

# **VIEWS ON GENDER ISSUES IN TONI MORRISON AND ANTITA DESAI'S FICTIONS : A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

**Minor Research Project Submitted**

**To**

**University Grants Commission**

**Submitted by**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the Minor Research Project entitled **'VIEWS ON GENDER ISSUES IN TONI MORRISON AND ANITA DESAI'S FICTIONS : A COMPARATIVE STUDY'** submitted to the UGC -MRP : MRP(H)-104/12-13KAKA091/UGC-SWRO KAKA 091 is my original Research Work.

Place: Ankola  
Date:

Signature of the Principal Investigator  
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## **Preface**

It was the time when women writers had to use pseudonyms and had to depend totally on men. But now the scenario has changed. Women writers have made outstanding contributions to the field of fiction writing. This book is an attempt to see how feminist consciousness has shaped two writers of different nations. Toni Morrison and Anita Desai have presented the women of their respective countries. Their portrayals reveal how the traditional women were inextricably caught in the quagmire of suppressed emotions and unfulfilled desires. The interesting thematic similarities are placed beside the cultural values of both the countries which permit the points of contrast.

The final assumption of the book is to obtain a fuller view of the image of the New woman.

My study intends to analyse to which shades of feminism these two writers are focusing on? Is it radical, liberal or rational feminism?

The book has been divided into five chapters. Chapter-I will focus on the gender issues and will give a brief sketch on the comparative study. Chapter-II will highlight the feministic element present in both the women writers namely Toni Morrison and Anita Desai. Chapter-III will cover the detailed study of the fictions of both the writers with reference to the gender issues, plot, setting and characterization. Chapter IV will analyse the different shades of feminism in the view of these two writers and chapter V will conclude with my perception, views and emotions.

**ROHINI NAYAK**

## **Foreword**

Today everywhere one can see a deep rooted gender bias; the bias which has become a part of the historical textual tradition. Each and every female oriented subjects have become a gender issue of contemporary literary debate. I propose to focus on class, gender sex, alienation and woman psyche. The one from the third world country and the other from the first world country. Toni Morrison as ethnic cultural feminist celebrating the strength of black women against the heavy odds of racism sexism and classism at the top and Anita Desai who reveals the process of a women at work in female psyche. In the novels of both the writers the quest for self is a motivating and organizing. Further it will focus on the economic stress, political tension and the change in the value system of society and to see how power imbalances due to gender. It is said that one can look at almost any literary text from the gender point of view including The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, since men and women are portrayal in the text.

**ROHINI NAYAK**

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**Place: Ankola**  
**Date:**

**Signature of the Principal Investigator**

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## **Gender Issues in Toni Morrison and Anita Desai's Fictions : A Comparative Study**

### **I. Introduction to Gender Issues: An Indian and Afro-American perspective.**

Man is a wonderful creature on this Earth and certainly many wonders take place in his day-to-day life. When these wonders or happenings create a burden to his life, they pursue the name of an issue. Today, each and every female oriented subject has become an issue of contemporary debate and they are very much our general issues too. Any meaningful discussion on women's writings today is part of the larger enterprise of empowering women. Various gender analyses and frameworks have been developed to meet the specific needs. These are the tools that help to reveal the gendered –socio-cultural system behind the surface of societies. In common usage, gender is a synonym for sex. It was the French feminist writer Simone de-Beauvoir in her book 'The second sex' –who laid the ground work for understanding gender as being socially-constructed. Gender socialization begins at birth and the understanding of gender has given rise to new observations. The question of how women and men and in between genders are constructed is a matter of much dispute. In the present paper an attempt is made to study the gender issues as focus on the gender bias which has become a part of our life.

Today every where one can see a deep rooted gender bias; the bias which has become a part of the historical textual tradition. I propose to make a comparative study here on two women writers of feministic views who focus on lass, gender, sex, alienation and women psyche. The one is from the third world country, and the other from the first world country

Through this comparative study my intension is to have a deeper mutual understanding and inter learning to open a new horizon. I prefer to compare the two different literatures to add the richness of our visions of things helping to bind to people into one community and nation. It is an overall view of literature-vision of the cultural universe. Thus the study will throw light on some feministic elements like how feminism comes a long way from power, politics to an understanding of cultural diversification. Feminism of late called womanism is serious attempt to formulate the issues and find solutions to gender problems.

Toni Morrison as a ethnic cultural feminist celebrating the strength of black women against the heavy odds of racism, sexism and classicism and the top and Anita Desai who reveals the process of self awareness at work in female psyche. The novels of both the writers the quest for self is motivating and organizing.

It is an attempt to analyse the basic bond that exists between men and women, parents and children and to know how the external circumstances also affect the mutualities. Further to focus the economic stress, political tension and the changes in the value system of society. And to see how power imbalances due to gender in given culture and try to promote gender equality through this feminist criticism. Feminism has always meant independence of mind, spirit and body.

It is said that one can look at almost any literary text from the gender point of view, including Ramayan and Mahabharatha since men and women are portrayed in the text. Secondly, since all representations are made through language, the language of the text reveals the attitude of society towards the gender issues. So I would deal with the gender issues in different class and race to come to conclusion.

With the change of times at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the new millennium, women now have an urge to seek self-identity and independence. She has to pressure her quest for identity and at the same time fulfill the needs of the motherland and that of a family life. In order to free the society from the oppression pressure of the patriarchal mould, a revolution of ideas in both men as well as women is the need of the day. It is the male fear of female powers which made them create various images of the woman. Hence the image of the lady in the western and the Indian society cast woman as the docile, silent submissive. A common contemporary issue facing every country is the feminism question of woman. The woman are seen launching themselves for identity. Keeping this concept in mind I thought of aiming at the gender issue.

When we speak of the gender issue we become very alert of the modern literary term feminism so called womanism. From 1970s onwards the growing interest in feminist criticism has taken speedy studies. Like political feminism which began with woman's liberation moment in 1970s, critical feminism today is shaped by a much richer understanding of difference. With such conception feminism comes on long way from power politics to an understanding of cultural diversification .



Here I wish to focus on two cultures, with the representation of one of the woman from first world country, Toni Morrison at the bottom and other from the third world country at the top, Anita Desai. By comparing these two different literatures, I would like bind the people in to one community and nation. And this can lead us to respect and recognize the differences and similarities amidst us and further lead to the mutual appreciation of the cultural values high-lightened in their perspective. In this context I prefer to do a comparative study.

A comparative study facilitates the cross fertilization of thoughts, beliefs and practice of life. Consequently it leads to a deeper understanding and mutual enlightenment opening new horizons. And know it is high time to bring them together on the plane of experience to have the mutual understanding and inter learning. This view has lead me to take up this comparative study. A comparative study requires two minimum literatures which have withstood the time. And such literature articulates the greatness of experience in the finest achievements of man extending this area to any length but the ultimate limit is the literature of world. It is an overall view of literatures, the vision of the cultural universe. So it's approach leads to be universal. A comparative study is a great commenting force between diverse cultures. It makes the principle of peaceful co-existence a lining reality based on mutual understanding and friendship. Here is an interesting comparative study of African-American novelist and an Indian woman novelist. It is a key issue related to the discipline of feminism.

Feminism is a diverse collection of social theories, political movement and moral philosophies. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. It is also based on gender roles and relations. Feminist activism is a grass-root movement that seeks to cross boundaries based on social class, race, culture and religion. It is culturally specific and addresses issues relevant to the woman of that society. Some issues such as rape, incest and mothering are universal. Women have always been disinterested disposed in literary history. As already said, it is the rise of feminism as a political struggle which has made it necessary for the subaltern to find a voice. Feminism is the most powerful movement that swept the literacy world in the recent decades. It is crystal clear that to understand the psyche of a female it is necessary to understand the feminism. Various writers aim at liberation of women from male domination and promotion of their rights by peeping into their

inner psyche. There is a demand for a humanistic attitude towards women. And an attempt is made to interpret their status in the world.

Through this feministic element in mind I would like to raise the voice against Female-Oppression, gender discrimination and all other social norms and tradition that straight jacket a woman's personality. I too agree with Simone de Beauvoir-a strong woman theorist who says that a woman should be understood as 'women' only and not in relation to man. Women should create a consciousness in them that they should start defining, and establishing themselves as they think and not a man does. The oppression, lack of freedom to carry out her will, lack of freedom to crave for her career, de-recognition of her decision-making capacities, exposure of her potentialities in limited manner are some of the issues of women on which we have to focus on. Hence I would like to focus here the two modern female writers who deal with their search for identity and assertion. And new woman of either India or any other country the quest for her identity is the main concern.

Though the paper is on gender issues the main aim is to throw light on the feminine psyche portraying the different shades of the feminine psyche from the novels of Anita Desai and Toni Morrison. Just as gender is defined as the cultural interpretation of sex, sex itself becomes a gendered category which signifies the powerful male against the powerless female. Gender equality is an ideological category of the new society . The main concern of feministic study is to explore the gender relationships. Through this paper I would like to make the woman realize that they are not just a 'two legged womb' but a dynamic human, different from male but no less human for that. If we just refer to women's human rights concerns any important concept that has emerged is 'gender main streaming.' The term signifies that the policies must be examine as to their implication for men and women as women have specific human rights needs . The gender must be linked with human rights issues – whether violence, health care or access to power. By evaluating laws, policies, programs, customs, practices from a gender perspective women and men can identify the area in which women have been discriminated against and develop new polices to overcome that discrimination. Thus the gender main streaming may seek to empower women by removing obstacles that have been constructed by societies that operate to the advantage of women.

My topic is totally focusing the two women writers – Anita Desai and Toni Morrison, whose concern to women psyche, the gender response to the psycho cultural factors stand good. Though the study is on two culture–African and Indian life style, the domestic violence is common. Male family members often behave violently towards their wives and daughters in response to their women folk’s perceived loss of virtue. But one thing is clear that it is easier if not safer to focus on what happens in case of others country instead of my own. So I have taken the comparative study of my country with that of Africa. My ethnocentric lens in to the world gives me a sense of being better, safer and invincible. Unless I know the realities of my own life, in my own country, I can never think of the other. So the study of two culture is essential.

Women in India earlier were treated as slaves by male domination and the society. This has been portrayed by many writers in their works. When I read Shashi Deshpande’s ‘The Dark Holds No Terror’ I felt Toni Morrison also has portrayed the women’s struggle for freedom from oppression. This thought made me to compare an African writer with an Indian.

