Chapter One
Introduction

Indian fiction in English is rich in tradition and variety. The contribution by women writers to Indian fiction in English has its own place and significance. The processes of colonization and decolonization are both related to the introduction of the English language and literature in India. The colonial experience contributed to the change in women’s position in Indian society, which is reflected in women’s literature. Therefore, it would be interesting to see the postcolonial response of women writers to the life and experience of the modern Indian women. This dissertation seeks to find out the post-colonial features in the fiction of five Indian women writers in English of the post 1980s. The writers are Chitra Banarjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri, Gita Mehta, Arundhati Roy and Jai Nimbkar.

The evolution of Indian literature in English is a direct consequence of the adoption of English and its literature by Indian society. Indians have produced a considerable amount of literature in the English language. Recently, many Indian writers have achieved fame and have claimed international recognition for their literature in English. Much has been said and written about the development of Indian literature in English. Especially, the recurrence of east-west encounter in Indian English literature has been frequently discussed by critics. The postcolonial positions of Indian writers in English and writers in the regional vernacular literatures are also a widely discussed issue. The contribution of women writers to Indian literature in English is certainly too prominent to escape the attention of scholarly critics. Since women writers present “the doubly colonized” section of society in the Indian literature in English, the attempt to read their novels in the light of postcolonial theory is logical.
The origins of Indian literature in English may be traced back to the introduction of the English language in India by the British. Basically, it was an intentional, political and colonial action of the British rulers. These colonizers introduced English and its literature in India to inculcate western taste and culture in their colonial subjects. Their intention was to impose the superiority of western culture on the Indian mind.

The colonization of the subjects was essentially carried out through the introduction of English language. This phenomenon has been discussed by a number of post-colonial critics. Some of their opinions should help to elaborate the point. While discussing the role of language in postcolonialism for instance, the Australian critics Ashcraft, Tiffin and Griffiths comment:

Language is a fundamental site of struggle for postcolonial discourse, because the colonial process itself begins in language. The control over language by the imperial center—whether achieved by displacing native languages, by installing itself as a ‘standard’ against other variants which are constituted as ‘impurities’ or by planting the language of empire in a new place—remains the most potent instrument of cultural control.

This observation is supported by the British policy of educating India. The African writer Ngugi wa Thiongo states:

In my view language was the most important vehicle through which the power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet is a means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation.

The process of colonization of the Indian mind was not simple and direct. The British rulers found a cultural and linguistic diversity in India which had no equal elsewhere in their dominion. The role of language in colonial discourses is prominent in India as the colonizer first learnt Indian
languages to gain power. Then the language of the colonizer is introduced to India.

The conquest of India was a conquest of knowledge. In these official sources we can trace the changes in forms of knowledge which the conqueror defined as usual for their own ends.4

Guari Vishwanathan’s study, *Masks of Conquest*, discusses the educational histories of Britain and India during the colonial period. She points out elaborately the differences in views of the Orientalists and Occidentalists with regard to Indian education. According to her: “But all the same it is essential to recognize that despite the conflict over language, the Orientalist and Anglicist programs assumed a common method of governance; in both, an influential class was to be cooped as the conduit of Western thoughts and ideas”5 The higher classes had access to the classical languages, Arabic and Sanskrit, in which the ancient knowledge was stored and the masses had vernaculars. In such a set up, English instruction was provided to a small elite (previously ruling) feudal class, because they had leisure and could afford it. She argues that the filtration theory of Macaulay and John Stuart Mill, desiring to promote a small elite group through education led to the linguistic stratification of Indian society. She observes:

> The cultivation of a small elite group of Indians was perceived as the foundation for stability that even a political revolution will not destroy and upon which after ages may erect a vast superstructure.6

Thus, with education in English, systematic colonization of the elite class, which was leading the Indian society, began.

The secular English education introduced to the Indian subjects consisted of the study of literature. Charles Trevelyan argued for the establishment of ‘law’ in the minds of Indians through the reading of literature. The motive behind this was to make Indians aware of the shortcomings of their culture as well as to civilize them. Gauri
Vishwanathan observes that the introduction of English literature marks the colonialist exploitation. The English literary text according to her functioned as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and the most perfect state. It successfully masked the economic exploitation and the material activities of the colonizer. Hans Dua states:

The teaching of English in India can be seen as an experiment as a form of social, cultural and political control...The pedagogy of English has played a crucial role in the constitution of ideological structures and the perpetuation of the hegemony of the elites in both the developing and developed nations.

Dua observes that English education was being developed for social divisions and cultural hegemony. The class affiliation of English had affected the divide between the elites and masses of India. English instruction has also resulted in the social divisions and marginalization of the vernacular languages. English literature was glorified while the oriental literature was dismissed by Macaulay, the earliest British official instrumental in introducing English.

The identification of the newly-educated subject to the master became complete with the passing of time. The English educated Indians started referring to Indian masses as the ‘natives’. They were convinced that ‘reforming the natives’ was the remedy to improve their condition. Thus, the concept of Macaulay to form a mediatory class had taken shape. Such an elite class was created with a definite purpose. The British rulers expected the percolation of Western cultural values from this class downwards to the masses. The English-educated class elite class was tuned to imitate the western tastes. The western models of art and literature inherently came to this class through the medium of English. This class had adopted the values of truth and reason, humanism, morality and culture from English literature taught to them by the British.
The class of elites in India had developed in a complex way. The ancient Indian tradition and wisdom, which was suppressed under the project of educating India, was not totally forgotten. A merging of oriental and western culture emerged out of this project:

A whole new world became available to the educated Indians in the middle of the nineteenth century through their study of the English literature. The Indians came to know a different society represented in the novels of Scott, Dickens and Thackeray.\(^8\)

