

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Feminism and the development of women's movements transformed the perceptions of life and literature. There existed a quest for women's liberation from male oppression from time immemorial. Feminism as a literary concept tries to analyse and comprehend the conditions through which gender was constructed within languages and literature. Woman occupies a central role in the formulation of feminist theory. Adding women to literature and analysing literature in the light of feminist ideology dismantles all systems of patriarchal domination that prevailed in representing women in various literary genres. From an academic perspective, women's liberation movements raised questions regarding reading, writing, and teaching literature from a female point of view. Even though feminism originated as an activist movement to free the world's female population from male oppression and dominance, people often mistook it for an extension of the civil rights movement. Civil rights movements focussed on legislative gains and allies to end racial discrimination and fight for human rights.

On the other hand, feminist groups protest against the inequities that reigned in a male-dominated society and fight against legal, economic, and social restrictions on the fundamental rights of women. Feminism is a phenomenon of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that prioritised women being treated unjustly. There are efforts to overcome gender stereotyping and establish equal educational and professional opportunities for women. Feminism in the literature attempts to re-evaluate women's position within literary texts and the literary contributions of

women. Modern feminism embraces ideas of individuality, stresses the diversity of women's experiences, and redefines what it means to be a feminist.

Postfeminism can be considered an extension of feminism in a way that a postmodern society demands. This new trend tries to accomplish gender equality by promoting subjectivity and redefining notions like femininity by deconstructing discourses and stressing diversity in women's experiences. Contemporary Indian Women's Writing in English seems inclined towards this modern feminist trend. Young women writers are greatly influenced by the notions of this ideology in creating female characters. Jaishree Misra and Anita Nair, as representatives of the current literary scenario of Indian English Fiction, demand special attention. The study analyses the female characters in the select works of Jaishree Misra: *Ancient Promises, Afterwards, Secrets and Lies* and Anita Nair: *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* with the notion of "being oneself" and "pleasing oneself" (155) that Rosalind Gill in her article "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility" in the journal *European Journal of Cultural Studies* regards central to a postfeminist discourse. Studying these writers in the light of postfeminist ideology offers a new perspective to analyse women's writing in Indian English Fiction. The study also focuses on how the writers unfold the changing social and domestic sphere of Indian middle-class society and probe into the feminine self, identity, and realisation of self in the works.

The study focuses on the feminine 'self' and 'identity', as notions referring to these concepts seem worth mentioning. An individual's 'self' is generally referred to as one's sense of 'who I am and what I am, and 'identity' can be referred to as how one perceives and how others perceive one, 'Identity' is simply one's social face. Both these concepts are deeply interrelated and complementary to each other. The 'self' is not a thing or an entity; it is a concept, a symbolic abstraction from the developmental

process of an individual. It refers to the uniqueness that separates an individual's experience from those of all others while conferring a sense of cohesion and continuity on the disparate experience of that individual throughout their life. Erik. H. Erikson defines identity as a fundamental organising principle constantly developing throughout life. Identity involves the experiences, relationships, beliefs, values, and memories that make up a person's subjective sense of self. This helps to create a stable self-image that remains relatively constant even when new aspects of the self are developed or strengthened over time. Identity formation involves self-sameness, which means a sense of continuity with the self in interaction with the other and uniqueness that differentiates between self and interaction with other.

The word 'identity' seems paradoxical, meaning sameness and distinctiveness and its contradiction proliferates when applied to women. In her *Reinventing Womanhood*, Carolyn Heilbrun illustrates confusion about female identity and liberation. She claims that successful women are "male-identified" but that it is a failure for "a woman to take her identity from a man." She states that women never form a self because they "need never undergo an identity crisis, yet they do not have an identity to lose. The price of wifehood is the abandonment of self (103)". The idea of self and identity has long been crucial in feminist philosophy for its vital role in questioning a woman's identity, body, and social identity. Simone de Beauvoir's declaration in *The Second Sex*, "He is the Subject; he is the Absolute- she is the Other" (301), signals the central importance of self in feminist discourses. Throughout history, women have been identified either as inferior versions of men or as direct opposites characterised by their perceived differences. Western philosophy and popular culture seemed to be derived and developed from masculine norms and values. Feminists reconsider universalising and idealising the experience of dominant,

white, heterosexual, economically advantaged men who have flourished financially and politically and dominate the arts, literature, and media. Thus, the female 'self' issues become ethical, literal, social, and political, as feminists argue. Feminist philosophical works on 'the self' have taken three main tracks: criticising the dominant modern view of the self, reclaiming feminine identities, and reconceptualising the self as dynamic and relational to individual desires and social bonds. The reconceptualisation of the self has challenged standard philosophical models and shifted the feminist discipline towards recognising selfhood.

The idea of the feminine self has always been a debated topic. Historically and traditionally, a woman's 'self' is associated with confirming the private domestic sphere. Such women's voices could be quickly neutralised, and they are often perceived as virtuous and supportive wives, vulnerable sexual partners, an empathetic and nurturing mothers. Femininity has been associated with a sentimental attachment that gives rise to compromises; thus, femininity combines nurturance, sensitivity, sweetness, supportiveness, gentleness, warmth, passivity, dependence, submissiveness, and sentimentalised and irrational aspects of 'self'.

In *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Nancy Chodorow's explanation of personality differences between sexes has gained widespread acceptance in feminist theories. She seeks to "move beyond descriptive generalisation about sexism, patriarchy, or male supremacy to analyse how sexual asymmetry and inequality are constructed, reproduced and changed". She believes such an analysis must focus on the "social structurally induced psychological process"(32) rather than biology or intentional role training. Her insights are helpful for the study of female identity. Chodorow argues that a boy negatively defines himself as a male by differentiation from his first caretaker, the mother. He achieves autonomy as he grows, and his

Oedipus complex strengthens his separation from his mother, and he adopts the role played by his father. After that, he becomes an active, independent individual and is valued in society and family. A girl's personality takes shape differently; firstly, a girl forms her gender identity positively by becoming like her mother. Later there develops a mother-infant symbiosis, and she recreates it when she becomes a mother. As a result, women develop capacities for nurturance, dependence and empathy. Throughout women's lives, the self is defined through social relationships, fusion and merging self with others are significant, and ego and body boundaries remain flexible. "Female identity is a process, It is less fixed, less unitary, and more flexible than male individuality. Writing by women engages readers in this process as the female self seeks to define itself in the experience of creating art"(57)

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar found " Woman's quest for self-definition as the underlying plot of nineteenth-century writings by women". At the same time, Elaine Showalter sees self-discovery and search for identity as the central theme of Women's literature since the 1920s. The concept of female identity provides many factors through which writings by women differ from those of men. She divides feminist criticism into two distinct varieties. The first is 'feminist critique', which concerns women as consumers of male-produced literature. The Woman as Reader or Feminist Critique is 'how a female reader changes our apprehension of a given text, awakening it to the significance of its sexual codes'; historically grounded inquiry which probes the ideological assumptions of literary phenomena'; 'subjects include the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions of and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male-constructed literary history'; 'concerned with the exploitation and manipulation of the female audience, especially in popular culture and film, and with the analysis of woman-as-sign in semiotic

systems'; 'political and polemical'; like the Old Testament looking for the errors of the past. One of the feminist critique problems is that it is male-orientated. The study on stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women play in literary history do not reveal what women have felt and experienced, but only what men thought women should be. The critique also tends to naturalise women's victimisation by making it an inevitable and obsessive topic of discussion.

Showalter coined 'gynocritics' to describe literary criticism based on a feminine perspective. Probably the best description Showalter gives of gynocritics is in *Towards a Feminist Poetics* "In contrast to an angry or loving fixation on male literature, the program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture" (129). This does not mean that the goal of gynocritics is to erase the differences between male and female writing; gynocritics is not "on a pilgrimage to the promised land in which gender would lose its power, in which all texts would be sexless and equal, like angels" (130). Instead, gynocritics aim to understand the specificity of women's writing not as a product of sexism but as a fundamental aspect of female reality. Its prime concern is to see 'woman as a producer of textual meaning, with the historical themes, genres, and structures of literature by women. Its 'subjects include the psychodynamics of female creativity. It studies linguistics and the problem of a female language in a literary text. It reviews the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career. It proposes 'to construct a female framework for analysing women's literature, to develop new

models based on women's experience'. Its study focuses on the newly visible world of female culture; 'hypotheses of a female subculture'; 'the occupations, interactions, and consciousness of women.