Gender and sexuality are among feminism’s most central concepts. The term gender has been used since early 1970 s to denote culturally constructed femininity and masculinity as opposed to biological sex differences. The concept of gender and sexuality, both take ‘sex’ a highly ambiguous term as a point of reference. The term sex can be used more commonly in French, but some times in English to name sexual organs to distinguish male from female. This linguistic confusion tells us something about the male-dominated heterosexist culture in which we live. Distinguishing sex from gender serves to emphasize the social and cultural origins of differences between women and men and helps to resolve the ambiguity of word of sex.’ According to Simon d Beavoir, the concept of gender is totally different . ‘One is not born a woman but becomes one.’ The contention that women are made rather than born has been central to the development of theories of gender. When we speak of gender we are not dealing with a symmetrical difference s between women and men but an asymmetrical, unequal relationship. The term gender is used in the context of gender study to display women as the central object of analysis in favour of her.

Gender exists as a social division because of patriarchal domination. I agree with Delphi and Leonard’s saying that For us ‘men’ and ‘women’ are not two naturally

given groups who at sometime fell into a hierarchical relationships. Rather the reason two groups are distinguished socially is because one dominates the other. It keeps with the Marxist method of analysis. Men and women are socially significant exist categories because of the exploitative relationship which both binds them together and sets them apart from each other. Conceptually there could be no 'women' without the opposing category ' men' and vice versa.

It is not my intention to speak on gender/sex relationships. But I particularly aim to consider the mental depressions that the woman goes through with this gender inequality or differentiations.

To women, the concept of family is very closely related to the positive concepts of love, fidelity, sacrifice, fame, security, companionship, reverence, honour and motherhood. Motherhood is an exalting experience for her. A woman's natural fulfillment lay in marriage and motherhood. If anything goes wrong with these she totally becomes psychic. She is very sensitive to over come these feelings.

Simon de Beauvoir is one of the famous post war woman writers of France, she has become a landmark in the history of feminism through her great study of women ' The second sex' (1949). Her text raises several questions about women and gender roles, psychological conflicts and issues.

We have often heard the phrase 'Men's World' where he dominates and dictates. Women since ages have been exploited and subdued and have accepted docile roles. But the wave of feminism now has given women a voice. We find woman playing several roles; she fights on many fronts; she is a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister and apart from all these social attachments she also plays a vital role of financially supporting her family. In these days of inflation the woman works shoulder to shoulder with her man. Yet man, when his needs are satisfied no longer supports her. But we can't compare the earlier duties of woman to today's world. Because today she keeps involved in activities that she desires. My only intension is to create awareness about the need of love, sharing and caring and the man in which make detachment from family problems emotional involvement may see the delicate sensitive bonds between man and woman

I use the term feminism to signal the concern with enduring gender inequalities and injustices amongst a matrix of other forms of oppression relating to race,

ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, disability and health status feminism was criticized for entirely ignoring the differences in the histories and experiences of black and white women. For many black women in Europe and the USA it represented a refuge from a racist society.

Feminist theory is now highly influential from a social thought. In its academic form, feminist thinking has both challenged the authority of male theory and produced a new body of knowledge concerned with issues of differences and diversity, identity and inequality, ethnicity, race, class as well as gender.

Gender studies has largely drawn upon the concepts and ideas of European and American socialist-feminist approaches. Gender relations are power relations involving conflict, resistance and bargaining between the more and the less powerful. In a relation of power one person tries to control the way another behaves and this can happen at different levels and in different ways. Usually, the balance of power in gender relations favours men and boys over women and girls but this may not always be so. Gender relations are not just a matter between two individuals but are a way by which social groups exercise political control once the organization of society and people's roles are in it.

Asking the question what is woman? Is in itself an indication of the different status and the significance of the two sexes. A man never need to explain himself. A man is in the right being a man, it is woman who is in the wrong. Man enjoys the prime position in the hierarchy of sexes as Beauvoir calls it he becomes the absolute type where as women is relative to him. Like Simon de Beauvoir one of the post-war-woman writers of France, Toni Morrison raises several questions about women and gender roles psychological conflicts and issues.

Gender is a matter of culture. The down grading of gender of sex may be understood as key move in the ideological justification of patriarchy. The primer identity of a person in a human society is gender. Gender inequality springs from many sources and so it is very difficult to determine which form of inequality is declining by the effects of globalization. Empowering women is an indispensable tool for advancing development. It is important that women must be regarded as agents of beneficiaries of change. Problems faced by women in urban areas totally differ from that of the rural. In the backward societies who are economically and intellectually backward, women are considered as commodities to be traded like

slaves. But today, in modern times equality between men and women is more than a matter of social justice. It is a fundamental human right. Gender equality also makes economic sense. When women have equal access to education and participation in business and economic decision-making; they are key-driving force against poverty. Women with equal rights are better educated, healthier and have greater access to land, jobs and financial resources. Gender equality is a condition for inclusive, democratic violence-free and sustainable development, women run households but their work is taken for granted. Men are identified with more domineering realms . A double standard is thus created.

A sort of tricky gender politics is observed now-a-days. Only powerful and properly welded discourse can arm women to reclaim their legitimate share and status in life and society. Hence women's marginalization has ever been a complex issue in human history as a whole. Race, colour, sex, polities, economic backwardness have created artificial gender constructs, worsening the situation of women all over the world, including India and Africa.

Whether western or India, women are searching themselves in to quest for identity. They have began to wage a war to regain their lost identity. Increasing consciousness of their oppressed condition has given rise to the woman's struggle against male dominance. Now they have been thrown into the competitive world where they are trying to discover their potential to earn, to survive and to develop self -esteem. To analyse the force leading to the emergence of the ' New woman ' it is important to realize the traditional concept of both western and Indian women. Women status in Indian set-up has under gone dramatic changes down the centuries. Various socio-cultural and economic conditions of the society have been continually changing women's lives and identity from era to era . The women now is not merely the symbol of generation, but the actual producer of life. The women now have realize that their prime duty is not only to please and obey man but also to lead a life of dignity and equality. Her first cry is against the suppression and marginalization ingrained by the patriarchal society and is to explore her true potential and the search for her lost identity. Through the novels of both Anita Desai and Toni Morison, I would like to reveal the themes of anxiety, anguish and psychological adaptation necessitated by the threats to the individual's identity and relation to reality.

Through this study I would like to make an attempt to see how feminist consciousness has shaped to writer of different notions. Anita Desai and Toni Morison have presented the women of the respective countries. And we find the interesting thematic similarities placed beside the cultural values of both the countries which permit even the point of contrast.

It goes without saying that irrespective of the economic, political and social progress, whether western or eastern women are subjected to gender discrimination. Throughout history women's status and rights are assigned within a patriarchal set-up--man to rule woman. Man the master woman the slave and so on. But there are not many women who are ready to fight openly against this gender discrimination till today. So such women- related issues are topics of discussion in almost every walk of life. But the present century has awakened the sensitiveness of women writers to present the causes and courses of emerging new women. Anita Desai and Toni Morison are two such authors who have devoted their literary skill for the portrayal of the emerging women. Though one is from the first -world country and other from the third-world country they are united in their per suit of truth about the shifting rules of women in fiction and society -in relation to their specific environment. Their gender and concern for gender offer is the strongest link between these two writers. Their fiction deal with the complexity of experiences under gone by women characters. Most of the similarity between these two writers make us to focus on the writings of these two.

Gender discourse is the body of concept and believes which is established as an accepted world view. This concept has become a powerful frame work to understand and estimate the feminine gender. Gender, or masculine or feminine qualities, or male/female social roles, come up as an area of analysis, whenever gender roles are shifting. Thus the gender is often a major focus of thought and writing in popular culture and theory. 'Gender' meaning the differentiation, usually on the basis of sex, between social roles and functions labeled as 'masculine' is universal. All societies known to us in time periods make some sort of gender distinctions. As central feature of all cultures , gender seems worth some attention. Gender codes are texts "written on our bodies and in our psyches, shape our everyday lives. The gender issues vary greatly from one culture to another and may not be homogenous within the same culture different social classes and income groups. Over the years, gender norms and values within

the social systems systematically gave rise to gender inequalities. During the last decade the issues concerning gender equality have assumed greater importance particularly in the literature and enhanced social awareness among the women. Being a woman I too would like to raise voice in this regard



## **II. Theme of Feministic Element: Fictions of Toni Morrison and Anita Desai**

Both Anita Desai and Toni Morrison belong to the period of 1930 s. Anita born in Mussorie in 1937 and Toni Morison in Ohio in 1931. They are the novelists of human psyche who stand for sensitive portrayal of female characters. And involve in the psychological study of Love/hate relationship of gender and class. We find the world of lonesome and sensitive heroines in the novels of them. Both deal with issues of female alienation and oppression of their respective countries. They have the concern for the woman's voice. Toni Morrison is fully aware of the wrong the black suffered, especially the woman folk and Anita Desai is aware of the alienation of middle class women in India. Her characters put individuality above every thing else. So is the characters in Toni Morrison. The desire to live and love clashes so violently in them, their interpersonal relation become dissonant and jarring driving them to withdrawal and alienation. Anita's characters try to achieve harmony and tranquility by alienating themselves by escaping from the demands and expectation inherent in human ties. In Tony Morrison's works we find the relationship between the individual and society. One is concerned with the man in general, where as the other the modern man. Both aim at the radical changes in the society. Toni speaks of her own culture African and Anita Desai, of an Indian culture. In both the attempt is made to analyse the nature of basic bonds that exists between man and woman, between parents and the children. We notice how external circumstances too affect mutual ties in their fiction. The economic stress, political tension and changes in the value system of the society are reflected in their novels.