The advantages of English education had their impact on the elite class of India; they cut themselves from the Indian ways of life. The rhetoric of morality gave way to the political economy. The colonial scheme of education that set out to evolve an aping middle class, for imperialist administration initiated social change in Indian society. The purpose of forming the class was to create a class beneficial to the empire in expediting the consumption of British goods. The educational policy of the British also enhanced the social division based on castes and classes. This resulted in a rift between the westernized’ select few elites and the masses that were far away from the European ideas. While discussing the impact of English and its literature on colonial India and Swati Joshi says:

English literature and language do not come to us a historically in the post colonial space. They have a history of over a hundred and fifty years in India. They have not only been an active agency in the reformation of the colonial society and culture but have continued to inform, indeed constitute elite, culture and literature in our societ\(^9\)

She further argues that English has affected a wide range of domains of cultural history. She observes that the context of colonial authority shaped the Indian middle class decisively and that needs to be understood in order to know better the subsequent history and politics of culture in India. The middle class required reformation of social institutions as part of the formation of identity and cultural authority.
Therefore, many influential people like Raja Ram Mohan Roy demanded English education which helped them to reform the social organization and develop notions of culture. English became a culturally unifying force. According to Bernard Cohn:

The Indians who increasingly became drawn into the process of transformation of their traditions and mode of thought were, however, far from passive. In the long run the authoritative control, which, the British tried to exercise over new social and material technologies, was taken over by Indians and put to purposes which led to the ultimate erosion of British authority.  

In short, English education has been instrumental in stirring and stimulating the process of renaissance in India. The nationalist movement and social reforms shook the roots of Indian society. However, Meenakshi Sharma views that the role of English literature in carving a distinct identity in the new class of Indian male elite was not completely satisfactory to the colonizer. By the late nineteenth century, English literature was nationalized and domesticated in India and particularly, in Bengali culture. This had a backfiring effect for the British. Meenakshi Sharma points out:

The Nationalist Movement in the early decades of the twentieth century negotiated a complex relationship with English education—a revitalization of native languages, literatures and traditions was deployed in the task of strengthening a sense of nationality while, the ideals of liberal humanism and democracy derived from English education were used to question the dichotomies of the Western thought and the colonial rule.

It may be said that the nationalist and social revolts against the British, from the latter half of the 19th century, were essentially led by the class that was educated in English. Their uprising was perhaps something that the colonial government could not visualize at the beginning. The attitude of admiration of the British Rule shifted with time. Indian society
began to claim political, economic as well as cultural independence. In the process of its search for identity, English became a language of power and continues to have a high esteem in Indian society. The nationalist movement was on the rise in the early decades of the twentieth century. Thus English education has a very complex history of development in the Indian subcontinent.

The English had their own colonial attitude about Indians as effeminate. However, in opposition to the colonial concept the glorious and heroic past was revived during the nationalist phase. The image of heroic mother, Bharat Mata depicted in the Indian literature and national movement was an act of resistance to colonial power. The contempt of English historians about Indian legends, stories and fables as historical documents was refuted by the nationalist spirit. The western form of narration was employed by the Indians to narrate the inspiring life stories of great historical figures.

Within colonial constraints the enterprise of writing an indigenous history was marked by a quest for a different archive of facts. The explorations entailed the incorporation of the very elements which the western notion of history had rejected, legends, genealogical narratives and myth.

Thus fiction has taken roots in Indian literature as an impact of colonial experience.

Though living on the margins of patriarchy, women were at the center of focus during the colonial rule in India. Women became an instrument of cultural strife. Geraldine Forbes points out that during the nineteenth century the British dominated the political, social and scientific upheaval of Europe. Elated by their sense of moral superiority, they were led to discuss the ideal relationship between men and women. Thus, for instance, James Mill argued:
Women’s position could be used as the indicator of social advancement.” He further commented that, “nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which the Hindu entertain for their women… they are accordingly in extreme degradation.  

Forbes observes that with their civilizing mission influential British writers’ condemned Indian cultures and society for their rules and customs against women. “Enamored with their ‘civilizing mission’, influence of British writers’ condemned Indian religions, culture and society for their rules and customs regarding women” It is true that the cultural confrontation in the colonial period led to improvement of Indian women’s condition. Women’s deplorable existence was a target of colonial attack. To counter this colonial attack the nationalists writings revived the ancient Indian past when women were held in high esteem in society. The emphasis was on the traditional qualities of women. According to Bharti Ray:

The material world might have been lost to the colonial rule but the home remained a site of nationalist victory. The educated housewife was always tied to the older patriarchal imagination of mythical divine figure of Laxmi.

British critiques of Indian society resulted in the formation of reform groups all over India. They focused on sati, infanticide, polygamy, and child marriage, prohibition of female education and the purdah system and the caste system along with religious reforms. The Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj emerged and influenced the progressive people. Education made women aware of their condition and pioneer organizations were formed. However, traditional notions about women were still dominant in these progressive moves. The colonial zeal to improve the condition of women interestingly was also patriarchal in its attitude. Bharti Ray points out that the reformers did not interfere with the traditional ideology of gender or patriarchal relationship she states:
In the new construction of womanhood it was the conventional image as wife and mother simply garnished by education and some Victorian womanly ideals borrowed from the West that was projected as ideal for the ‘good’ Indian woman. Even Bambodhini Patrika, the journal for women’s enlightenment published in Bengal by the enlightened and educated Brahmos propagated such ideas.\(^\text{17}\)

Thus, the concept of modern Indian womanhood is a consequence of colonial rule and education. The increasing urbanization and colonial domination separated work of newly educated women from home and the new women participated in the modernizing movement. The women’s education program emancipated women, giving them self-awareness and a sense of individuality. Organizations were formed to claim the rights of women and also in support of the nationalist movement. However, Tanika Sirkar observes that:

In some other versions of culture studies Strishiksha or modern education is taken to place the Hindu wife under a double burden of servitude: to her deracinated educated husband, and to the cultural agenda of white masters who educated Indians to destroy their cultural identity.\(^\text{18}\)

The cultural colonization of the Indian mind through education certainly created an elite class with the English tastes. But what is ironical is that the very English language that was an instrument of subjugation was appropriated and employed wisely by the educated Indians to resist the British authority. The ideology of humanism and the egalitarian values inculcated by the British language and literature, along with the mastery over the English language, gave rise to Indian writings in English. Meenakshi Sharma views that the educated Indians employed the knowledge and ‘control’ of English language to regain narrative control
and to resist the essentialist representation of Indian life in western narrative.