Showalter acknowledges the difficulty of defining the unique difference in women's writing, which she says is a slippery and demanding task in *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness*. She says that gynocritics may never succeed in understanding the remarkable differences in women's writing or realising a distinct female literary tradition. But, with grounding in theory and historical research, Showalter sees gynocriticism as a way to "learn something solid, enduring, and real about the relation of women to literary culture"(129). She adapts the French term 'la gynocritique' and calls it 'gynocritics' to explore more about feminist literature, which seeks an independent study of women's writing. Through gynocritics, she aims to establish a female literary tradition:

"a female framework for the analysis of women's literature". It develops new models based on the study of the female experience and replaces male-created models. It also explores the feminine struggle for identity and claims that gender is a social construct. It uncovers the female subculture and the 'internalised consciousnesses of the female. From these experiences, Showalter then begins a rough sketch of some of the elements that have characterised women's writing: awakening, suffering, unhappiness, and emetophobia, among others. She concludes with her classification of women's writing into three phases that "establishes the continuity of the female tradition from decade to decade, rather than from Great Woman to Great Woman" (133).

Showalter traces the history of women's literature, suggesting that it can be divided into three phases. The Feminine phase (1840–1880); Showalter sees the first phases taking place from roughly 1840 to 1880; she calls this "the Feminine phase" and declares that it is characterised by women writing to equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture. The distinguishing sign of this period is the male pseudonym, which exerts an irregular pressure on the narrative, affecting tone, diction, structure, and characterisation." The Feminist phase (1880–1920): The second, Feminist phase followed from 1880 to 1920, wherein "women are historically enabled to reject the accommodating postures of femininity and to use literature to dramatise the ordeals of wronged womanhood. This phase was characterised by women's writing that protested against male standards and values and advocated women's rights and values, including a demand for autonomy. The Female phase (1920 onwards) is one of self-discovery. Showalter says, "women reject both imitation and protest—two forms of dependency—and turn instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature" (149). Significantly, Showalter does not offer a characteristic sign or figure for the Female phase, suggesting a welcome diversity of experience that is too broad to be encompassed in a single image.

To clearly understand the crucial political and theoretical issues of feminist criticism, it is essential to distinguish the terms 'feminist', 'female', and 'feminine'. Toril Moi defines feminism as a political position, femaleness as biology, and feminine/femininity as culturally determined characteristics. 'Feminine and 'masculine' represent social constructs, patterns of sexuality, and behaviour imposed by cultural and social norms. Feminine represents nurture and female nature. Femininity can be considered a social construct. Simone de Beauvoir observes that



one isn't born a woman; one becomes one. The patriarchal social setting imposes specific social standards of femininity on all women to prove that these standards for femininity are natural constructs. A woman who does not conform to the chosen standards is considered unfeminine and unnatural. The patriarchal order makes women believe that there is such a thing as the essence of femaleness called femininity.

It becomes essential to clear the confusion regarding females and femininity. Women are female, but this does not mean they will be feminine. Under patriarchy, feminine characteristics such as sweetness, modesty, subservience, and humanity serve femininity. If feminists try to develop another set of feminine virtues, it will become part of the metaphysical binary oppositions, as Helene Cixous believes. Julia Kristeva considers femininity as marginality, which is marginalised by the patriarchal symbolic order. Cixous' deconstruction shows femininity as lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos, and darkness. *The Laugh of Medusa* made her well-established as a post-structural feminist. She was the founder of the first Centre for Feminist Studies at the European University at University Paris. In her essay "The Laugh of Medusa", she coined 'écriture féminine' or women's writing. It refers to a uniquely feminine style of writing. She aimed to establish a genre that deviates from the traditional masculine style and to have a style that exposes cultural and psychological inscription of the female body and differences in language and text. Her works exert significant influence on the upcoming feminist thinkers and writers. She was influenced by the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, and the idea of binary opposition.

Kristeva, in the article co-authored by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, "Women's Time", published in *Signs*, argues that the feminist struggle must be seen

as a three-tiered phenomenon; first, dealing with women's demand for equal access to the symbolic order, like Liberal feminism focus on equality; secondly, women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference as Radical feminism, where femininity is praised enthusiastically; third women rejecting the dichotomy between masculine and feminine. Toril Moi argues that there is still a need to reclaim women's place in human society as equals, not subordinates. To emphasise the difference between male and female experiences, Moi divides Feminist criticism into two main categories. First, Female Criticism and second Feminine Theory. Female criticism focuses on women to judge whether a discourse is feminist or not and interest in woman writers aims to make women visible. Meanwhile, Feminine theory analyse the construction of femininity. Her views were prone to severe attacks and considered anti-feminist, as Moi finds Freud's works as the best illustration for this theoretical foundation.

Modern feminism seeks to update the existing feminist theory by including women outside academia and applying it to the lives of individuals. They also believe that true equality must be achieved in a gender-acknowledged environment. This stance of modern feminism initiated much criticism. Some believe that modern feminism subverts the definition of feminism by replacing the freedom to choose any life with the concept of emancipated femininity. Modern feminism faces many challenges like wage disparity, child care and health care issues, domestic and sexual violence, etc. There are numerous definitions and variations of modern feminism. In general, modern feminism questions equality and what it means to be a feminist.

The feminist of the modern era does not abandon feminist theory but holds the view that feminist theory can be applicable in many situations like women raising a family, working at a career or getting on business life, etc. Modern feminism focuses

on the notion that a united class of women (global feminism) is needed to fight oppression; at the same time; some modern feminists claim that it is a utopian concept. There is a shift towards individualism linked with freedom of choice and self-determination. Modern feminism refers to the period from the 1960s that lays the foundation for postfeminism. Postfeminism is an ideology that developed after the 1960s and a new form of feminist ideology that was popularised in the 1980s. Like poststructuralism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism, which means an extension of structuralism, modernism, and colonialism, postfeminism is the extension of feminism. It is different from the second and third waves and is sometimes known as the fourth wave of feminism. Postfeminism is connected chiefly with popular culture and media. It presents a genuine contrast to the ideas of second and third wave feminism.

Postfeminism was first used in 1919 in the journal *Female Literary Radicals*. The radical feminists then declared they were interested in people, not men and women. They believed that moral, social, economic, and political standards should have nothing to do with sex. It is a progressive thought without being anti-man like second and third wave feminism. The term became officially popularised in 1982 in *The New York Times Magazine*, which published an article entitled "Voices from the Post-Feminist Generation" by Susan Bolotin. This article re-introduced the term, and later, it gained much popularity. Postfeminist ideology is a new form of empowerment, individual choice, independence, consumer culture, fashion, hybridisation, humour, and sexual pleasure with a renewed focus on the female body. This theory emphasises the avoidance of depicting a woman as passive, inferior, weak, and subordinate to a man, and its primary goal is women's individualisation and assertion.

The term seems ambiguous, and it is hard to find an exact definition. Several definitions contradict each other. While adding the prefix 'post-' it acquires an extended meaning. In a nutshell, the notion behind postfeminism is that feminism has achieved its key aims, that there is complete equality for all women and a blurring of the boundaries of traditionally defined gender roles. Critics like Angela Mc Robbie, Myra Macdonald, and Sophia Phoca believe that it is a movement formulated due to the dissatisfaction with existing feminist politics, especially the second wave, because it did not consider the majority of the women population. Some critics like Susan Faludi, Tania Modelski, and Ann Brooks believe it is an anti-feminist movement, a backlash to feminist ideology. The prefix 'post' does not mean the end of feminism but is an extension that proposes a contrasting outlook to the past feminist ideologies. As it is more influenced by popular culture and is evident in the concepts that formulate the Postfeminist doctrines, Postfeminists believe that women had gained equality which was the destination of past feminist movements, so the new feminists must focus on something more. They believe that woman must use their feminine values for empowerment and not devalue traditional female roles like motherhood. They must take control over their lives and give equal importance to family and career.

Postfeminists emphasise the ideas of empowerment and liberation, even though they are considered to be anti-feminist. Sophia Phoca associates it with post-Lacanian psychoanalysis, French feminism, and post-structuralist theory. Ann Brooks argues that "it is not a question of depoliticising feminism, but of marking a conceptualised shift between the 'old' and the 'new'- from a model based on equality to debates around the revived and theorised concept of difference"(121). She says that as in a theoretical context it signifies a matured feminism in which 'post' means breaking with existing ideology. She reflects that Postfeminism is "a process of

ongoing transformation and change"(118). The term was used in the 1980s to describe a backlash against second wave feminism. It carries a label that it takes critical approaches against previous feminist discourses and challenges the ideas put forward by the second wave. Amelia Jones finds that the texts produced between the 1980s and 1990s portrayed the second wave as a monolithic entity and were overly generalised in their criticism. The term got popularised by the 1990s in academics and media and is viewed positively and negatively simultaneously. It is believed that Toril Moi originally coined the term. She was a professor at Duke University, and the term appears in her work *Sexual/Textual Politics*. There is constant confusion regarding the word 'post'. On the one hand, it announces the end of feminism; on the other hand, it has become a site for feminist politics.