The quest for self is motivating and organizing device in Morrison's fiction. She concentrates on the relation between the pressure of the community pattern established within the families and the developing sense of self. In Anita Desai's novels she stresses the individual and individuality. In both of their novels, desire to love and live clashes violently. Both of them refuse to see their creation in the light of mediocrity. Their characters are peculiar. They are individuals with an in ordinate desire. Anita Desai mainly dwells on the predicament and dilemma faced by the urban middle class. Prime concern of he is the exploration of the inner-selves of her woman protagonists. She explores and portrays kin bonds from the viewpoint of a psychologist. Her protagonists fight against the commonplace . Conformity and adhere to their own vision of life. They desire and strive for more

authentic way of life than the one offered to them. Her novels unfold themselves within the framework of death and destruction. And they suggest that life has to work out its solutions whatever the may be, even though they are difficult one's to arrive at. Anita comments through her central character on the violence aggression in society. Aggression between men and men and men and women in society and even comments on the narrow in growing vision which blinds mankind on the confrontation between inner and outer reality. Her primary occupation remains with the absurdity of human life; with the existential search for meaning in it. In the ultimate instance it becomes the question of reason versus unreason. The world of Anita Desai's novels is an ambivalent one . It is a world where central harmony is aspired to but not arrived at and they desire to love and live. Involvement and stillness are incompatible by their nature yet they strive to exist together. Instinct emotion and passion seem to be strangers in the world of daily routine and serving away into dark corners to flourish in condition of solitude. In all her novels there is striving on the part of protagonist. There is need to be loved in each successive novels of her. The problem of involvement versus detachment, of surrender versus freedom is viewed from various angles and psychological perspective. Anita Desai shaped the modern writing in English.

Tony Morrison come to us as ethnic cultural feminist celebrity, the strength of black women against the heavy odds of racism sexism and classicism. She is more concerned with celebrating the unique feminine cultural values the black have developed inspite of their oppression. Her novels record the triumph and complexities of black life from the painful past of slavery to prostrating racist present. Anita Desai wants women to be accepted as responsible human beings. Both Toni Morrison and Anita Desai are basically female oriented. They probe in to their problems. They portray the women symbol of growth, change, regression, decay , death and destruction. We find in the women of disturbed psyche , loneliness and alienation. We find the pictures of women in flesh and blood and with a distinct mind of their own. They deal with psychological and social pressures . They in their literary world are on ceaseless quest for a more meaningful life not only for themselves but for humanity in general. They both have passion the new concept of feminist fiction.

The term feminism is western womanism in India. But the issue of patriarchal control as a judicial power in society is universal. It is not sufficient to inquire how the women might become fully represented in literature and politics but

feminism has among its other concern, the urge to break the silence and the taboos on the woman's body and on her pleasures to disintegrate the male versions of the woman and repair the psychic damage in the society. The novelists do not merely address the issue of women's representation in their patriarchies, but address the issues of 'otherness' or 'gender' to interrogate its production and circulation for an effective transformation. They irrespective of their cultural differences suggest that a stable notion of gender is no longer the fundamental premise of the feminist politics.

With the change of times at the new millennium, women now have an urge to seek self identity and independence. Feminism is perhaps the most powerful movement that swept literary word in the recent decades. Feminism aims at \* providing an altogether new awareness of women's role in the modern complex world. Feminism exposes the systematic social injustices caused by gender discrimination.

Women have always been disinherited dispossessed in literary history. The rise of feminism as a political struggle made it necessary for the subaltern to find a voice . Here, I would like to unfold women's voice in history which inspite of male repression had made a mark on the logo centric world. And would like to trace the growth and development of western feminism, black feminism and Indian feminism and then attempt to give a comparative analyses of the heterogeneous modes of resistance to their different patriarchal oppression. Toni Morrison's ability to probe deep in to human psyche is reflected in her novels. We come to know how the main psyche differed from the woman. Into how women are positioned within sexual discourse whose repressiveness is often recognized. Toni Morrison in her novel 'Beloved' makes use of a true story of Margaret Garner who tried to tell her children to save themselves from slavery.

A common contemporary issue facing every day in every country is the question of women. The women are seen launching themselves for identity. The liberated women today challenges the traditional notion of the Angels in the house and sexually voracious images. A liberated women is essentially a woman of awareness and conscious of her low position in the family and society. Anita Desai's 'Fasting Feasting' is an expression of inner pre-occupation of women in our society and our illusion of modern ideal of building a society free of male dominance. Anita's works represent a unique blending of the Indian and western.

In India the struggle for woman's equality with man has been voiced more prominently in the last couple of decades. So it is our desire to understand how images and cultural constructions are connected to patterns of inequality, domination and oppression. I use the term feminism to signal a concern with enduring gender inequalities and injustices, among a matrix of other forms of oppression relating to race, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, disability and health status. There are thick different types of feminism liberal, radical and social. I speak of radical feminism which is often presented as rather less hopeful about a reform of gender relations. From this perspective women and men are fundamentally different and women 's power, women's culture and women's pleasure are regarded as having been systematically controlled and dominated by men, operating through patriarchal institutions.

In patriarchy, male privilege is marked as having controlled over production, circulation and representation of pleasure. Cultural representations have been designed to accommodate male preferences and pattern of women. Pleasures have been relegated to a marginal position to disallow circulation and gratification. The woman in the western / christian culture has suffered the male gaze as virgin or a whore. In the Indian context the image of woman is within the parameter of the Sati-Savitri parampara. Women had very little scope to speak for their roles in society. A revolution of ideas in both men as well as women is the need of the day. As I am dealing with an African writer Toni Morrison I have to consider the black feminist. The two issues which haunt the feminist of black(African) are introduction of race into feminist theory and the subject of gender in Afro-Americanist discourse. Among feminism heterosexist culture in which we live, It's high time to take up first step to separate the three terms-sex, gender and sexuality in order to explore how they are inter-related. Distinguishing 'sex' from 'gender' not only severs to emphasise the social cultural origins of difference between men and women, but can also help to resolve the ambiguity of the word 'sex'. If gender is used to refer to the distinction between women and men, the term 'sex' and 'sexuality' can be reserved for erotic activities, desires practices and identities. Since my study is concerned with the gender issues, I will focus primarily on those novels which are related with the concept of gender.

It's a matter of great pride that Indian women's fiction has come into its own and is recognized as literature with a substance. Today Indian women's fiction is

dealing with multiple issues, concerning self and society but much of its writing is primarily a critique of social justice and equality in patriarchal society. I firmly believe that the Western literary tradition has influenced English writing in India. Today feminist literary theory has emerged as a substantial body of criticism focusing on the aspects of the women question in general, whether they belong to any country in the world, either East or West. When we peep in the novels of Anita Desai, we find the women's suffering inwardly trapped in a socio-cultural milieu. Communication is the basic drawback and speech is what they wary of. Sita in 'Where Shall we go this Summer?' is one such woman who finds the life in Bombay full of ugliness and indifference. Her inner self resists the violence outside and she comes back to Manori Island where she had spent her childhood. She wants to avoid giving birth to the fifth child as she does not want her unborn child to face the harsh brutality of life. Desai brings out the essential dilemma of Sita's inward journey. The journey of Sita in the modern world is not alone but with the children and her husband. Though tired and worn out that life has to be accepted because of her children husband. No escape and refusal, life must go on. For women with a heightened sensibility, solitude becomes dangerous. We have several examples of it in the novels of Anita Desai. Maya in 'Cry the peacock' is a case in point. Her solipsism ends in the brutal thing of her husband who she finds incapable of living. Monisha of 'Voices in the City' burns herself to death. Mira Masi in 'Clear light of the Day' drowns in the well. The prospect of loveliness is as disturbing as that of being trapped in a loveless marriage. Anita Desai, in her novels is exploring the male-female dichotomy by feminizing the male. Inside the house the women's life is bound to duty and care for others with any concern for life. The duty of her is taken for granted. Women like Nanda Kaul in 'Fire on the mountain' or 'Uma in Fasting Feasting' are looking for warmth and affection. They are just the symbolic figures. The state of women in general is similar women craving for freedom, for change. But they weep silently and it doesn't reach any one. Thus the women emerge as victims. We portray the complex fate of being a women in modern society and the expression of their feelings symbolizes the progressive social change. Today we call this as liberal feminism where we have the emergence of the new woman. The women crave for a relationship which could provide them both emotional and sexual gratification and it is the search for such a relationship which sometime leads to frustration. Women feels her life as meaningless and a barren waste-land when she lacks the love that she wishes to have. The silenced women too have a 'homing desire' they dream of

respectable life of love and dignity. But sometimes they are so sick of the sexual assaults that they do not want to go back to their men but lead an independent life.

The women writers by virtue of their feminine sensibility have shown great insight and deep understanding in portraying women characters. They present life size women with throbbing pulse, yearning for love and recognition, longing for self-expression and individual fulfillment. The word New Woman has come to signify the awakening of woman into a new realization of her place and position in family and society. Conscious of her individuality, the new woman has been trying to assert her rights as a human being and is determined to fight for equal treatment with man. The new woman voices a note of dissent and resents to be stifled under the oppressive restrictions. She has her own changed notions of life. It is true, women's education, her rights of citizenship and other legal rights and above all her gainful employment and economic independence have tremendously influenced her outlook on conjugal relationship and attitudes. The slow but steady changes in cultural, social and economic patterns of life have expanded and altered the nature of reality for women. There are traces of feminist trends in early English writers too. The world of Shakespeare's comedies illuminated the wit and wisdom of the heroines for example, Olivia, Beatrice, Rosalind and Portia.

Jane Austen's characters possess qualities like self-respect, Independent judgment, alert observation and readiness to improve themselves. They have the confidence and the independence of the 'New Woman.' The appearance of the fully awakened woman, prepared to accept the challenges in order to live a meaningful life is a recent phenomena in Indian English literature Anita Desai mainly explores the emotional world of women, revealing a rare imaginative awareness of various deeper forces at work and profound understanding of feminine sensibility as well as psychology. She is adept in presenting the longings and frustrations of hypersensitive individuals. She is hailed as one who ushered in the psychological novel and excels in her chosen field of exploration of the psyche of sensitive women. The prominent feature of the new woman in the changed India is her constant effort to live as an economically independent individual. The women writers have shown an admirable understanding of the problems and the predicaments of the women. They go deep into the forces that condition the growth of a female in the patriarchal society.

Maya in Anita Desai's 'Cry the Peacock' longs for the world of her father, a world of flowers, tenderness. Gautama fails to respond to Maya's emotional needs. Sita in Anita Desai's 'Where shall we go This Summer' finds the prevalent violence around her oppression. Thus her characters are distinguished by the qualities of introspection, introversion and a refusal to surrender their individual selves. In her novels women strive towards arriving at a more authentic way of life than the one which is available to them. They long for love and communion of spirit. Their refusal to compromise and surrender and their inability to accept the perspectives of their partners inevitably results in isolation and loneliness. Lack of faith as well as lack of vocation drive them to indulge in a futile search for fulfillment which is a mirage in the inhuman and materialistic world. A typical Hindu wife is shown to suffer silently, wait patiently and forgive readily. The liberated woman is the butt of criticism for being modern and rebellious. No attempt is made at exploring the inner conflict of the suffering woman. Woman's bonding for expression and self-fulfillment is bound to land her in trouble, especially if it necessitates a clash with the unwritten word codes of society .