A century of Indian writing in English clearly suggests the appropriation of English. The choice of English of the Indian writers in English reminds one of the often quoted words of Caliban “You taught me language, and my profit on it is, I know how to curse”\textsuperscript{19} The subversion of English language for representation as has already been pointed out, was an unexpected fruit of the colonizing mission of the British.

When the Nationalist Movement began to gather momentum, during and after the World Wars, English became the dominant language of the Swadeshi movement. A large number of Indians – Ranade, Naoroji, Tilak, Vivekananda, Gandhiji, Malvia, Aurobindo, Jinnah, Shriniwas Shastri, Satyamurthy, Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Rajaji, Sir Ram swami and several others used English so effectively, that the English were both ‘astounded and humbled’. Creative writing in English began to flourish.\textsuperscript{20}

The colonized subjects of India used language as a tool for self-empowerment. Thus, Indian writing in English became an instrument of resistance Indian English writers nativized English into the Indian context. The command of the foreign language is now used to claim equality. Presently, literary writing is a means to use to represent the Indian cultural and social identity.

It is ostensibly a gesture of imitation but under the surface there lurks a claim of equality, moreover an equality that is on terms most valued by the superior colonizers: literary writing in their language. It is also a claim of confident ‘command’ of the foreign language which was already being appropriated as non foreign, as capable of truly representing Indian situation, experience and emotion. \textsuperscript{21}

The introduction of English literature initiated Indians to Western forms of literature, such as autobiography, novel and certain poetic forms
like the ballad and sonnet. India’s first generation of renaissance writers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Toru Dutt Rabindrnath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh etc introduced the glorious Indian heritage and culture of the past in their creative writing. They incorporated myths, legends and historical and genealogical narratives to revive the old traditions. Movements like Hindu Mela had shaped the Hindu national identity that revived the valor of Rana Pratap, Raja Shivaji and other heroic figures.

The earlier generation of Indian poets likes Raindrnath Tagore, Toru Dutt, Michael Mudhusudan Dutt had expressed their pride in the revival of ancient Indian philosophy, wisdom, legends and myths. The literary models of the center were appropriated to suit Indian self-representation. Fiction as a form and autobiographical narratives made a lasting impact on the development of Indian literature. This is evident in the precedence that novel took over drama and poetry in Indian English Writing. Texts like Kanthapura (1938) depicted the Gandhian spirit of nationalism and the nonviolent means of resistance against the imperial oppression. It has become a model of the appropriation and abrogation of the imperial novel form and the English language. Raja Rao very aptly sums up the linguistic constraints experienced by the writers of his generation in these words: “The telling has not been easy; one has to convey in a language that is not one’s own.” Yet, he adds that that “English is not really an alien language. It is the language of our intellectual make up”.

The novel written during this period were influenced by nationalistic, political, social and cultural reforms Gradually, the Bengali, Marathi, Tamil and other regional language literatures reflected their author’s resistance to the British rule through well developed novels. The development of the novel form in Indian writing in English as well as in the regional languages shows the transformation of Indian society towards modernity and the process of decolonization of the Indian mind. Since the beginning, Indian literature in English has represented the
cultural encounter between the East and the West in various ways. Hence, it is appropriate to view the Indian novel in English through the postcolonial approach; postcolonial approach to literature elucidates the meanings of Indian novel most suitably.

The postcolonial critical approach is a well known and widely used term in current critical discourses. This term has multidisciplinary significance. Its origin is in the historical and the political studies. The term ‘postcolonial’ covers political, historical, social, anthropological, aesthetic, artistic and literary concerns. The term, postcolonial also spreads across races, regions, histories, and cultures around the world. It has become a widely referred to and discussed theory. Hence, it is necessary to discuss its bearings on the present literary study.

The genesis of postcolonial theory or post colonial studies goes back to the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). The 1980s was the period of its inception and exploration and the 1990s was the period of its maturation and institutionalization. The meaning of the term comes in the first place. ‘Postcolonial’ or ‘postcolonialism’ is a critical term with a complex meaning. It is suggestive of multiple activities. It refers to political as well as intellectual activities. It is very difficult to define the meaning of the term as it is concerned with reclaiming the identity of the colonized subjects all over the world.

The term postcolonial consists of two words and is written with or without a hyphen. The hyphen prevents integration between the colonial past and postcolonial present. Colonization is centered.

By separating the hyphen as a dependent prefix the centering of colonization brings the plurality of postcolonial situation under a unitary and familiar sign of colonization and empowers the post-colonial critic to draw a universal model of postcolonial societies. The hyphen again brings the center into focus. 

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In the course of its growth as a ‘discipline’ the term postcolonial has widened the scope of its meaning and significance. It is no more a chronological label. According to Neil Lazarus, “A sea change’ has occurred in the postcolonialism, as it has emerged as a prominent field of academic specialization. In its widest reaches the study of post colonialism might be said to implicate most of the humanities and social sciences.”