Gender studies and postmodern thinking also influenced postfeminism. It gives more importance to an individual woman's experience than a collective one. It marked a return to the self and the individualist identity framing favoured by enlightenment and liberalism in popular culture. Ann Brooks suggests that there is "the conceptual shift within feminist debates around equality in postfeminism to a focus on debates around difference"(4). Postfeminism can be seen in gender studies and popular culture; it highlights individual differences and experiences and upholds the absolute feminine values, virtues, and vices that past feminists tried to deny. More focus is on femininity, so several writers, including Susan Faludi, claim it anti-feminist. In her *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, she analyses postfeminism to discredit the notion that feminism is still a valuable or relevant movement.

Ann Brooks' version of Postfeminism puts 'woman' under 'erasure'. There is a return to the 'self' favouring individual identity. Tania Modleski claims that if a

woman is put under erasure in the debates about differences, allowing men into feminism might make women disappear from feminism. Rosalind Gill comments that postfeminism can be understood as sensibility, characterising various contemporary depictions of women and feminists within popular culture. Its sensibility is not fixed or reliant on a precise understanding of the term. Instead, it emphasises the contradictory nature of postfeminist discourses and the entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist themes.

Postfeminism seems more associated with media and popular culture than academics. It celebrated 'girl power' and female success and promoted chick literature, glamour, and fashion. Young fashionable girls became the centre of attraction and emphasised white as the beautiful image. Self-assured and confident women are shown as having equal footing with men. Women are not portrayed as victims; they boldly proclaim their womanhood. They claim that women can also be empowered through working in the sex industry as strippers and in adult films.

Postfeminism is problematic because there is no specific definition, and everyone has their meaning and approach to it. In her book *Backlash; The Undeclared War Against American Women*, Susan Faludi severely criticises this new mode of feminism. They believe that the goal of Postfeminism is to drag society back to the days of patriarchy. There exists a debate about whether Postfeminism is the third wave or part of it. As Ann Brooks comments, it occurs mainly because 'post' means a break with the past, understood as "a process of ongoing transformation and change"(3).

Postfeminism, like other feminism, has theoretical support. Many societal factors led to the rise and development of Postfeminism. A central theoretical concept

in advancing both feminism and Postfeminism is biological determinism. According to biological determinism, biology makes the sexual division of labour. The second wave of feminism shows a harsh reaction to this concept. The second wave feminists give less concern to the biological determinism of labour. Postfeminism criticises second wave feminism for this rejection of biological differences. They give prominence to 'unique equality' and all that is feminine. It focuses on femininity to ensure power and upholds that femininity is equal to masculinity even though they are different. Another influence that can be seen is essentialism. It is similar to biological determinism that male and female identities are determined or fixed biologically, psychologically, and socially. Second wave feminism is generally considered a reaction against this biological determinism and essentialism.

Feminists of the second and third waves claim that biological determinism and essentialism are the creation of patriarchy. They believe that gender and sexual difference are historically and socially rather than biologically constructed. Postfeminism brings back this concept but encourages and emphasises women to live in whatever manner they wish and values the importance of professional and domestic life. This is a reaction to second wave feminism which undermined women's domestic sphere. Postfeminism is also influenced by Post Structuralism, Post Modernism, and Post Colonialism. These theories rejected established truth and focused on the role of language in creating and reflecting meaning and deconstructing subjectivity. They emphasised a fragmented state and embraced diversity, and questioned fixed identity. The influence of Postcolonial theory gives voice to third-world women.

The writings of Naomi Wolf, Camille Paglia, and Kate Roiphe tremendously influence Postfeminist theory. Their writings are highly sexualised and based on the mystical power of female sexuality. They include a variety of sexual topics like rape,

prostitution, and abortion and focus on the non-victim status of women and the assertion of female power. These writers promote power feminism which is sexual and hate sexism without despising men. They acknowledge women's quest for power, money, and self-fulfilment and portray the dark side of femininity. Common themes of these writers are the rejection of victim identity and the celebration of the power of female sexuality.

As this new feminism gives importance to the power of female sexuality, it is often referred to as 'power feminism' or 'babe feminism'. 'Girl power' replaced 'girl crises' as the central theme of works produced, which gives prominence to fashion and attitude. In *Feminism and Youth Culture* Mc Robbie says:

Young women tend not to identify with patriarchy; they have the right to vote, own property, inherit fortunes, keep paychecks, buy cars, lease apartments, order credit cards, and keep jobs through pregnancy, complete with maternity leave. The Postfeminist generation of females has been raised with the idea that they could be fighter pilots, stay-at-home moms, doctors, beauticians, or businesswomen of their choosing. As such, there appears to be increasing ambivalence towards feminism as more and more women who innately agree with many 'feminist' ideals either reject the label of feminism entirely or claim feminism only to qualify then which portion is acceptable and which are not" (27).

The central issue in front of the Postfeminist aim is to create a new relevant path that describes women's life experiences and circumstances, which was omitted by the second wave of feminism.



Postfeminists believe that the victimisation of women is not an accurate representation of feminism but a white female middle-class attempt to overlook the issues like race, class, and cultural differences. Some critics argue that the reaction against victim feminism is nothing more than a white middle-class woman wanting to claim victory before the struggle is over. The 'super woman' persona is puzzled in many situations. She is considered the embodiment of femininity, and women of past decades were under its grip. Postfeminists, especially younger women, view feminism as a means to realise their desires and goals. It may include homemaking and motherhood, maybe walking out of the home to pursue a dream career. Older feminists believe that women's desires are constructed socially and culturally in a patriarchal setting. Women have different life choices, which makes them confused; where feminism dictates which options are preferable, postfeminism upholds the contradictory combination of both.

Postfeminism challenges society's views concerning gender equality. Today women are left with two messages; it is not good to be a woman, and gender equality means pretending like a man. Postfeminism defends this by acceptance of differences, differences between feminine and masculine. Previous feminist movements omitted the element of femininity and undermined the unique feminine qualities in making women equal to men. Postfeminism suggests that patriarchal differences are still there, and the increased power of women brought abandonment of many boundaries that remained historically.

Another vital factor that postfeminism stresses is femininity, which was missed in feminist movements of the past. They criticise feminist movements by pointing out that by establishing that women are equal to men, unique feminine qualities are lost from a woman. They believed that some factors in females make

them women, and some in males make them men. They believe that these factors are inherent in both sexes. Postfeminism highlights that when they become male-identified, women neglect their real identity as females. In a postmodern society with much liberation from the traditional ideals of feminism, women try to embrace womanhood's privileges and acceptable notions.

According to postfeminism, female sexuality plays a vital role in popular culture. The power of female sexuality and the female body was hidden from the past feminine movements. Modern theorist Camille Paglia asserts in *Free Woman, Free Men* that women are the more powerful gender because of their sexuality, and men are less powerful because of their unabated desire for the female body. Postfeminism dismisses traditional forms of behavioural patterns. They reject the conventional feminist concept that to be equal to men, it is necessary to be male-like and, simultaneously, forced to embrace submissiveness and repress their sexuality. As a result, society was full of unhappy women who could not adjust to their imposed dual roles. They view the female body as a sex symbol and an object of male desire. They use this notion to protest against male domination. In Postfeminism, there is a reaction against the prudish views of older feminists on sexual desires. Postfeminism encourages free love and casual sex. Later it is found to be a betrayal of truth and intimacy in relationships.

In her book *'Life So Far'*, Betty Friedan brings out a solution; she says that feminist movements had popularised women's liberation, lesbianism, and man-hating. She says the women's movement should pay attention to the real issues of equal employment opportunities, education, autonomy, and child care. Giving too much importance to sexuality may divert attention from women's real problems. Postfeminism focuses on equality for women in the public sphere and rejects the

sexual politics of past feminist movements. It underlines the importance of marriage, men, and family, which was devalued in the past.

In postfeminism, attention is given to an individual woman, choices, and freedom. It tries to view family/ marriage as necessary as a workplace. It is a criticism against postfeminism that they give much importance to the traditional role of nurturer that a woman plays in a family. It tries to bring out the change in the position of men. The writers portray more domestically conscious husbands who spend more time cleaning, cooking, doing laundry, and sharing household duties with their families. There is increased participation of men in household duties. It is mainly because women with careers feel burdened by household duties compared to men. So, to run a balanced family, men, too, are compelled to share tasks and responsibilities. Some fathers parent at home full-time, and postfeminism emphasises the need for fathers and the role of men in fathering and raising a child. They held up the view on the necessity of fathers in the family and their contribution the emotional, intellectual and social growth. Postfeminism gives equal importance to fatherhood and motherhood, which the feminist movement, especially the second wave, considered unimportant.