Most of the Indian woman stick to the traditional values even if they are highly educated and are exposed to modern ideas. Women who have come in contact with the progressive ideas of the East are found to face the problems of adjustment. After the marriage, the girl has to undergo. Some kind of re-orientation in order to adjust her ways to those of her husband and in-laws. The resultant conflict creates emotional disturbance, which in turn strikes a discordant in her family life. Though the men writers themselves make a statement in their writings that "the women of India have more depth, more richness than men the crisis of value adaptation strikes deeper in to the lives of our women than our men folk"- still the male-domination exists and the adjustment has to be made by the women itself. This is an irony. The women writers either from the East or West have displayed the remarkable social consciousness. The impact of western culture on the traditional society of India, the psychological turmoil face by them, East/West confrontation and the resultant cultural conflict in the context of marriage, the oppression of female by male are the main themes of issue of the modern society. The way the women handles the men and matters shows that they are in full command of their job.

Woman have been regarded inferior to men since a long time. Even Aristotle the great philosopher gives a second place to women. Simone de Beauvoir's 'The

Second Sex' the feminist classic, establishes the principles of modern feminism. Man's dominance has been secured through ages by an ideological power. Altogether have promoted the idea of woman's subordination. One is not born a woman but becomes woman under the influence of culture and history when we discuss feminism, we are confronted with comparative models of parallel feminism from different cultures. And this has made me to select the two cultures here, the African and Indian where we see sexual oppression as primary and fundamental.

Feminism is generally understood as a movement from the point of view of by and for women. Black feminists sincerely believe that every human being is unique. Afro centric women writers prefer to refer to themselves as womanist rather than feminists. Women is the one who loves other women and sometimes individual men sexually and non-sexually. She is a universalist who is committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. In this case, how can women be the second sex? is my question. Why should the female feel inferior. Why should she accept every dominance by the male? It is the Black writes who came forward to eradicate the ideology of domination and helped women to actualize humanist save her place for generation to come. And this is why I selected Toni Morrison as a part of my study. This feminist movement is a social force to change gender relations and to improve the position of women. The radical writers like Toni Morrison concentrate their attention on male gender oppression on female gender strength. They reveal that the oppression of women is sexual. Male culture has charged women's bodies into objects of male desire and they are treated as a thing of beauty and sexuality. Women are individuals not a class or race. They have their own rights and free will. They can produce anything to their life. Woman today have become conscious of their rights. They have risen in revolt and are rising their voice against exploitation. This is quite evident in the writings of Anita Desai. The existential struggle to establish one's identity, to assert one's individuality and fight to exist as a separate identity appears in the novels of Indian women novelists like Anita Desai. In Anita Desai's 'Cry The Peacock'- Maya the protagonist is well aware of the discriminating treatment given to her. She complains that she is being treated as a wild beast on a leash she fearlessly fights to rebel against point of view. She has courage to rebel against Gautama's autocratic and selfish behavior.



In the novel 'Voices in the City', Monisha is an intelligent girl. She is also worried and unhappy, deprived of freedom like Maya. She has to face the hostile attitude of her father, husband and her mother-in-law to assert her individuality. In 'Voices in the City', when Aunt Lila advises, Amla to take pride in her independence, Amla remarks. "Our country belongs to men"- This reveals the traditional status of women and male dominance in Indian society. We have in the novels of Anita Desai, the complex psychic experience of woman. How men fail to read the mind of women being lost in their duty consciousness. And how even the little happiness counts much to the woman and the men fail to realize it. The image of loveliness are found in many of Anita's novels. Monisha in 'Voices in the City', Sita in 'Where shall we go this Summer' In 'cry the peacock' we see how the adored child getting married is unable to adjust with her husband and considers cold shouldering by her husband. Eventually she ends up killing her husband.

Violence against women manifesting itself in various forms such as rape, molestation, stripping eve-teasing, abducting and kidnapping, forced prostitution, domestic abuse, wife battering, harassment in the workplace and cruelties to them in various physical, emotional and psychological forms has been a global phenomenon leading to their oppression, suppression and victimization and marginalization.

The term feminism has been derived from the Latin word femina which means women. It refers to the socio-cultural movement for the assertion of female identity. It implies radical re-orientation of life, culture and literature. The cultural prescriptions that subordinate and trivialize woman and treat them as inferiors are the primary concern of these two female writers, Anita Desai and Toni Morrison. Feminism demands an activity not passivity, which analyses our sense of the female presence in the world. A feminist fiction is a work where language and imagery are employed to import a new vision of reality. A reality perceived from a woman's authentic mode of seeing and measuring her existence without subscribing to the male cultural codes. Feminism is a political position, female or femaleness is a matter of biology and femininity is a set of culturally defined characteristics. The feminine is a culturally produced position of marginality in relation to patriarchal society. It is not a fact of nature. The term feminine gives rise to a ground from which to conduct a feminist politics for change. Feminism has its origin in the history of woman's oppression all over the

world. It is the age old superiority of man over woman. The present article is an attempt to study the gender views in both Indian and African fiction. It also incorporates the study of different cultural and historical backgrounds to trace the presence of the woman question.

I have tried to focus on two major novelists Anita Desai and Toni Morrison. In their fiction these writers speak out the female psyche and appear to be seeking freedom from the male version. Anita Desai portrays women belonging to the educated sections of the society where the problem is not economic but psychological and are infact regarded as abnormal by the people. Indian society is the institution of joint family which demands a lot of flexibility and adjustability from a woman. The newly married girl has to face a lot of problems if the family members are not sympathetic and broad minded. We find such happenings in the novels of Anita Desai but it does not exists in the novels of the west. In India sexual freedom for women has not assumed enormous proportion compared to the west.

Here is a concentration on the problem which is common perhaps to women all over the world. It is an effort to establish her identity to regain her neglected personality. The novels clearly show that the family in patriarchy is a hindrance in the path of a woman's realization of her identity and points out what the inner self of woman want to be or is. It is true that women are placed at a disadvantage.

Whenever we discuss the gender issues we suddenly think of the women's problems and the wretched life of her, she searching for her identity. But we forget that there are exceptions like Milkman Dead a male protagonist in the novel of Toni Morrison who is in a quest for identity as a black man in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States. This proves that not only woman but even the man, many a times faces this gender issues. Even he is targeted. As Morrison's earlier novels concentrate on girls and women, this novel 'The Song of Solomons' highlights male friendship, and bodings. But unlike Pecola or Sula, Milkman develops in to an adult capable of a mature sexual relationships. To become this adult, Milkman must claim his African/American heritage.

Gender inequality is greatly expressed even in this novel. Men were more powerful and always tend to have control over women in some way or the other. Macon Dead's violence towards Ruth, Milkman's ignorance for Haggar with the

only exception of Pilate woman milkman described as a woman that could fly without ever learning the ground. Throughout the novel Morrison insists upon the need for Milkman to correct his former transgressions against women and embrace their instructions in order to correct his former transgressions against women and embrace their instructions in order to successfully complete his quest for self-identity. Consequently, Milkman must depend on the guidance of Circe and Pilate in order to uncover his ancestral roots and construct his identity in relation to the larger African/American community. 'Song of Solomon' illustrates the importance of African awareness and acceptance of their history in order to liberate themselves from the race and class oppression. Black are affected by a double consciousness of racial values and gender. The long journey of Milkman leads him back through his personal past to racial history. His knowledge liberates him and he begins to respect the sweet women Pilate and Hagar who have helped him. The novel highlights the personal and community impacts.

Feminist literary theory emerged as a dominating force in the arena of literary criticism since the 1980. To start with the feminine issues, the trend was visible towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The feminist writers in the USA particularly the African American women writers are naturally drawn towards the triple jeopardy race, class and gender. Toni Morrison the Noble prize winning author is female black and a U S citizen. The characters in her novel suffer from a double stigma of class and colour often revealing the scars in their minds caused by sexual and basically exploitations. The western religious and cultures, particularly, Judea Christianity had supported the male supremacy and the women had always been subjugated and marginalized in society as well as myths and legends. To quote Simone de Beauvoir in this context, "she is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her, she is the incidental, the inessential opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute- she is the other". Hence a western woman's demand for an equal status with man is quite natural outburst of the oppressed and humiliated class. But in India, women in general have experienced duplicity in the attitude of male. Hindu myths are full of powerful goddesses who reign supreme and a newly wed bride is accepted as goddess Laxmi in her in-laws house. But in real life the picture is often different. Burning the wife on her husband's funeral pyre, the crudity of child marriage and the sufferings of the widow are common factors.

The women hardly had decision making powers in the family or in the society during the pre colonial days. When we refer to the women characters of Jane Austen, we see the woman as an individual and her place in a social setting. Her social role at the cost of her own identity. It is the black woman's words which have the most meaning on it. She has experienced life not only as a black person, but as a woman (Alice Walker in her essay 'Search of Mother's Gardens'-1984)

Black women are the victims of both sexism and racism. The black woman is oppressed almost beyond recognition oppressed by everyone. It is evident that 'The Bluest Eye' reveals discrimination on the basis of gender. The characters candidly make known their lived experiences of sexism. Pecola represents the combination of womanistic two-ness with a personal search for identity, self and humanity. Anita Desai's works represent a unique blending of the Indian and western. The female protagonists of Anita are seen poised tantalizingly at different junctures of the philosophic Spectrum. A common contemporary issue facing every country is the question of women. The women are launching themselves for identity. The liberated women today challenges the traditional notions of 'Angles in the house' and sexually voracious images. A liberated woman is essentially a woman of awareness and conscious of her low position in the family and society. In 'The Bluest Eye', Black male/female gender conflicts are clear. Both Pauline and Pecola are victims of Cholly's abuse. They are both victims of discrimination based on gender. Through the tragic narrative of protagonist Pecola and her quest for blue eyes, Morrison explores damaging imposed upon the black female body.

