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This research endeavours to study the images of women in the novels of post modern novelist Manju Kapur. This study proposes to attempt a detailed study and draw inferences which might offer a fresh perspective to this topic.

Indian writing in English has undergone a lot of changes since its beginning. From being a foreign language, English over the time has been adapted and modified. It is no longer the administrative language but has become almost like a mother tongue for many Indians. Through theses authors, it has been proven time and time again that English is no longer an alien language it used to be once upon a time.

In recent times, Indian English literature has carved a widespread popularity for itself. There are many writers who are making their presence felt. Writers are exploring new genres in their field. Be it verse or prose, they are making their mark with resounding success. Side by side Indian women's writing in English is being recognized as major contemporary current in English language literature. Indian English novelists are being recognized among the great novelists of the world and many international awards have been conferred on them meanwhile Indian English women novelists have given a new dimension to the Indian English literature. In India where women weren't even allowed to complete their education, these female authors have proved their mettle in field of literature, which at one point was considered a man's job. Our
literature has definitely explored new horizons, opening gates for more women authors to prove their creative talent. In the twentieth century, women's writing was considered as a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statements. Indian English is literature much more than merely novels. The women writers are exploring new means to provide excellent literary reading materials to their readers.

The last few decades have witnessed phenomenal success in women's writings in Indian English literature. Indian women writers like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Githa Hariharan, Bharati Mukherjee, Shobha De, Namita Gokhle, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, Anita Nair, Manju Kapur and others have chosen the problems and issues faced by the women as their main thematic concerns. These women novelists describe the whole world of women with stunning frankness. Their write-up gives glimpses of the unexplored female psyche, which had no accessibility previously. For this reasons I have chosen Manju Kapur's novels for my research work. She is a novelist. She has written five full length novels to this date. She has given remarkable images of women through her novels. My study will concentrate on the images of women as portrayed by Manju Kapur in her novels.

Indian English literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in English language and whose native or co-native languages of India. Indian English literature may be defined as literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth,
ancestry or nationality. M. K. Naik clarifies the term, "the term emphasizes two significant ideas: first that this literature constitutes one of the many streams that join the great ocean called Indian literature, which though written in different languages, has an unmistakable unity." (Naik, 5). In the beginning this body of writing was given different titles such as Indi-Anglian literature, Indi-English literature, Indian writing in English and Indian English literature. But with the help of Sahitya Akademi this body of writing got its most suitable name in Indian English literature. Whatever be the name of this body of writing, it remains a phenomenon of serious attention.

Traditionally, the write-up of Indian women novelists has never been valued much due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. The Indian women's perceptions of their ambition and expectations are within boundary of social and moral commitments Chaman Nahal writes:

_Both the awareness of women's position in society as one of disadvantage or in generality compared with that of man and also a desire to remove those advantages._ (Nahal, 13)

It is true that a good and virtuous woman in Indian society avail the status of goodness but it is equally true that a woman's goodness and virtuousness was judged on her capacity to endure unquestioningly and uncomplainingly the atrocities against her by the husband and also the ruling patriarch. This dismal plight of woman is not present in India but all over the World. According to B. K. Das:
Apart from love, sex and contemporary reality, Indian English novelists have written feminist novels. Women novelists assert the rights of women to live their life in their own way. (Das, 57)

The first appearance of women novelists, though female education took a long time to spread, is an interesting development in early Indian English fiction. Novels by as many as three women novelists appeared in the last decade of nineteenth century. Toru Dutt's *Bianca, or The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878), Krupabai Satthithanadhan's *Kamala, A Story of Hindu Life* (1895), and Shevantabai Nikambe's *Ratanbai: A Case of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895).

The Dutt family gave two generations of writers of English verse, the second generation consisting of Romesh Chunadar Dutt and his cousin Toru Dutt (1856-77). Toru was the the daughter of Govind Chundar. Toru lived extensively in France and in Cambridge, where she took education. At that time Toru was publishing poetry from London and Calcutta. Toru was without doubt the first modern Indian poet in English. She brought the personal and cultural dimensions of her experience into her writing. Her fame today rests largely upon a handful of lyrical poems that appeared in the posthumously published *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* in 1882. Her first publication *A Sheaf Gleane'd in French Fields* (1876), consisting of translations of seventy French poets, brought her into the limelight. When she was eighteen, she published her first essays, including one
on Derozio in the *Bengal Magazine*. She died at the age of twenty-one and six months. After her death, her father went through her paper with a view to publishing any material of literary interest. He found a sketch for an unfinished romance, *Bianca, or The Young Spanish Maiden*, a complete French novel. The fragment, *Bianca*, was eventually published serially in *Bengal Magazine* (1878), while the French novel, edited with the help of Clarissa Bader, appeared in 1879 to gain much critical praise. A glance at Toru Dutt's use of language is enough to show the difference between her style and that of her predecessors. She had her own separate identity. The difference lies in the manner in which her language addresses her experience, her visions radiating beyond the boundaries within which most of the nineteenth century poetry in English was confined.

**Krupabai Satthianadhan** is another early exponent of women's writing in Indian English literature. She is the only woman who wrote more than one novel in English in nineteenth century India. Her two novels *Kamala, A Story of Hindu Life* (1894) and *Saguna, A Story of Native Christian Life* published posthumously in 1895, were reprinted in 1998. *Saguna* is largely autobiographical. As the daughter of a Christian convert, the protagonist manages, despite the odds, not only to receive formal education, but also to get admission to a medical college, and eventually meets a man who could share her life as an equal. In *Kamala*, Kamala's life follows a different trajectory altogether. Daughter of a learned sanyasi, she is brought up in a sparsely populated hilly area, innocent of the ways of the narrowly
caste bound community into which she is married. Both the novels are set in the same geographical locale, the Deccan plateau near Nasik. Possibly for the first time in Indian fiction, we have untouchable and tribal men and women individualized and named as part of the cast of characters. These two novels by her are not of mere archival interest. They offer a good deal of textual pleasure and represent some of the earliest articulations of feminist and cultural concerns in English by Indian Women. Shevantibai Nikambe's novel *Ratanbai: A Case of a Bombay high High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895) is also one of the early writings of Indian English women's writings. It is a domestic novel. *Ratanbai* depicts the story of a Marathi Brahmin adolescent's experience of an East-west culture clash in her own home. Ratanbai's father is a westernized lawyer.

The beginning of the twentieth century produced the first Indian English short story with a considerable literary output. Cornelia Sorabji (1866-1954), a Parsi Christian, lady advocate in Britain, known for three novels viz. *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* (1902), *Sun-Babies: Studies in the Child life of India* (1904), Sun-babies later supplement and *Between the Twilights: Being Studies of Indian women by one of themselves* (1908). Sorabji also wrote two autobiographical works - *India Calling* (1935) and *India Recalled* (1936). Through her novels she reveals the various moods and ventures going in under the 'purdah'. *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* is a collection of eleven narratives she called her 'Indian stories'. Some were fictional and others drawn from her first encounters with Indian legal life. Swarna
Kumari Ghosal (1856-1932) was a novelist, poet, playwright, songwriter, and a journalist. She was elder sister of Rabindranath Tagore. She was the first among the women writers in Bengali to gain prominence. The Fatal Garland (1910), The Unfinished Song (1913) and An Indian Love Story (1910) were her major works. She was the editor of the journal Bharath and her works mainly reflect the middle class people's story.

