Chapter One

Introduction

"The Authentic Lie"
Introduction

The term ‘Feminism’ was coined by Alexander Dumas, a French dramatist in the year 1872. The term was first applied to the voice raised for the cause of women which later expanded its canvas and took up the issues of race, class, sex and gender. Infinite number of meanings and connotations are conferred by different theorists and philosophers on feminism. Cambridge Dictionary defines it as “the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state.” Webster Dictionary says, “Feminism is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes. It is an organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests.” Over the past 2500 years, women writers and scholars across the globe have expressed their views about gender roles and struggled for equality. Some philosophers trace the roots of feminism to Sappho of ancient Greece (630- 570 B.C). She is followed by Hildegard of Bingen (1098- 1179), Christine de Pisan (1364-1430), Modesta di Pozzo di Forzi (1555- 1592), Hannah Woolley (1622- 1675), Olympes de Gouge (1748- 1793), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759- 1797), and Jane Austen (1775- 1817) etc. who are considered the foremothers of the modern women’s movement. All these writers have promoted the dignity, intelligence and basic human potential of the female gender.

You may forget
But let me tell you
this: someone in some future time
will think of us.

_ Sappho

Sappho (630- 612 BC), is one of the greatest Greek lyricists and a few identified women poets of the primitive world. Many theorists consider her to be the founder of literary feminism. She belonged to an elite family and married a merchant and also had a daughter. Coming from a wealthy background, Sappho had the opportunity to chose pastimes according to her own will. She decided to work on the arts on the isle of Lesbos. Sappho is acknowledged as a lyric poet even by patriarchs of classical literature. The scholars of Hellenistic Alexandria named her as “one of the nine melics or musical poets”, while Plato called her “the tenth muse” (Adventures in
ministry). The uniqueness of her verses makes them so distinct that they came to
identified as Sapphic meter. It is quite unfortunate that most of Sappho's works
is lost. The work that survived is fragmentary. Sappho's artifacts describe her as a
bian archetype. The word 'lesbian' is derived from the isle of Lesbos, while the
m 'Sapphic' is used as an adjective in the modern literary world for women who
other women.

Hildegard of Bingen was born in 1098, the period of Eleanor of Aquitaine,
er Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux. At this time Charters Cathedral was built and
great universities were established. Hildegard too is considered as one of the most
ificant figures in the history of Middle Ages. She has written more than hundred
istles to emperors, popes and nuns; about seventy two songs and a play. She is
led as "the Dear Abby of the twelfth century" (Kiefer) by some biographers. Her
portant works are theological viz. Scivias (Know the Paths), Liber Vitae Meritorum
n Ethics), and De Operatione Dei.

Christine de Pisan wrote Epistre au Dieu d' Amour (Epistle to the God of
ve) in the 15th C in defense of her gender. Her early works consist of ballads of lost
ue which she wrote in the memory of her husband. She wrote ballads, rondeaux,
s and complaints. She wrote ten volumes in verse that include Le Livre des trois
its (Book of Three Virtues) written in 1405, a sequel that categorizes the roles of
men and the constructed moral instructions for them in medieval society, Le Livre
la Cite' des Dames (The Book of the City of Ladies) also written in 1405, depicting
heroism and goodness of women. She wrote on the life of the deceased King
arles- Le Livre des Fais et Bonnes Meurs du Sage Roy Charles V (Book of the
eds and Morals of the Wise King Charles V) in 1404 at the request of Philip the
old of Burgundy which is an original treatise on Charles V and his court. Her last
rk, Le Ditie' de Jehanne d' Arc (1429), is a lyric written in celebration of the
ories of Joan of Arc.

Modesta di Pozzo or Moderata Fonte (1555-1592) born in Venice, is one of
most appealing Italian women writers of 16th C. 'Moderata Fonte' is her
eudonym. Modesta had been writing since her childhood. Il merito delle donne (The
orth of Women) is her best known dialogue published posthumously in 1600 which
also the debate on sex roles. She has also published Il Florido, her chivalric
ance in 1581 and two poetic narratives of Christ's passion and resurrection in the
r 1582 and 1592 respectively. Tredici Cantidel Floridoro is her earliest unfinished
chivalric romance which came out in 1581. The Florido narrates the adventures of young prince Florido and his would be bride Celsidora, with a sub-plot of the adventures of the female knight Risamante. Her other works, Le feste (Celebrations), a dramatic dialogue and a narrative poem, La Passione di Christo (The Passion of Christ) were published in 1582. The latter is a well known religious poem of 16th C Italy written in ottava rima typical of chivalric romance. The poem emphasizes the female protagonist of the Gospel, the Virgin Mary Magdalen. Le feste is a dialogue between a stoic and an Epicurean philosopher on the importance of virtue and pleasure in human life. It was performed before Doge Niccolo da Ponte on St. Stephen's Day, December 26th 1581.

Hannah Woolley was born in 1622. She published books on household management. Her publication, The Cook's Guide (1664) is dedicated to Lady Anne Wroth whose household Woolley had served. Her first book The Ladies Directory in Choice Experiments and Curosities was published in 1662. Along with her husband, she ran two boarding schools. She began writing cook books after his death in 1661. She continued her career with The Queen-like Closet, and remarried in around 1666-1669. It is suspected by one of the modern editors of her work that Gentle Woman’s Companon or A Guide to the Female Sex (1673) is a work by Woolley.