Anita Desai's work unconsciously contribute to the feminist cause. Her 'Fasting Feasting' is an expression of inner preoccupation of women in our society and our illusion of the modern ideal of building a society free of male dominance. Uma's two time victimization by the dowry system and Anamika's death is an expression of on slaught of violence on the feminine sweetness and light all over the globe. The condition of Uma and Anamika reflects the unscrupulous fame of mind of our society which creates serious doubt about the thinking faculty of our so-called literate society. In the novel 'Fasting,Feasting' Anita Desai incorporates the central contradiction of human life where one gets more than his/her desire and the desire of survival of others remain unheard. Though the life of different characters like Uma, Aruna, Anamika and Arun: Anita Desai explores human

psyche through their fulfilled and unfulfilled dreams and desires. We can see a kind of bond between mother and girls before the birth of Arun a precious son. Soon after his birth the attention and affection of mother drifts away from the girls to the son and the son becomes the central force in the family. The great excitement and joy comes to the parents only when they think of their heir, a son. Anita Desai portrays the psyche of Indian parents who want a boy/son in their life, which is a living example of psychological disorder of Indian parents. The whole concentration of mama papa is centered only on their son. The eagerness of growing him up in the best possible way to give him the best health, the best education the best life, they neglect the daughters on the other side. Thus we find the maternal indifference. Daughters are oppressed as the parents become over possessive of their sons. This treatment itself gives rise to the gender issues. Thus the novel of Anita Desai gives voice to humanity where so called (religious pursuits of) men are looked at primarily as superfluities.

Among the major novels of Anita Desai three novels are worth mentioning- 'Voice in the City(1982), 'Cry the Peacock(1986) and 'Where Shall We Go this Summer(1988). Through these novels I find that Anita is interested in dislodging the male and restoring the lost position of female and She believes in the liberty of women. The interest of her novel lies more in the manner of telling and the psychological exploration of character rather than in mere plot construction. Sita in 'Where shall we go this Summer' and Maya in 'Cry the Peacock' are presented as revolting women challenging the authority of men. The struggle for freedom and assert themselves and fight for the independence. They stand against the egotism and self conceit of men. In 'Cry the Peacock' Maya tolerates more than her husband does. She suffers from the conflict between the real and the ideal self. Thus the characters of Anita Desai are trapped in an existentialist predicament. Their quest is for survival, freedom and self actualization. Anita Desai's work represents a unique blending of the Indian and Western. The protest is against present time, against the monotony, drabness and humiliation. The psychological odds against which they fight are peculiar. It seems that a woman can be free and yet good at the same time is not acceptable.

Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and focus on gender politics power relations and sexuality. It is also based on experiences of gender roles and relations. It is a grass root movement that seeks to cross boundaries based on social class, race, culture and religion. It is culturally specific

and addresses issues relevant to the women of that society. Gender or their social meanings attached to male and female, builds layers of difference upon a narrow biological foundation, affecting physiology as well as personality. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and female. Peeping in to the inner psyche of women, we demand for humanist altitudes towards women. It is an attempt to reinterpret woman's status in the world.

The feminist writers of modern times have focused on the themes of sexuality, sexual difference, gender conflict and identity politics. But with the recent changes in perceptions and outlook on women, the post feminist writers have turned away from voicing their anguish or frustration over man-woman relationship, over fiascos in marriage, love and sexuality and over suppression of female identity in a patriarchal set up. We find in their works the politics of colonization, suppression, subjugation, coercion, sexism and racism practiced to silence woman's speech. It focuses on the newer understanding of womanhood and its convenient place in patriarchy. Thus it tries to advocate a gender free, egalitarian, social structure given to accept and appreciate plurality, respect, mutual differences and welcome coexistence of individualities. Anger anxiety and an innate desire for self-discovery, self-reliance and self-sufficiency characterize literature of the women writers of the world -with, black or coloured in postmodern times. The Indian English women novelists of the post-modern times exhibit a drastic change in outlook towards man-woman relationship, love, marriage, sexuality gender roles of identity. All these changes can be viewed as signs of post-feminism. Thus the world has been looking into man-woman relationship with newer in rights to perpetuate mutual understanding and harmony between the sexes. Now the post-feminism is not just a literary movement but a conviction and pledge undertaken for attaining greater aesthetic perfection and excellence. Here I prefer to propose to examine the woman's discourse with reference to post-feminist perceptives in the novels of Anita Desai and Toni Morrison, belonging to two different countries, different social backgrounds and different cultures.

Definite and self-assured Indian girl Bim in 'Clear Light of Day' by Anita Desai, bold and black heroine, Sethe in 'Beloved' by Toni Morrison are apparently worlds apart from each other due to situational-cultural psychic disparities of their respective space-time continuum and yet show a strange kinship. They proclaim their womanhood in a bold manner. The new woman of these writings

strive to come out of the identity crises they have been facing and are on the way to finding space of their own in the man made world. Bim, seethe not only defy the limiting norms of patriarchy in different ways and define themselves but also deconstruct threat. Family rebellion has no good universe next door and is bound to meet the inevitability of failure. They fight for gender equity and do not require the clutches of feminism to secure space for the saves. The Indian English women of post modern reveal an optimistic view of man-woman relationship and refrain fro pronouncing their humiliation, sexual repression, frustration and failure. Their fiction is an attempt to achieve a balance between sexes by recognizing the bond of symbiosis between men and women. Today the needed for self-fulfillment, autonomy, self-realization, independence individuality and self actualization is as important as the sexual need. The protagonists of these two novelists. Anita and Toni Morrison create a space beyond matrimonial enclosure, reject the time honoured archetype of womanhood enshrined in oedipal traditions that demands losing one's self for mate children and family. They want to establish themselves as individuals without any support from males.

There is an unconscious common bonding of theme between women writers of the world-whether black or coloured. In the fictional works of black post-feminist women writers of America, namely Toni Morrison, we come across similar assumption of individuality, a quest for exploring the possibility of a new self not in the denial of the self molded by the patriarchal society, but through an affirmation of positive values that have been ignored.

Morrison's novels reflect the tension between protest and transcendence, between suffering and strength and between collective and individual identity. Woman to her is a creative force and not burden of continuity. Her fictional characters are in dynamic involvement with and at the same are critically opposed to the system of society in which they live and succeed in asserting their feminine self. In 'Beloved' Morrison reconstructs the world that has been left behind 'Beloved' reviews the female and the male slave narrators voice, the female voice is heard more dominantly than the males

Feminist consciousness provides a new awareness of the woman's role in the modern complex world. In patriarchal society a women is considered inferior to man. Gradually as a result of consciousness raising efforts women have become aware of the limits and dangers of femininity. Increasing consciousness of their

oppressed situation has given rise to the woman's struggle against the male dominance against the strictures past by a renowned man. If she can understand her past and the working of her culture, she can break away from externally imposed gender restriction. She must undergo a metamorphosis and accept her freedom as an adult in a society that has so far denied her selfhood because she is a woman.

The novels of Anita Desai are basically female oriented. They probe into the problems of a mother, a daughter, a sister or a wife. They examine the psyche of their creations and analyze their relationship with society at large. The women becomes just dependant and inferior in patriarchal system and their status in life and their identity is defined in terms of their relations to others, father, husband and son. It is the culture of a patriarchal country which determines the behavior of a woman specially the Indian woman who is dominated by and dependent on male member of his family. Her life centers on the relationships. If there is a break-up in relationship, there is a nervous break-down or a neurotic state in mind which will lead her go either compromise or rebel. This can be viewed in the woman characters of Anita Desai. Desai's novels constitute the radical female resistance against a patriarchally defined concept or normality. The evolution of feminism can be traced in four stages. The first is that of political movement for woman's rights second relates to the his farcical context of patriarchy and oppression and attacks the male domination in aggressive, militant tone. The third challenges gender discrimination and focuses on finding a rationale for identities of masculinity and femininity separating men and women. The fourth stage can be turned and post-feminism as it lays stress on individual woman's inner freedom and awakening on resolving the issues and problems raised by feminism and focuses on understanding the relationship of inter-dependence between man and woman. The term post-feminism encompasses the latest concepts of the brave new world and the girl power. The writings focus on a newer understanding of womanhood and its convenient place in patriarchy and advocate a gender free, egalitarian social structure given to accept and appreciate plurality respect mutual differences and welcome co-existence of individualities. The paper proposes to examine the woman's discourse to gender views with reference to post feminist perceptive in the novels of Anita Desai and Toni Morrison belonging to different social background and different cultures as they belong to different countries. Through their writings they would like to sketch the



woman, who shine to come out of the identity crises, they have been facing. And these woman fight for gender equality and do not require the clutches of feminism to secure space for themselves. The discussion of feminism in literary context, particularly in the context of recent Indian fiction is an endeavor of highly innovative nature representing a significant departure from the traditional mode of critical evaluation.

Woman in the present socio-cultural set-up fell deeply frustrated by their restricted and regimented lives. The lack of privacy, the physical burden and the drabness the free growth of their feminine self. The problem of women today is not sexual but a problem of identity. They are no longer controlled and regulated by morality. They have become free and autonomous beings for which sex is no more a taboo. The writings of Anita Desai and Toni Morrison reflect the need of a female realizing community. Any meaningful discussion on woman's writings today is part of larger enterprise of empowering women and this in turn joins hands with other transversal struggles for social justice on various fronts like dalits and tribal against caste hierarch, of the radical democrats against imperial economic and cultural interventions as we see in the novels of Toni Morrison. Patriarchal power is one among many forms of power that creates an unequal relationship among human beings. Power brings into operation a whole microphysical of differentiation and rationalisation.

Recently the women's writings have began to receive special attention and are read from gender point of view. Fiction writers like Anita Desai and Toni Morrison have contributed to a new awareness of women's issues among the urban middle class readership. Their novels are popular in raising gender-consciousness at a more popular level. These two writers analyses the 'Male Gaze' on the women in the western black and Indian patriarchies. The issues of love, marriages family and community relationships unfold the gender complexities in the novels of these two writers. Gender in the narration visions of the writers has a performatory role to play. It is in constant process. In the west the idea of lady was closely bound up with the image of Mary. Women were in constant danger of being considered as 'fallen' A men could desire a prostitute and still be a 'gentleman', but a wife would be respectable only if she scarifies herself to the claims of her father, husband and sons. The concept of marriage a delicate union of two different minds has not been properly realized in most of the Indian male dominated families. Woman's individual identity has not been positively and

open mindedly realized in Indian social life. Woman has never been accepted as a full human being. She is taken for granted on number of fronts. And this has led women to suffer a miserable life. Going through Anita's novel we come to know how the female protagonists are deprived of due emotions attachment in the patriarchal family. When we speak of gender we have to refer to two different temperaments. Women's feelings and emotions totally differ from man " A lady can feel without touching but the man touches without feelings." This temperament can be found in Anita Desai's first novel 'Cry the Peacock'. Tony's 'Beloved' and Anita's 'Fasting Feasting' employ fiction to integrate the patriarchal gaze and to recover women from their marginalized status in society. Toni's novels focus on the complex gender.

