CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION
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The history of Indian English literature spreads over only a short period of a century and a quarter. Within this short time this body of literature could carve out a niche and find its identity in Commonwealth Literature. The evolution of this new branch of literature in India can be traced from the initial stage of drafting articles, memorandums, speeches and letters in English by English-educated Indians. After this initial phase of using English as a medium of communication with the foreign rulers, Indians reached a stage when they could express native sensibility and consciousness in an alien tongue. The appearance of the first Indian novel in English, Raj Mohan's Wife (1864) by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee bears witness to the metamorphosis of an Indian English writer. Women novelists like Krupabai Sathianadhan author of Kamala, the story of a Hindu wife (1894) and Swarnakumari Goshal author of The Fatal Garland (1915) also contributed to this new literary form. Excluding a few native Indian writers, most of the early Indian English novelists are comprised of visiting dignatories, Anglo-Indians and the dependents of British officials in India. They possessed only a limited knowledge of the culture, habits, tradition and life of the natives.
So most of the early Indian English novels are far removed from reality in the selection of themes and characterisation and present a superficial treatment. They are swamped in sentimentalism. It is only after the first decade of the 20th century that Indian English writers have shown ability in producing meritorious works of art. The period of the Freedom Movement can be called the Renaissance period in the history of India. It is the time when the educated Indians realized the urgent need to eradicate many evil social customs, norms, and attitudes that disintegrated India and deteriorated the Hindu society. They found the novel, a new literary form to which they were introduced by the study of English literature very useful for crusading against the evils. It came to be used by writers in English as well as regional languages. The Renaissance has witnessed the emergence of a large number of novelists. When the demand for political independence became the nation-wide cry "freedom struggle" and "East-West encounters" became for a while the major themes in many of the Indian English novels. As R.S. Singh has pointed out:

In these progressive writings were blended both Gandhism and Marxism. Patriotism, altruism and stoicism were as central to the thematic periphery of the fiction of 20's and 30's as a plea for economic stability, spread of education and social equality.
The second phase of the Indian English literature begins after the Independence. The new found national freedom, spread of English education and the constitutional guarantee of equality to all irrespective of caste, creed and sex had a direct impact on the minds and attitudes of writers. They soon realized the naked realities that lay beneath the external political freedom. They felt the urgent need to unravel the social evils, protest against the social maladies and portray the consciousness of the period in which their novels are set. And gradually they assumed the new role of interpreting their ideas and views against a realistic social background, so that they could be both realistic and analytical in their presentation of social problems, human drama and complexities of life. The contribution of women writers to this new aesthetic social criticism is worth mentioning. As Virginia Woolf had once predicted that more and more women would take to novel writing in future, quite a good number of women in India took to writing fiction. The reason vis the spread of English education, liberalism and the change in the socio-economic conditions. They found the novel as the most apt form for expressing their literary talents, ideas, ideals and aspirations. So after the nineteen fifties one notices that Indian women are fairly active in the Indian English literary field. All these women writers hail from the upper middle
class, and middle class* and naturally share common cultural background. They are all well-educated, enlightened and well-placed in life economically. They make an effort to study the life around them critically and write about the problems of women of their class and also about women belonging to poor class. However, they do not like to be called feminists. The reason might be the bad connotation of the word 'Feminism'.

But feminism as is defined here is the establishment of women's right as a human being, a right which has been denied to her in many societies. Feminism means an awareness of women's problems and predicaments. It means concern in the welfare of women. Feminism in the fiction of Indian English novelists is evaluated by considering the point of view of the writer's approach, presentation of feminine problems and their desire to enlighten the readers about the predicaments of Indian women. In other words, feminism in novels expresses itself in the novelists' intense awareness of feminine problems and their intention to change the prevailing attitudes, customs and the pattern of life in the backdrop of Indian society. And most of the women novelists have confessed their sincerity and their involvement in social
problems and their humanistic concern for the multitudes of suffering women. These novels in a way are the social history of India as they truthfully portray the complexities of life. As has been pointed out in the previous pages, the inferior status that Indian women occupy in society and the precarious conditions in which they are placed are all there. It is a fact that many atrocities were committed against women in the past. A more pitiable thing is that they are still committed in the name of religion, custom, tradition, cultural values and social attitudes. So it is not surprising if the women novelists have felt that Indian women have many ordeals to overcome to achieve freedom. The discrimination against women starts right from the birth of a girl. The birth of a son is welcomed while that of a girl is moaned and sometimes is cursed, because religious beliefs and social attitudes create the impression among the people that they should have male offsprings. Parents do not want a baby-girl to come into their life. Why should they invite worries, misery and financial problems?, when the girl goes away after marriage to another family? Later, the ways by which boys and girls are brought up are also different. Girls are brought up in such a way that they will be subservient housewives later. Boys are better fed and cared; and are often taught to be adamant and aggressive. They are allowed to pursue
their ambitions in life by whatever means open to them. But for girls ideals of chastity and morality are imposed upon them. This limits their freedom of movement, self expression and social interactions. Though marriage is the only vocation open to girls in many families, they have no choice in selecting their life partners. This is so even among the anglicized families which believe in freedom, individuality and emancipation of women! These arranged marriages often become a business contract of two families by which both the parties make a profit. The system of dowry has become so to say an integral part of Indian marriage system. And this system indicates the lower status of women and her dependence on some men for physical and material support.