The mother's role and motherhood have always been debated subjects in feminism. Second wave feminism tries to belittle mothering and other feminine virtues. However, postfeminism tries to highlight the role of the mother in family, childcare and nurturing. At the same time focuses on workplace and job issues faced by a woman. Previous feminist movements held a negative view of child care and mothering and ignored motherhood and genuine motherhood-related experiences. Those feminists believed there is no pleasure in raising children; time spent on it is a burden to women. Postfeminism focuses more on an individual woman's experience

and includes her experiences, delight, distress, and confusion of various life experiences that a woman passes. They elicit a multi-faceted view of motherhood and its significance. It is regarded as a means to identify a woman's self. They highlight the experience of everyday mothering experience of women and include both working and non-working mothers.

Postfeminism stresses diversity among woman's experiences as an individual experience is diverse. It is concerned with women's equality, freedom of expression, sexuality, and power and discusses differences rather than sameness. They discard the idea of uniformity of women's experiences. It also deconstructs the binary categorisation of gender and sexuality. Postfeminism intermingles feminine virtues, femininity, and achievements of second wave feminism like career opportunities and other rights. The centre of concern is shifted from women to human beings or an individual. So varied experiences and orientations get more attention into feminine discourse.

In her book *The Aftermath of Feminism*, Angela Mc Robbie analyses the evolution of Postfeminism with popular culture. She says that in the 1970s and 1980s, something unexpected happened. Postfeminism is a new kind of anti-feminist sentiment that is different from simply being a question of backlash against the seeming gains made by feminist activities and campaigns in an earlier period. She discusses that two terms gained popularity: empowerment and choice. These elements of feminism are converted into more individualistic discourse. McRobbie criticises that "feminism has intervened to constrain these kinds of conventional desires. But it is surely a relief to escape these censorious politics and freely enjoy what has been disapproved of"(20). These types of thoughts seem evident in new forms of expressions related to media and popular culture. It is a kind of substitute for

feminism. She considers that the contemporary feminist movement harshly undermined feminist gains. She shares Susan Faludi's backlash thesis and considers it an anti-feminist. She says feminism is cast into the shadows.

Even though she observes it as an anti-feminist, she tries to view the change positively. She brings out some popular films and newspaper columns that gained much readership. The newspaper *Independent* has a column in the UK, 'Bridget Jones's Diary' and its film version, which is a worldwide success. It is modelled on a modern woman Bridget, living and working in London in her thirties. She is accessible, single, and childless, enjoying her life in pubs, bars, and restaurants. She is educated and earned to be independent without shame and danger. However, there are many anxieties that she passes through, like fear of loneliness and uncertainties, and she is constantly in search of the right partner. She thinks and fears that she will not be successful in finding the right man and getting married. Though Bridget represents a modern free woman, she fantasises about traditional happiness and fulfilment forms.

Next, she points out female characters in the television show *Sex and the City*, *Ally Mc Beal*, and female images in Woman's magazines. She claims that:

These young women are confident enough to declare their anxieties about possible failure regarding finding a husband, they avoid any aggressive or overtly traditional man, and they brazenly enjoy their sexuality without fear of sexual double standard. In addition, they are more than capable of earning their living, and the degree of suffering or shame they anticipate in the absence of finding a husband is countered by sexual self-confidence (21).

There is a strong sense of reclaiming their femininity. This new woman wants to be girlish and enjoy traditional feminine pleasures without any guilt. McRobbie

highlights that feminism has taken away woman's unique pleasures like romances, gossip, and concern regarding how to catch a husband.

According to Judith Butler, Postfeminism is described as 'double entanglement'. It is the co-existence of neo-conservative values concerning gender, sexuality, and family life. McRobbie says that feminism is dismantling itself; due to the impact of double entanglement with popular culture and political culture, it becomes necessary to dismantle itself. Influence of Foucault and postcolonial feminists like Spivak, Trinh, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and other feminists like Judith Butler, and Harroway, there is a shift away from feminists' interests in centralised power blocks like state, patriarchy and law. The body and the subject came to represent a focal point for feminist interest, nowhere more so than in the work of Butler. The concept of subjectivity and how cultural forms and interpellations (or dominant social processes) call women into producing themes and subjects while ostensibly merely describing them as such inevitably means that it is a problematic 'she' rather than an unproblematic 'we' which is indicative of a turn to what we might describe as the new feminist politics of the body.

Feminist cultural studies in the early 1990s mark a moment of feminist reflexivity. Charlotte Brunsdon, in her article "*Pedagogies of Feminine*", enquires about the use-value of feminist media scholarship of the binary opposition between femininity and feminism. Between a 'housewife' and an 'ordinary woman, who is now the focus of feminism. 1990 was also a moment at which popular feminism found expression. Andrea Stuart observes that the broader circulation of women's magazines and their popularity had a central point in forming women's movements against domestic violence, equal pay, and workplace harassment gained a vast readership. The influence of women's magazines and popular culture gives importance to the idea

of feminist success. There has been a gradual change in the depiction of women in mass media and magazines. It gives rise to successful female figures with a brief tide of optimism.

Female individualisation is another crucial feature of postfeminism.

Individuals must choose the kind of life they want to live. New feminism insists that girls must have a life plan. They must become more reflexive regarding every aspect of life, like making the right choice. New popular culture has a significant influence on postfeminism and new girls. It imbued the celebration of pro-western values like career, success, glamour, and sexuality. Postfeminism emphasises the centrality of family, the importance of family values, and the celebration of female power in the household. Postfeminism claims that early feminists were too anti-man, pro-lesbian, and far too anti-family and delineated ordinary women. Postfeminism says that early feminist movements isolated women from family life and cut them off from the pleasures of having children and from the meaningful community which emerges around motherhood. Popular culture, including women's magazines, the fashion and beauty industry, women's genre films, and television programs, comes forward with a new model. Women began to move out of the shadows to the spotlight of visibility. The focus is on female individuality and subjectivity.

A new form of gender power is established and offers women a specific form of freedom and a particular idea of importance. Women began to move away from being hidden and unimportant. They become observable with a new sense of self-importance. Another vital characteristic of postfeminism is gender mainstreaming. It is a unique, modernised form of feminist practice. They highlight true femininity in women, whether it is good or bad. Feminism was once rather rowdy and activist (or at least this is the inference that can be drawn). It has matured and embraced human

rights discourse. Human rights discourse has fully incorporated women's demand for equality not in the individualist sense but also includes women's collective, economic, and social rights. She claims that there are many opportunities for a new feminist movement to emerge. Women can be said to undertake a shift from the domestic sphere to the public realm. There is restructuring, reinventing, and rebranding of feminism by promoting gender equality and also ensuring that existing social policies are made effective by being expected to address gender issues.

McRobbie analyses how popular culture dismantles feminist gains. Popular culture is a space where feminism is 'undone'. One way of undoing feminism is picturing it as a rigid and frightening movement in the historical past. Another method is spreading a belief that young women and society no longer need feminism as equality is already achieved. She never claims that feminism has disappeared. She finds that Women's magazines follow popular trends, and there is a co-existence of feminism and anti-feminism. She asserts that the media has played a vital role in defining gender roles. She examines that postfeminist ideology proposes that women are free to compete in academics and the economy without restriction; the individual's merit is of prime concern.

Postfeminist ideology is an exchange process where women gain symbolic equality as they do not work for full political or meaningful equality. She says that consumer culture influences every walk of life in the modern world. Consumer culture celebrates female power and femininity. Next, she comments on accepting pornographic images in our mainstream culture. She says young women fail to condemn the normalisation of pornography. Besides, they are encouraged to show their sexual freedom as a means of empowerment by attending lap dances and pole dancing classes. She says now that women occupy many social institutions and high-



profile positions. This shows successful female figures are an essential part of postfeminism. She attempts to criticise postfeminism for giving less space to low-income, rural, and women of colour in popular culture. She says that postfeminism surrounds white middle-class youth culture.

Susan Faludi's *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* severely criticises postfeminism and contemporary popular culture and media trends. She argues that popular culture and media attempt to spread the general concept that women's liberation movements have caused many problems for women. As women have gained equality, feminism is irrelevant in the modern world. She says that women are not yet equal, and there is a counter-attack to reverse the hard-won gains of feminist movements. Our media encourages women to reject increases and struggle for genuine equality. She comments, "Postfeminist sentiments first surfaced, not in the 1980s media, but in the 1920s press. Under this barrage, membership in feminist organisations seemed problematic, and the remaining women group hastened to denounce the Equal Rights Amendment or simply converted themselves to social clubs. 'Ex feminists' began issuing their confessions" (70). There are several myths that the media produces, including fewer potential spouses for women, new divorce laws negatively affecting women's financial and professional life, women being infertile and having more mental illnesses, and daycare having permanent adverse effects on children academically, socially and emotionally.

