil-nadu incorporates the respective landscapes into her fiction. Andhra Pradesh is the only southern state that she has not yet explored in her fiction owing to her lack of familiarity with that specific region. People and place have a significant role to play in her fiction. In addition to that, her fiction being realistic in nature, she chooses not to integrate unfamiliar settings and characters into her fiction. On the contrary, Hariharan employs fantasy and flights of imaginations into her fiction and therefore, has more scope to bring in variegated characters and settings.

Both Hariharan and Nair have experimented with themes and created new paradigms for the recreation of women’s identity. Widely considered as a feminist writer Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night* “challenges essential, generalizing definitions of motherhood by reconceptualizing the definition of the mother-daughter bond” and “Devi’s quest for a self-image” (Nityanandam-Kothari 41). Similarly, Nair who does not like to be labeled as a feminist writer has portrayed characters as Akhila who also feel “a longing for their own space and their worth as individuals” and “the resurrection of self.” (Mishra 100).
Hariharan and Nair are Indian English writers who attempt to write about South India with its culture, customs, traditions and the language due to their familiarity with that landscape. All their fictional narratives are the output of their observations and perceptions of the country. To be more specific about the term “South Indian writers”, Parameshwaran means “the writers in English whose linguistic origin lies within the geographical bounds of the present states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, the regional languages of which are Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada respectively.” (Parmeshwaran 6).

By that definition, both Hariharan and Nair are “South Indian writers”. Hariharan is a Tamil Brahmin and Nair who belongs to the matri-lineal Nair tharavad whose mother-tongue is Malayalam. The former belongs to a patriarchal society and the latter matriarchal. It is therefore obvious that their perception of life and the experiences that they have lived differ and so do their writings. A comparative study of these two writers helps us understand the similarities and dissimilarities in their writing style, choice of themes and characters etc. An analytical study of the characters and themes in their novels and short stories would also help understand the similarities and differences in their ideology and perspectives. The scope of the study when restricted to ‘geographically imposed boundary’, will throw light on some of the facets of their writing. This implies the works of both the novelists are influenced by their cultural and regional background. They both stick to their comfortable zones and create characters that suit the settings or milieu in the novel that they are familiar with. Therefore when Hariharan writes, the story is set in Manila, Chennai or Delhi. These are the places she has lived and known. Familiar settings inspire them to write
about that place. Nair's novels are set in Chennai, Bangalore, Mundukuttukurrusi or Shornur in Kerala. Kaikurrusi, where the story of *The Better Man* is set, is the fictional name of Mundukuttukurrusi, Nair's native place in Kerala. Her first book *The Better Man* depicts this small town of Kerala at its best. Her fascination for the Malabar region of Kerala is found not only in her fiction but her collection of poems titled *Malabar Mind*. Nair's novels *The Better Man*, *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* represent South India in its fullness. The same level of comfort is shared by Hariharan when she writes about Delhi and the sprawling JNU (Jawaharlal Nehru University) campus, where she lives now. A detailed study of Hariharan and Nair's novels *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *Mistress* point towards their judicious use of words and phrases from their mother-tongue. In both these books, a glossary is also provided to the readers—both Indian and international, without which the words make no sense to the foreign as well as native readers. Both the writers are deeply influenced by their culture. This statement can be corroborated by certain illustrations. Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* and Nair's *Mistress* and *The Better Man* are strewn with Tamil and Malayalam words. With exception to *The Better Man*, the other two books carry a list of glossary of these words. This attempt by the writers is a deliberate ploy to retain the essence of the culture and region they represent. The lexicons used by the authors are typical to the region they represent. No substitute vocabulary can be provided. Just renowned writers like Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan have used Indian words in their novels; Hariharan and Nair have been liberal in their use. Words like *agraharam*, *kolam*, *nadaswaram*, *payasam*, *sumangali* etc. in *The Thousand Faces of Night* represent Tamil Brahmin customs. No English word could have replaced the Tamil word used here. Any attempt by the author to replace or shun/ evade the original Tamil vocabulary would have failed to communicate the
ethnicity of the region. Nair, on the other hand based her entire novel *Mistress* on the
life of a *Kathakali* artist, Koman. This book carries a glossary of thirty-four lexicons. A Malayali reader would also have fumbled at the text if he were alien to the *Kathakali* lexicon. This would have been impossible without Nair’s untiring efforts to learn the nuances of the art from K. Gopalakrishnan, Assistant Professor, *Kathakali*, at the Kerala Kalamandalam. Nair’s concern for the dying art is also explicit when she chose to write about *Kathakali*. As a responsible citizen and a connoisseur of art she attempts to save and preserve the art as well as reach out to the mass.

Indian English Fiction now need not have two categories: men’s writing and women’s writing. The divisions tend to make women’s writing less significant. Both the writers have established themselves along with their western counterparts as “writers” without any discrimination on the basis of their gender. They will continue to aim at revealing truths that are fundamentally and politically correct. A new dawn has set in Indian English Fiction where women writers no longer have to carry the tag of being subservient to their male counterparts. Their body of work is equally representational in style, and registers a revival of the traditional narrative manner and explores the significant role tradition plays in bringing the Indian English novel to return to the mainstream of the Indian narrative. Thus, with Hariharan and Nair and and their fiction women’s writing has definitely moved from the margin to the centre.
Works Cited:


“An Interview with Githa Hariharan” – http://www.curledup.com (Luan Gaines), 2003


Frequently asked questions about Anita Nair http://www.anitanair.net/faq.html