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), the first women president of Congress and the first woman governor of an Indian state, was a great poetess whose romanticism charmed readers in India and Europe. Her major contribution was in the field of poetry. Her poetry had beautiful words that could also be sung. Soon she got recognition as the "Bul Bule Hind" when her collection of poems was published under the title The Golden Threshold. After that, she published two other collections of poems - The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death and the Spring and The Broken Wings: Songs of Love Death and Destiny. In 1918, Feast of Youth was published. Later, The Magic Tree, The Wizard Mask and A Treasury of Poems were published. Maharshee Arvind, Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru were among the thousands of admirers of her work. It is said that, "Her poems had English words, but an Indian soul". Naidu was untouched by the modernist movement in English poetry ushered by Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. Her four collections do not differ from each other in form or content but present a continuity of poetic imagination. They revel in metrical variations and in highly embellished images and lighting cadences akin to song, all of which
are used to put on show a romantic India of myth and legend. *Sunalini: A Passage from Her Life* is an unpublished autobiographical fragment written in Switzerland before she was married. In it she spoke of her sudden realization that she was a poet with 'new irresistible, unutterable longings and senses'.

The emergence of women writer in the last quarter of the nineteenth century carried with it a double significance. It bore testimony to the birth of a new era of emancipation for the Indian women, an era of increased opportunities and a more dynamic participation in the social and intellectual life of the country ushered in by the great social reorientations which came at the turn of the century. Secondly, it was also a commentary on the rise of individualism in the life and letters of the age, an individualism which is closely associated with the rise of the English novels. It is not the appearance alone of the women writers in the realm of Indian fiction in English during the earliest phase of its growth that is of interest. The emergence of women novelists in Indian English literature took place as early as the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But it was only after the achievement of Independence that women novelists could make solid contributions to Indian writing in English. It is true that Indian women novelists had initially made a tentative beginning which, however, could not gather momentum in the first half of the twentieth century. Women novelist such as Jyotshna Bhattacharjee (*Shadows in the Sunshine*), H. Kaveri Bai (*Meenakshi's Memoirs* (1937)), Iqbalunmisa Hussain (*Purdah and Polygamy* (1944)), and Vimala Kapur (*Life Goes
on (1946)) wrote only one or two novels only. But most of these novels are a curious mixture of fiction, autobiography and sociology with a marked emphasis on the autobiographical. The chief motive behind these novels is sociological reform. These novelists are almost insignificant and non-entities. They are neither novelists of bulk literary merit. They made a general kind of contribution to the growth of Indian English fiction in terms of vitality. As such they might get a passing mention only in any comprehensive history of Indian English fiction. In contrast the post-independence period has brought into prominence a number of talented women novelists. There have also been a number of other women novelists who have written minor fiction. Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai and Manju Kapur are generally regarded as major women novelists of the period. They enjoy such a status on the strength of both literary merit and fictional corpus.

"Indian women's writing in English got established with the novels of a Kamala Markandaya" (Nitonde, 23) Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004) is a prominent post-modern woman writer writing for women. Her portrayal of India has parallels in the thematic interest of Bhabani Bhattacharya, is one of the most gifted and widely known Indian women novelists writing in English. She has nine novels to her credit. Internationally known widely known as the author of Nectar in a Sieve (1953), her first novel, which brought her critical recognition, is a novel of rural India, it is a realistic epic of hunger, of the sufferings of a peasant family and of the onslaught of modernity upon
tradition. Her other novels are viz. *Some Inner Fury, Silence of Desire, Possession, A Handful of Rice, The Coffer Dams, The Nowhere Man, Two Virgins, The Golden Honeycomb* and *Pleasure City*. One of the striking features of Kamala Markandya as a woman novelist is her portrayal of women in relation to the historical, cultural, political and sociological environment of a changing India. Women characters prominently figure in her novels. The Woman consciousness being central to her fiction, it is but natural that women characters should loom large in novel alter novel. She has tried to articulate the philosophical and the sociological strains in her novels. S. C. Harrex rightly observes:

*Kamala Markandaya's fiction is of particular interest within the context of the modern Indian novel because it crystallizes various literacy directions that the quests for identity has philosophical and sociological are clearly discernible...* (Harrex, workshop)

Kamala Markandya has not the same intimacy and familiarity with all areas of life, and she has indeed been criticized by Indian Critics for a certain lack of inwardness with the life of the poor people. Her particular strength lies in the delicate analysis of the relationship of persons, particularly when these have a more developed consciousness of their problems, and particularly when they are attempting to grope towards some more independent existence. She has, too, the genuine novelist's gift for fixing the exact individuality of the character, even if she is less successful at establishing it logically and
her best, in dealing with the problems of the educated middle class, and she has a gift in particular for delineating the self-imposed laceration of the dissatisfied. A. V. Krishna Rao asserts,

*Kamala Markandaya's novels seem to be more fully reflective of the awakened feminine sensibility in modern India as she attempts to projects the image of changing traditional society. As such, Markandya merits a special mention both by virtue of the variety and complexity of her achievement, and as a representative of a major trend in the history of the Indo-Anglian novel. In her novels, she not only displays a flair for virtuosity that orders and patterns her feelings and ideas, resulting in the production of a truly enjoyable work of art, but also, more important, she projects the national image on many levels of aesthetic awareness. Indeed, her novels seem to be uniquely reflective of the national consciousness in its multiple forms with the characteristic sensibility of the modern, educated Indian woman.* (Rao, 55)

**Ruth Prawer Jhabvala** (1927) is of Polish origin and was born in Germany. She was brought up by refugee parents in England and educated there since she was twelve. She married to an Indian and lived in India for a considerable period. She is considered as a significant writer of Indian English fiction in post-independence period. Her nine novels - *To Whom She will, The Nature of Passion, Esmond in India, The House Holder, Get Ready for Battle, A Backward
Jhabvala does not write about one or two persons. She writes about the corporate life of two or three families. Her novels are singularly devoid of accidents, coincidence and sudden shifts of fortune as is found in other writers. On the reverse, they are full of the dull routine of daily life, so much so that they tend to be tritely repetitive. But being repetitive is not a big deal for her. For that reason only "she has been able to present Indian domestic and social life as no other writer in English has ever done." (Shahane, 19) She is a hard critic of Indian society. She exposes the hypocritical ways and double
standards of Indians. She mainly writes about the upper middle class and the lower middle class people. Due to her frankness in writing she is considered by many as anti-Indian. In her fiction she employs the associated themes of love, marriage and family life, all treated very closely to the type of family which is still characteristic of India. Her eight novels present her as a novelist of urban middle class Indian Life. Her novels do not throw up such apparent signals of feminine sensibility as are found in the novels of Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai, but her consistent preoccupation with women characters shows her bias.