Another thing about marriage is that women are expected to sacrifice their ambitions, hopes and self identity at the altar of their marriage. And an Indian woman's 'Sita' image does not allow her to go out of marriage and accept another man's love and to find fulfilment even if she is discontented and unhappy in her life. While women hesitate to tread out of their marriage men do it freely without feeling any pangs of guilty conscience. This leads to various sexual double standards which are prevalent in our society. Society has two sets of moral codes one for men and another for women. The pattern is always male-oriented. According to an unwritten moral code a woman is not supposed to assert herself
or leave the roles and duties assigned to her. But a man need not conform to the set rules of society. He has many ways of escape routes whereas a woman has nowhere to turn to, has no escape from drudgery, suffering, pain and other calamities of life. So women are doomed to suffer more than men in all respects especially when they have problems like, poverty, marital discords and divorce. The conditions of working women is not much different. They have to face problems on the homefront and in the outside world. A working woman is bound to experience what is described as the "role conflict" because situations and circumstances have changed, but the attitudes of men towards women have not undergone any change. So many a time, a working wife has to act two different roles - the role of a meek, humble, obedient and subservient wife at home and the role of an efficient, confident and capable worker at the office. Women have the additional task of doing the domestic chores and childcare whereas men are exempted from all such monotonous domestic chores whether they are employed or not. The working wives face problems such as 'role-conflict', tension and overwork. The unmarried working women have some other problems to face in life. They are an object of suspicion and contempt because they have defied the conventional marriage prescribed for a woman. Society still cherishes the notion that marriage is the only destiny proper
for women. People also feel that without it women would turn to be lonely, bad-tempered and discontented in life.

The plight of the low class working women is quite pitiable. They are exploited as cheap and unskilled labour in fields, farms and factories. Apart from the hard toil outside the low class women have to undergo the domestic tyranny in unhygienic conditions. They are also subjected to constant child bearing without the facilities of basic amenities. The fate of another group of illiterate and unskilled women is worse than that of the low class women. They are the prostitutes, the devadasis and the dancing girls. These women are exploited as objects of lust. The ignorance and helplessness of some girls are taken undue advantage of by some lecherous men. The prostitutes hold an inferior social status as agents of dreadful diseases and as corruptive influence in society. The same men who make advances to them in the shades of night treat them like Pariah dogs in broad daylight to look respectable in the eyes of the world.

Another barbarous atrocity committed on innocent, helpless women is rape. Whatever might be the reason behind this inhuman act, it is women who suffer ultimately when a girl loses her virginity. She comes to be considered as used and impure by both the members of her family and the
society. They treat her like a rotten object. The sudden shock of the inhuman act and the changed social attitudes towards her drives the girl to insanity and sometimes to suicide.

All these problems are found reflected in the novels written by women novelists. As educated and enlightened women they experience a conflict between self awareness and traditional norms more than men and naturally they try to analyse the causes of suffering among women more convincingly. As has been seen in previous pages, they do explore the reason why women hold an inferior social status and the conditions that block their total liberation from the tradition-bound ethos. Sociologists like Dr. Promilla Kapur, Tara Ali Baig and A.S. Altekar feel that social attitudes still lag behind the legal laws. The major novelists are all sensitive to the sufferings of women caused by the social attitudes, conventional morality and customs as listed above. In a way their novels unravel the complexities of life in present day India and show how women are still discriminated against in all fields of life.