Marie Olympe de Gouges of Montauban is a French author (1748-1793) who is best known for supporting the French Revolution. She is a political writer and a successful playwright. She belonged to a poor family. Her father was a butcher, while her mother was a maid servant. She was a self educated woman who wrote plays, novels and socio-political pamphlets. Her dramatic works include Le Mariage inattendu de Cherubin and Zamore et Mirza ou l’ Heureux naufrage. She read political work that helped to propagate human rights specifically for women. Her reformatory political works were intended to bring about change without sacrificing the social stability. Her Droits de la femme (1788) articulated advanced revolutionary ideals, while the Patriotic Remarks (1788) advocated the distortion of monarchical government, and also presented the abuses of the elite class with the agenda of social reforms. Her work Project of a Patriotic Case by Citoyenne is a political satire. She produced two more satires, Cry of Wise by a Woman and To Save the Fatherland. Her socio-political works primarily focused upon the issues of civil rights, particularly the rights of women. She believed in complete equality of all human beings. She asserted the women’s rights in her document The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the
tizen in 1791. She is known as a member of radical groups, and also advocated for equality of the sexes, job opportunities for women, better educational rights for girls, and the establishment of a theatre that would produce plays exclusively written by women. She also emphasized the liberty of speech, women’s suffrages and the opportunity to seek public office. In 1793, she was executed for crimes against the government.

Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, is an extension of the French Revolution as it emphasizes the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity for men with the inclusion of women. Her work is a counter attack on Rousseau’s *Nile* that rejects intelligence in women. She stresses upon providing equal opportunities and equal rights to both the sexes. Apart from these writers, Jane Austen, Charlotte and Emile Bronte, Virginia Woolf etc. are the precursors of the feminist movement.

It was not until the late 19th C. that the efforts for women’s equal rights escalated into a clearly recognizable movement, or rather a series of movements. In the UK and the US, the urban industrialization and liberal social politics during the 19th and the early 20th centuries can be traced as the first wave of feminism. The first wave of feminists did not call themselves “feminists”. The term was first used in the late 1960s with the emergence of second wave feminism. In a number of countries the emergence of a new feminism after the second world war began came to be known as second wave feminism which reflected the consequences and the new sections caused by the war, while prior to the war was considered as the first wave. The aim of the first wave was to provide women the right to suffrage, educational rights, birth control, equal marriage laws and post-marital property rights. The wave was initiated at Seneca Fall Conventions set off by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) which highlighted the new movement’s ideology and political strategies in 1848, when 300 men and women assembled and raised voice for the cause of women.

In the initial phase, feminism was interconnected with the restrained and militant movements. Women adopted unconventional ways after making public speeches, going to jail and defying domesticity. The well-known first wave feminists in the UK include, Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Rayner Parkes. Those from US include, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Alice Paul, Matilda Joslyn and Jane Jams. The wave primarily took into account the cause of the middle class educated women.
The second wave of feminism began in the 1960s and continued till the 1990s. In the US it was influenced by the Civil Rights Movement while in the UK by the labour rights movement. The tone of the second wave was increasingly radical, and dealt with reproductive rights and sexuality. Mc Hugh points out:

Women’s bodies became sites of political contest as the right to bodily integrity and self-determination became focal points of second wave feminism. The UK abortion Act in 1967 and the 1973 US ruling in Roe V. Wade giving women the right to have safe, legal abortions were important movements in second wave feminism. (120)

The phrase ‘personal is political’ was the significant slogan of the time. It depicted marriage, gender norms and domesticity as political. The slogan encompassed issues related to low pay scales of women and abortion rights. Many feminists urged the state administration to form laws against rape and domestic violence so as to provide security to women in every sphere of life. The movement insisted on the assurance of social egalitarianism irrespective of sex. Anti-sexual attacks and domestic violence operations were conducted.

Second wave feminism had Lesbianism on its agenda. Lesbians felt marginalized within the dominant discourse of women’s movements and also by the movement of gay liberation. The slogan ‘woman-identified woman’ became popular among them. One major group known as Radicalesbians considered heterosexuality to be the root cause of women’s oppression. Many radical lesbian feminists such as Adrienne Rich and Catherine Mac Kinnon argued that there was no man-woman relationship that was free of violence and compulsion. Many women’s organizations and consciousness raising groups such as NOW were formed with women assembling to discuss their experiences as women during 1970s. “The BITCH Manifesto” and “Sisterhood is Powerful” became the major publications of the time. Betty Freidan’s The Feminine Mystique (1963) attained the status of a best-seller that projected the mental and emotional trauma of middle-class US women bound to home and domesticity. Theories and movements other than feminism such as, neo-Marxism and psychoanalytic theory submerged with the second wave, and thus connected the cause of women with capitalism and heteronormativity. Second wave feminism also attempted to differentiate between sex and gender as the former being biological, and the latter a societal construct. It largely took into account the cause of the white
middle-class women and considered women of colour, and the problems of the third world women as divisive to the movement.

The third wave of feminism began in the mid-1990s and is influenced by post-modern ideology and Third World feminism. It is a critique of second wave for considering the issues of only white middle-class women. The third wave deals with a number of aspects of marginalization of women and other oppressed groups. Many constructs originated earlier, have been destabilized, including the one related to body, universal womanhood, sexuality, gender, prostitution and heteronormativity. A characteristic feature of third wave feminism that had amazed the earlier feminists is the “readoption by young feminists of the very lipsticks, high heels and make-up” (Rampton). Many second wave feminists criticized the third wave for not concentrating on women’s issues and the marginalization of the subalterns, while the latter called themselves activists who imparted the same idea but in a different manner. They argued that gender oppression could not be dealt with separately rather it is connected with other forms of discriminations. According to Rampton, the “grrls” of third wave defined “feminine beauty for themselves as subjects not as objects of sexist patriarchy” (Rampton). They used media and web as important features for creating space exclusively for women. Grrl-feminism is universal and shuns false identity, sexuality and gender. The third wave broke the norms of earlier feminist movements.