Next, Faludi describes the effects of popular culture on feminism and examines the Hollywood portrayal of women in the 1980s. Media depict changing roles of women focusing on the fashion and cosmetic industries and promoting cosmetic surgeries. She describes recent trends in popular culture like cocooning, the new abstinence, the new feminist morality, and celibacy. She also comments on the

Hollywood screen and depiction of independent single career women. Faludi severely criticises popular television shows which arouse anti-feminist sentiment by depicting good female characters as angelic at-home moms and careerist females who lack warmth and submissiveness. She is against media whose misrepresentations of facts without examining the statistical data on women choosing home life over career, spread that women were unhappy with feminist movements. She argues that the media presents single women as defective while single men are more mature in making decisions. She claims that these myths spread by the media devalue the achieved liberties of feminist movements. She believes women's unhappiness arises because their struggle for equality is not finished. Faludi observes that the role of media was significant in framing a popular and negative understanding of postfeminism. Their views were blindly shared by some feminists who critically evaluated the potential of postfeminism with the 'backlash model.'

Another essential work related to this new trend is *Postfeminisms; Feminism, Cultural Theory, and Cultural Forms* by Ann Brooks. According to her, Postfeminism " facilitates a broad-based, pluralistic conception of the application of feminisms and colonised cultures for non-hegemonic feminism capable of giving voice to local, indigenous and postcolonial feminisms."(4). She has a positive attitude toward this new trend and analysed it through cultural studies. She tried to view Postfeminism in connection with Postmodernism, Postcolonialism, Feminism, and the Psychoanalytical theories of Foucault. She also examines the influence of popular culture and representations in media, film theory, sexuality, subjectivity, and identity in her works and how Postmodern feminists engage with these notions. Ann Brooks believes there is no depoliticising of feminism but a conceptual shift between the 'old' and 'new'. "Postfeminism can be understood as critically engaging with patriarchy and

Postmodernism as similarly engaged with principles of modernism" (5). A model based on equality and theorised concept of difference. To her, "Post-feminism is understood as a useful conceptualised frame of reference encompassing the intersection of feminism with several other anti-foundational movements including Post Modernism, Poststructuralism and Post Colonialism" (7). She emphasises the individualist framing of identity and returns to the self.

Rosalind Claire Gill, a British sociologist and feminist cultural theorist, published various articles concerning postfeminism, popular culture, and its influence on media and individuals' lives. Her primary work *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neo-liberalism, and Subjectivity*, examine the changes in depicting female experiences and representation in the twenty-first century. It also looks at the depiction of feminine sensibility in media, which paved the way for new female subjectivity. This book provides insight into understanding representations of gender in contemporary media and popular culture.

A literary genre developed by the influence of Postfeminist ideology is Chick Literature/ Chick Lit. It is a genre of fiction with heroine-centred narratives that focus on the trials and tribulations of an individual protagonist. It addresses the issues of modern-world womanhood, like romantic relationships and female friendship circles in the workplace, in humorous and light-hearted ways. The protagonist is always a single, white, heterosexual British or American woman living in the city in her late twenties or early thirties. This genre became popular in the late 1990s by publishing Catherine Allcott's *The Old Girl Network*, which is considered the pioneer of this style of fiction. Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* is a famous work in this genre. This type of literature features a female heroine and the protagonist's womanhood, which is the plot's primary concern. Heroine's relationship with her family or friends

is as meaningful as her romantic relations. Recent trends highly influence chick literature in feminism, like postfeminism and celebrating female sexuality, fashion, and beauty.

Postfeminism includes several characterisations. It emphasises the varied ways women experience power, interact with the existing power structure, and open up a diversity of options for female experiences. It also looks at and approaches differently the inequalities that women face. An essential feature of postfeminism is about defining equality differently. They hold the view that equality should not be based on gender. It reduces human potential, and differences must be based on human elements of thought, intellect, emotion, and expression. Women shall be equal to men without looking similar to men. Quest for power becomes a common theme in many works. There is a celebration of girl power and sexuality as a means to exert influence. Postfeminism recaptured the notions like marriage, love, family modesty, and femininity which were taken over by the feminist movements and blended these feminine virtues with achievements of career opportunities and legal rights that the second and third waves provided. More focus is on what a true woman desires as a human being; there is a shift from "woman-focused" to human-focused". They aim to recognise, respect, and blend these differences in desires and interests in feminine discourse.

There are contradictions among feminists and critics that postfeminism is a support or an anti-feminist phenomenon. In the eyes of many feminists, it is a concept that has become popularised by the media. This diminishes the progress that feminism attained and creates a new capitalist social system that compels women to buy things to become more feminine. The backlash nature of this ideology is an attempt by the media to discredit the goals of feminism, and a large group of feminists argue that

postfeminism is anti-feminism. It is seen as equated with the backlash movement in the notion of differences in viewing men and women are fundamentally different, it is regarded anti-feministic because it gives importance to motherhood and the innate nurturing desires of a woman and promotes the role of women in the home.

Postfeminism is regarded as an amalgamation of feminism and anti-feminism, providing more possibilities and scope for women and women's movements.

Postfeminism, in essence, is believed to be a collective ideology that uses gender equality in a variety of manners, including an emphasis on individual behaviour and diversity, a rejection of victimhood and other perceived feminist shortcomings, and an embrace of femininity and previously discarded feminist interests.

Postfeminism has become a popular trend over recent years, even though once seen as 'anti-feminist'. It claims feminism's 'coming of age as Yeatman claims, "It presents a confident body of theory and politics, represents pluralism and difference and reflecting on its position about other philosophical and political movements similarly demanding change". When understanding some central issues, the relationship between postfeminism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism is debated. The concept 'of' 'ost' is common to all these discourses and has become a subject of misconception while interpreting the terms. Like postcolonialism and postmodernism, postfeminism is often used to indicate a complete break from the previous theoretical foundation and emphasis a new range of temporal, political, and cultural relations. The use of 'post' becomes highly problematic sometimes as post-colonialism can be marked as a critical engagement with colonialism, not to claim that colonialism has been overturned. In the same sense, postfeminism can be understood as critically engaging with patriarchy. It occupies a critical position regarding the earlier feminist framework while critically engaging with patriarchal and imperialist discourses.

Doing so challenges the hegemonic assumption that second wave feminist epistemologies hold that patriarchal and imperialist oppression are universally experienced pressure.

The concept of postfeminism seems hard mainly for two reasons. First is the widespread conception of the term, which resulted from the media's appropriation, and second is the uneven development of the concept as a movement expressing change. Alice L. claims, " Postfeminism(usually written as Post-feminism) was coined in the period between the achievement of women's suffrage in the US and the rise of second-wave feminism during the 1960s. It denoted the successful outcome of struggles by women for the right to vote, hold public office and the choice to occupy many more personal spheres" (*What is Postfeminism? Or Having it Both Ways* 7). The conceptual reference points of postfeminism are focussed on the issues of women's rights and equal opportunities and, thus, as a white western middle class, mainly of the northern hemispherical conception of feminism. Therefore in postfeminism, there is a shift from debates around equality to focus on discussions around difference. It has been accepted as a powerful successor to second and third wave feminism. It represents diversity in concepts and theoretical frameworks. It encloses a wide range of diverse political and philosophical movements. It has emerged as a result of critiques from within and outside feminism.

The paradigm shift from feminism to postfeminism can be seen differently. First is the challenges posed by postfeminism to feminism's epistemological foundationalism; second is its growth away from specific disciplinary boundaries; third is postfeminism's refusal to be limited by representational constraints. Several scholarly articles on Postfeminism and popular culture discuss the emergence of a

new type of feminine sensibility over recent years. These studies present a Postfeministic view regarding media, literature, and society.

An article by Marjorie Jolles titled "Going Rogue: Postfeminism and The privilege of Breaking Rules" published in *Feminist Formations*, and Shelley Budgeon and Dawn Currie in the article "From Feminism to Postfeminism: Women's Liberation in Fashion Magazines" published in *Women's Studies International Forum*, analyses the essential notions discussed in Postfeminism like successful femininity, self-invention, and self-regulation. It also analyses how the postfeminist ideology requires its subject to fulfil these crucial features by following and breaking the rules. The article argues that celebrating rule-breaking to identify successful femininity leads to inaccurate and dangerous notions regarding womanhood. In "Postfeminism, Popular Culture, and Neoliberal Feminism", the article by three authors Sarah Banet-Weiser, Rosalind Gill, and Catherine Rottenberg, in *SAGE Journals*, discusses these terms. The article is in a conversational pattern. Their reviews and perspectives regarding the terms are presented. They also debate over the impact of media and capitalism on these theories. They are concerned about Postfeminist notions of life, Girl Power, Successful Femininity, and Postfeminist Sensibility. Rosalind Gill's article titled "The affective, Cultural and Psychic life of Postfeminism: A Postfeminist Sensibility 10 years On" in *SAGE Journals* examines the notions of Postfeminism ten years after its formation. She discusses it as a critical term as a part of feminist scholarship. She also focuses on current features of the theory as a sensibility. This article studies the hold of this ideology upon contemporary life as a powerful means of neo-liberalism. It stresses that the experience of white middle-class women is a belief popularised by the media. Popular culture and Postfeminism are very much influenced by capitalism, which created an environment for developing a

new form of a social system based on consumerism; when women begin to earn and come to the forefront of society and become economically independent, the way for upliftment of middle-class women.