The social prejudice against baby girls is portrayed in the novels: A Time to be Happy by Nayantara Sahgal,
Nectar in a Sieve and A Handful of Rice by Kamala Markandaya, The House holder and The Nature of Passion by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. The novels Voices in the City and Clear Light of the Day by Anita Desai, A Time to be Happy by Nayantara Sahgal and Get Ready for Battle by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala deal with the different behaviour patterns imposed upon boys and girls in their early childhood; The brothers could pursue their ideals because they are boys, but not their sisters. This limits their freedom of movement and self expression as seen in the case of Ira in Nectar in a Sieve and Sumi in Get Ready for Battle. So in the name of conventional morality a girl's individuality is nipped in the bud as it happens in the life of Uma and Leela in This Time of the Morning. Thus for a girl marriage becomes the only vocation in life as in the case of Misra girls and Tara in Clear Light of the Day, Monisha in Voices in the City, Sumi in Get Ready for Battle, Nimmi, Shanta, and Usha in The Nature of Passion and Madhu in Nayantara Sahgal's A situation in New Delhi. Though marriage is the only vocation open to girls in many families they have no choice in selecting their partners. Nita in Nayantara Sahgal's novel This Time of the Morning, Shakuntala in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Esmond in India, Amrita in Whom She Will Nimmie in The Nature of Passion, Zohra in Zeenath Fatehally's novel Zohra (1951) and Monisha in Anita Desai's Voices in the City succumb to arranged marriages, which are done against
their desires and emancipated ideas. Marriage is for the togetherness of two equal individuals. But the conventional type of marriages often turn out to be a business contract of two families by which both make a profit; like Nita's marriage to Vijay in *This Time of the Morning*, Shakuntala's marriage to Narayan in *Esmond in India* and Nimmi's marriage to Kuku in *The Nature of Passion*.

Another truthful representation in these novels about the present day Indian marriages is the system of dowry. In this age of 'bride burning' and 'dowry deaths' the evils of dowry as it is depicted in the novels of women novelists can be an eye opener to Indian readers. Kamala Markandaya's novel *Nectar in a Sieve* gives an elaborate picture of the effect of dowry on the part of poor parents having many daughters. In Jhabvala's novel *The House-holder* the mother-in-law taunts and ill-treats her young daughter-in-law because she brought less dowry. Sumi in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's novel *Get Ready for Battle* is cursed to be born in family having six daughters. So Sumi has to go in turn from one married sister to another till her parents find a match who demands less dowry. Hari in Anita Desai's novel *A Village by the Sea* worries about his sister's marriage and dowry.
These conventional type of marriages by which both the families make a profit do not guarantee any happiness or fulfilment to the respective spouses. They expect the woman to sacrifice her ambitions and aspirations and merge her interests with those of her husband and family. In a way women are expected to find fulfilment within their wedlock as we notice in Monisha in *Voices in City*. She was expected to merge with Jiban and get lost in his joint family. Raman in Anita Desai's novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer* questions his wife, why she could not live like other housewives and be satisfied with her 'natural' role of wife and mother. The patriarchal system of family is widely prevalent in India where the authority of male goes unquestioned. But, many a time women are not ready for painful submission to their limited roles and to continue the monotonous domestic drudgery. So the wives, particularly young ones experience role conflict, frustration, non-belongingness and an unknown urge to escape from the domestic drudgery and loneliness. This painful period of loneliness is seen in the lives of Sita in *Where shall we go this summer*, Nalini in *A Handful of Rice*, Monisha in *Voices in the City*, Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, Zohra in *Zohra*, Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain*, Dimple in *Wife* and Tara in *The Clear Light of the Day*. Many Indian women have neither
the strength nor the desire to revolt against their living conditions and limited roles. Nalini in *A Handful of Rice*, Indira in *Esmond in India*, Shanti in *A Backward Place*, Shanta in *The Nature of Passion*, Gauri in *Storm in Chandigarh*, Lakshmi in *A Time to be Happy* and Mrs. Narang in *This Time of the Morning*, show a stoic acceptance of life. They unravel layers of reality and give a typical picture of the placid and meek Indian womanhood. All these characters suppress their discontentment in life and none of them goes out of the marriage bond and accept another man's love. On the other hand the 'Sita' and 'Sati-Savitri' image ingrained in them nail them to their subservient status. As pointed out by sociologists like Pramilla Kapur, these novelists show that the only escape route open to Indian women is either to suppress their real feelings or spiritualize their natural desires. They cling desperately to Swamis, rituals, rites and prayers for support and inner stability like Bhuji in *A Backward Place*, Uma in *Esmond in India* and Sarojini in *Silence of Desire*. Sita's mother in *Where Shall We Go This Summer* spiritualizes her disappointment in life. And the rich women's revolt against boredom and loneliness is expressed in different ways. Their frustration and unhappiness in life is sometimes expressed in gossiping as Lalaji's
wife does in The Nature of Passion, in over-eating and oversleeping as is done by Gulab in Esmond in India and Prema in To Whom She Will. Some frustrated housewives turn to social work and some seek solace in sex and wine like Uma in This Time of the Morning. Mrs. Kaul in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s A Backward Place ‘organizes ‘cultural Dias’, Gauri in Storm in Chandigarh tries to suppress her frustration by occasional and sex with Dubey. Mara in Storm in Chandigarh runs a kindergarten. Premela in Kamala Markandaya’s Some Inner Fury, Sarala Devi in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s Get Ready for Battle, and Zohra in Zeenuth Futehally’s Zohra engage in social work to drown their frustration and loneliness in life.