As feminism advanced a pace, there remained differences of opinions and tensions within its realm. Many theories and ideologies emerged out of the umbrella term ‘feminism’. Radical feminism, Queer theory, Psychoanalytic theory, Third World feminism, Eco-feminism, Post-modern feminism etc. are some that are adopted by different feminist writers to encompass the movement. Radical feminism evolved out of the women’s liberation movement of the 1960s. Radical feminists argue that to abolish the patriarchy’s oppression of women, new political, social and economic groups are required to be constructed. Radical feminists considered gender oppression the root of other oppressions, in order to abolish inequality, the elimination of the subjugation of women and the end of institutionalized heterosexuality was essential. Radical feminism suffered from cultural and democratic destruction. The Libertarian-radical feminism questioned the sex/gender structure and sought to break it. It acknowledged that, “women are no more destined to be
passive than men are destined to be active” (Tong 49). Kate Millet in Sexual Politics (1970) argued that to achieve this goal, the shift from gender-based structure of society by androgynic system is required. The Dialectic of Sex (1970) by Shulamith Firestone considers women’s nurturative and reproductive role as the sole cause of their decay, and that to free them from such roles the construction of new social structure and advanced technologies of reproduction, such as artificial insemination are required. Another major liberal radical feminist Marilyn Frye encourages lesbianism and discards heterosexual standards as they reduce women to minute creatures, unnoticed in an androcentric world. Mary Daly, a cultural radical feminist emphasizes the retention of womanhood and feminine characteristics free from male oppression. She also stresses upon the development of essential female behaviour which women should celebrate without being muddled with masculine traits and standards.

A group called Radicalesbians drew connections between the denial of male ascendancy and the affirmation of sexual love for other women. The essay “The Woman-Identified Woman” (1970), defines lesbianism as an expression of anger. Kreps argues that for the women’s self-hate and identity crises are rooted in male-given roles, thus “only women can give to each other a new sense of self” (239). They try to redeem the dignity of lesbians after discarding the ignominy of their mental illness associated with their love and affection for other women. Radicalesbian feminists consider lesbians as unconscious feminists who resist documentation. In the 1970s, lesbians made attempts to enhance women potential after running book stores, organizing conferences and concerts for the cause of lesbians. In reaction to the elimination of lesbian movement from the mainstream feminism, separate awareness raising groups and committees were formed who explained their culture and demanded its legitimacy in songs and essays. Along with the fledging gay liberation movement; lesbian feminists helped to falsify an influential concept of sexual identity.

Queer theory developed in gay and lesbian studies in 1990s and is associated with the radical gay politics of Act Up, Outrage and other groups which labeled queer to separatist politics. In cultural theory, queer theory is said to be a challenge to both homosexuality and heterosexuality, as it defines sexuality as dynamic and multiple, and fluid according to cultural context. To queer is to render normal sexuality as weird and disturbed, and to challenge heterosexuality as a naturalized social-sexual norm. It challenges the hegemony of straight ideology and endorses the concept of
digression. The influential work of Judith Butler, particularly *Gender Trouble* (1990), with its broadly over-used concept of 'performative' sexuality and gender identity, discards fixed categories altogether. She confronts the terms as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender and points out that they bear no meaning when stripped of the institutional means that support them. In her work *Undoing Gender* (2004), she says that "queer theory is understood, by definition, to oppose all identity claims, including sex assignment." (Butler 7) Queer theory is supposed to be hazardous, by some feminists, for feminist theory as it makes investigative gender studies.

Psychoanalytic feminist theory is both for and against women and thus perpetuates sexual politics. Oedipus Complex is the root cause of subjugation of women. The notion originated from Sigmund Freud's *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sexuality, Infantile Sexuality* and *The Transformation of Puberty*. Feminist criticism and Psychoanalytic theory both give importance to Oedipus complex, relationship between sexuality and its expression, instability of identity, psychic affiliations between parents and children, dreams examination etc. Kate Millet, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar and Simone de Beauvoir etc. are some feminist psychoanalysts.

Third World feminism is generated by Third World women or women of colour. Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her introduction to *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (1991) defines it as:

> Imagined Communities of women with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systematic...

(t)he idea of imagined community is useful because it leads us away from essentialist notions of third world women struggles, suggesting political rather than biological or cultural bases for alliance. (4)

However, the everyday lifestyle of third world women is distinct, their political struggles unite them together to form a common bond between them. Their race, poverty, work, ethnicity and a critique of the mainstream white feminist movement provide them a common voice.

Francoise d' Eaubonne, a French feminist philosopher first used the term Ecofeminism in her work *Le féminisme ou la mort* (1976). She argues that the androcentric view of looking at women as mere reproductive bodies is the root cause of environmental destruction, for the increase in population leads to the ruining of
ecological balance. She thus stresses upon the elimination of patriarchy in order to balance nature and environment. Rosemary Ruether in *New Women/New Earth* (1975) furthered Eaubonne’s ideology and brought out the notion that the emancipation of women could not be achieved without the reshaping of our behaviour towards the environment. According to her, women’s strong spiritual, emotional and physical affiliation to nature, create cultural interactions with it.

Eco- feminism also has multiple approaches to feminism. Karren Warren in *Ecofeminist Philosophy* (2000) argues that “[e]cological feminists (“ecofeminists”) claim that there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women, people of colour, children, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature” (1). It shifts the objective approaches of Western Sciences by creating a relationship between nature and the human world, including animals. It comes out with the truth that the patriarchal framework of society is approximately two thousand years old while matriarchy prevailed prior to it. The works that propagate the theories of eco- feminism are *God was a Woman* by Manja Gimbuta and *The Creation of Patriarchy* by Gerda Lerner. *The Chalice and the Blade* of Eisler is often considered as the Bible of Eco- feminist theory. It is specifically powerful in radical feminism and Green Movement.