Many critics have tried to define the meaning of the term. Some of them are cited here. Ania Loomba defines colonialism as ‘the conquest and control of other peoples land and goods’, She comments that the prefix ‘post ‘ implies ‘aftermath’ in two senses ---temporal and as in coming after and ideological. According to Nicholas Harrison “post colonial studies in general may be characterized broadly and simply in terms of colonialism /imperialism and its aftermath, and (away) in many instances be a distinguished from traditional, historical or political writing on the colonial or post independence era by a particular attention that is paid to the role within that history of ‘representation or discourse.”

Jasbir Jain comments that:

Postcolonialism is, as I understand it, a definition of one’s position vis-a-vis the colonial past. It is not merely a question of time, of the aftermath of colonialism, but one of attitude to confront colonialism to transcend it, to step outside the influence and framework, to reclaim autonomous and free identity.

Similarly, Bart Moore Gilbert et al point out that “the ‘post’ in post colonial can imply ‘an end actual or imminent to apartheid, partition or occupation. It hints at withdrawal, liberation or reunification.” While most of the previous definitions focus on the periodicity of the term postcolonial, Homi Bhabha focuses on social aspect of the term by referring to the dependence of the Third World to the West, the center of identity. According to Padmini Mongia,:
The term has been deployed to replace what earlier went under the names of Third world or Commonwealth literature, to describe colonial discourse analysis, to detail the situations of migrant groups within first world status and to specify oppositional reading practices.

None of the above-cited definitions completely bring out the significance of the term. Rather, these definitions indicate the confusion and complexity of its meaning. The term postcolonial is frequently used in political, historical, social, anthropological, aesthetic, literary, and artistic and economic studies. These definitions also suggest that the term postcolonial covers races, regions, histories and cultures around the world. It has become a widely used and discussed, elusive and contested term. What these definitions suggest is that the term postcolonial is concerned with the reclaiming of the identity of the colonized subjects.

In this sense postcolonialism suggests liberation and reunification of the ‘others’ to their previous self. Perhaps, the most comprehensive meaning of the term postcolonial is offered by the Australian critics Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin. In the preface of Post Colonial Studies: A Reader they comment that these terms (post colonial/post-colonial) encapsulate the ‘unresolved and active dispute’ between those who see post colonial as an amorphous set of discursive practices and those who see it as a more specific and historically located set of strategies. They discuss the ambiguity of the term in relation to the imperial process and comment that “Post colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction.” They prefer to use the term ‘postcolonial’ to represent the continuing process of imperial suppression and exchanges throughout this diverse range of societies. They state that they use the term postcolonial to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present. According to Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, the term is appropriated for the new cross-cultural criticism. While
commenting on the literatures of previous colonies, they offer this very appropriate definition of postcolonialism:

What each of these literatures has in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristic is that they emerged out in their present form out of experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumption of imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial center. It is this which makes them distinctively postcolonial. 34

This definition identifies the historical moment of freedom along with a focus on the content of postcolonial literature by referring to their peculiar relation with the imperial center. Besides, it covers the worldwide-colonized geographies. The literatures of African and Asian countries, such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Shri Lanka, Malaysia, Canada, New Zealand, Latin America are the post colonial literatures. This definition further points out the essential peculiarities of the post colonial literatures, such as, ‘resistance to the colonization as a basic reaction and tension between the imperial power center and the marginalized colonial subjects. Most importantly it notices the need for assertion of identities of the societies that become free from the imperial rule. Yet, confusion persists as the independence of previous colonies is ambiguous. Political empires may have come to end, not colonialism. It has become even more subtle and discreet. The previous colonies of the great empire have proved unable to discard the economic, social and cultural hegemony of the West. They still hold various institutions and the power structures set by the great empire. The material effects of imperialism are still clearly visible in international relationships and in internal social, political and even cultural institutions of the former colonies. Again, the meaning of the term becomes ambiguous as it
includes the discussion of various discriminations born out of colonial impact.

The term, therefore, suggests the processes of resistance to all kinds of oppression. It denotes the reconstruction of subjective realities by oppressed people. The differences based upon race, gender and place are parts of postcolonial readings. The responses to the imperial discourse about history, philosophy and literature are inherent within the postcolonial theory. Thus, postcolonialism helps to analyze all types of center and peripheral relationships.

It is necessary to understand postcolonial theory’s relationship with other contemporary theories. Postcolonial theory has shared certain things with other theories. Many scholars have discussed the evolution of postcolonial ideology and have tried to explain the ideological inheritance of postcolonial theory with its contemporary theories precisely with Marxism, post structuralism, post modernism and Feminism.

Marxist theory views the relationship of West and Non West as exploitative. It sees the colonial expansion and imperialism as an outcome of capitalism. Capitalism uses economic power and displaces human values for money. The subject accepts the value system of capitalism out of ideological conditioning. The capitalistic ideology is supported by institutions such as family, educational institutes, and literary texts. The exploitative nature of imperialism and resistance to the oppression relate the Marxist theory to the postcolonial theory. The views of Marxist critics have a close connection with the issues debated in the postcoloniality, such as race, gender, class and so on. Marxist views about ideology also raised the problematic areas such as the role of music and cultures in the process of colonization. Fredric Jameson’s comment about narrative ‘as a socially symbolic act’ has also influenced the development of postcolonial theory.\textsuperscript{35} Jameson looks at literature as informed by political consciousness. Ashcroft et al. Point out that “Marxist theory, in particular, has had many uses and much appeal for postcolonial societies, and for
Postcolonial theory with its stress on the political construction of cultural events."  