### **III. Plot Setting and Characterisation in Anita Desai and Toni Morrison's Novels**

The history of women's subordination on any society reveals how patriarchal subtexts like religion, race, caste, class and cultural codes have been operative to facilitate men. It is the male fear of female powers which made them create various images of the woman. Hence the image of the lady in the western and Indian societies cast women as docile, silent and sub-missive. As there could be no universal patriarchies there could be no universal solutions to the problem of women being gendered as inferior under male domination. It is possible to find a comparative analogy between the Indian and western traditions in their methods of oppression for a cross-cultural discourse. In both the societies males are granted moral and sexual freedom and there are restrictive roles granted for women. Thus it is possible to find parallels between the Indian wife and the western Lady. Silence, stoicism, mute suffering and catering to the needs of men were the desirable qualities in women of both the societies. This has made me to do the comparative study on Eastern and Western culture, specially focusing on the gender issues. Anita Desai and Toni Morrison are the two distinguished names in feministic literature and they are well known for their feminine mode of expression, for their honest views of man-woman relationship and for their unconventional approaches to some of the burning issues of the day such as love and marriage and their effects-good or bad on their individuals. They are the women of typical feminine sensibility. Though they are born in two different times and culture, they have certain points in common and others in divergence. In articulating their thoughts and feelings they throw challenges to the age old customs and traditions. The paper being of comparative nature draws illustration to focus on their similarities or dissimilarities in one way or the other.

In my view Anita Desai has an in-word eye and thinking-mind to look into the passions and pathos of women and to lay bare the mysterious depths of their delicate heart. In her novels we come across her deep sense of envy, boredom, tension and restlessness caused by ill-matched and ill-fated marriage. The nuptial knot in which she has been tied can not be undone and this has spelled disaster for her in her personal life. It tends to confirm that love and marriage are not merely social and legal contact between a man and woman. I recall the sayings of T.S Eliot that "one gets into wedlock for the sake of children to perpetrate the human race". Woman knowing the truth can't read her thoughts or hopes. She is

an inseparable part of entire procreative system of child-birth and continuity of life. Toni Morrison also writes about the hopes and fears of a wife and a mother in her novel 'Sula'. A deep sense of sorrow and anguish over not finding the Desired love in her married life from her man is seen in the novel of Anita Desai's 'Cry the Peacock'. It is women alone who can speak on the subjects as menstruation, child-bearing, child rearing and motherhood with confidence and authority. A women's craving for love, her involvement in sex her significant role in procreation and child bearing find an outlet in the compositions of these writers. The ultimate solution to bother the writers viz. Toni Morrison and Anita Desai is in attaining the wholeness. The patriarchal values entwine into intricate knots within the human mind and there is no easy solution to the problem. But still the two writers have attempted to bring out a socio-cultural evaluation through a process of re-thinking and re-analyzing. If for Toni Morrison, racial oppression and the history of slavery have been the patriarchal factor which controls human psyche and complicates issues of love and marriage for Anita Desai the Indian patriarchy which needs to be revisioned to open channels of re-interpretation. Their approach to the gender conflict according to their respective patriarchal pressures contain within if the seeds of re-generation. Bearing in mind, the regenerative force of this monumental history, it would be interesting to analyze. Anita Desai's novels to locate the gender conflict in the Indian contest. Her novels like 'Cry the Peacock', 'Voices in the City', 'Where shall We Go This Summer' and her last novel 'Fasting feasting' explore the issues of gender from Indian socio-historical perspective The first three novels are of women's depression and the latest novel deals with the issues related to women's education Toni Morrison and Anita Desai's novel are interrogative of their patriarchal/ideological constructs, are quest narratives. They try to discover the meaning of gender construct in their societies. Toni Morrison problematises the concept of race and interrogates its conception. Anita Desai questions the symbolic states of social code of behavior which derives its source from religion, class and accepted norms. As gender is defined as the cultural inter pretention of sex itself becomes a gendered category which signifies the powerful(masculine/male) against the powerless (feminine/female). Toni Morrison works, within these parameters of binary opposition from 'The Bluest Eye' to 'Jazz'. Her novels uncode the racial cultural oppression through the gendered behavior of her subjects. The ultimate aim of feminism is to do away with gender oppression for healthy community

existence. Depending on the nature of the complexities in culture the nature of the feminist struggle is different.

Toni Morrison makes an attempt to find how gender is constructed in their societies. She explores the signifying process of the gendered consciousness novel after novel to arrive at the conclusions (1) Gender is a metaphor of difference. (2) It is an ideological construct which labels the woman and creates the archetypes of man/woman. In the recent novels of Toni Morrison, I find that she moves beyond the binaries of gender representation to challenge the concept of feminism as representational politics from within. With Anita Desai, it is a different story. The writer has no such Utopia to include heterogeneity of famine desire. The psyche dimension of gender oppression in the Indian context is too acute even to dream of a gender free society. Anita Desai's novels seek to analyse how the category of women as the subject of feminism is produced and restrained by the power structures through which \*emancipation is sought. The works interrogate the patriarchal status through women's consciousness and raise questions on the intellectual and psychological dimensions of Indian male's consciousness. Her novels reveal a lyrical beauty unravel the complexities of women's lives as they confront a network of familial relations. Her women characters suffer from an extreme self introversion against a background of disharmonious family life. This is revealed in the novels like 'Voices in the City' and 'Fire on the Mountain'

Toni Morrison in her novel shows the emergence of an evolutionary palter. The nexus among race, gender, class is the cause of oppression of the Black African American women in the white American society. Toni investigates manifold problems and solutions to African-Americans, especially African American women's dilemmas.

Morrison through her novel 'The Bluest Eye' exposes black parent's powerlessness and loss of positive self concept which are the common predicaments by black women. The inhuman incidents that occurred in Toni Morrison's small town Ohio is the subject matter of her novel 'The Bluest Eye'. The predicament of Pecola, the protagonist is not just limited to her alone. It is a predicament to all black girls and black women. Through this novel she gives the message that the African must accept their situation bravely in stead of retreating and hiding their inability under the white mask. For people like Pecola if they

want to live, they must learn to love themselves by developing self-confidence and self-love. The 'Bluest Eye' discusses a theme that is both universal and particular to the black female experience- the desire for freedom from racial and sexual victimization the search for self definition and autonomy, for personal spiritual wholeness, the search for equitable male-female relationships, the need for love and friendship. The novel dwells upon racial oppression . An eleven year old black girl, Pecola the protagonist suffers from an inferiority complex because she does not have white skin. Morrison examines how the European standard of white cultural values has effects on the psychology of a black female adolescent. Through on the outlook we feel the emphasis on racism, the issues of sexism and classism are also interwoven in the fabric of the novel. African American women being females were always the victims of sexual atrocities at the hands of the white patriarchs as well as the blacks.

Toni Morrison's second novel 'Sula' (1974) mainly focus on gender violence germinated from the deeply felt feminist consciousness of the novelist. It brings out the issue of selfhood in the portrayal of its woman protagonist in the context of the particular life situation that represents solidarity and selfhood. The oppression of African women in the United states, especially in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is documented throughout the novel. In this novel we notice the struggle of an African American woman for emancipation and identity. She has explored the nature of the woman's oppression in a unique manner. Considered from a gender perspective Sula makes powerful reading. It turns out to be a novel of female combatants. Eva pace and Sula peace in the novel can be named as crusaders who tried to prove that women can manage their own affairs independently without the support of men and yet remain desirable for men. While reading Sula. I recollected the saying of Zora Neale Hurtson. Her novel 'Their eyes were watching God' is dedicated to the new woman. Here the protagonists represents the negro woman with a new awareness of her own identity as a human being and a woman and the same case is with Sula. The protagonist. She represents a radical departure from their old customs and beliefs. In the name of black solidarity and survival women were assigned gender roles not only subordinating them, but virtually killing all creativity in them by forcing a mechanical life. Solely meant for pleasing men, with no regard for their own growth or enjoyment. Sula completely disregards this treatment of women by the community. Though she was condemned and rejected by her community,

yet she persists in her independent ways. She gives herself a freedom which was considered only a male prerogative. Sex for Sula was a self redeeming act. She refuses to Surrender her female self to any male. Sula takes up an existentialist position i.e. she tries to live a free spirited life ignoring the cultural values of the community. She forms her own laws of existence and self realisation. Interpreted from the point of view of existentialism, Sula possesses the warrior spirit. She does not feel powerless. As Simone de Beauvoir states, the power of competent woman over a man is not an illusion. A man may think he is in charge of a situation by virtue of his power to degrade and subdue a woman, but with a woman of competence and spirit. This power is not incontrovertible. Sula sets apart from unthinking women whose sole aim in life is to please men and if unable to do so deplore their condition. She uses the test of reason to understand her own interpersonal relationships and generalize the matters of fact. I realize here, what once Toni Morrison has said through the voice of Sula her character in the novel is the fact of today. She had spoken in a prophetic note that in due course of time what is scandalous today will have public section right. Women with her insistence on independence and autonomy is regarded as a brave step of a person who dared to differ from the established mores and who thought a new for the betterment of community. Where sexism is concerned the women of today does not allow the opposite sex to take advantage of her. She retains her freedom of spirit. The spirit of Sula lives in every woman who realizes her self-worth. Adventures with self can be viewed both positively and negatively. But we shall take the positive aspect only. The voice and philosophy of Sula as a person is the indication of the future emancipated woman. For every thing there is a season and a time for every matter under the Sun. Time to kill and the time to heal. A time to break down and time to build up. There was a time for suffering for women but now is the time for healing. In this novel, there is a struggle for individual rights in general and woman's rights in particular. It is a novel about black woman's friendships and about good and evil. Sula is basically a woman's novel as a woman character dominates the entire novel. It concerns itself with the feelings and affairs of women and the roles they assume whether by choice or force. It is the self-perception of the woman and her subsequent reactions to self-concept that are central to it. The concept of gender with its interconnections to race and class forms an indispensable part of the novel. Toni Morrison delves deep into the issue of a person's rights and identity in terms of gender.