Post- modern Feminism is deeply influenced by Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, Jacques Derrida’s theory of ‘difference’, and Lacanian Psychoanalytical theory. It originated in France in 1970s with the works of Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray etc. The theory points out that the power and position in a society are decided by race, class, sex and ethnicity. The theory is criticized for being excessively prosaic and politically invaluable for women as it did not focus on the realistic approach of male domination of women and their freedom struggles. Many post- modern feminists would argue against these criticisms. *Unbearable Weight* (1993) by Susan Bordo, a post- modern writer, is the evaluation of contemporary media and advertising agencies’ rude perception of women’s bodies. Mc Hugh points out:

... Post- modern analysis can help us to read how the body is made to be text and teaches us to read advertising such that we come to understand how we embody messages. Through this critical lens women can learn to resist the pull of cultural messages about their bodies. (103)
The writings of post-modern critics transcend the boundaries of feminism and offer women freedom from oppressive thought.

Women composed to break their silence. They were heard only after they began writing. Women's writing, then, is like a growing consciousness. Their writing influences their very being in the socio-cultural settings as it hastens their shift from margins to the centre. Much of women's writing has been rejected for two centuries by patriarchal discourse. Thus, attempts were made to provide recognition to women writers in the mainstream culture, but the non-white writers still struggle to be acknowledged in women's literature.

Literature is the mirror of society but society is also patterned by literature. Indian literature was traditionally dominated by men writers. It tells the story of half of humanity leaving women unnoticed. Women's writings brought them out from the shackles of the stereotypical roles of Savitri, Sita and Pativrata. Now the Indian literary women are no more submissive, meek and docile, rather they are active and ready to take on the challenges of the harsh androcentric world:

The concept of Indian womanhood is as divergent as the country itself and has undergone drastic and dramatic changes from era to era. India has traveled from her glorious past to degeneration; from spiritual ascendancy to communal clashes; from captivity to independence; from agrarian revolution to cyber technology. The role of the Indian woman has also changed from that of deity to devadasi, from shakti to abala, from homebound creature to a professional. (Shukla)

Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu were the pioneers who made way and inspired the new generation of writers in English. Their poetry is the submersion of both the Eastern and the Western style of writing. The credit for writing the first novel in India goes to Krupabai Satthianadhan with her debutant novel Kamala: The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife written in 1894. The novel is considered to be revolutionary and reformative. The protagonist however is presented as a stereotypical woman who gradually evolves into an active modern woman who is capable of helping and protecting other women. Her other novel Saguna, is the realistic account of the life of a Christian woman. These novels have formed women's solidarity along religious lines. Sevantibai M. Nikambe published an autobiographical novel Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife in 1895. It narrates the story of a
Hindu girl, married at nine, and her struggle to attain education. These novels were inspired by the Age of Consent Act of 1891. The Hindu andarmahal is depicted in Kamala, and in 1944 Iqbalunnisa Hussain projected the life of a Muslim woman of a traditional Muslim household. Her novel Purdah and Polygamy: Life in an Indian Muslim Household (1944) is a feminist novel which is autobiographical in nature. Most of Indian women writers have common themes in their novels. Tejero points out that almost all of them apply their personal experiences, use autobiographical elements, identify themselves with their female characters and finish up in a feminist tone (Tejero). These writers bore the impact of the 19th C. reform movements. In the year 1917, the movement for women’s suffrage started. Many activists of All India Women’s Conference such as Sarojini Naidu, Amrit Kaur, Annie Beasant and many other supplemented the cause of women.

The post-independence era has a plethora of women writers who are prolific, devoted and rich in terms of theme and technique. They are committed to society and their agenda and belief is to make literature a vehicle of change. The stunning spurt of female talent brought forth a host of women writers. Stalwart among them are Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Shobha De etc. The writers of the post-independence phase move inward. They get more and more inclined to evaluate the sociological impact on the psyche of their characters.

Fiction by women writers exhibits innate capacities, assets of perception, a storehouse of meaning and a center of debates. Anita Desai like Joyce and Woolf, is widely acknowledged as the pioneer of the psychological novel in modern English literature. Her novels such as Where Shall We Go This Summer, Cry the Peacock, Fire on the Mountain etc. deal with women’s plight, their sense of alienation and quest for identity. Kamala Markandaya’s Nectar in a Sieve (1954) is preoccupied with the theme of the East-West encounter while Ruth Pravar Jhabvala’s To Whom She Will (1955) has imparted a psychological profundity and captured shades of life from the East as well as the West. Kamala Markandaya is the first woman novelist to present a varied collection of fictional women. Ira in Nectar in a Sieve comes out as the heir of the Victorian new woman. Rejected by her husband for being infertile, she looks after her brother starving herself to nurture and feed him at the time of famine. Her mother Rukmini does not diverge from the replica of Indian wife, dedicating herself entirely to Nathan, her husband who betrays her. Some Inner Fury, Possession and The Nowhere Man deal with the trials and tribulations that a woman faces
emerging out of east-west encounter. Venu Chitale wrote *In Transit*, the narrative of three generations of a Brahmin joint family and documented the evolution of India from colonial times to independence. The theme of conjugal conflicts find place in Ruth Pravar Jhabvala’s fiction as well. Whatever quarrels occur in a marriage are typically due to women’s growing awareness of their self and the ensuing sense of estrangement from the male culture. Veena Paintal presents upper middle-class women still tolerating marital atrocities in the hope of becoming an ideal patriarchal wife but they soon realized that it is not possible until the husband becomes equally devoted. So either they commit suicide or walk out of their relationship.