There is an inherent relationship between postcolonial theory and post structuralism. Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* is one of the seminal texts of Postcolonialism. Fanon clarifies the impact of colonialism on the native and the loss of identity. Fanon explains how the colonial violence results in a resistance in opposition. The hybridity caused by the cultural domination splits the native society and destroys the native community patterns. Thereafter, the postcolonial studies evolved with a set of concerns marked by decenteredness which were associated philosophically with post structuralism and particularly deconstruction. Simon Gikandi, in his essay *Poststructuralism and Postcolonial Discourse* comments that post structuralism and postcolonialism generate questions about their political efficacy, their location within intellectual traditions informed by unequal power relations and their validity as theoretical challenges that provide useful knowledge about cultures and literatures of previous colonies. Gikandi points out the closer relation of major postcolonial critics such as Edward Said, Bhabha and Spivak with the dominant strands of poststructuralism. They are indebted to Foucault’s work on discursive system of power subjectivity and difference along with the nature of meaning and representation. These had become the central issues of debate in post colonial theory. Derrida’s view about writing and language supported the postcolonial notion that writing was a form of difference.  

The links between postmodernism and post colonialism are strong and clear. Their strategic concerns and themes overlap. They deconstruct the existing established systems. Both share formal issues of magic realism, thematic concerns regarding history and marginality and strategic use of irony and allegory. The critique of essentialism, the deconstruction of Enlightenment models of the subject, the crisis in western rationalism and its discourses of authority, the analysis of cultural
nexus of power and knowledge are shared discursive spaces of postmodernism and post colonialism. Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin observe:

The concern of post modern writers and poststructuralist critics to dismantle about language and textuality and to stress the importance of ideological construction in social textual relations finds echoes in post colonial texts. The concerns of these discourses are therefore increasingly interactive and mutually influential.  

In their view, the deconstruction of centralized, logo centric master narratives of European culture is similar to the postcolonial project of dismantling of center/margin binaries of the imperial discourse. According to them the significance of language strategies of mimicry, irony and parody in post colonialism overlap the concerns of postmodernism. They comment:

Post colonialism is not simply a kind of ‘post modernism with politics’--it is a sustained attention to the imperial process in colonial and neocolonial societies, and an examination of strategies to subvert the actual material and discursive effects of that process.  

The marginalized status of women as ‘others’, in patriarchal set up shares the issues of oppression, problems of representation as well as identity crisis with the post colonial experiences. Therefore, the development of postcolonial theory and Feminism shows a parallel growth. Feminism and postcolonial theory, both concern with the language, ‘voice’ and concepts of speech and silence. The subversion of authority regarding language and literature, rejection of absolutist concepts is common in both the theories. Both, post colonialism and feminism probe into the ‘difference’ After the 1970s feminism evolved from western middle class assumptions towards complex marginalizing
factors such as, race, class, or and location. Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin comment:

Feminism and Postcolonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant and early feminist theory, like early nationalist postcolonial criticism sought to invert the structures of domination, substituting, for instance, a female tradition or in place of male dominated canon.42

There are tensions between western and postcolonial feminisms. These tensions arise out of the project of decolonization and nation building as well as postcolonial focus on race and ethnicity, politics of location and strife between minority communities in the first world, women in Diaspora communities, etc. Feminism and postcolonialism attempt to question the hierarchies of authority regarding gender, race and culture. But the consolidation of Third World woman in a single category has raised controversy. The feminist postcolonialist critics like Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanti, Sara Suleri, and Trinh T. Minh have focused on the debate about the Third World woman. The third world woman is offered a marginal identity by western feminism. The separation of women of colour again becomes colonialist according to them.

The construct of the Third World woman is an outcome of the hegemonic discourse suggesting the otherness and geographic location. The typical categorization of the third world woman has been as one who is ignorant poor, uneducated, tradition bound, domestic, family oriented and victimized. Against this categorization, the image of first world woman is consolidated as educated, modern, free, and self-confidant. The categorization of the third world woman also suggests that oppression is a third world preserve Chandra Talpade Mohanti goes further and argues against the homogenization of the third world women:

The homogeneity of women as a group is produced not on the basis of biological essential but rather on the basis of secondary sociological and anthropological universals. Thus, for instance, in any
given piece of feminist analysis, women are characterized as a singular group on the basis of shared oppression.\textsuperscript{43}

Gayatri Spivak states that the contesting representation systems displace and silence the ‘gendered subaltern’ within liberal feminist discourse. \textsuperscript{44}

Post colonialism in its wider scope subsumes the acts of oppression and resistance. All types of modern colonization, as well as resistance are also considered within the scope of the term. Post colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and construction of identity, because most of the postcolonial societies are subject to neocolonialism. The political independence has given way to elite urban class. Discriminations exist in various forms in these societies. Race, gender, and linguistic differences create strife among these societies. Postcolonial literatures reflect these internal strife and oppression. Postcolonial theory involves discussion of discriminatory experiences of various kinds.

It is a well known fact that colonial discourse is built upon binary relations such as center/margin, colonized /colonizer, etc. It depends on the fixed ideological concept of ‘the other’ and creates stereotypes of racial/historical differences. These differences have been ignored in the western representational discourse. The colonial discourse views the colonized as a fixed reality which is ‘the other’ and entirely knowable and visible. In Bhabha’s view the stereotype is a simplification for it fixed form of representation that denies the difference. The fetishism of colonial discourse is always represented with a strategy of political and social control.

They are signified as ‘savage (cannibal) most obedient and dignified servants, embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child. The colonial discourse emphasizes on the mystical, primitive, simple mindedness of ‘the other’ on one hand and yet considers the other as ‘most accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces’.\textsuperscript{45}
The civilizing mission gives the ruler the authority to control and govern the other and justify the discriminatory practices.

The term ‘alterity’ denotes the state of being different which is described thus:

Alterity marks the threshold of otherness, the site where difference in skin color, geography, sex, sexual orientation and other historical and biological markers of difference are socio-politically discussed.