Toni Morrison through the portrayal of 'Sula', tries to bring out the point that woman must have to account for her own individualistic strength if she has to replace her humiliation by self-respect. She is the black woman whose power resides in her ability to seize control of her circumstances and create a universe suited to her changing needs, 'Sula' is viewed as an evil in the society. Her pariah way of living, her defiance of the existing model tradition of the customs of the society, compels the society to re-examine its values. Though her life is not a successful one. She passes her life the way she likes and pursues her own way to freedom. By rebelling against society she suffers a lot, yet she attains a rare kind of identity and individuality which differentiates her among the other female characters while creating the character Sula, Toni had in her mind a woman of force. Sula constantly opposes and rebels against the attitudes imposed upon her by cultural norms.

Nel and Sula represent the two sides of a coin that stands for the total human personality. In both of them, there is a quest for social and gender identity to which bounds created between them bear testimony and relevance. Their lives are restricted by their community and by the outer society. Toni Morrison, like many women writers equates marriage with the death of the female self, and imagination. As she freezes into her wifely role. Through Sula Toni Morrison demonstrates the difficulties that the black woman face when they try to expose different aspects of their selves. Sula's image represents the nature of free black woman. Toni Morrison tries to convince the fact that an individual like Sula can assist her 'self' integrated with society and offer a useful model of 'self' of identity and celebration in its truest sense. Women in the Black community were treated as mere objects to bear children and to support their men either sexually, emotionally or financially in short as edible women. And it is the same case with every woman in the world. The novel 'Sula' is seen as a debate between individual experience and general ethical principles of the community. The focus in 'Sula' is on gender. The characters projected in this novel touch the boundaries beyond one's self. The novel expresses how much women long for each other. It is also about a woman's binding to her own self. The primary emphasis is on gender, especially individualism of the African woman. Morrison is interested in the struggle for individual rights in general and women's right in particular. The concept of gender and its relation to the race and class is very much a part of this novel.



The novel 'The Bluest Eye' serves as proof of Morrison's low level of gender and class consciousness. It is on gender bias, the racial issues. As a racial being eleven year-old Pecola is forced to relinquish her individual, cultural ways. As a female gender she is made to subordinate her femininity and remain subsumed in the orbit of patriarchy. It makes clear that the male versus female roles and experiences are the primary enemy of the Africans in America. The same is the case every where. It is Morrison who finally comes out to us as ethnic, cultural feminist celebrating the strengths of black women against the heavy odds of racism, sexism and classism.

When Pecola being raped by her drunken father becomes pregnant with her child, her mother instead of being sympathetic, beats her and forbids her to go to school. This shows how sometimes the women forgets the role of her self and obeys the orders of the male. Directly or Indirectly it is the women that suffers whole through her career. As a highly matured fictional artist, Morrison stands an apt comparison with novelists of other countries and climes, as she plays with a variety of viewpoint, as whites and black, husband and wives parents and children. As my main concentration is to the gender issues, I would like to stress on the relationship between husband and wives. So I have selected only two or three novels of these two writers namely Toni Morrison and Anita Desai. And their novels mainly based on male/female relationships.

As a novelist artistically dealing with racism and sexism as source of oppression of black where in the world women in white America, Toni Morrison reminds us of Anita Desai, a distinguished contemporary Indian women novelist in English who sensitively presents female alienation and oppression in the post canonical Indian society. Like Toni Morrison, Anita Desai deals with the world of lonesome and sensitive heroines like Maya, Monisha, Sita and Nandn kaul who are pitted against the dehumanizing forces abroad in Indian society. Like Toni Morrison heroins Pecola, Sula and Jadine, Anita Desai's heroines are a study of female psyche alienated owing to a lack of compassionate companionship . The female protagonist long for the human touch sensitivity and companionship of their husbands. Maya of cry the Peacock and Monisha in voices in the city are like Morrison's Pecola in the Bluest Eye. Sita in 'where shall we go this summer' invariably reminds us of the Tony Morrison's 'Beloved'. Like Nanda Kaul in 'Fire on the Mountain' is Nel in 'Sula'. Thus in the fiction of both Morrison and Anita, the crucial issues of female alienation and oppression are authentically mirrored

and artistically expressed. Morrison reaches to the entire world, but more specially to the third world countries like India. Morrison's work has considerable interest for the India people. The African American experiences and the post colonial Indian experience have many similarities. The factor that brings Morrison's writing close to Indian experience is the issue of double of oppression raised by the 'dalit' women. The problem of double marginalization caused by the system of caste and gender oppression in India is almost the same as the race and gender oppression in Americans Like the African. Americans , the Indian 'dalits as well as the other socially and economically oppressed sections of Indian society, specially women, irrespective of their caste and economic status. Hence the women the 'other' of the other.

The slavery experience in the United States has some relevance to the system of bonded labour in India. In both the nations women are treated as slaves. To some extent they are always ruled by the male dominated society. The protagonists of both Toni Morrison and Anita Desai are held in an inescapable psychic state which is the out come of their socio economic oppression. Morrison has become the symbol of African- American of human struggle against various kinds of oppression and above all of his global longing for liberation.

The novel 'Beloved', a master piece of Toni Morrison's fiction, the winner of the Pulitzer prize for fiction is one of the land marks in her image making. In the novel Toni Morrison displays how racism and sexism play havoc in the lines of the black specially the woman. This novel develops the idea that maternal bonds can stunt or even obviate a woman's individual or sense of self. The book problematizes the conflict between culture and maternal instincts. The novel centers on three generations of black women-Baby suggs, her daughter-in-law seethe and seethe's daughter Denver. Beloved deals with the history of slavery focusing on the position of women in white society. It can be seen as a representation, a personification of the entire trauma artistically dramatizing a haunting amalgam of the past and present experience of an escaped female slave Sethe and traning her quest for meaning and wholeness in slavery and in freedom. The novelist sketches the events that led to Seethe's crime depicting how the stories of the past have been influenced on the bodies of the black women to focus on slavery and its psychological manifestations. It even dramatizes a haunting mixture of the past and present experiences of a runaway female slave, Seethe tracing the search for liberty. The novel makes clear the facts

that blacks in America suffer from the crisis of the African personality stemming from three-pronged oppression of race gender and class.

A universal characteristic of Toni Morrison novels has been her depiction of male/female protagonists failing or succeeding on the difficult journey to freedom through self-awareness. Besides the commonality of the third world consciousness there is another factor that brings Toni Morrison's writings close to Indian experience. The issue of double oppression raised by the 'dalit' woman. The fact that dalits are treated in India as sub-human beings and given the most humiliating jobs co-insides with the black predicament in America to a considerable degree. Toni Morrison is more concerned with celebrating the unique feminine cultural values that black women have developed in spite of their oppression. As African-Americans are degraded as an underclass owing to their sex. Toni through her world of fiction breaks the boundaries of racism and sexism and liberates her women and places them in the paradise. While addressing the issues, Morrison chooses to focus on the psyche of a child, it is a girl child, yet in her teens, who becomes the signifier. Morrison creates in the text a site for interrogations, anxieties uncertainties and contradictions, which embedded in the black-American Childhood. 'The Bluest Eye' Suggests how the children are victims, activists, recorders and even oppressors. In the novel Morrison makes the children provide the voices and perspectives for the exploring the significations and implications of black girlhood. We find the childhood-innocence that contradicts and confuses the brutal realities of manhood. When the father rapes his own child, what's the use of such love which neither redeems nor sustains but only destroys the child. With comparison to 'The Bluest Eye' when we are read 'Sula' we notice the relationship between mother and child in two extreme ends. Mother's love towards the child is beyond comparison to that of the father. Both in 'sula' and 'Beloved' we see mother love for the children taking recourse murderous acts, which raises questions pertaining to the nature of the love.

Morrison explores the mythic power of femininity in a poor and isolated rural black community when women rule as mothers, warriors and story tellers as one of the most compelling writers at work today.

Anita Desai, in several of her novels has depicted the pitiable state of women in Indian society. Her novel 'Cry the peacock' is a treatise on the condition of such

women who have the misfortune of having nothing in common with their husbands. Husband alien to the emotions of love and the wife craving for love. Thus they are poles apart from each other. The wife becomes ore or less a bonded slave. Maya of 'Cry The Peacock' Monisha of 'Voices in the city' die because of the reason that they could not bear the strain of living in their husband's house. Sita of 'Where shall we go this Sumer' is disgusted to see that people have no mission

In the 'Cry The Peacock' Maya wanted to stand on a level ground with men, but she realized that she was not allowed equality even by her husband. She found to her great discomfort that a woman had no place among men. Same thoughts are found in the novel of Toni Morrison's 'Sula.' Like Maya and Gautam there are many husbands and wives who have several important issues on which they differ. Anita Desai is of the view that Gender issues arise due to class complexity-upper, middle and lower. It can depends on the way how the children are brought up. Children should be expanded to all sides of life at the time of their growth so that they can over come to this issues .

In 'Cry The Peacock' Maya like other women had a desire for sex and also for a child. Had several images of man-woman relationship in her mind. She had heard peacocks and peahens crying 'Pia, Ria' which meant lover. But Gautama was fast asleep invulnerably before she came to him. She remained childless all her life. This shows how some of the husbands failed to understand the feelings of their wives. These incidents shock the fine sensibilities of women. No matter woman had greater capability, she had no place among men. As Maya doesn't get any love from her husband which she actually desires she becomes psychic. She feels that Gautama has no love for her because she didn't have the longish face of a learned woman as in the novel. 'The Bluest Eye' Pecola feels that she is not beautiful as she doesn't have the blue eyes. The story of Maya proves, how the grief stricken woman differ from a man. Several psychological jolts throw woman of the balance where as men take it easy. Men are strong enough to bear any psychological jolts but the women are mild had soft hearted. There might be some exceptions as common.

Women always seeks love and is in need of somebody to console her. Similar is the case with Maya but Gantama's indifferent manner having no emotions makes Maya sad. Many a times men's unemotional feelings lead women to assumptions. They long for men's love and wants them to come for them in all walks of life.