A shift in the narrative paradigm of Indian English fiction took place with the publication of “Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the status of women in India” in 1974 as it brought about a large impact on post 1975 women’s writing. The report was the disillusionment of the idea of equality for those who had been living with the false notion of equality. A number of meetings were held and a number of committees were formed to speak for the cause of women. In 1977, the life of Rajasthani *zenana* was brought into light by Rama Mehta’s *Inside the Haveli*, and the year 1979 marked the publication of a feminist journal, *Manushi*. Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* gives a vivid account of pre-partition Lucknow. Laila’s aspiration to acquire education is killed by her grand father; Zahara is forced into marriage, while Nandi the servant girl enjoyed more liberty than upper class girls. These novels are reflective of the types of responsibilities imposed upon women to guard the honour of their families, where men are considered the masters of their own will. Women writers in India face a psychological clash between their devotion towards old Indian traditions and their need to break the old stereotypes. Choubey suggests:

... the new opportunity for education and employment, the emergence of new socio-economic models and the privileges of new and equal political rights for women are gradually altering the traditional notion of the role and the status of women in contemporary society. The *Sita* image was in for a jolt and as women’s sense of individuality matured *Sita*, and cleared the way for *Draupadi*. This paradigm shift may be seen in the novels of Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and more recently Arundhati Roy besides many contemporary women writers of Indian English Fiction. (Choubey)
Indian women writers in English had been innovative and balanced traditions with modernity. They attempted to redeem the dignity of women. The submersion of western culture with Indian traditions created a shift to women seeking independent identities. The post-colonial writings of the Indian diaspora narrate the complex experience of migration, and encompass both cultural hybridization and assimilation on one hand and lingering nostalgia and cultural alienation on the other. There might be differences among various literary traditions of Indian diasporic writings but their historical background connects them altogether. The frequent occurrence of India resonates in almost all the works of diasporas. Identity crisis, personal loss, sense of alienation etc. are the prevailing themes. Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Bharati Mukherji, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai are well-known Indian diasporic women writers who have attained fame throughout the world. *The Nowhere Man* portrays the lack of belonging of immigrants in a foreign culture and the existing racism in England; Nayantara Sehgal's *This Time of Morning* deals with identity dilemma; Bharati Mukherji's *The Tiger's Daughter* takes into account the sense of alienation and loss of cultural identity through repatriation, while Anita Desai's *Clear Light of the Day* reflects the importance of family and home. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), uses magic and realism in her novels. Anuradha Marwah Roy's *Idol Love* (1999) takes on fantasy and surrealism, and presents the image of an Indian dystopia of the twenty-first century.

Before the rise of novels, several women writers composed songs, short stories and short plays. Story-telling is the old age tradition particularly associated with women, who in their leisure used to sit together and tell tales in the form of legends, myths, fables, folk tales and fairy tales. Legends often have a regional association. They are connected with a particular event or person and often convey a religious message. The roots of legends lie in a particular time and are associated to a particular place. They may either be passed on verbally or through writing. Unlike folk tales, legends do not have an orderly outline.

A myth is an old story that may not necessarily be true. It attempts to elucidate and organize the world through narrative. It often endeavours to explain the forces of nature. The gods and goddesses are connected with human world. Myths are based upon religious traditions which are difficult to understand for a listener, unfamiliar with their traditions. Fables are short stories that instruct their readers/listeners about
the patterns of human behaviour. They provide morals that are presented sometimes as maxims. The characters presented in fables are talking beasts who have human emotions and feelings. Aesop and La Fontaine are renowned fabulists who have survived down the ages.

Folktales grow out of the oral custom of story-telling. They are not the work of a single writer but rather the labour of corporate authors as each teller makes personal changes to suit his/her personality and spectators. Like fables, folktales also have animal characters, but with the accompaniment of human beings. Hans Christian Anderson, Oscar Wilde, John Ruskin etc. extracted material from classical folktales in order to write original fairytales. The literary fairytales often use the pattern of traditional folktales. A folktale that contains "fairies, elves, trolls, dwarfs, giants and other imaginary creatures" (Folktales), is usually considered as a fairytale. Fairytales have elements of magic and enchantment. They are often stories about royalty, kings and queens, rather than common folk. Thus the terms folktale and fairy tale may be used interchangeably.

Feminist fairy tales are different from traditional fairy tales in many ways. Scholarly research committed to feminist issues in short stories and fairy tale studies initiated in 1970 and was pushed forth by the second wave feminist movement. This does not mean that the function of fairy tale in socio-cultural discourse related to gender identity has not been acknowledged earlier. Consciousness of the fairy tales as a chief site for affirming and destabilizing ideas of gender is obvious throughout the genre's history. The women writers of France during the 17th and 18th centuries identified the fairy tale as a genre with gender and sexuality and experimented upon the inversion of the conservative gender role presented in the old and traditional fairy tales. In the 18th and 19th century, German women writers such as Benedikte Naubert, Bettina Von Arnim and Gisela Von Arnim acknowledged the primarily male point of view that distinguished prominent fairy tale publications, particularly those by Johann Karl August Musaus and the Brothers Grimm, and deliberately confronted these compilations by generating a female viewpoint and de-establishing the widely read male counterparts. In 19th C England, women writers such as Bronte sisters and Jane Austen reacted to the construction of gender in classical fairy tales after applying these broadly popular tales in their novels. The Victorian writers created new genre of tales complicitly for gender ideology. Jean Ingelow, Christina Rossetti and Juliana Horatia Erving got into inter- textual discussion with the fairy tales of male
contemporaries by writing their own texts in defense in which they would intentionally “rewrite, rewrite and replace the male-authored constructions of femininity” (Haase preface viii). In the US, tales such as “Beauty and the Beast” and “Cinderella” were put forward by Louisa May Alcott in Little Women to revise conventional ideas about men, women and their relationship. Margaret Fuller invoked Cinderella in her feminist treatise of 1845, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, the first step to introduce the fairy tales into the public discussion of women’s rights.

For about three hundred years women have deliberately used fairy tales to question gender roles and to produce tales distinctly from those generated by men which in turn built a route for the younger generation women writers and also prefigured the feminist analysis expressed in fairy tale research since the 1970s. Numerous women writers have defied and rewritten previous texts constructed from the androcentric point of view and modified internal models to give voice to the marginalized. Prominent among such writers are Anne Sexton, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, Olga Browmas, Tanith Lee etc. (Haase Preface vii- ix).