Alterity or otherness explores the ways of western hegemonic constructions of the subject in the imperial representation of the third world. Edward Said explains the imperialist representation of the other in the narrative fiction as a cultural form. Literature plays an important role in the formation of imperial attitudes, references and experiences. The nineteenth and twentieth century English fiction represents essentially the English culture, moral order and social institutions. Said views that such cultural enterprises as narrative fiction and history are premised on representing the power of the central authorizing subject. He observes that the capacity to represent, portray, characterize and depict is not easily available to just any society. Said says:

In all these areas gender, class and race criticism has correctly focused upon the institutional forces in modern Western societies, that shape and set limits on the representation of what is considered essentially subordinate beings; thus representation itself has been characterized as keeping the subordinate, subordinate, inferior, inferior.

The nineteenth and twentieth century English fiction shows essentially Eurocentric colonialist view of the other cultures and implies the superiority of the West over the rest of the world. The power relation is clearly visible in the novels of Conrad, Kipling and Jane Austen. Their fiction was firmly based on the strong edifice of the empire and England’s command over the distant territories. Edward Said advocates the
‘contrapuntal’ reading of canonical texts in order to trace back the silenced voice of the marginalized.\textsuperscript{48}

The opposition and resistance to the empire are not only articulated through action, but it is articulated ideologically and aesthetically. The Imperialism gave rise to resistance literature. The colonized refuted the representation of their cultures by western writers. The resistance indicates the reconstitution of cultural identities and traditions. The patriotic and nationalistic resistance is reflected in the literary resistance of African/Asian writers. Edward Said comments that to a certain degree the forms established by the culture of empire have been used by these writers for resistance in the postcolonial literature, e.g. the voyage/journey/river motif in Conrad’s \textit{Heart of Darkness} are repeatedly used in resistance:

The post colonial(imperial)writers of the third world, therefore, bear their past within them— as sign of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards post colonial future, as urgently interpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory claimed as part of a general movement of resistance from control.\textsuperscript{49}

The awareness of self leads to nationalist view and takes the form of literary resistance. Restoration of national and cultural history and community reflects from the resistance fiction. Stephen Sleamon quotes the opinion of Coujoe and Harlow about resistance “as an act or set of acts that is designed to rid a people of its oppressors and it so thoroughly infuses the experience of living under oppression that it become an almost autonomous aesthetic principle”\textsuperscript{50}\n
Sleamon comments that resistance literature can be seen as an integral part of an organized struggle or resistance for national literature. Said observes that after regaining political independence, new and imaginative reconstruction of society and
culture, intellectual stirring against injustice and abused oppressions come to the forefront in the resistance process and literature.

Hybridity is another major concern of postcolonialism. It is a product of colonial and cultural confrontation. Colonialism often meets with this contradiction of ‘civilizing the others’ and perpetuating the otherness. Ania Loomba observes:

Anti colonial movements and individuals often drew upon western ideas and vocabularies to challenge colonial rule. Indeed, they often hybridized what they borrowed by juxtaposing it with indigenous ideas, reading it through their own interpretative lens and even using it to assert cultural alterity or insist on an unbridgeable difference between colonizer and colonized.\(^5\)

In Bhabha’s opinion mimicry dislocates the subject culturally and disintegrates the identity. The effect of mimicry disturbs the authority. It involves ‘the displacing gaze’ of its ‘disciplinary double.’ The imitation results in partial representation and corrupts the purity. What Macaulay intended was the production of mimic man. According to Bhabha between mimesis and mimicry, writing emerges as a mode of representation. The double vision, ‘gaze of othernesses liberates marginal elements. In the process, the observer becomes the observed. The notions of identity are rearticulated. Bhabha views that therefore, the questions of representation of difference is always a problem of authority. The mimicry process splits the identities of man and his ‘double’.\(^5\)

Writing in the colonizer’s language is an act of regaining the lost sociopolitical and cultural identity. In India, during and after the freedom movement writing in English had become a powerful mode of assertion of identity. There is an inevitable tendency of subversion and interrogation of philosophical assumptions that establish the hierarchical order. Novelists like J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, V.S. Naipaul, Margaret Atwood and Jean Rhys have rewritten the English canon. These writers exposed the ‘syncretic and hybridized nature of postcolonial experience and literature
became an instrument to establish difference on equal terms. Aschercof et al state:

Strategies of appropriation, then, seize the language, replace it in a specific cultural location, and yet maintain the integrity of that otherness, which historically has been employed to keep the postcolonial at the margins of power, of ‘authenticity’ and even of reality itself.  

Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is a seminal text of postcolonialism. According to Said, European supremacy was based on two themes—knowledge and power. The literary archive was created by the West. Writers like Dante handed down the image of Orient as strange, different, exotic and sensuous since renaissance. Said views the concept of Orientalism, as a discourse, that exists in an uneven exchange of powers. Said observes Orientalism as an ideology behind the European imperialism. He painstakingly exposes the epistemological and cultural attitudes of the west and their reflection in actual political hegemony.

Literary culture and society are to be understood together. The sense of western power over the Orient is taken for granted. Orientalism could be traced back to the Greek and Roman period. He observes that the journey, history, the fable the stereotype, the polemical confrontation, etc. are the means by which the Orient is experienced. The images of the Orient represented by Western Orientlists and accepted as the true Orient. For Said, Orientalism is a kind of Western projection on to the Orient and observes that Orientalists plotted oriental history, character and destiny for hundreds of years. Orientalism viewed the orient as something fixed in time and place for the west. It provided a set of structures. Said discusses the Oriental historians as well as philosophers like Sacy and Renan to prove his point. He points out: “Orientalism organized itself systematically as the acquisition of oriental material and its regulated dissemination as a form of specialized knowledge.”
Thus, the orient was reconstructed from individual responses. It became ‘a system of representation framed by a set of forces that brought the orient into Western learning, Western consciousness and later Western Empire’. He thinks that Orientalism was a product of political forces and activities. The ‘essential body of knowledge’ about the Orient was made distinct and clear from Occidentalism. Said shows how during the nineteenth century the separateness, the backwardness, silent difference and feminine penetrability of the orient reflect in the writing from Renan to Marx, Lane and Sacy to Flaubert. In the discourse of the Orientalists, the Orient is all absence and what he says is presence. Thus, orient is substituted and displaced and silenced. Said thus explores how the European colonialism and imperialism determined Orientalism and controlled the nature of knowledge. Europe authorized and controlled the Orient in her interest. Said highlights, how culture and literature played vitally important political roles in the Empires and how structures of European hegemony were constructed through European concepts of Orientalism.