Postfeminism is both a response and an extension of modern feminism. Postfeminism and third wave are considered contemporary movements or even regarded as identical. It is viewed as a wild extension of the third wave, seeking new insights into feminism. Postfeminism is a response to the homogenised, white middle-class feminist movement. It is an expression of younger women for more freedom of feminist expression and individual expression. Postfeminist sensibility comprises the notion that femininity is a physical property; there is a shift from objectification to subjectification, emphasising self-surveillance, self-discipline, and focus on individualism, choice, and empowerment.

Through her concept of 'Female Individualisation', Angela Mc Robbie stresses how individuals with self-monitoring tendencies prevail in this current phase:

The earlier period of modernisation (first modernity) created a welfare state and a set of institution(education) which allowed people in the second modernity to become more independent and able, for example: to earn their living. Young women are, as a result, now dis-embedded from communities where gender roles were fixed. And as these old social structures of social class fade away, and lose their grip in the context of the late or second modernity, individuals are increasingly called upon to invent their structures. Individuals must now choose the kind of life they want to live. Girls must have a life plan. They must become more reflexive regarding choice in



marriage, taking responsibility for their own working lives and not being dependent on a job. (25)

Mc Robbie illustrates *Bridget Jones's Diary* to speak about the notion of female individualisation:

*Bridget Jones's Diary* speaks then to female desire, and in a wholly commercialised way to the desire for some kind of gender justice, or fairness, in the world of sex and relationships. Here too, the ghost of feminism is hovering. Bridget desires to get what she wants. The audience is wholly on her side. She ought to be able to find the right man for the reason that she has negotiated the tricky path which requires being independent, earning her living, standing up for herself against demeaning comments, remaining funny and good-humoured throughout without being angry or too critical of men, without foregoing her femininity, her desires for love and motherhood, her sense of humour and her appealing vulnerability. (27).

Rosalind Gill suggests that notions of choice, "being oneself, " and "pleasing oneself" (155) are central to the postfeminist sensibility that suffuses contemporary Western media culture. They resonate powerfully with the emphasis on empowerment and taking control that can be seen in talk shows, advertising, and makeover shows. One aspect of this postfeminist sensibility in media culture is the almost total evacuation of politics or cultural influence notions. This is seen not only in the relentless personalising tendencies of news, talk shows, and reality TV programmes but also in how every aspect of life is refracted through personal choice and self-determination. To a much greater extent than men, women must work on and transform the self, regulate every aspect of their conduct, and present all their actions as freely chosen.

Despite the criticism, third-wave participants admit there is an overlap between postfeminism and third-wave feminism since both consider second-wave feminism old-fashioned and suffocating. They situate themselves within popular culture and mention contradiction, diversity, personal and sexual pleasure, lifestyle, and individualism. But whereas postfeminism is conservative and explicitly against second-wave feminism, third-wave feminism is constructively built on second-wave's accomplishments. Postfeminism is part of the third wave because it participates in the discourses of capitalism and neo-liberalism, where women are asked to focus on their private and consumer lives as a self-expression.

Women's writing is considered a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statements. Today most female writers are known for their strong views, and their works are a sign of protest or an outburst against the injustices they face.

Elizabeth Jackson comments:

The concept of feminism has been controversial in India and other developing nations for many reasons. On the one hand, traditionalists argue that it alienates women from their culture, religion and family responsibilities. At the same time, some on the left see it as a diversion from the more important class struggle or the struggle against the western cultural and economic imperialism (3).

The emphasis on family and community in Indian society has important implications for feminism in India. Feminism in Indian Literature, mainly Indian English, is a by-product of the influence of Western Feminist movements. The Indian women caught in the chains of tradition and modernity are favourite subjects for female writers of all ages. Their search for identity and quest to define themselves became significant

concerns among female writers. Women novelists of the modern period voice emergence of a new type of woman in Indian society who is educated and desires a rightful place, recognition, and respect due to her inner urge to make her existence meaningful.

Contemporary Women's Writing in India progresses with various experiences and powerful depictions of real-life Indian women. Their novels deal with burning issues that exist in our society. The changed women of the modern era and their experiences are very well explored by the new-age female writers of Indian English Fiction. The writers are recognised for their originality and indigenous portrayal of Indian female subjectivity. They have balanced the complex issues without degrading tradition, even though some of their characters prefer breaking traditional codes and customs. Modern writers celebrate true womanhood and aspirations in their works, the values, the qualities of women, and their role in society. Their works address issues of women as individuals more than women in general.

Struggle to establish one's identity, assert one's individuality, and women's efforts to exist as a separate entity appear to be powerfully depicted in the works of Women Writers. Modern women writers strongly show the real life of Indian middle-class women. The thesis is intended to analyse Jaishree Misra's and Anita Nair's works as representatives of modern women writers of Indian English Fiction in the light of postfeminism. The study examines the female characters with the notion of 'being oneself' and 'pleasing oneself', which becomes the central concept in a postfeminist discourse. There are numerous other studies regarding the works of these writers. A postfeminist analysis of these two authors and their works is something new. Even though the writers do not claim to be feminists, the influence of feminist movements and popular culture can be seen in the works they produce.

Anita Nair and Jaishree Misra, the authors selected for the study, belong to the modern women writers of Indian English Fiction. Both writers depict Indian society and its every aspect. Their primary concerns are women's role in the family and community. They harshly criticise the traditional marriage system, which gives less importance to individual choice and freedom. Jaishree Misra, in her works, vehemently attacks the patriarchal Kerala society, which privileges men more than women. She tries to open up the futility of arranged marriages in the lives of individuals. She also expresses strongly that the Indian/ Kerala family system gives less space for the self-development of female individuals. The works selected for the study exhibit women characters who are rebellious in the present social system and take hold of their lives to attain self-fulfilment. Anita Nair's heroines also struggle with conventions that prevent women from achieving true emancipation. She contrasts old-generation traditional women with modern, confident, free-thinking women who courageously assert their individuality. These writers delineate a new type of woman, powerful enough to rewrite their life as they desired. The female protagonists show a strong drive to escape the constraints of unhappy marriages, patriarchal society, and familial bonds that stand in the way of attaining self-fulfilment.

These writers are influenced by their Keralite surroundings, and their writings echo it. Jaishree Misra is the great-niece of famous Malayalam writer and Janapith Awardee Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai. Her writings, especially her first novel *Ancient Promises*, is set in Alleppy, where she used to visit her vacations and where her grandparents lived. It is also a place that is connected to her happy childhood days. It is a semi-autobiographical work too. This novel is her life story, about a mother's efforts with a special-needs child. In this novel, she depicts the patriarchal society of

Kerala, insensitive and uncaring in-laws, and a husband. He gives the least importance to her feelings, emotions, and desires as a human being. The central character is Janaki (Janu), her efforts to escape from a married life from which she has nothing to expect. Her struggles to have a life that makes her daughter comfortable pave the way to her self-fulfilment. Her subsequent work, *Accidents Like Love and Marriage*, is a novel that ridicules Indian society, customs, and arranged marriages. Next is *Afterwards*, the story of Maya, a beautiful woman caught in an unhappy marriage. To her, married life seems like a cage because her husband is always suspicious of her. With the help of Rahul Tiwari, a foreigner, she escapes to London. Her fourth novel *Rani* is a historical fiction based on the life of Rani Lakshmbai of Jhansi. In 2009 she signed a three-book deal with Harper Collins UK, and the first one of the series is *Secrets and Sins*. Next is *Secrets and Lies*, which appeared on the Heat seekers list in Britain's Bookseller Magazines' bestseller list. The third one is *A Scandalous Secret* which was published in 2011. Her eighth novel, *A Love Story for My Sister*, explores Stockholm syndrome, and her ninth book, *A House for Mr Misra*, is nonfiction, a memoir of the life she spent in Kerala with her husband while trying to build a studio on the beach. She paints an amusing picture of the present-day life of Kerala. Jaishree Misra worked for several years in the Child Care Department of Social Services in Buckinghamshire. Recently, she works as a film classifier at the British Board of Film Classification in London. She is regular in literary festivals in India as well as abroad.

Anita Nair, too, in her works, explored Malayalee life and culture. Her first work is a collection of short stories titled *Satyr of the Subway*, which won her a fellowship from the Virginia Centre for Creative Arts. Her novel *The Better Man and Ladies Coupe'* has a wide readership and was translated into twenty-one languages.