While women suppress their natural desires or drown their loneliness by some decent ways within the permitted limit men are not regulated by any such moral conventions and they never conform to any rules as such. The sexual double standard, male supremacy and double moral code that are in operation in our society find a graphic expression in the novels written by women. Women writers seem to be more perplexed by it than the men writers. So most of the women writers appear to be the mouthpiece of the women on whom many atrocities and injustices are committed because of sexual double standard. Though women suffer due to this double
Some women also support this male-oriented tradition. So many social inequalities still exist in our society and are carried on and on. Literature being the reflection of such societies, we get convincing pictures of double moral code in the fiction of women writers. The finest example of it is in Inder's attitude towards extramarital affairs, in Nayantara Sahgal's novel *Storm in Chandigarh*. People look down upon Uma in *This Time of the Morning* for her unconventional behaviour. Even the very men who have gone to her voluntarily for sex and have equally shared the sin consider her immoral because she is a woman. Even men novelists have expressed this male oriented unwritten moral code of the society which demands chastity and self sacrifice in wife and permits waywardness and sexuality in husband. Here just one example could be given, that is, Nagaraj's novel *Chronicles of Kedaram*. This novel unravels many sexual double standards which have their roots in native reality.

The sexual double standard is fully operative in Kamala Markandaya's novel *Silence of Desire*. Though Dandekar visited prostitutes he demands his wife's chastity and obedience. But nobody, not even his wife can question his authority and mis-adventures because he is a man. In Kamala
Markandaya's another novel A Handful of Rice Ravi, the village lad turned city-dweller is not much different in his attitude towards chastity and virginity of his wife.

The general structure of Hindu family in India is still patriarchal in nature and the eldest male exercises substantial authority over the family members. Society and religion expect women to be self denying, traditional religious, obedient, non-complaining, dependent and submit to the authority of men even if they are ill-treated by their husbands. Bal in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's A Backward Place wants his English wife to be traditional and submissive like a mute Indian wife. Om, Lalaji and other men in The Nature of Passion expect their womenfolk to adjust with their male chauvinism and idiosyncracies. Ravi in Kamala Markandaya's novel A Handful of Rice loves his wife because she is docile, meek and submissive to his whims and fancies. The English educated, westernized Inder in Nayantara Sahgal's novel Storm in Chandigarh is not much different from the illiterate, peasant Ravi in his attitude towards wife and women as a whole. For Dandekar in Kamala Markandaya's novel A Silence of Desire wife is a useful piece of property. And Premla in Kamala Markandaya's novel Some Inner Fury is treated like a chattel by her westernized husband.
Kamala Markandaya shows that the western men are also not much different from their oriental counterparts. They too view women as a piece of property, their valuable possession and are often reluctant to treat their wives as equal individuals. When Helen in her novel Coffer Dams treads away from her so called "wifely duties" Clinton even dares to rape her. Raman in Anita Desai's novel Where Shall We Go this Summer? wonders why Sita could not live and behave like other wives. So does Gautama in the novel Cry, the Peacock. Thus even the English educated, elite and modernized Indian husband does not treat his wife as an equal partner. On many occasions a wife is not considered as a companion whose partnership can be extended to the areas of mind. Gautam in Anita Desai's novel Cry, the Peacock does not consider Maya as a person capable of intellectual discourse. Som in Nayantara Sahgal's novel A Day in Shadow never treats Simrit as an equal partner. He often ignored her like a piece of property.

Another thing about Indian male attitude is that they hate stronger stuff in women. They want women to be obedient, dependent and weak to satisfy their male ego. Inder in Storm in Chandigarh is furious at Saroj for she does not ask him to forgive her past actions. He hates individuality and self expression in women and for the same reason he breaks
off from Mara. In the same way Som in A Day in Shadow dislikes courage, self-assertion, initiative and individuality in women. He would have pardoned Simrit if she were a weakling. Even Moolchand who was more human and understanding than Som is puzzled to see Simrit's matter-of-fact behaviour and presence of mind soon after her divorce. Because, as a man he expected her broken-hearted, crying and pleading for help.