**Nayantara Sahgal** (b. 1927) is in the first place an exponent of the political novel. She herself had declared that each of her novels more or less reflects the political era we are passing through. Form beginning to the end her all novels are political in one or the other way. Her novels present the life of the richest sections of Indian society, their hypocrisy and shallow values: at the same time, she is concerned with the Indian heritage and its value for the educated Indian. But along with political theme, her fiction is also preoccupied with the sexual freedom and self realization. She has written nine novels - *A Time to Be happy, This Time of Morning, Storm in Chandigarh, The Day in shadow, A Situation in New Delhi, Rich Like Us, Plans for Departure, Mistaken Identity* and *Lesser Breeds*. Her fictional discourse is quite different in comparison to her contemporaries. Her novels try to highlight the independent existence of women and their efforts to thwart attempts to isolate them from the
center stage of human existence. Her fiction is also replete with the modern Indian women's search for sexual freedom and self realization. She explores the problem of women in all her novels and contemporary society treats unconventional themes and relations, divorce and remarriages and permissive morality. For that reason only in her novels her women characters find an important place as in the novels of Anita Desai and Manju Kapur.

Chaman Nahal asserts that, "Nayantara Sahgal is the major Indian novelist in whom we see the rise of the new woman." (Nahal, 145-46) Nayantara Sahgal is conscious of the fact that women have their existence as an individual who have their own rights and wishes. She fights and writes against the timid self of women as well as men's protectoral shell. In her novels women are not a mere 'goddess or an automation', they move through a process of transformation and move from weakness to strength, from indecision to self-assertion and from bondage to freedom. Most of the women characters in her novels feel bonded within the so-called sacred bonds of marriage. They object to being treated as a piece of furniture or a doormat. They rebel against the hostile environment in which a woman is forced to live. They question the validity of the accepted set of values and strive to establish a new order with changed standards where women can be their true selves. Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal protest against monotony, drabness, injustice and humiliation to which Indian woman is subjected in her conjugal life. Their women refuse to be taken for
granted and do complain against their state. Sahgal's women desire not to be mere goddess or lifeless instrument of domestic use.

They pass through a process of transformation which signifies for them a change from bondage to freedom, from indecision to self-assertion and from weakness to strength.

(Mehta, 146)

In her attitude to sexual relationship, Nayantara Sahgal differs from most of her contemporaries on Indo-Anglian scene. She treats unconventional extra-marital relationships which are beyond the middle-class morality. Other Indian English writers like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya abide by the moral conventions of Indian society. Anita Desai's women don't stray outside the fold of marriage. In R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*, Rosie is viewed as a fallen woman as she steps out of the sphere of marriage to make a relationship with Raju, the guide. But her view to extra-marital relationship is quite unconventional. She, through her female characters, points out that such relation need not always be moral.

Raji Narasimhan (b. 1930) started her writing career as a journalist. She gave up the job in late nineteen sixties to devote herself whole time to fiction and literary criticism. She has published five novels - *The Heart of Standing is You Cannot fly*, *Forever Free*, *Drifting to a Dawn*, *The Sky Changes* and *Atonement*. The major shift in the presentation of women characters in the fiction takes place with the novels of hers. In all her novels she portrayed liberated women free
from bondages. The newly evolved and liberated women in the contemporary society really bloom and blossom in Narsimhan's novels.

Kamala Das (1934 -2009) is perhaps the best-known Indian woman poet writing in English. Nowhere can we see the intensity and genuineness of the artist in her poetry. Her principal works include *Summer in Calcutta, The Descendants, The Old Playhouse and Other Poems, My Story- Autobiography, Manas* and *Alphabet of Lust*. Among all the Indian English poets of her generation, male or female, she maintains the shortest interval between emotion and expression. 'Unlike most of other Indian English poets, Kamala Das has not received any academic education or training in poetry writing. She is a bilingual writer, writing short fiction in Malayalam, her mother-tongue, under the pseudonym 'Madhavikutty'. Her open and honest treatment of female sexuality, free from any sense of guilt, infused her writing with power, but also marked her as an iconoclast in her generation.

Kamala Das is probably the first Indian woman to talk openly and honestly about the natural but hidden desires of Indian women, which made her unique form her contemporaries. *My Story* was first serialized in a Malayalam periodical, as *Ente Katha*, it created uproar and the conservative society in Kerala was stunned into disbelief. People were shocked reading her own portrayal as 'ready for love' ripe for a sexual banquet, long showers of abuses were waiting for her. Kamala Das boldly declared in the preface of the book that
My Story is my autobiography which I began writing during my first serious bout with heart disease. (My Story - Preface)

Women writers in India are generally treated as a work in progress or agent's provocateur for things unpopular. They don't count unless their sexuality is out in the open and its salacity is ridiculed in public and enjoyed in private. Kamala Das is a writer who courted controversy like night gowns and scythed the vulnerable gender sensitivity of Indian readers. She has been a unique literary phenomenon in India.

*My story is the only attempt of its kind among Indian women autobiographies in English to tread the untraded challenged area of exploring and sharing one's experience as a baby which serves as the foundation of her sociological, psychological and even spiritual development. (Harish, 102)*

Some critics label her as 'a feminist', but she has never tried to identify herself with any particular version of feminist activism. Kamala Das revolts against the rigid gender divisions. She voiced against the marriage as an institution because it legitimizes violence on women and gives men a legal control over women's bodies. She has criticized the tradition bound, conservative society which, of course, was always harsh on her unconventional life style. She was far ahead of many other Indian writers in their ideas, unconcerned about what others thought of her.
Anita Desai (b.1937) is now widely acknowledged as the grand dame of Indian English Literature. She is one of those distinguished Indian English novelists whose writings have attracted most extensive critical attention in India and abroad. This may be due to several factors such as the complexity of form and theme in her novels. Her novels are broadly appreciated for the subtle portrayal of the protagonists' search for self-assertion and self-actualization in the face of the rigid codes of behavior in a conformist and status quo loving society. In this context Anita Desai has observed thus in one of her interview:

*I am interested in characters that are not average but have retracted or have driven into despair and so turned against or made to stand against the general current. It is easy to flow with current, it makes no demand, and it costs no efforts. But those who can't follow it, where hearts cry out 'the great No' who fight the current and struggle against it, they know what demands are and what it costs to meet them* (Interview, Ram)

Beginning her creative career with a handful of short stories, her greatest success came with novels. As a prominent feminist writer writing in English, she has sixteen novels to her credit including *Cry, the Peacock, Voices in the City, Bye Bye Black Bird, Where Shall We Go This Summer, Fire on the Mountain, Clear Light of the Day, The Village by the Sea: An Indian Family Story, In Custody, Baumgartner's*
One of the most remarkable features of Anita Desai's fiction is that long before multiculturalism became a fashionable word, her fiction demonstrates the nature of India which represents a conglomerate culture. The Indian life has always been a wonderful amalgam of languages, cultures and civilizations which form one compactly woven whole. Anita Desai's mother was German and father Bengali, having spent her childhood in the city of old Delhi and studied in Missionary school, she had a wide, liberal understanding of what being an Indian means. Anita Desai is not a social realist, and her forte is the exploration of the emotional ecology of her protagonists. But her portrayal of women characters and analysis of marriages, although from a psychological angle, Anita Desai mirrors certain aspects of Indian society which only a woman novelist could have presented. The kind of anatomy of female psyche that one finds in her novels makes for fiction socially. R. S. Sharma observes,

She claims that her "novels are no reflection on Indian society, politics or characters, but this shows only her desire not to be categorized as a realist or a novelist with a purpose". Her novels are certainly reflective of social realities which are not immediately perceived. She does not dwell, like Anand, on social issues, but goes deep into the forces that condition the growth of a female in the patriarchal, father-dominated Indian family. She sees
social realities from a psychic or psychological perspective, but does not look at them as a social reformer or a moralist would do (Sharma, 13)

A study of her novels reveals her persistent concern with the theme of anxiety, anguish and psychological adaptation necessitated by threats to the individual's identity, and relation to reality. Many of Desai's characters find the real world too harsh, difficult, unpleasant and also too complex. There is intense questioning and the protagonists are torn between their search for authentic selfhood and the limitations of the human situation that prevent them from such realization. The myth of the Indian woman as a strong, self-sacrificing bastion is not for Anita Desai; the isolation and insecurity that her characters suffer from is human. *Cry, the Peacock*, her first novel, embarks her on an exciting career as a novelist. It is this novel that she came to be widely recognized as an exponent of the psychological novel in Indian English fiction.