*Ladies Coupe'* is about women's condition in a male-dominated society. It is the journey of a woman to liberation and self-fulfilment. It explores the theme that even though women are from different strata of society, they are united by a common problem: male domination and oppression. Her other remarkable work is *Mistress*, which explores a story from three perspectives. The story is told from the viewpoint of Radha, her husband Shyam, and her uncle Koman, a Kathakali artist. She had written poems in anthologies like *The Dance of the Peacock: An Anthology of English Poetry from India*, featuring 151 Indian English poets. Her other works are *The Puffin Book of Myths and Legends*; she had edited *Where the Rain is Born*. Other prominent works include *Malabar Mind*, *Lessons in Forgetting*, *Cut Like Wound*, *Idris: Keeper of the Light*, which is a historical and geographical work about a Somalian trader who visited Malabar in 1659 AD, *Alphabet Soup for Lovers*, *Adventures of Nonu: The Skating Squirrel*, *Living Next Door to Alise*, *Magical Indian Myths* and she had written a play which was adapted from her novel *Mistress* named *Nine Faces of Being*. Her recent work is *Eating Wasps*. She won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for her contribution to literature and culture in 2012 and other literary achievements.

There are various studies regarding Jaishree Misra and Anita Nair's works as a representative of contemporary writers dealing with day-to-day problems faced by women in Indian society. Most of the studies are concerned with depicting female protagonists as a tool to express the changed outlook of Indian Women and a change in the social and domestic setting of Indian middle-class society. The writer stresses bringing back the matrilineal system that the Nair community practised. The studies discuss why she pictures Kerala women as powerful and adaptive in her works. Giving back women the power to choose their life make them genuinely emancipated. In the article "Re-assessing the Kerala Model Woman in Fiction: An Interview with

Jaishree Misra" by Maya Vinai and Jayshree Hazarika, Jaishree Misra expresses her view regarding Kerala Society and its patriarchal setup. The novels are understood as an indicator of subjugation in the patriarchal culture of Kerala Society. The writer goes deep into the characters Janaki and Maya. Their plight in a typical Malayalee family is depicted powerfully. Their struggle to escape from the clutches of male domination and the attitude of girls' parents towards domestic violence and divorce are discussed. The paper titled " The Female Self in Jaishree Misra's Ancient Promises and Afterwards" by Ms Sherine Allena Joseph and Dr Ann Thomas, published in *Literary Herald*, studies women's role in these novels.

The works of Jaishree Misra probe the different roles that men and women play in our society. Indian society always prefers women to occupy subordinate position in the family. Marriage as a social institution hinders the freedom of women as an individual. The strength the female protagonist shows in her life and evolution as a bold female is discussed in the article. Janaki's search for identity and self gives new hope in her life. An article titled "Journey to the Self: A Reading of Jaishree Misra's Ancient Promises" by S. A Nesamani and Dr S. Thirunavukkarasu, published in the *International Journal of Engineering and Applications* pictures the depiction of educated women in Indian society. The novels *Ancient Promises* and *Clear Light of the Day* examine the struggles that women of modern India face. These works depict their struggle between the values of tradition and current and their conflict to have an identity and a liberated self. The article seeks to analyse the development of New Woman in Indian English Fiction. There is a new awakening and a new realisation in women to redefine their place, position, and roles in society and the family. The research article "Struggling Women for their identity in Jaishree Misra's Ancient Promises and Anita Desai's Clear Light of the Day by Richa Pandey and Aparajita

Sharma in the *International Journal of Development and Research* examines this recurrent theme that Women writers depict.

Most of the works of Jaishree Misra question the notions of marriage as a matter that concerns not just two persons but society as a whole. It examines and destabilises the ideal image in a patriarchal society. "Subverting the Stereotypes: A Reading of Jaishree Misra's *Ancient Promises*" by C.V. Abraham in the *IOSR Journal of Humanities, and Social Science* deconstructs the conventional idea of a submissive and enduring woman. *Ancient Promises* as subverting the Sita myth, Sita is considered the embodiment of all woman's virtues like modesty, chastity, endurance, obedience, and self-sacrifice. Jaishree Misra's *Afterwards* focuses on the man-woman relationship in contemporary Indian society. The novel goes deep into the inner psyche of Maya, and her quest for happiness, and urges her to free herself from a suspicious, egoistic, and self-centred husband. Maya's efforts to assert her individuality as a human being and her struggle to escape from the unhappy life of an independent individual become the way to maintain her identity. A woman's pathetic state in a sad married life where she neither gets support from her own family is pictured in this work. This idea is echoed in "The Unquenching Thirst At Life's Bay: Understanding Maya in Jaishree Misra's novel *Afterwards*", published in the *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*.

The characters of Jaishree Misra are courageous enough to defend against the suppression imposed upon their life by tradition and custom. They defend the exploitation of women in the name of the so-called custom and tradition. Women's efforts to come out of the chains that bind them are focused. The article "Feminism in the novels of Jaishree Misra, Kaveri Nambisan and Manju Kapur" by Mavidi Papinaidu and Dr Chennareddy in the journal *The International Journal of Analytical*



*and Experimental Modal Analysis* enquires about female characters in the works of these women authors supports the notion of rebelling against women who challenge tradition and customs which are no use to them as individuals." Journey of Woman through the home, hearth, and heart: A reading of Jaishree Misra's *Ancient Promises* by Soumya Jose and Sony Jalrajan Raj, published in *Labyrinth: An International Refereed Journal of Postmodern Studies* seeks to read the works from a feminist perspective. The study goes deep into the character Janaki and her emergence as a new emancipated woman. The character ultimately gains control over her life and rewrites her destiny. In her works *Ancient Promises* and *Accidents Like Love and Marriage*, the writer depicts the inter-woven familial bonds in a traditional family. Both novels show a clear picture of middle-class Indian life and the problems faced by women in a convention-bound society. The study looks into the family and class differences issues still prevalent in India. A family is a place where a woman faces several injustices. In majority of her works, the writer seriously criticises the patriarchal system of the family still prevalent in India. In "Theme of Tangled Relationship in the select novels of Jaishree Misra", Dr . Stephen Foster Davis, published in the *International Journal of Research*, probes into the roles that man and woman play in the family. This article analyses Jaishree Misra's works regarding the notions like family, tradition, feminine individuality, and liberation.

There are various studies regarding Anita Nair's works too. Her celebrated work, *Mistress* stresses women's journey towards liberation and self-discovery. The whole story develops in chapters named the Nava rasas of Kathakali. Through the characters Radha and Saadiya, the writer pictures powerful female characters who have distinct selves and strongly assert their individuality. The story probes into the complex life of a Kathakali artist Koman. " A Critical Study of Anita Nair's *Mistress*

by Usha Jampana and Dr L.Manjula Davidson in *Research Journal of English Language and Literature* analyses the novel *Mistress* and its characters, especially the women characters like Radha and Saadiya.

Female protagonists' lives and efforts to assert their individuality and self have become the favourite theme of modern women writers. *Ladies Coupe'* gives a group of characters from different classes of society; they all can be united in the name of male domination in our community. Women's efforts for survival make them liberated. In the *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)*, an article titled "Women's struggling for Survival in Anita Nair's novels by M. Noushath and T. Charumathy examines the women characters in *Ladies Coupe'* and *Mistress*.

Anita Nair is more concerned with the condition of modern women. A woman who pursues their career and has less interest in social institutions, especially marriage, is depicted. Contemporary women who give importance to companionship than marriage are sought in the study. Sonia Firdaus's " The Reflection of Modern Women in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* and Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe'* in *The Dialogue* seeks to depict the similarities and differences that these two works represent. The similarities between these two works in plot construction and characterisation are also discussed in this article. Article by T. Sasikala titled " The Feminist Perspective in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe'* and Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*" in the *International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities* views both these works in a feministic light. The role of women in contemporary postcolonial society is discussed throughout the article. These works are analysed based on women's relationship with men and society. *The Edible Woman* depicts another level of women's life. Food and eating become rebellious acts against a modern male-dominated world.

Anita Nair focuses on the concepts of freedom, responsibility, and the existence of the female individual in *Ladies Coupe'*. The courage and willpower the female characters exhibit while establishing their existence and free self are examined in her work. Women's struggle to discover their identity, individuality, strength, and independence paves the way toward self-realisation. An article in the *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities* titled " Concept of Existential Elements of Freedom and Responsibility in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*" by Nalini Saxena enquires about these notions in the work. The Research article in *Contemporary Literary Review India* titled " The Conflict Between the Individual and Society as Portrayed in Anita Nair's Fiction" by Raghuvamsi Dantuluri analyses the conflict between the individual and the outer world. The characters are in constant struggle with the rules imposed by our society. All her characters confront this inevitable conflict on their journey towards liberation. Ultimately, they evolve as successful liberated individuals.