According to Hindu ideology the basic concept of female presents an important duality - on the one hand she is fertile and benevolent; and on the other she is aggressive and destructive. This division helps to understand the dual character and conception of Hindu women's essential nature by which society provides rules and role models for women. Many a Goddess in India is worshipped as 'Mother' who nourishes and provides for her children and a Goddess is never called or worshipped as 'wife' or 'Mistress.' So many a times Indian men consider women either as a 'mother' or a 'mistress' and Hinduism plays a dominant role in cultivating such an image of women. Both classical literature and modern literature place 'motherhood' on a pedestal and always portray a mother with an aura of respect and spiritual love. Indian English women novelists too have portrayed
the unquestionable authority and elevated status of Indian mothers and the secondary status of mistresses and other women in their respective families.

The Punjabi mother in Anita Desai's novel *Bye-Bye, Black Bird* is an example of a typical Indian mother who has a powerful combination of bullying and tenderness with which she controls and regulates the other members of the family. Another mother who exercises abundant influence on her family members is Jiban's authoritative mother in Anita Desai's novel *Voices in the City*. Jiban is like many Indian sons who blindly worship their mothers but are unconcerned about the plight of their wives. Ravi in Kamala Markandaya's novel *A Handful of Rice* always feels for his peasant mother a feeling which he never felt for any other woman. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala exposes the petty follies of Indian men spicing it with humour, wit and ridicule. Prem's mother in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's novel *The Householder* deliberately creates conflicts in the house. But Prem tolerates it and continues to obey his mother like any Indian son for respect towards his mother is more important than affection towards his wife. Inder Lal in *Heat and Dust* respects and obeys his mother. He never goes against her wishes. Another typical Indian who proves to be one of those typical Indian men forever
tied to the apron strings of his mother is Etta's husband in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's novel *A Backward Place*. Men adore and respect the 'mother' role of women while the other roles are associated with a sexual urge or contempt.

The silent and meek female being the ideal of womanhood both men and society view forward, able and independent women with suspicion. Indian men's inability to keep a healthy view of womanhood free from prejudice and sex is seen in the case of Vir Das in Nayantara Sahgal's novel *A Time to be Happy*. So does Gopi in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *A New Dominion*. He has forced Lee to have sex with him because he believes that western girls are brought up on sex and do not have any morality like his sisters.

The women novelists strongly voice the view that women alone suffer due to these sexual double standards and deprived status; and men are always placed on the safer side. And this has been made quite clear in the novels: *Two Virgins, A Handful of Rice, Silence of Desire, Possession, A Village by the Sea, A Backward Place, Zohra, Sunlight On a Broken Column* and *A Day in Shadow*. It is pointed out that women have no escape routes at least for a momentary escape from domestic drudgery, poverty, and other upheavals of life.
So they suffer more than their men. For women like aunt Alamelu, Amma and Manikkan's wife in *Two Virgins* there is no life and experience outside their home circle. Their constant child-bearing without proper facilities further deteriorate their condition. Thus many peasant women meet with an early death for lack of proper food, care, medicine and basic amenities. We see this in the case of Ravi's mother in *A Handful of Rice*, Val's mother and other innumerable peasants in Kamala Markandaya's novel *Possession*. The fate of lower middle class women is not much different from their rural counterparts. For Amma, Jayamma and Nalini in Kamala Markandaya's novel *A Handful of Rice* life is more awful than it is to Appa, Puttanna, Ravi and Kumaran.

Marital discords, divorce, re-marriage, and free love are all personal problems which do not come into a real conflict with society in the initial stages. But it is women who suffer ultimately and have to pay for their deviation from the prescribed conventional role, duty and morality. That men are affected less than women by these problems is clearly envisaged in the novels of Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal. "Why" and "How" women experience more agony, frustration and social criticism than men due to marital discords is explained here. So in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai we notice that the female protagonists
are struggling hard to create a normal, satisfactory relationship with their men who are not yet prepared to accept women in their totality and give up their male superiority complex, privileges and prerogatives as men. At this level the inner conflict of these women characters becomes clear and definable in social terms because their individuality is at constant conflict with the rigid social code that looms in the background to block their development as human beings and hesitate to recognize their individuality. We see a whole range of women characters who struggle and lead a frustrated life and suffer more than their men: Simrit in *A Day in Shadow*; Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh*; Rashmi in *This Time of the Morning*; Maya in *A Time to be Happy*; Sita in *Where Shall We Go this Summer?*; Maya in *Cry the Peacock*; Monish in *Voices in the City*; Nanda and Raka's mother in *Fire on the Mountain*; Tara in *The Clear Light of the Day*; Zohra in *Zohra*; Dimple in *Wife and Premala in Some Inner Fury*. They all lead a distorted life and they are doomed to suffer more than their male counterparts.