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said expands his argument to describe a general pattern of relationship between modern metropolitan West and its overseas territories. By culture Said implies two things, first, all practices that exist in aesthetic forms, and secondly, a concept that each society’s reservoir of the past. Said focuses on the novel as a cultural form because narrative is crucial for his argument. Said observes:

> The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging is very important to culture and imperialism. The grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment motivated the colonial subjects to throw off subjugation.

Said elaborates that because of imperialism the cultures involved in one another and all are hybrid, and heterogeneous. The narratives of emancipation and enlightenment have given way to formation of new groups. Representations and resistance, formations of identities became
more debated issues. Said points out that the past shapes the understanding of the present\textsuperscript{57}. The alterity and difference have affected the Imperial cultures, too.

Homi K. Babha is another significant contributor to the postcolonial theory. \textit{The Location of Culture} (1994) consists of most of his seminal essays. In Bhabha’s point of view the post perspective revises nationalist / nativist view of the binary structure of relation of the first world and the third world. \textit{The Black Skin, White Masks} by Fanon has Bhabha’s foreword suggesting that the colonizer and colonized must be seen in their nuanced and politically ambiguous engagements. Bhabha observes that the west and non west are connected by colonization and the once colonized societies become ‘dark shadows’ of the colonizer. The humanist progress and civility are attached repeatedly to the assumed power. To scrutinize the language of colonialism is to perceive the play of power. In ‘Race, Time and Revision of Modernity’ Bhabha suggests that post colonial identity is always differential and relational rather than fixed and essential and post colonial politics is more subversive than oppositional. According to Bhabha:

\begin{quote}
The discourse of race displays the problem of ambivalent temporality of modernity. Bhabha says, “If we take even the most cursory view of influential post modern perspectives we find there is an increasing narrativization of the question of social ethics and subject formation\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

In Bhabha view such ‘self-construction is ethnocentric in its construction of cultural difference.

Bhabha’s \textit{Of Mimicry and Men} focuses on the contradictory mechanism of the colonial discourse. The ‘native’ is anglicized but refused to be an English clone. The colonial mimesis leads to a subversive move. The more the mimic man resembles the colonizer, the more possibility of transgression of authority. The mimic man undermines the colonialist supremacy. Bhabha views that:
The menace of mimicry is its double vision in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse, also disrupts its authority. And it is the double vision that is a result of what I’ve described as the partial representation / recognition of the colonial object.59

But it is also a process of displacement and distortion. The book is a correlative of the Western sign of empiricism, idealism, monoculturalism—and a tradition of English national authority. The discovery of books establishes colonial authority and order. The authority requiring differentiation individuation discriminates between mother culture and the others ‘the self and its ‘double.’ Hybirdity becomes the sign of productivity of colonial power and its shifting forces and fixities. ‘Hybirdity emerges out of the revaluations of assumptions of colonial identity effects. Hybirdity represents the ambivalence of discourse of authority and enables a form of subversion. The metonymic strategy produces ‘signifier of colonial mimicry as the effects of hybridity, as a mask for resistance and mockery of authority.

Gayatri Chakrvoorti Spivak’s approach is inclusive of Marxist, Feminist and Deconstructive views. Spivak is concerned with the neo capitalist, Western strategic control over the third world population. Spivak takes up the feminist issues of the third world women. She emphasizes on the heterogeneity of post colonial experience and opposes to the unified subjectivity of the subaltern. She throws light on the hidden politics in the discourse. She points out that the constructs ‘explanation and knowledge’ explain ‘the other’ .The humanities in Western academies have become a source of explanation of East as ‘other’ post colonial world. Spivak observes that the high level technology strengthens neo capitalism, which further controls production and dissemination of knowledge. The production of knowledge has a strong political purpose of ‘popularizing culture of consumerism, high fashion and advancing technologies.’ Such a knowledge produces a specific culture .she perceives that the ‘official explanation aligns with power and imposes the
status of the ‘other’ on the margin and serves the power play In Spivak’s view literary theory and criticism are also subsumed within the grand narrative of capitalism. The theories of metaphor, modernism and postmodernism, function on the assumption about the superiority of a particular class, group and race over the rest.

Spivak’s views regarding gender politics are vital to the post colonial theory. Spivak points out that gender politics is much under the networking of market. She discusses feminist struggle of the third world women in their cultural and material contexts. She examines Western Feminism from the point of view of ‘difference’ and heterogeneity, and applies deconstruction to the images of third world women as an important project of post colonial feminism. She brings in considerations of race, gender and class while examining the first and third world feminism. Spivak shows that the first world feminist perceptions of the third world are phallocentric. The first world feminism’s attempt to describe and perceive the process of displacement confines the third world women. Spivak finds the differences of social cultural and material background between first and third world women are vital.60

Indian fiction in English has come of age in the last decades of the twentieth century. The variety of themes explored by the Indian authors is astonishing. Right from the beginning, the focus of Indian fiction in English has been on the presentation of social ethos. The evocation of East/west cultural encounter has been very impressively dealt with in the Indian fiction in English. The legacy of three great novelists- Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand -is inherited by the second generation of novelists such as Manohar Malgoankar and Bhabhani Bhattacharya. The contribution of women writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal, Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Pravar Jhabwalla continues to occupy a place of respect among the readers and critics.