Anne Sexton was born in Newton, Massachusetts in 1928 and spent most of her life near Boston. She suffered from a serious mental illness for much of her life. Her poetic career was encouraged by W. D. Snodgrass, her mentor. She wrote “The Double image”, to explore multigenerational relationship between mother and daughter. She met Maxine Kumin with whom she exchanged her artifacts and critiqued them. They together wrote four books for children. Her play Mercy Street was produced in 1969 after several years of revisions. She was a Pulitzer Prize winner of America, a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

Four Radio Plays. She published The Virago Book of Fairy Tales in 1990 before publishing her last novel, Wise Children, in 1991. Carter was intrigued by folk and fairy tales, which she both translated and reinterpreted. Carter is widely known for her fearless examination of tabooed topics such as pornography, sexual fetish, rape and incest. Carter's work embraces lawlessness and deals with the question of marginalized. Two of Carter's works, The Magic Toyshop and The Company of Wolves, were made into films, and many of her short stories have been recast for the stage.


Tanith Lee (1947), a British writer is one of the leading fantasy authors writing today. She has written over 50 novels and short story collections, among them the best-selling is Flat Earth series. She is also the author of a fantasy series, The Secret Books of Paradys. She has won the World Fantasy Award numerous times as well as the August Derleth Award.

Feminist fairy tales serves as guides for children to make them aware of the stereotypical fixation of gender roles, unequal power distribution, racial aspects, oppression and much more. In “Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale”, Marcia K. Lieberman gives the brief overview of feminist fairy tales and remarks:

Among other things, these tales present a picture of sexual roles, behaviour and psychology, and a way of predicting outcome or fate
according to sex, which is important because of the intense interest that children take in ‘endings’; they always want to know how things will ‘turn out’. (187)

The mode of fantasy is used by the feminist fairy tale writers for reconstruction processes. The term ‘fantasy’ is as primitive as the fictional utopias (an ideal world that does not exist in reality but only in imaginations), and Swift’s Gulliver Travels (1726) in its satiric form is the presentation of bizarre world. Animal fantasy with animals personified, mythicizing and demythicizing along with magic on one hand and technology on the other are the basic components of feminist fairy tales. The writers also experiment upon Science Fiction assisted with fantasy that represents imagined reality completely diverse in its nature and performance from the ordinary real world:

Often the setting is another planet, or this earth projected into the future, or an imagined parallel universe... an explicit attempt is made to render plausible the fictional world by reference to known or imagined scientific principles, or to a projected advance in technology, or to a drastic change in the organization of society. (Abrams 278-79)

In the mid-nineteenth century, more women started to write in English in the Indian sub-continent. With the passage of time, English literature has witnessed several changes in the writing patterns. Many collections of short stories and anthologies of works by Indian women around the world have appeared, such as Truth Tales (1986), Truth Tales 2: The Slate of Life (1990) edited by Kali For Women, In Other Words: New Writing by Indian Women (1992) by Uravashi Butalia and Ritu Menon, Right of Way (1988), Flaming Spirit (1994) by K. V. Dominic, and The Inner Courtyard (1990) by Lakshmi Holmstorm. They also re-interpreted mythologies that are produced by using new symbols and subverting the canonic versions. Indian women writers have also incorporated recurring female experiences in their writings which affected the cultural and language patterns of Indian literature, and brought a stylized pattern in the whole context of Indian writing. In the late 20th, and the 21st centuries, women's writing is considered as a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statement.

It is noteworthy that critics and literary world has paid more attention to many women writers, but ignored others who too are prolific, competent and worthy of success. Due to one or the other factor they have been marginalized and thus lag
behind to attain significant positions in literature. Some such writers are Jyoti Singh, Vimala Raina, Shakuntala Srinagesh, Abha Dawesar etc. Most of these are now beginning to realize their potential, and will go further in directions as yet unimagined. Like the former ones, they also have committed themselves to fictionalize women’s causes with a view to ameliorate their position and release them from the state of traditional servitude. The present thesis studies the work of one such writer Suniti Namjoshi who too has favourably responded to the changing social, political, sexual and psychological realities of subalterns and the marginalized and has questioned their position in the androcentric patriarchal domain.

Born in Bombay, India, in the year 1941, in an elite Hindu family, Namjoshi lost her father, Captain Manohar Vinayak Namjoshi- a senior test pilot in the year 1953 in a plane crash, at the age of 12. Her mother, Sarojini Naik Nimbalkar belonged to the princely states of Phalton, Maharashtra, India. Namjoshi acquired her early education in an American boarding school in the north of India and later was sent to Rishi Valley School somewhere in the south of the Indian sub-continent. From the University of Pune she obtained her graduate and post-graduate degrees in English Literature in the year 1961 and 1963 respectively. For a year she taught as a lecturer at Fergusson College, Pune and in 1964 was selected in the Indian Administrative Service. It was after she joined the IAS, she took up writing verse. She got her master’s degree in Public Administration at the University of Missouri in America after taking leave from the government of India in 1968, and in 1969, resigned from the IAS and attained her doctorate degree on the Cantos of Ezra Pound, at Mc Gill University, Montreal, Canada (1969-1972). From 1972 till 1989, she lectured at Scarborough College, University of Toronto. It was during a sabbatical in 1978-79 that Namjoshi went to England and spent time in London and also at Cambridge and came across to the evolving feminist and gay liberation movements. She discovered other feminists with whom she shared her thoughts, doubts and visions. In Because of India, she particularly acknowledges the impact of one of Christine Donald, a poet and activist, and due to her influence she came to understand the complexity of radical feminist thought and movement. This was the time of her political development. Namjoshi herself explains in Because of India that the other women’s defense of her shamed her. She thus joined the feminist groups and appeared explicitly in print.
Since then, Namjoshi has been writing fables, poetry, prose, children’s stories etc. about power, inequality, oppression and discrimination. She is best known as fabulist and her work encompasses issues such as gender, sexual orientation, unequal power distribution, cultural identity, human and animal rights. She takes into consideration the construction of gender identities in an androcentric society and also explores the position of lesbian women on the margins of the compulsory heterosexual order. Her writings reflect the multiple attributes of a post-modern, radical-lesbian feminist encapsulated in Eco-feminist and the Third World feminist aspects. She is the first Indian woman diasporic writer who is known as the out of the closet lesbian. She is of the view that one’s sexuality is one’s own personal choice and that compulsory heteronormativity is an oppressed social construction that leads women to subordinate men (Vijayasree 26). Due to the ethical and cultural values of India and the dignity of her family, it was not possible for her to express herself openly as a lesbian writer for in a lesbian’s development the moment of open declaration of one’s sexuality before one’s family is a crucial aspect of evolution. Thus she left India and settled in the West. As reflected in Goja; An Autobiographical Myth, her writing reflects the notion of homophobia, pain and existential dilemma of a lesbian.