If at all women try to break away from tradition, patriarchal family and male support they end in disaster. They feel uprooted in the initial stages like Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer* and Priyie in *This time of the Morning*. And the aftermath of separation from their men is
devastating for women because they are left to face all the hazards of life single-handedly. In the same way a divorced woman in the traditional Indian society has to take care of many things – from emotional imbalance to economic insecurity. They face many problems as it happened in the lives of Rashmi in Nayantara Sahgal's novel This Time of the Morning and Simrit in her another novel A Day in Shadow. Among these four women novelists only Nayantara Sahgal has portrayed the pangs a woman experiences soon after her divorce.

The conditions and problems of working women are not much different from others. They face, in addition, some more problems as they have to go out and work. In India we find the emergence of a few working women and unmarried working women. As has been pointed out earlier, they have many problems to face because Society still clings to certain biased notions, prejudices and norms about a woman's role and natural duties. So an educated woman who is aware of her capability and identity as an earning member is at constant conflict with the morbid social ethos which is still rigid towards her. This happens when enlightened women have shed their inhibitions, inferiority complex and economic dependence whereas the society and family in which they live expect them to be submissive, dependent and subordinate to men. So an emotionally explosive situation arises in
the family. It is clear from the previous pages that the
women novelists have tried to depict the lives of working
women and their problems but a more vivid, touching and
convincing portrayal is yet to appear. Sarah in Anita Desai's
novel Bye-Bye, Blackbird and Judy in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's
novel A Backward Place are English women married to Indians.
Both are working women and experience certain amount of
psychological role conflict. Mira and Roshan in Kamala
Markandaya's novel Some Inner Fury work in a press. Except
this, we know nothing much about their problems in a crowded
press. Mara in Nayantara Sahgal's novel Storm in Chandigarh
is a working woman. She does not work for a livelihood,
but for the pleasure of work. Simrit in Nayantara Sahgal's
A Day in Shadow is a free-lance writer and Anasuya works as
a self-made writer in Kamala Markandaya's novel The Possession.
Their problems and predicaments as writers are quite
vague and obscure in those two novels.

We get pictures of the life of unmarried working
women in Anita Desai's novels. She has portrayed a single
woman and her predicaments in the character of Bim in The
Clear Light of the Day. Bim rejects the conventional role
of wife and mother. She is like the heroines of Charlotte
Bronte, who are independent, self-made and impassioned in all
respects. Anita Desai also shows that single working women are an object of suspicion and contempt due to certain social prejudices against them. Ila Das in *Fire on the Mountain* is another single working woman who works as a social worker in the Himalayan foothills. She, like the spinsters in the Victorian fiction is an object of ridicule for the villagers. Langures way laid her, street urchins hoot at her and people giggle when she passes them. Another misconception about unmarried working women is that they are sensuous and can be easily available to men. People often mistake their free and frank behaviour as sensuality. Anita Desai in *By-Bye, Blackbird* portrays such a bitter experience of a foreign returned unmarried working woman when she took up a job in India. We can gather from these novels that unmarried working women are generally viewed as lost creatures without identity or are treated as objects of sarcasm and pity.