The article "Into the Vortex: Indian Women in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*" by Sushama Kasbekar in the *Asian Journal of Literature, Culture, and Society* focuses on women in South Asia/ south India. The themes that the writer explores can apply to women as a whole. The study enquires about the life of a single and a married woman. The heroines seeking different ways to escape difficult marriages have become a matter for analysis. The situations they face on their journey to liberation benefit self-realisation. The change in social setting accelerates women's liberation. A Journal article by Vasanthi Vaisreddy titled "The Indian Sensibility in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*" in *Scholarly Research Journal For Humanities, Science and English Language* is about the novel's central character Akhila. Her journey towards self-realisation is deeply studied in this article. The character Akhila discusses a change in

Indian Women's sensibility. Listening to other women passengers' life stories, Akhila realised she needed a companion, not a protector. This realisation gives her the courage to deal with her future life.

The roles that women play in the social, familial, and personal spheres are discussed in the works of Anita Nair. Her works portray a woman who expresses her opinion strongly and demands attention. They assert their individuality and existence boldly. Her characters show elements of aggression in some situations while maintaining their identity. It is a means to express their uncompromising nature concerning their liberation. In the article "Aggressive nature of Women in the novels of Anita Nair" by T. Pushpanathan in the *International Journal of Research*.

*GRANTHAALAYAH: A Knowledge Repository* studies the aggressive nature of women depicted in the novels of Anita Nair. The protagonist's journey in search of relationship and independence becomes a recurrent theme in Anita Nair's works. She boldly attempts to voice the frustration and struggles in a patriarchal society. Her novel exhibits a clear picture of contemporary Indian society. The study aims to go deep into the relationships portrayed in the novel. Relationships in a patriarchal society never ensure equality for men and women; women always remain in a secondary position, so the writer opines that to share an equal role in the family and society, there is a need to deconstruct the roles in the relationship. Man and woman must be companions; man must rise from the role of a protector in a married relationship. An article published in the *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* titled "Resuscitation of Relationships in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*" enquires about this idea, how the protagonist Akhila realises this notion, encompasses the central part of the work.

This study aims to probe deep into the women characters of these writers and seeks to analyse the works using Rosalind Gills' view of "being one self' and 'pleasing oneself"(155). The features that make the works different from previous feminist discourses are depicted in the chapters. The chapter traces the peculiar features of Postfeminism and what makes it unique from other feminism. It also analyses this ideology as a recent trend in literature that gives women more scope for advancement. This chapter views this new trend as an extension of Feminism which has a changed outlook as demanded in a postmodern world influenced by media and capitalism. The views of various authors and critics regarding the notion show that there is much recognition and criticism raised against this new mode of feminism. The chapter also seeks to discover this movement's influence on modern women writers of Indian English Fiction. Jaishree Misra and Anita Nair's selected works are included in the study. Jaishree Misra's *Ancient Promises* (2000), *Afterwards* (2004) and *Secrets and Lies* (2009) and Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe'* (2001) and *Mistress* (2005) are chosen for the investigation to examine the Postfeminist features that the writers knowingly or unknowingly depicted. The writers seem to include features of this modern trend in their writings that make these works look different.

Even though postfeminism influences media-related discourses, its impact on literature cannot be overlooked. It exerts its effect upon the lives of individuals mainly through media and popular culture. It is an influential movement in every sphere of an individual's life, especially for women. It grants diversity in opportunities and choices, which was inaccessible to women in the previous generation. Furthermore, it acknowledges the true femininity that the earlier feminist movements disregarded. This changed ideology aims to uphold both positive and negative virtues inherent in a female individual, which is evident in the writings of authors who advocate the

importance of real feminine experiences. The novels produced by the women writers of Indian English Fiction claim to bring forth the actual life of middle-class Indian women. Women of the middle class become the focus area of the women writers of the contemporary Indian scenario. The works selected for the study belong to the modern literary framework where many experiments in themes, styles, and manners occur. As representatives of the postmodern literary era, the writers moved away from the conventional depiction standards. To analyse the select works of Jaishree Misra and Anita Nair with notions of postfeminism seems innovative and exciting.

Chapter two, titled 'Indian Women's Writing in English and Indian Middle-class Society', examines the development of Women's Writing in Indian English Fiction. Its progress as a separate entity is enquired. Women Writers' evolution from the shadow of male cannons to an autonomous group with the influence of feminism is discussed in this chapter. The writers use new modes of narrative strategies, techniques in characterisation and humour are also analysed. The middle class is powerful in India and worldwide and occupies a more prominent part. As writers are concerned with the life of middle-class women, their role in family and society is redefined and re-constructed according to the changing trends in culture and society. Indian women authors apprehend the life of middle-class women who occupy the majority of the total population in India.

Chapter three, named "Being Oneself and Pleasing Oneself": Realising the Feminine Self' traces the postfeminist notion of self-fulfilment explored in the works of Jaishree Misra and Anita Nair. This became a central concept that makes postfeminism different from other feminist movements. Postfeminism stresses the importance of self-realisation and liberation to make an individual successful. Space for self-development of an individual, whether male/female, is a significant concern

among Postfeminist ideology. The characters in the novels of these two authors aim to work for their liberation from patriarchal norms. The efforts to assert their individuality are a means to attain self-fulfilment. It goes through the female protagonists' journey towards self-fulfilment and their efforts to achieve liberation and maintain their identity. With their strong willpower, they redefine and reconstruct their lives lost in the traditional framework of family. Changes in roles, desires, and aspirations that modern women possess are in constant conflict with orthodox traditions and customs. The characters are powerful enough to break away from the moral codes of marital bonds and customs to have a life they dreamed of and are pleased with.

Chapter four, 'New Masculine Sensibility, Changed Domestic Setting and Female Sexuality,' examines various Postfeminist features in the works selected for the study. How the writers depict their female characters without making them victims but as survivors in adverse life situations. It seeks to analyse the changed domestic setting in the present Indian scenario. It also hints at the emergence of a new masculine sensibility and men who are more domesticated and homely and give importance to shared parenting. This chapter investigates changes in women's attitudes towards social institutions like marriage and family life. The writers exhibit different perspectives regarding motherhood, widowhood, divorce, rape, extra-marital relations, and single life. The writers try to limit homosexual relations and consider it a natural commonplace. This chapter deciphers the life of female characters who celebrate their sexuality. The characters are not hesitant to exhibit their sexual desires and aspirations. Women who are bold in these matters and have liberal perspectives are new to our tradition-bound society. They demand equal treatment as human beings in society. The writers also have a liberal tendency to frame their characters by

the influence of the popular culture they belong to. They highlight feminine sensibilities that all females present and never consider it kept being hidden. The characters are truly feminine, and the writers explore the real-life experiences that a woman pass through.

The concluding chapter five comprises the findings of the analysis, limitations and further scope of the research. While reviewing the works of Jaishree Misra and Anita Nair in the light of postfeminism and the 'New Woman' concept, it can be assumed that these movements have influenced the writers. They tried to incorporate the ideas in their writings while framing their female protagonists. Through their works, the writers illustrate a model to the womenfolk on what to expect from their life, what is true emancipation and gratification in a woman's life as a human being. The study assesses postfeminism as an emerging literary trend in fiction among India's women writers. Indian women gained a new sense of freedom and the will to express themselves through this change in society and domestic setting.



space. Women began to assume that they could not adapt to the ideal state of restrained submissiveness and suffering. In a male-dominated moral code of marriage, a woman plays a secondary role. The writers highlight the real world of the so-called glorified images of women in Indian tradition. Women in life and Literature willingly surrendered to the idea of desires and aspirations and created profound conflicts in their subconscious selves.

Tradition, transition, and modernity are believed to be the stages through which Women's Writing in Indian English Fiction progressed. In the early phase, there was generally an adherence to the image of the traditional Sita, Savitri type. At that time, a male-dominated society was enthusiastic about acknowledging that idea, and that pervaded the Literature for a long time in both Regional and Indian English Fiction. The transition characterises the miseries and sufferings of women trapped between two worlds. There appeared women trying to be free from tradition and a nostalgic look back on the conventional Sita/ Savitri type. Writers like Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandeya, Shobha De, Ruth Parwar Jhabvala, and many female writers brought some new life to Women's Writing. Their characters are caught in a dilemma between tradition and individual freedom. There has been an effort to push away the burden of inhibitions that women carried for ages and an attempt towards liberation.

Modernity commences when writers sketch the reality of women's experiences. Criticism against modern writers is that they curbed themselves to the sophisticated, urban, middle-class women and families. The village life, low class, and Dalits are excluded from the writings. Certain writers, including Arun Joshi, depict characters from village life. The emergence of women with individuality became a remarkable aspect of this phase, and women showed up in new roles and