**Shashi Deshpande** is a well known name in the field of Indian English literature. She emerged on the Indian fictional world in the 1970s. She has created a unique place for herself in the literary world. She excels in projecting a realistic picture of the middle class educated women who, although financially independent, is still facing the problems of adjustment between idealism and pragmatism. She is almost incomparable for her portrayal of Indian middle class women with their turmoil, convulsions, frustrations, endurance and 'that long silence' which has been their lot for many centuries. Her novels are
mainly based on the lives of women and their problems particularly in the Indian context. Due to which she has been labeled as 'a feminist'. She explored the realities behind the silence of women. Shashi admits that three things were responsible for her development as an English writer. She says,

*There are three things in my early life that have shaped me as a writer. These are: that my father was a writer, that I was educated exclusively in English and that I was born a female* (Of Concerns, 107)

This statement clearly echoes the voice of a feminist soul in her. However, unlike the early feminist authors who chose to portray the subjugation of women in ordinary life, Shashi Deshpande moved a step further and made educated women as the subject of her writing and voiced the agony of such women who have to depend on their male counterparts for the choices and decisions of their life. In the words of Y.S. Sunita Reddy:

*She gives us a peep into the state and condition of the present day woman who is intelligent and articulate, aware of her capabilities, but thwarted under the weight of male chauvinism* (Reddy, 146)

In the context of the contemporary Indian writing in English, Shashi Deshpande is the confident voice, who explores individual and universal female psyche. She has gained reputation as a serious writer with awesome potential. He women are educated and exposed to western culture. She avoids the simple technique of straightforward narration and employs the flash back method instead to draw her point and attention. Her novels are a list representation of women's oppression, and hence are highly susceptible to being labeled feminist literature. She feels sentimentality and romance mar the serious concerns of a novel. She no doubt has a genuine concern for women who are acutely aware of their smothered and faltered existence in an orthodox and patriarchal society.

As in Manju Kapur, Shashi Deshpande's women also caught between tradition and modernity and search for their identity within a marriage. The realistic delineation of women as mother, daughter and wife, their search for identity and sexuality as well lays her real sympathies for women. Her novels are concerned with self-assertion and goodness of woman in the Indian society. Deshpande’s novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, brings out the struggle of a woman in a family where a male child is preferred to a female child and the novel reveals how the insensitive attitude of the family towards a female can drive her into a schizophrenic state of mind. *If I Die Today* (1982) and *Come Up Be Dead* (1983) are detective novels by Shashi Deshpande but with
relevant social issues related to women such as education, economic independence and motherhood. *Come Up and be Dead* is a detective novel by Shashi Deshpande. It is a detective story with revenge as its theme. This psychological thriller reveals the award winning literary excellence of Shashi Deshpande. *Roots and Shadows* is again a feminist novel by Shashi Deshpande. Like Manju in *If I Die Today*, the protagonist of this novel, Indu finds herself caught in dilemma of preference between family and profession, between patriarchy and traditions on the one hand and independence and self-expression on the other hand.

In this way Shashi Deshpande has given a very true to life picture of the society and not a biased one. Although she often denies being a feminist in her writings, yet she admits that in personal life, she is one:

*I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am a feminist.*

*In my life, I mean, but not consciously as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has come to me very slowly, very gradually and mainly out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings. I started writing first and only then discovered my feminism* (Reddy, 68)

in South Asian Women in a new world. Her novels trace the split in the Diasporas' subject, expressed in that sense of being here and elsewhere, of being home and abroad. In her interviews she appeared, she rejects the notion that identities are stable, fixed and unchanging. She does not accept the notion of hyphenation and subscribes to the postmodern idea that self is always incomplete and always remains in the process of becoming. She explores the sufferings and transformations a migrant has to undergo for survival in the host culture. Mukherjee proclaims in an interview with Russel Schoch that she through her work has depicted the capacity to alter the thinking of people about others and about nationhood. She proclaims:

>To make people realize that we have to get away from thinking of ourselves - of our identities - as fixed, as dependant only on inherited things: language, race, class culture, and instead to improvise identity, to see ourselves as part of a changing community in which our loyalty depends on what community we have adopted and decided to give our loyalty to: I've always felt that individuals are a series of identities, simultaneous identities. Identity is not fixed. The moment you think there's only one way, you're going to crack (Interview with Russel Sachoch)

Bharati Mukherjee writing broadly reflects her personal experience as woman caught between two cultures. Her literary work is divided into two parts. The first part covers her writing before 1980, as an expatriate writer and second part after 1980, as an American
immigrant writer. As an expatriate writer, the protagonists are Indian of her early three novels - Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter*, Dimple in *Wife* and Jasmine in *Jasmine*. Although having published two novels - The Tiger's Daughter and Wife, she remained still as an outsider in the Canadian literary scenario. Once she was humiliated by Canada Council. Her personal experiences in Canada and America and complete change in her psyche are truly reflected in her works. Along with Bharati Mukherjee, there are several contemporary writers such as Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai and host of others have projected the theme of expatriation. Her portrayal of women is inspired by her experience in India as well as abroad. Her protagonists are sensitive and they lack a stable sense of personal and cultural identity. They are victimized by social oppression such as racism and sexism. Mukherjee's work corresponds with the various phases of her life, as her protagonists are close projection of herself. In brief, her writings reflect her perception of what it means to be a woman writer of Bengali-Indian origin who lived in both Canada and America. She found it difficult to restrict herself. So she goes beyond boundaries and perceives herself as a pioneer of new territories, experiences and literatures.

*The Tiger's Daughter* considers this feeling in relation to Tara, New York returned and married to an American, as she attempts to reconnect with Calcutta, only to find that everything has been affected by an estranging alchemy. *Wife* examines the darker side of this split when Dimple, unable to cope with the tumult of irreconcilable values
and emotions that hunt those in transit between places, roles, and cultures succumbs to liberator madness, culminating in the murder of her husband. Bharati Mukherjee in *Jasmine* explores the troubles and tensions crop up due to changes in self-perception. *Jasmine* is a tale of a diasporic South Asian woman who lives in America. In *Jasmine* the eponymous heroine struggles to cheat the stars by fleeing to America, a country in which personal destiny is connected to individual action rather than, as in India, to the fateful action of the planers. Jasmine describes herself as transitory, as becoming, as rebirth, and her life becomes a statements on the United States, on the nation-states as a palimpsest marked by successive waves of immigrants.