A few novels have shown the plight of widows in Indian families. Though a child-widow is a fact of the past the suffering of the elderly widows is still a painful part of Indian life. Aunt Alamelu in Kamala Markandaya’s novel *The Two Virgins*, Bhuji in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s novel *A Backward Place* and Mira Masi in Anita Desai’s novel *A Clear Light of the Day* bear witness to the deplorable
Another group of unskilled women who lead a degraded life are the prostitutes, traditional nautch girls/devadasis. As has been noticed in the previous pages the women novelists have portrayed their lives with sympathy and care. An example on hand is the character of Ira in Kamala Markanday's novel *Nectar in a Sieve*. It is poverty and helplessness that drove Ira to prostitution like the women who go to brothels in Bhabani Bhattacharya's novels *So Many Hungers* and *He Who Rides the Tiger*. Whatever might be the reason that drives women to this profession, from the feminist point of view it shows the degradation and exploitation of women as a sex object. Val in Kamala Markandaya's novel *Possession* seduces the Jewess Ellie, impregnates her and exploits her both as sex object and model because she was at the concentration camp once. Another painful fact about these unlucky women is that, though they are lulled into this field by money or food they are not satisfied in catering for the undue demands of their immoral customers. The prostitutes in Kamala Das's novel *A Doll for the Child* *Prostitute* and the Cabra girls in Anita Desai's novel, *Cry, the Peacock* show the discontentment that lay beneath the mask of their painted face and sensuous smile.
Another inhuman atrocity committed on women by men out of wrath or lust is rape. A very sensitive portrayal of the agony and frustration of a rape victim figures in Nayantara Sahgal's novel *A Situation in New Delhi*. Another rape victim that captures our sympathy is Ila Das in Anita Desai's novel *Fire on the Mountain*. Anita Desai's concern and resentment of this type of inhuman action is explicit here though she is very objective and impersonal in her treatment of both the character and the problem.

The Indian novelists in English also have treated women's problems in their work. But most of these writers seem to be more pre-occupied with the life of their main male protagonist and the problems of women-folk are portrayed as a side issue in their early novels. So many a time the male point of view tends to favour traditional patterns of womanhood which enables the feminine stereotypes to prevail in literature. But Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kushwant Singh and Manohar Malgaonkar have laid stress on the individuality and emancipation of women and shown their concern for struggling women through their fiction. Mulk Raj Anand's *The Old Woman and the Cow*, Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Music for Mohini*, Manohar Malgaonkar's *Combat of Shadows* and Kushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* portray the nightmarish
life of women and their intense human suffering. Among these writers Mulk Raj Anand as a social writer advocates that women deserve equal position with men in all spheres of life. As a sensitive writer he condemns the way society still views women as unpaid housekeepers and bearers of children. His sincere pleading for the recognition of the individuality and social status of women is evident in the novel The Old Woman and the Cow. The protagonist Gauri is drawn on the same pattern as Ibsen's Nora. She revolts against the idea of the traditional meek Indian womanhood and tries to free herself from undue bondage to lead an independent and meaningful life. Her character is a welcome change from the feminine stereotypes of submissive housewives and their 'pig-like contentment' in wifeshood.

R.K. Narayan's The Dark Room presents a realistic picture of the conditions and exploitation of a wife in her family. The woman in her revolts against the ill-treatment by her husband and tries to liberate herself from all shackles. Like Nora in Ibsen's Doll's House Savitri asserts her individuality.

"I am a human being", she said, through her heavy breathing. "You men will never grant that. For we are playthings when you feel like hugging and slaves
at other times. Don't think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose". 2

Unlike Nora's revolt Savitri's rebellion is short lived. She realizes that she cannot forgo her certain needs - the security of home and the emotional support of its members. The memory of her children and the inbred "Pativrata Dharma" draws her back to the same dark hole - her home. In the present Indian social context the thoughts, experiences and actions of Savitri are realistic and symbolic. Realistic because Indian women have neither the desire nor the courage to face the realities and challenges of life. And symbolic because, if at all a woman revolts, she has to forgo personal happiness and face the hostility of both the society and members of her family. Women need abundant courage and intellectually strong mind to face the adversities of life.

Thus, men novelists have treated the problems of women and portrayed the tense life of Indian women in their novels. But the women novelists seem to have greater involvement. Most of the women novelists feel that total liberation is a gradual, painful process for women. Many a time individualistic women are forced to conform to traditional society and its norm. Though they are aware
of the outcome of such a life they accept it either by filial piety or by external forces. Shakuntala in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's novel *Esmond in India* is English-bred but decides at last to submit to the authority of her father and accepts a traditional marriage and life. In a way she surrenders her will, ideas and ideals at the altar of marriage. So does Amrita in Jhabvala's another novel *To Whom She Will*, Nimmie in *A Nature of Passion* and Nita in Nayantara Sahgal's novel *This Time of the Morning*. Thus the novelists show that the demands and pull of society is stronger than the will of the emerging new woman. The women novelists also have shown why women cannot assert their inner needs and individuality. Indian women are still in a dilemma and have to face many obstacles in castrating fully from the limited conventional codes. The social conditions, attitudes and customs being so adverse, emancipation of woman is a gradual and slow process. Here one may note R.S. Singh's opinion regarding this eternal dilemma and confusion of Indian women:

The women of the Indo-Anglian fiction are not yet delineated in their individuality and dependence. They are either victims of the evil-ridden society, of ignorance or noble ideals of sacrifice and stoic suffering for
husband and children or else they are symbol of inspiration, generosity, compassion and patience with their oddities and uniqueness, vagaries and vanity, faith and fickleness, they have yet to be rendered artistically in Indo-Anglian fiction.3

And K.M.Kapadia, too, a sociologist corroborates this idea while discussing about Indian woman's role, duty and status in her family and also her inability to assert herself. He says:

Marriage was desired not so much for sex or for progeny as for obtaining for the fulfilment of one's religious duties and .... there was little idea of individual interest.4

The analysis of the novels written by women novelists reveal certain facts. These writers interpret their new aspirations, ideals, views, disillusionment, and frustration and they also reflect the consciousness of the period through their work of art. In other words their fiction charts Indian society, its complexities, cultural patterns, conflicts and problems. They do it with a deep sensitivity and a sense of equally deep involvement. Their intention is the emancipation of women and their welfare. So that
women may live respectfully as human beings with their individuality recognized. And there is certainly a deviation from the traditional plot-motives, characterization and presentation of problems in their novels. They point out that a woman has no self-identity and peace of mind as long as she is dependent on men economically and emotionally. She needs abundant courage, confidence, capacity and intellectual stability to face the hostility and wrath of the society to be a free individual. Thus the women novelists explore the sufferings of women as well as their effort and struggle to adjust and harmonise with the social conditions. And among them Nayantara Sahgal and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala openly question the norms behind the idea of subdued Indian womanhood and stress the need to cultivate self-esteem freedom and individuality in women to liberate themselves from all baseless social values. The typical meek, mute, economically dependent, submissive, subservient, self-denying, illiterate, superstitious, traditional and suffering woman is giving way to a woman with a mind of her own.

The women novelists have shown how women can work towards their emancipation. They have started portraying the "new woman" in society and their slow and gradual emergence from the tradition bound ethos, blind values and
illiteracy. When women find that their beliefs are mere illusions, a few of them get courage to break off the sacred bond of marriage and defy social attitudes. They also refuse to put up with the misery, agony and frustration of life unlike the majority of female characters in the Indian English fiction. Saroj in Storm in Chandigarh emerges as a liberated individual at the end of the novel when she says good-bye to Inder who belongs to the "he - man school". Rashmi in This Time of the Morning gathers courage to divorce Dalip because she could not live a worthless life with him and thereby destroy her real self. Simrit too (A Day in Shadow) divorces Som because he could never satisfy her real needs and recognize her individuality as a woman. Prixie in A Day in Shadow is another character who breaks away from dependence and servitude to be a liberated woman. Sita in Where Shall We Go This Summer? runs away to her father's magic island and Monisha in Voices in the city, commits suicide in their frantic search for self liberation. And we see "streaks of feminism" in Nanda Kaul in Fire on the Mountain when she struggles to run away from "routine affairs'. At last Nanda Kaul did cut off her bond from all boundages of "routine affairs" and retires to Carignano to lead an independent life.
Bim in Anita Desai's novel *Clear Light of the Day* is another emerging 'new woman'. She is an independent working woman. More than this, she is a spinster. Her character is a new phenomenon in the Indian English fiction. In the novel *The Nature of Passion* Ruth Prawer Jhabvala depicts another young individualistic woman who defied customs, tradition and a conventional marriage. Kanta is quite different from Shakuntala, Nimmi and other snobbish middle class girls. Through these two characters - Shakuntala and Kanta, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala points out two things: one, how society and family have a pull on an emancipating woman; and, secondly, how a determined woman like Kanta can liberate herself from social bondages and find fulfilment in life. These characters give ample evidence to the fact that Indian English writers, especially the women novelists have started showing the changing social conditions, role models and the social phenomenon of the emerging "new woman" in their fiction.

Thus we find that Nayantara Sahgal, Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai have in their own way made genuine attempt to present women's problems and portray realistically their struggle for self-development, self-identity and self-realization. This is feminism in the fiction of the Indian-English women novelists. They have
not called themselves feminists because they have not been propagandists. Within the scope that a novel provides them, they have made evident their sincere concern for women's welfare. They are in their own right conscience-shakers. Will not an Alamelu, a Simrit, a Madhu, a Saroj, a Nita, an Ila Das drive one to think about the rigidity of the society and its outmoded social values and customs? It is hoped that in the years to come many more women writers will carry on the work that they have started. This thesis is an humble effort in focussing the attention on the fiction of these Indian English women novelists with the feminist perspective and I could claim that this is a pioneering effort.
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