The fiction of the last two decades is a significant period in the flourishing of Indian fiction in English. One notices a sudden increase in
the production of creative writing almost exploded in the post nineteen eighties. The modernist spirit initiated by Salman Rushdi, Amitav Ghosh and Arun Joshi’s creative writing became a powerful trend in this period. The most remarkable feature of this fiction is the considerable increase in the number of women writers. The new generation of women writers naturally deals with the complexities of Indian socio-political scene as well as cultural evolution. Hence, the fiction of these women writers becomes a matter of prime interest in this study.

Secondly, women writers’ fiction of the post nineteen eighties deals with themes related to multiculturalism and global cultural changes. Indian women writers have indicated a very sincere analytical view concerning questions of identity, human relationships and individual agonies. Their assessment of Indian society clearly expresses their postcolonial stance. The central issues they deal with include history, gender, cultural and identity crises. They make gender issue the center of focus with an attempt to deconstruct the patriarchal authority. Keeping these facts in view, the present study has confined its focus to five women writers of the post nineteen eighties. It is really difficult to select a few writers from a large number of women writers. The choice of these writers is based on their position about women’s marginality.

Their response in their works to the postcolonial situation is the topic of this dissertation. The present study seeks to trace the postcolonial features of these Indian women writers selected novels. The writers chosen are Arundhati Roy, Gita Mehta, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jai Nimbkar. Almost all of these writers shot to fame instantly with their début attempts of novel writing in the last two decades of the twentieth century. They focus their attention on the internal socio-cultural constructs of Indian society, especially, the position of Indian woman in that society. And more importantly, their fiction presents the social cultural and postcolonial situation from a woman’s
point of view. Their works thus suggest their refusal to acknowledge any discrimination within the indigenous cultural context.

Arundhati Roy was obviously the first choice. The first reading of *The God of Small Things* was a simply haunting experience. It is moving, disturbing and sometimes shocking. It provokes the reader to look at the world and its brutality from close quarter. The sense of marginalization and painful existential trauma of the central characters was so haunting that Arundhati Roy became the first choice. Her other non-fictional writings support her position as a postcolonial writer.

Gita Mehta’s gallery of fiction is rich and varied. The postcolonial approach of Gita Mehta reflects through her confident narrative of *Raj, River Sutra* and *Karma Kola*. Her representation of the Indian independence movement through the eyes of an elite royal woman in *Raj* is an instance of good creative writing. Her critique of the image of exotic mystical India in the west and reality is very impressively visible in *Karma Kola*. Mehta’s experimentation with the narrative form and allegorical presentation in *River Sutra* make her fiction a natural choice of the present study.

Jai Nimbkar’s two novels, *Come Rain* and *Temporary Answers*, offer a unique experience of reading. Nimbkar sets the identity of modern Indian woman against the traditional patriarchal society. She presents the crisis in the traditional family system and individual’s response to social evolution. *Come Rain* is about cultural differences and rigidity of family system. Nimbkar also deals with the theme of inter racial / inter cultural marriage and the traditional institution of Hindu joint family. These themes and background are an ideal site for postcolonial interpretation.

The other two writers, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are both acclaimed writers and are recognized for their postcolonial stance. Their fiction represents the voice of migrant Indians. The themes of displacement, nostalgia, and assertion of cultural / regional identities and existential trauma of a migrant in an alien land, racial
discriminatory experiences are at the center of their fiction. This
discussion of the postcolonial spirit of Indian women writers can never be
complete without considering the migrant experiences. Since, the
migration intensifies the awareness of colonial consciousness their choice
is logical and essential.

All these writers belong to different regions of India and as such
they represent the multicultural and multilingual reality of India. Yet, in
each of their works there is a peculiar stream of Indian values and
attitudes. It is interesting to trace what they share in their views of Indian
identity through an analysis of their fiction. The purpose of the
postcolonial reading of these selected writers is to examine their views
concerning the life of women in contemporary Indian society.

Since the dissertation aims at exploring the postcolonial
characteristics of the selected writers’ fiction, the principles of
postcolonial theory shall be used for the analysis. Seminal texts and
opinions of the major exponents of the postcolonial theory are to used for
a systematic analysis of these novels. Since focal authors are women the
analysis relies on postcolonial feminism and its basic tenets. The present
study is confined to the postcolonial notions reflected in the individual
author’s texts. The MLA style sheet is followed in denoting the references
and sources.
Notes and References

1. Leela Gandhi says: “Some feminist postcolonial theorists have cogently argued that a blinkered focus on racial politics inevitably elides the double colonization of women under imperial conditions. Such theory postulates the third world woman as victim par excellence – the forgotten casualty of both imperial ideology, and native and foreign patriarchies.”


6. Ibid., p.117


“In the invention of heroic women served this purpose to some extent, the claim for nationhood and also articulated in terms of a claim for the threatened body of Bharat mata and more generally, of Indian women. This book then demonstrates the centrality of gender in the formation of national identity.”


Ibid., p. 12.


Ibid., p. 7


23. Ibid., p. 296.


38 Ibid. P.102


48 Ibid., p. 41
49 Ibid., p. 165
55 Ibid., p. 165.
56 Said suggests Contrapuntal reading of texts he states that: “The point is that contrapuntal reading must take account of both the processes, that , of imperialism and that of resistance, which can be done by extending our reading texts to include what was once forcibly excluded,”

59 -----------, “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under tree Outside Delhi, May 1817” Critical Inquiry Volume 12 no.1,Autumn, 1985 144-165
60 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak states in her essay Can the Subaltern speak? within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject , the track of sexual difference is doubly effected. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or ground rules of the sexual divisions of labor, for both of which there is ‘evidence’. It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction
of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.”