As Namjoshi has lived in India, America, Canada, England and Australia, her stories and fables are drawn from several cultures. She is also a re-visionist myth maker whose corpus is marked with, fantasy, inter-textuality and allusions, and is counted among prolific feminist fairy tale writers and fabulists, and carries a noticeable resemblance to Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood in terms of subject matter and creativity. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in The Mad Woman in the Attic analyze the development of women’s writing as their emergence from the shadows of men. It’s a coming of age experience for the writer as woman. They write:

A woman writer is engaged at another level with assaulting and revising, deconstructing and reconstructing those images of women inherited from male literature, especially the paradigmatic polarities of angels and monsters. (5)

Being a diasporic writer she weaves her work with nostalgia and autobiographical elements. She suffers from displacement and alienation for being a woman of colour, a lesbian and a Hindu in a male-dominated, heterosexual, Christian and Western world. Her work reflects the experiences that she herself had undergone
during her life and provides her writings a self-referential stroke. Her Indianness is apparent in her collection in which she uses Western myths and legends alongside Indian and Eastern mythologies and anecdotes. Her canvas is quite broad and encompasses the tales from *Panchatantra* and *Jataka, Arabian Nights*, Grimm Brothers, Hans Anderson as well as Hindu and Christian mythologies. She applies animal fantasy and builds utopian/dystopian worlds and science fictions. As Vijayasree points out:

> Her strength as a fabulist lies in crafting fantastic and farcical situations. She creates strange ‘Looking Glass Countries’ where things happen in an apparently bizarre fashion, but reveal interesting patterns on a closer analysis. All fiction is in some sense fantasy in that it is an imaginative construction, but the pervasive use of fantasy as an organizing principle and mode of perception as in the case of Namjoshi’s work suggests an overwhelming need for imaginative release from objective reality. (25-6)

Like Atwood and Carter, Namjoshi uses gothic elements along with magic and miracles in order to mesmerize and enchant the readers. Basically she is a poet, her fiction is not only marked in prose but in verse as well. She is a non-conformist who not only defies societal norms but also regulations and standards of literary genre.

Namjoshi’s literary career began with the publication of her first book of poems entitled *Poems* published in 1967 by P. Lal of Writers Workshop, Calcutta. She translated some poems from old Marathi into English during this period with her grandmother, Lekshmi Devi Naik Nimbalkar’s and her mother’s assistance, which got published as *Poems of Govindagraj* in Calcutta, Writer’s Workshop, 1968. Another two anthologies of poems, *More Poems* and *Cyclone in Pakistan* came out in 1971 in which she merges keen insights into personal sentiments with the evaluation of sociocultural foundations and systems. Namjoshi linked her poetic success with the publication of *The Jackass and the Lady* (1980) when she came out of the closet and established her position as a lesbian feminist. In this collection she laid open her sexuality and sexual preferences to her readers and thus her most powerful verses are found in this collection. Her next collection of poems *The Authentic Lie* published in 1982 is centered on the theme of death and metaphysics. This collection consists of poems related to Namjoshi’s grief at losing her father and is autobiographical in
nature. Later in the year 1986, her collection of poems is published in collaboration with Gillian Hanscombe entitled *Flesh and Paper* by Ragweed publication, Toronto, Canada. It is in the year 1984 that the writer met Hanscombe at the First International Feminist Book Fair in London. Even after coming back to Canada, they remained in touch and later exchanged poetry, gradually which became a manuscript and acquired the shape of the compilation *Flesh and Paper*. Gillian Hanscombe is currently Namjoshi’s partner with whom she lives in Devon, England. Another set of poems, *Sycorax* published by Penguin, India, 2005 is an elegy which is written in appraisal of a bloody-minded old woman. The figure of Caliban’s mother, Sycorax, is taken from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Sycorax is still alive and returns to the island to die after Prospero and others have left.

It was after more than a decade’s poetic work that she turned to fiction writing. She was always allured by fables and fairy tales. Her awareness of the harmful nature of the apparently harmless children’s stories led her to distort and deconstruct the conventional fixed notions associated with gender discrimination and other oppressions created by them. She hit the canonical text *The Tempest* by Shakespeare for its colonial relations by creating a female Caliban and attacking gender and racial mistreatment in her work *From the Bedside Book of Nightmares*. She produced her first work of fiction in the form of fables in 1979 which was later published by Sheba Feminist Publishers, London in the year 1981 entitled *Feminist Fables*. As the title indicates, the collection not only takes into account the issues of women’s oppression but the subalterns in general. She remarks in *The Fabulous Feminist: A Suniti Namjoshi Reader*:

...the word ‘feminist’ has become almost a bad word in the west. It has the disadvantage of making the careless reader think that the fables are concerned only with what happens to women. The fable form should make it clear that they question what happens to anyone whenever there’s an imbalance of power. (2)

Another work on fiction is a novella entitled *The Conversations of Cow* published by Women’s Press, London, in the year 1985. The book was basically written as bedtime reading for Christine Donald, her friend and a feminist who was the first to introduce her to the roots of feminism. Namjoshi does not think of this work as a book but only as ‘a private bit of writing to amuse’. (*The Fabulous Feminist* 53) The novella is written from the point of view of an Indian and is self referential. It
describes the journeys of Suniti, an expatriate lesbian of India, and a Brahmini Cow-Bhadravati with a focus on race and questions the stereotypical belief about gender and identity.