**Jai Nimbkar** (b. 1932) is best known for her novels. She published her first novel, *Temporary Answers* in 1974. Her second novel, *Come Rain* (1993) presents a new version of the East-West encounter, a stock situation in Indian English fiction. Ann in *Come Rain* leaves America and makes her home in India when she marries an Indian named Ravi. After spending seven years abroad as a student and researcher, Ravi finds is as difficult as Ann to adjust to his Indian parents and home. Nimbkar's language is simple and unpretentious, and her picture of India true to life. Major theme of her novels is the middle class married woman's identity crisis in the contemporary patriarchal Indian society due to the inequality between the sexes. She has also written few short stories of worth - *The Mother, Turning Points, Peanuts for the Monkeys and The Phantom Bird.*
Another important relationship depicted interestingly in the short stories of Nimbkar is of a mother and a daughter. The mother figure is for the most time treated with love and reverence in our literature. In all her short stories, Nimbkar has presented mother-daughter relationship beautifully. In this respect Sudhir Kakar observes:

_The special maternal affection reserved for daughters, contrary to expectations derived from social and cultural prescriptions, is partly to be explained by the fact that a mother’s unconscious identification with her daughter is normally stronger than with her son._ (Kakar, 39)

Jai Nimbkar is a meticulous craft person and conscious stylist, known for her bold themes. She feels that a literary artist must creatively get involved in society and seek a full revelation in the works of what she or he finds in the world around. _Turning Points_ is a feminist discourse on women’s equal opportunities versus traditional concept of family. Through her work she will always remain in our hearts.

**Githa Hariharan** (b.1954) is one of the Indian English women writers who have been producing a body of Indian literature that is committed to feminist and social issues. Though she doesn't like to be branded as a woman writer because she believes that is pigeonholing a writer, yet she calls herself a feminist, along with several other things. In her interview with Arnab Chakladar she affirms:

_Am I a writer particularly concerned with 'women's issues'? And am I a feminist? The answer to both questions_
is yes. I want to make it quite clear that in my life my choices have been dictated by what I perceive as the feminist choice...And anyway, however you define yourself, all our work is informed in some way or the other by feminism, along with the ideas of Freud and Marx. And this goes for both men and women, of course. So...I am a (as opposed to a woman writer) who is a feminist, along with several other things! (Hariharan, interview with Arnab Chakladar)


Githa Hariharan belongs to the second generation of post-colonial women writers like Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Mridula Garg, Anita Nair, Rama Nair, Shobha De, Namita Gokhle and Manju Kapur who together created the image of the suffering but stoic woman eventually breaking traditional boundaries has had a significant impact. Githa Hariharan has also created a separate identity for herself by attempting to write about non-feminist subjects like question of writers' freedom and the true meaning of education and teaching in the
Indian milieu. Among the contemporary Indian writers she is considered to be one of the harder ones to pin down in terms of theme, setting and protagonists and so on. All her novels are varied but for a few common strands. One such thing is that all the titles of her novels are plural including the latest Fugitive Histories. Secondly the central theme for all her novels is the re-writing of given narratives be it myths, history or fables which is essentially a postmodern technique called 'revisionism'. In fact Revisionism became an important tool in the hands of the women writers of the post nineteen eighties.

Githa Hariharan has started her career as a writer by attempting to write on a subject that was close to heart to many women writers, that is, the female subjectivity. She portrays the changing image of woman in the modern and the post modern era through her not so conventional women characters. Tradition, transition and modernity are the three stages, which the women in Hariharan’s novels pass through. Women in her novels seem to be the personifications of ‘new’ women who have been trying to throw off the burden of inhibitions they have carried for ages. Antonia Navarro-Tejero, a Spanish writer and academician, while comparing Arundhati Roy and Githa Hariharan says:

Roy and Hariharan are engaged – in different degrees – with social reforms, and this is what makes them writer-activists, as they are sensitive to gender and caste experiences. They are not demagogic or prescriptive, but
offer alternatives instead of victimizing the oppressed.

(Tejaro, 41)

Githa Hariharan’s women characters stand as an epitome of the changing images of Indian women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women to self-assured, assertive and ambitious women forcing the society aware of their demands. Githa Hariharan’s women not only question the system, but they are bent upon paving new paths and breaking new grounds and finally they create a world for themselves where they seek the companionship of another female. This female bond replacing the man and woman bond is ubiquitous in almost all her novels. The slow but gradual change that has been witnessed in the psyche of twenty-first century Indian women reflects in the portrayal of Hariharan’s mother-daughter relationship. In her first novel, Sita, the mother of the protagonist understands her married daughter’s decision to return to parental home.

She is well aware of the multiple identities that are attributed to a writer in India as the English writer, the regional writer, the woman writer and even as the children’s writer. As a writer she has been an astute observer of cultural issues. She believes that

Well-being does not come piecemeal, for rights co-exist, and repression in one area will not leave other areas unaffected. (Hariharan, Interview with Kala Krishnana Ramesh)
It was thus imperative for her to legally challenge the infringement of her rights as a mother. She has been involved in some way or the other in the activities of women’s groups, secular cultural groups, and anti-nuclear groups and all her works represent her role as a writer cum social activist with commitment. She sees herself as an “engaged citizen” (Hariharan, Interview with P.Anima)

**Uma Vasudev** (b.1931) is another women novelist with substance. She has to this date written two novels - *The Song of Ansuya* (1978) and *Shreya of Sonagarh* (1993) In Uma Vasudev's first novel *Songs of Ansuya* attracted a lot of attention for its frank treatment of sex. *Shreya of Sonagarh* (1993), her second novel, describes the rise to political power of the heroine Shreya, a selfish middle class girl married into a princely family. The writing lacks distinction - Shreya's sexual attraction towards her neighbour Anand is always described in terms of "a cloud of incense" rising from her body. However, Vasudev, a political commentator, presents a realistic picture of the horse-trading that enables the heroine to be elected a Member of Parliament. It deals with the theme of sex in relation to woman’s relationship with her husband as well as with her paramour. Uma Vasudev views Shreya as an introverted and ugly girl, an ambitious teenager who ‘hated people, entertainment, socializing, sex or politics.’ The novel ends with an optimistic note, asserting the validity of true love which transgresses all mundane sexual values to attain a spiritual wholeness. Thus the novel depicts Shreya’s sexual odyssey, her journey from self-alienation to self-identification from rejection to acceptance. Her
characters are depicted as liberated women with their own surreptitious affairs.

Shobha De (b. 1948) a super model, celebrity journalist and one of India's most widely read and admired columnist stands as one of the most popular and prolific writers among contemporary Indian English novelists. Because of her treatment of sex in novels, academicians and literary critics have often neglected her writings by not considering her works worth literary significance. But anyhow Shobha De is India's most commercially successful Indian English author. Even in one of world's most socially conservative country like India. For many years she has been daring to write on themes like lust, sex and these also from the point of view of a woman. She writes about women who, like herself, flee marriage because they are bored of it. Shobha De has written more than twelve books, all of which's name starts with "s". Her important works are - Socialite Evenings (1989), Starry Nights (1992), Sisters (1992), Strange Obsession (1992), Sultry Days (1994), Snapshots (1995), Second Thoughts (1996), Speed Post (1999), Spouse (2005) and others.

As a creative writer she occupies a significant place in the history of Indian novels in English. She has also written stories, letters, essays and an autobiography. In India marriage is the beginning of a new way of life. it is considered as a pious bond between man and woman. But by portraying the modern liberated women Shobha De has shattered all traditional ideas regarding the institution of marriage. Her women never hesitate to venture out for their own fulfillment. Shobha
De depicts the breaking up of the institution of marriage. The new concept of marriage in Shobha De's context is to envisage complete sexual freedom with no notion of fidelity. According to De, attractive and assertive women redefine the concept of marriage. In it man and woman do not become one in marriage; instead they merely become partners in conjugal bliss. Sexual freedom is the quality of most of her women. The moment their marriages fail, they involve in extra-marital relationship. Shobha De in her novels examines the disturbed psyche of the modern Indian women. Shantha Krishnaswamy observes:

*Her women characters try to strike a balance between instinctual needs and intellectual aspirations. Deeply exhausted by this trapeze act, they are further bewildered when the existential absurdity of life is unmasked before them, when they face loneliness and lack of communication and community and we finally brought to mental crises when masculine and institutional pressure are added to exacerbate them further.* (Krishnaswamy, 67)

Shobha De depicts the tension arising out of the failure of Indian women in dealing with the situation, emerging from a clash between conservatism and liberalism. She also projects in her novels certain issues such as the non-acceptance of the liberated woman by the Indian society. In this way she differs considerably from her contemporaries because she believes in a very frank narration of incidents and open mindedness. Nothing is reserved in her fiction. As a result, the orthodox people in India criticize her for her open discussion on sexual
matters. But she gives no importance to what others will think of her. In fact, all classes of readers not only in India but all over the world enjoy her fiction. Sometimes due to the unavoidable circumstances in their lives, women are pushed into the net by their protectors while at other times their high ambition and will to assert their freedom endanger them. Shobha De's women don't believe in suffering submissively. They struggle with all their strength to reach the peak of joy and success in patriarchal society. They revolt and shape their destiny by living for themselves and earnestly protest against subordination. About her artisanship and style Sheela Rani Khare observes in her article, 'Inner World of A Film Star: Shobha De's Starry Night'

Shobha De an eminent modern novelist and journalist have focused in most of her works on the marginalization of woman in Indian Society. As a feminist novelist, she has marvelous understanding of the psyche of woman and therefore female dominates her novels. Women struggle hard in their lives and break patriarchal order, pretend against male dominance and at last come out in fixing colors in their quest. (Rani Sheela, 54)

Once First Indian woman I.P.S. Kiran Bedi met her, she opined,

Here's and extraordinary woman with a compelling presence who has the charisma and media savvy to be in perfect contact of her public image. She is aware of the hold she has on the public imagination and uses it to the
De is a smart woman who has understood the changing needs of our confused times, she knows she represents this change and capitalizes on it as a symbol of a new woman. She more than anyone else, is in a unique position to establish herself as a role model for a generation of Indian women who look up to her as someone who has made it in a male dominated profession. (Sodhi, 98)

Manjula Padmanabhan (b.1953) is a playwright, journalist, comic strip artist, and children's book author responsible for the play Harvest (1997), which won her first prize in the 1997 Onassis Prize for theatre. She has also written such plays as Light Out! (1984), Hidden Fires, The Artist's Model (1995) and Sextet (1996). She has also written such as Hot Death, Cold Soup (1996), a collection of short stories and Getting There (1999), a travel memoir. She has authored a collection of short stories, called Kleptomania (2004). She has illustrated 23 books for children including, most her own two novels for children, Mouse Attack and Mouse Invaders. Apart from writing newspaper columns she also created comic strips. Suki, an Indian female comic character is her creation. It was serialized in Sunday Observer.

The play Harvest presents how the machine world governs the human world and how Manjula Padmanabhan has cleverly used the electronic devices turning them into characters. In it battle she has presented a war between machine and man for possessions human beings have to wage in future if not learn to control machines. The play
presents the futuristic picture of the modern times where the machines will be replacing and disturbing human beings gradually. The play warns through the character of Jaya how one has to govern the machines instead of being driven by it. *Harvest* is considered as a futuristic play by many intellectual. Through *Harvest* Padmanabhan has also presented the grim realities of present world with the sell and purchase of human organs.

**Kavery Nambisan** (b.1947) is from the Coorg district in Karnataka. She gave up her job of a surgeon in 2006 to devote full time for writing fiction. Her novels - *The Truth About Bharat* (1991), *The Scent of Pepper*, *Mango-Coloured Fish* (1998), *In Wings of Butterflies*, *The Hills of Andheri* and *The Story That Must Not Be Told* (2008) are her prominent work. *The Story That Must Not Be Told* was short-listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize and the DSC South Asian Literature Prize. She was invited to Greece for a Fulbright-sponsored Symposium on 'Home/Homelands' in 2008. Her forthcoming novel is *A Town Like Ours*. Through Eco-critical lenses Kavery Nambisan has examine the interconnectedness of the characters with nature in *The Scent of Pepper*.

Kavery Nambisan's first novel *The Truth About Bharat*, has many qualities for being called as campus novel. It centers on the life, attitudes and behavior of the students of modern India. The novel revolves around the mischief played by a student Bharat in an educational institution and the description of consequences and the impact it has on his life. In the course of his life Bharat goes on
discovering many aspects of truth about himself and also about the
nation Bharat. Her second novel *The Scent of Pepper* is a haunting tale
of a family belonging to the Kaleyanda clan inhabiting much of the
novel and the characters. It is a moving saga of the life and times of
Nanji, the central character around whom the novel centers about
though Nambisan does not envisage this in the novel. Through this
novel, Nambisan has given expression to the small ethnic group
Coorgis. The novel presents a picture of distinctive culture and religion
of the community as it describes Nanji, a young bride.

Amidst all the developments in the novel, Nambisan has
portrayed the character of Nanji that remains true to her craft and
draws the reader like a magnet to her strength, integrity and the
practical approach to her life. Nanji’s character truly reflects the basic
premise of eco-criticism as the interconnectedness between nature and
culture, and also the connection between the physical world and human
nature. Nanji remains an ardent follower of the soil and cherishes and
nurters it with her love and affection. Nambisan’s craft displays
strong eco-critical strains as she is familiar with the environment of
Coorg that is lovingly captured in Nanji’s internal and mutual co-
exisiting relationship with nature. The reader can visualize the
picturesque surroundings of the Coorg region inundated with lofty
mountains, magnificent flora and fauna that can preserve and destroy
the wealth of the region if spurned by the local inhabitants. The British
inhabiting the place fall in love with the tranquil and peaceful place of
Coorg and are often reluctant to leave the place.
Namita Gokhle (b. 1953) has written six novels, a collection of short stories and many works of non-fiction to her credit to this date. They are - *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1984), *Gods, Graves and Grandmother, A Himalayan Love Story, The Book of Shadow, Shakuntala and The Book Of Shiva*. In her recent book *Priya: In Incredible Indyaa*, she has relived the character of her first novel *Paro*. She was diagnosed by cancer in thirty fifth year of her life only. Her writing style was affected due to this setback in her life.