_The Blue Donkey Fables_ published by Women's Press London, 1986 is a collection of fables with 'Blue Donkey' as the central character. Namjoshi was always fascinated by Marc Chagall’s paintings, and the creation of the 'Blue Donkey' is the out come of Chagall’s production of the blue donkey with the bright red bridge and the vase of flowers as the image of the blue donkey lingered in the writer’s mind to write more fables.

_The Mothers of Maya Dilt_ was also published by Women's Press, London, in 1991. The story is set up on an island of imagination where 'matriarchy bloomed' openly. The novel portrays the three different worlds- Mayadiip, Ashagad and Paradise in which she discusses multiple sexual identities and multiple cultural traditions. The writer provides 'Ashagad’ the landscape of Western Maharashtra, her native place.

_Saint Suniti and the Dragon_ was first published by Spinifex Press, Melbourne in 1993. The book consists of two parts-_Saint Suniti and the Dragon_ and _The Solidarity Fables_. The first part is a novella while the second is the collection of fables. The first is the projection of the world in a mess, and the effort to be good persists in all. The protagonist, Saint Suniti is an ordinary human being who desires to be good but not too good as the idea conveyed later is too difficult to be fulfilled.

_Building Babel_ is published in the year 1996 by Spinifex Press, Melbourne. The text deals with the building of a new culture free of gender and sexual biases, and has located its last chapter on the internet. The hypertext links are open for the readers to contribute to _Building Babel_ so as to provide eternity to culture building.

_Goja: An Autobiographical Myth_ (Spinifex, 2000) is Namjoshi’s attempt to explore the link between language and experience. In the Preface of the book Namjoshi writes:

> This account is autobiographical in that my experience is all I have. It’s fictional since any version manipulates facts. And it’s mythical, because it’s by making patterns that I make sense of all I have.

This book ranges from story- telling to interrogation, from description to poetry, from conversation and dialogue to recollection and nostalgia. It takes the readers to the writer’s childhood and brings them back to her adult life.
For children’s Literature, Namjoshi has written twelve books of fairy tales in the set of three with four tales in each set. Her first book for children *Aditi and the One-Eyed Monkey* was published by Beacon Press in the year 1988. Namjoshi wrote the book for her niece Aditi, and made her the protagonist of the story. Soon after the children of Blue Gate Fields Junior School, London had read the tale as a part of a story telling session in Tower Hamlets and had wanted Aditi and her friends to come to London, Namjoshi wrote her second book, *Aditi and the Thames Dragon* (Chennai, India: Tulika Press, 2002). The third book in this series, *Aditi and the Marine Sage* (Chennai, India: Tulika Press, 2004) is set on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, while her fourth book, *Aditi and the Techno Sage* is set on a lake in Canada. These four books are compiled in a one set—*Aditi Adventures I* named as *Unlikely Friends*. Later more two sets of four tales each—*Aditi Adventures II and III* entitled *Unexpected Monsters* and *Heroes* respectively were published by Tulika Press, India. However, the tales are written for children but they also bear the highly philosophical notions of feminism worthy of being read by adults. These tales are feminist fairy tales which distort and dismantle the myths, biases and stereotypes constructed by patriarchy related to sex, gender and identity. The tales also deal with the raising of children and help the latter to overcome their oedipal conflicts. Painted with fantasy and magic along with science and technology the tales are the perfect examples of utopia and dystopia.

Apart from her collection of poems *Because of India*, her autobiographical account *Goja* and her compilation of poems *Flesh and Papers*, written in collaboration with Gillian Hanscombe, Namjoshi has also published her reader *The Fabulous Feminist* (2012) by Zubaan publication, Delhi, India, which along with her formerly mentioned work provide a vivid description of her literary and personal account. With Hanscombe, she has also experimented upon a play *Kaliyug: Circles of Paradise* which was first performed in 1993 written for Pan Project. Her recently published prose work that is also a memoir *Suki* (2013 by Penguin Books India) is a dialogue between Suki— a cat and her owner (the author herself). Namjoshi is fascinated by animals. Suki is a pet of the writer whom the former lost in the year 1997. For Namjoshi, Suki was a friend and a companion, thus to give a tribute to it, she decides to write a memoir:

To Suki—a sulky, silky feline who believes she is a goddess—her owner is simply her ‘high priestess’, there to do her bidding. To
Suniti—a writer, poet, fabulist and feminist icon—Suki is ‘a stroppy cat who talks too much’. But as they discuss the merits of vegetarianism, or the meaning of happiness, or war, or morality or any topic under the sun, it soon becomes clear that the bond between human and animal is a deep, complex and loving one. (Suki)

Suki is not only a memoir but a philosophical work expressive of Namjoshi’s art of fantasizing and exploring an innovative connection between animal and human world.

The present research deals with feminist perspectives in the fiction of Namjoshi. The first chapter is the introduction, the second and third chapters analyse her fables and novels in a chronological order i.e. *Feminist Fables* (1981), *The Conversations of Cow* (1985) and *The Blue Donkey Fables* (1988) in one, and *The Mothers of Maya Diip* (1989), *Saint Suniti and the Dragon* (1993), *Building Babel* (1996) and *Goja* (2000) in the other, while the fourth chapter takes into account children’s literature and deals with her fairy tales *Aditi Adventures I, II and III*, and the fifth is the conclusion. The chronological order of the division of chapters trace the course of development in Namjoshi’s thought process and literary career.
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