Namita Gokhle conceptualized the International Festival of Indian Literature, Neemrana 2002 and also The Africa Asia Literary Conference, 2006. She is a founder-director of the *Jaipur Literature Festival* along with the author, William Dalrymple, which started in 2006.she is also festival adviser to *Mountain Echoes, A Literary Festival* in Bhutan and the *Kathmandu Literary Jatra*, which is unique of its kind literature festival in Nepal. Commenting on her short-story collection entitled *The Habit of Love*, she says in her interview to IANS.

> The stories speak of a woman's need to love, rather than the objects of love. Women love passionately, deeply, often angrily. Real love is not about sexual conquest, it is not a triumphant place, but a space of surrender. (Interview - IANS)

Namita Gokhle, who has been at the forefront of several global projects to carry Indian writing abroad, is now working on a new novel, *Things to Leave Behind*.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is a remarkable indictment of patriarchy and the injustice as well as oppression faced by women in the male dominating society. The novel is an argument for and against the good and evil in society with special reference to women. The novel throws light on some important things of life like how love is mostly related with sadness, how a person's childhood experiences affect his/her perspective on the whole. The novel presents the ugly side of people and society as a whole, a vivid description of the black and sarcastic world especially related to women that lives around us. It also highlights the constant struggle of women against their exploitation in patriarchal society. The novel presents three generation of women. Each of them was born and brought up under different circumstances. Starting from the oldest generation, there is Mammachi, then the second generation of Ammu, and the youngest generation is Rahel. These women were following the prevailing customs of Hinduism to live. Susan Wadley and Doranne Jacobson rightly feels, 'According to Hindu culture, there are dual views on
women. First, woman is considered benevolent and bestowed, second view is that, woman is aggressive, malevolent and a destroyer.'

In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy, through the character of Ammu has portrayed, that the female sex is completely neglected in society. When Ammu makes the physical relationship with an untouchable man Velutha, their relationship exceeded to an extent that it came to be labeled as illicit. In this novel, it is found that both male and female are treated differently as Chacko, being a man, lives happily even after divorce but on the other hand, Ammu, after divorce, suffers in the whole novel. It shows different social conditions of men and women in the society which is very decisive. This novel was a revolutionary attempt on the part of Arundhati who tried to open the eyes of Indian community towards the callousness of treating women as objects. Women thus treated are considered soulless beings, sub-human and playthings for men. This imbalance in society explains much of the unhappiness prevailing in our families and the battered lives of children who are exposed to this very partial and unjust view of life. The end result is a paralyzed society unable and unwilling to grow.

Arundhati Roy with her quite confidence, comic spirit, ironic vision and a restricted Ayemenem background gives us a variety in the characterization of women. She has portrayed women chiefly from the Indian point of view. She projects them basically as women with all their characteristic traits and inherent weaknesses, the varied options available to the modern Indian women, from traditional motherhood to man-less lifestyle - all are given local habitation and colour by Roy in
her novel. In fact, a woman in her fiction is a powerful vehicle for the exposition of the author's perceptions and she cannot be ignored or bracketed together with other minor characters. Woman here plays an important role, sometimes passively and at times aggressively, in a believable network of family, religion and society leading to relatively normal codes of behaviour and discourse and following recognized patterns of growth, courtship and transfer of power from one generation to another.


*A writer of uncommon elegance and poise... Lahiri chronicles her characters' lives with both objectivity and compassion.* (Kakutani Interview)

Her other important works - *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), a short story collection, *The Lowland* (2013) are of importance. Jhumpa Lahiri represents new generation of immigrant writers in Indian English literature. Most of her characters and especially women are caught in the net of loneliness and alienation as an immigrant. She writes from her own experience as she born in London to parents who emigrated from India, and living in America. She visits India regularly with her parents. The immigrant sensibility is the basic thing in her fiction. Her protagonist explores the world around her. On immigrant experience
and the question of identity of displaced people, Jhumpa Lahiri comments that the question of identity is always difficult for those who are culturally displaced like the immigrants:

I have somehow inherited a sense of exile from my parents, even though in many ways I am so much more American than they are....I think that for immigrants, the challenges of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, the knowledge of and longing for a lost world...But it bothered me growing up, the feeling that there was no single place to which I fully belonged. (Interview)

Rashmi Bansal is a writer and entrepreneur. She is the author of five books on entrepreneurship - Stay Hungry Stay Foolish (2008), I Have a Dream (2011), Connect the Dots (2012), Poor Little Rich Slum (2012), Follow Every Rainbow (2013) and Take Me Home (2013). Earlier in her career after completing her IIM from Ahmadabad, she joined The Times of India. After quitting it she started her own magazine named JAM - Just Another Magazine for modern youth. Her first book Stay Hungry Stay Foolish is based on the success stories of MBA entrepreneurs. Incidentally, writing in 'Hinglish' has been her style of writing since her days of working with the Times of India. Rashmi Bansal in her interview to The Times of India answers the question, why does she choose to write in 'Hinglish':

I feel confident that the majority of my readers have a working knowledge of Hindi, so why lose the beauty of a
particular phrase through clumsy translation? (Interview to Times of India)

Anita Nair (b. 1966) is a fulltime writer and lives in Bangalore. She has written many novels and children's books. Some of her novels are The Better Man (2000), Ladies Coup (2001), Mistress (2005), Lessons in Forgetting (2010) and Cut Like Wound (). Her books have been translated into thirty Indian and foreign languages. She has also published a collection of poems, Malabar Mind; a collection of essays, Goodnight & God Bless; two plays and the screenplay for the movie adaptation of her novel Lessons in Forgetting, which won the National Film Award in 2013. She was awarded the Central Sahitya Akademi award in 2013. Her new novel Idris will be published shortly. She examines man and woman relationship in all her major fictional writing which is also marked for its representation of the South Indian culture.

Anita Nair in her novels focuses only on the marginal section of society. Her characters revolt against the social set up of society. They manipulate and negotiate for propagating the middle class values. During the course of this journey, a subtle cultural transformation has been captured. Her first novel The Better Man has placed her among the most self conscious Indian English novelist. Her second work Ladies Coup is a novel that basically deals with female sensibilities but in no way does it show women as bettered, bartered and abandoned on the shoals of low self-worth. In fact it is a triumphant flowing against the tide; it shows us different facets of a woman's life in which she shows that inherent strength of a woman that makes her rise against all
odds and to be able to reconstruct her life. Perhaps that is why Anita Nair herself has referred to it in the acknowledgement as "This novel about ordinary women and their indomitable spirit" (Acknowledgement, Ladies Coup)

In Ladies Coup Anita Nair scores as it attempts to deal with the age-old question whether a single woman could be happy without a man. This question gains a special relevance in the Indian context. To answer this question, Anita Nair narrates the stories of various women, very different in their age, social status and position but all are Indian women. Yet all over the world, life of women is same to same with little bit variant in it. Woman is a mother, a wife and, a daughter. She is expected to be the same compassionate, caring and affectionate yet women have it in them to be mighty, vindictive and erosive when it comes to a matter of their identity. When Ladies Coup came out it was described as an important work of feminism by many popular publications. Anita Nair denied it categorically. She is unhappy with the term feminism. She says in an interview with Chandaraju:

Well, firstly, it is outdated. Secondly the word feminism implies a striving to be equal, desperation almost to get equal with men while what is important is to know that you are equal and exercise that equality. To experience that equality knowing it is yours, naturally. (Interview with Chandaraju)

Ladies Coupe is the story of six women who meet in a train journey, just by chance. Akhila, the protagonist listens to the story of
five other women in the compartment and gives her too, seeking in them a solution to the question that has troubled her all her life: Can a woman stay single and be happy or does a woman need a man to feel complete? The story switches over from past to present and present to past and hence, even other than the five women in the compartment, we are shown of certain women who are humiliated and devalued. At the end, through this wonderful spectrum of female experience as related by her co-passengers in the ladies coup, Akhila finds the strength to emerge from the prison of her old self. May be nothing will have changed when she returns superficially but she has evolved clearly on a mental level. She has thrown off her inhibitions in the ladies coup where five women shared some of their life's intimate moments with her about their childhood, their husbands, their sons, and their lovers. The book attempts to deal with various issues like rape, homosexuality, and women's education. Anita Nair is able to convey the dilemma of her characters with a freshness and charm that makes her story more than just a feminist homily. It is an insight into the expectations of Indian women, the choices they make and choices made by them. Each story has the seed of a dull novel in them. There is a strong message of hope through change in them and even the ending is like another beginning.

Lavanya Shankaran is the author of the celebrated short story collection The Red Carpet that garnered critical praises worldwide. A graduate of Bryn Mawr College, her debut novel, The Hope Factory, was selected by Amazon UK as a top pick. Lavanya’s writing has won
several awards, including Barnes and Noble Discover New Writers, and Poets and Writers’ Best First Fiction Award. Her opinion pieces and fiction have appeared in the New York Times, the Guardian and the Atlantic. Lavanya sponsors the annual Lavanya Shankaran Writing Fellowship at the Sangam Writers Residency, which she hopes will encourage new writers in India. While reviewing Lavanya Shankaran’s first novel, Lisa Lau observes:

*Shankaran is a good and careful story-teller. She plans well, develops the plot at a very sensible and pleasing pace, she edits and constructs her work clearly with much thought and care. It is never any hardship reading her writing. However, when one closes the book, although the story stays with one, no fragment of a sentence does, no memorable wording lingers in the mind, no original turn of those echoes. The writing is perfectly correct and unremarkable and quite suitable for the subject matter, perfectly unobjectionable but there is no special knack here, no flair, no superb mastery over the language, no stylistic distinction...* (Lisa Lau-Review of Hope Factory)

**Namita Devidayal** is a Mumbai-based journalist and author. She wrote the highly acclaimed memoir, *The Music Room* which won the Crossword Book Award and was Outlook book of the year. She also wrote the best-selling novel *Aftertaste* which was long-listed for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. She is a consulting editor with the Times of India, where she covers a range of subjects. She is also a trained classic singer. Namita graduated from Princeton University in the US. The Music
Room works on many levels. It’s a story about music. It’s a story about individual artists. It’s also a story about women in art; a subtext she did not realize when she was writing the book. Her debut novel *Aftertaste* is about a Bombay-based bania family that runs a mithai business.

**Anjum Hasan** is the author of the short fiction collection *Difficult Pleasures* (2012), the novels *Neti, Neti* (2009) and *Lunatic in my Head* (2007) and the collection of poems, *Street on the Hill* (2006). She has contributed to several anthologies including *50 Writers, 50 Books: The Best of Indian Fiction*. She is currently books editor at the *Caravan* magazine and lives in Bengaluru. She says while inaugurating her first book:

> My new book *Difficult Pleasures* is a collection of stories about solitary, brooding types who spend a lot of time inside their own heads. At the same time, these folks are fascinated by what are the, I hope, recognizable urban, contemporary landscapes they live in. The city is a big presence. As are love, childhood disappointments, dreams of travel, relationships with parents, literature, artistic and material aspirations and … water shortages. (Anjum Hasan Website)

**Anuradha Marwah** (b. 1962) is the author of three novels. Her most popular novels are *Dirty Picture* (2007) and *Ideal Love* (1999). *Dirty Picture*, by Anuradha Marwah, is set around the Ajmer sex scandal of the early nineties. Having grown up in Ajmer, this professor of English literature at Delhi University uses her immediate knowledge
to write a moving and sensitive tale. Anuradha Marwah comments on her own book:

*Having already authored two books, she says this one has been the most difficult. It's the first time that I'm dealing with such a dark subject. I see the exploitation and I notice how innocence is crushed," she further adds. "She also had to tread softly to save the book from sensationalism and also had to steer clear of "prurience" as that would reduce the tale to another sexual potboiler.* (Interview, The Hindu.com)

**Jayshree Mishra** has published eight novels - *A Love Story for my sister*, *Scandalous Secret*, *Secrets and Sins*, *Secrets and Lies*, *Rani*, *Afterwards*, *Ancient Promises*, *Accidents Like Love and Marriage*, *The Little Book of Romance*. She has an MA in English literature from Kerala University. “Not many know that Misra is the grand-niece of Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, the Jnanpith Award-winning Malayalam writer, but she likes to believe that her great uncle, has passed the baton to her.” (Interview with Jaishree by Suneetha)

**Mridula Garg** (b.1938) is an Indian writer who writes in English and Hindi languages. She has rendered few of her Hindi works into English. Her English rendered works are - *Chittacobra* (1999), *A Touch of Sun* (1978), *Country of Goodbyes* (2003) and *Anitya Halfway to Nowhere* (2010). *Deffodils on Fire* is her short story collection.

Chittacobra, her much acclaimed novel that has been translated into many foreign languages, including German. Yet when the novel
was first written in 1979, there was widespread outrage and Mridula was accused of obscenity. She tough refused to be cowed down. So, within a year of the controversy came her next novel AnityaHalfway to Nowhere, set in partition; a tragedy she watched unfold close quarters. She says while putting out English rendered version of Anitya in 2010 in her interview to THE HINDU on January 16, 2010 15:40 IST:

Every day, at my home, the talk at the dinner table was always political. No Gossip. The nation was personal. High ideas came to nothing with partition. I wrote Anitya in nine months in 1980 reliving my childhood with it (Interview, The Hindu)

Manju Kapur (b. 1928) is a prominent Indian English novelist writing in English. She taught English Literature in Miranda House College, Delhi University for over twenty-five years. She has written five novels to this date. All of them bear the stamp of her artifice. They are as follows Difficult Daughters (1998), A Married Woman (2001), Home (2003), The Immigrant (2008) and Custody (2011). Difficult Daughters was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize for best first novel for Eurasia region. A Married Woman was shortlisted for the Encore Award. Home was shortlisted for Hutch- Crossword prize. The Immigrant was shortlisted for the DSC Prize of South Asian Literature in 2010. Her fifth novel Custody has been bought by Balaji telefilms. Balaji Telefilms made Yeh Hai Muhabbatein television serial which is based on her novel Custody.
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