Women are known for sacrifice and adjustment. Maya loves her husband inspite of his lacking in decency, profound invulnerable sleep etc,. But her desire for love from the side of Gautama remained unsatisfied. This shows how insensible the men are. Some times their insensibility itself causes the gender issues. It is the natural desire for all women that they should share their ambitions and aspirations with their husbands but Gautama seemed to be well insulted against the current of love. He was always more concerned with his professional work than his wife's health. When Maya was passing through her crisis, yet he was absorbed in his studies. Naturally Maya was felt whether her death would disturb him. Where as Gautama locked feelings of sympathy for Maya. Man is concerned with action, experience and achievement. A woman is more concerned with thought, emotion and sensation. Anita Desai plunges into the inner terminal and the chaos inside the mind. The woman in Desai's world is on a ceaseless quest for a more meaningful life not only for herself but for humanity. Anita Desai's first nove 'Cry the Peacock' is an exploration into the psychic world of Maya the main character in the novel. The novel treats of the contingency of her situation, her despair, anxiety, dread, anguish and her choice in the given situation, which ultimately leads her to insanity. Part one of the novel detects Maya as a hysteric character and forbids the impending tragedy in her life. Maya a young childless wife of Gautama, a lawyer much older to Maya, is friend of Maya's father. He runs after facts and reasons and has nothing to do with the world of feelings and emotions which forms the core of Maya's existence. It hurts Maya to discover that Gautama is incapable of appreciating the sensuous beauty of the world of nature. Gautama's myopic intelligence fails to establish communion with the emotional self of his wife. Maya suffers her loneliness and times to gratify her emotional saturation with her nostalgic reveries of childhood days. Gautama was only a figure of granite to her for there were countless nights when Maya had been tortured by a humiliating sense of neglect, of loneliness and of depression. This makes her a fit of frenzy to push down Gautama to death. Desai's second novel, 'Voices in the City' (1968) offers a moving picture of the life of another Maya named Monisha. Like Maya, Monisha also suffers emptiness within as well as without but unlike Maya, Monisha too is married against her wishes in a middle class stolid family. Her relationship with her husband is characterised only by loneliness and lack of communication. She is also childless like Maya. The fact that she is childless and is incapable of bearing a baby snatches from her the privacy,

even of her own room. Even in such circumstances her husband Jiban is unable to understand and fulfill her emotional needs.

While dealing with the characters like Maya and Monisha, Desai goes deep into the sources of Marital disharmony on a male dominated society. She communicates the sense of social fashion with the tender sensibility of a woman and gives it depth and meaning through highly communication symbolism.

Even in the novel "Where shall we go this Sumer?" Desai takes up for treatment the theme which had engaged her attention in her first two novels. The Major protagonist of her first novel of the middle phase is a nervous sensitive middle aged woman who finally alienated from her husband and children because of her explosive and emotional reactions do many things that happen to her. Sita is as introverted and subjective as Maya. Sita's mother had left her husband and children and it was always a wonder to Sita. Sita's marriage was an inevitable one. She had not planned anything for her life. She was a sensitive woman, who wondered for love and affection in life, detested sharply the violence and cruelty anywhere, expected a close communion with her husband Raman but all in vain. Living with her rations with that husband, She finds her surroundings too unpleasant and cruel to cope with.

Desai's novels are a study of women's depression resulting from their inability to grapple with their family situations. Some of her novels deal with the issues related to woman education and their aspiration to obtain self sufficiency and a meaningful existence. Her novels reveal a progression in the psychic awareness of women about their position in society. The idea of woman's independence is brought in by Desai, in her later novels. She finally believes that women can be self-sufficient, confident and free from the clutches of men only when they are able to discover their own spirits. Most of Desai's women characters which oppressed them.

#### **IV. IV Different Shades of Feminism: Toni Morrison and Anita Desai Focusing at**

Feminism is a concept emerging as protest against male domination and the marginalisation of women. The new woman has raised her voice against the atrocity and injustice done to her. The modern women protest and dares to pronounce her convictions and it is their voice to protest their pronouncement in and over tone her that has credited the difference and force us to consider and call Anita Desai as focused feminist. She has presented three kinds of females. In the first group the females who are hyper sensitive- Maya, the second group portrays women characters who silently suffer the strain of life and become idealists or commit suicide like Monisha. And the third group discloses women who discern new and important discoveries about themselves resulting in a sobering effect on them and they find a sense of fulfillment in their relation to the world. So the issues to differ in case with one or the other. Both Toni Morrison and Anita Desai's vision of life and art come in conflict with the day-to-day life. They depict very beautifully, the inner conflict of life that it is not an ivory tower but a reality.

Anita's portrayal reveal how the traditional women were inextricably caught in the quagmire of suppressed emotions and unfulfilled desires. She has plumbed the depth of the psyche of women and analysed the neurotic disorders that result from the constant oppression and suppression. It goes without saying that irrespective of the economic, political and social progress, invariably in all countries, whether western Eastern or women are subjected to gender discrimination. Throughout history, and in all civilization, the personality of woman has been sought to be damaged and distorted and her very status as human being interiorized under the overwhelming male domination. The crux of the problem is that man to rule and woman to obey. Man the master and woman the slave man the god and woman the devout man for the field and woman for the hearth and so on. And there were not many woman who were ready to fight openly against gender discrimination till the advent of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The present century has awakened the sensitiveness of women writers to present the causes and courses of the emerging new woman link between the two writers-Anita and Toni.

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century writers radical and dramatic changes in the roles and experiences of women in fiction and society. Anita Desai is part of a new literary tradition of Indian writing in English, which dates back to 1930 or 1940. She is a writer of considerable merit and critical acclaimed marital problem. She focuses on the gender roles of women seen through the lenses of female activities, experiences, goals, values, institutions relationships and modes of communication. The two writers Anita Desai or Tony, explicitly and implicitly dismantle the pernicious gender norms constructed by males for self-advancement women run households, but their work is taken for granted. Men are identified with more domineering returns. A double standard is thus created with two different measuring tapes. A sort of tricky gender politics is at play. Only powerful and properly welded discourse can arm women to reclaim their legitimate share and status in life and society. Hence women's marginalization has ever been a complex issue in human history. As a whole, it needs great vigour and vitality of thoughts to alter the gender constructs and lend an equal footing and just freedom to women at least in the new millennium. A well thought out decolonization has become a must for women in a multi-layered sense. Whether in Western or Indian literary tradition, women are seen as launching themselves into a quest for identity. Through various bold strategies, women have began to wage a war to regain their lost ground. As the economic scenario is changing they organize themselves against injustice. Thrown into the competitive world they discover their potential to earn, to survive and to develop self esteem . Increasing consciousness of their oppressed condition has given rise to the woman's struggle against male dominance.

In an interview with Anne Koenen, Morrison traces her conception of self-invented women in her fiction. For example Sula and song of Solomon. They recall being in a room with their mother, grand mother and great grand mother and recognizing her own place as a descendent of this time of women. Their presence is felt every where in Morrison's fiction. From time immemorial women have been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world compared to men. The various socio-cultural and economic conditions of the society have been continually changing women's lines and identity from era to era. Earlier they considered woman as culturally as well as emotionally reliant on man and common relationship proves to be a loss of self. The plight of modern woman in the existing man dominated society makes an effort to voice herself. The rareness



of Anita's art is in giving voices to the psychological, emotional as well as physical needs of women which are hardly considered in an Indian society.

In 'Cry the Peacock' Maya's cry for love is compared to the Peacock's cry. The cry of Peacock is symbolic of Maya's cry for love and mutual understanding. Even her crave for child exaggerates her pain in isolation in spite of being married. Thus Anita Desai explores the sufferings and anguish of individuals living in Modern society. She speaks of the complexity of human relationships. She tries to introduce neo-psychological vein and projects a sensibility and lays stress on the characterization through which she reflects obsession and suppression of her characters. She presents neo-concept to the achievement of Indian women writers in English fiction. Anita, through her novels make the women realize that their prime duty is not merely to please and obey man but also to bade a life of dignity and equality. To Aristotle, Sophocles, Shakespeare and even Manu, the law giver of Hindu Dharmashatstra, woman was subordinate position to man. But remember, all these definitions about woman's conduct, behavior and existence were given by men. The old connectional notions of male-dominated society were so rude, unbearable and suppressive, oppressive and depressive that it has resulted in the wave of feminism, which struggles for women's liberation or equality. The new woman today challenges the traditional notions. She has become a woman of awareness and consciousness of her low position in the family and society. And has realized that the subordinate position of women in society is with reference to gender difference, specially in terms of theory of patriarchy. I too agree with Beavior when she speaks of the freedom of women's choice that women has the power to choose between the assertion of her transcendence and her alienation as objet she is not the play thing of contradictory drives. Anita Desai presents the welcome creative release of the feminine sensibility which emerged more powerfully in the post-independence era. She depicts a new dimension to English fiction laying stress on the exploration of this troubled sensibility of typical Indian phenomenon.

Though not directly, but indirectly he can find that in each of the Toni's novels the peep in of the gender issues. In 'The Bluest Eye' the girl prays for a pair of blue eyes. Which is the symbol of beauty. And the importantance given to the physical beauty makes her crave for that. Once they have the beauty, there arise the horror of having that. The part of that yearning and wanting to be somebody else.

How devastating it is? And yet part of all females who are peripheral in other peoples lives.

The second novel 'Sula' is on gender, especially the individualism of the African woman. Morrison is interested in the struggle for individual rights in general and woman's rights in particular.

In this novel Toni Morrison expresses how the women's energy is not accepted by the community. For example 'Sula's euegry propels her out into the world but the world drives her back into the community where she is treated as an outcast.

We look at the things from the Black male point of view in her third book, 'The Song of Solomon'. The familiar saga focused on the fate of a male character provides a literary mate to Morrison's insights into the Black female psyche. Song of soloman presents Macon Dead the slum lord and his bootlegging sister, Pilate, who are pilled in a duel that is carried into the third generation by the affair between his son, milkman and her grand daughter Hagar.

Toni Morrison's masterpiece, 'Beloved' -1987 expounds the theme of the collection class struggle against capitalism. It examines the critical period in the history of African people in order to demonstrate that the economic source of both gender oppression is considered a visible problem, not as it exists between African men and women but as it exists within the context of the economic relationship between master and slave. Gender oppression is examined as a consequence to the economic exploitation of African people exploring relationship between problem and solution. Morrison suggests that eradication of capitalism ensures ensures eradication of racism and sexism.

Toni Morrison's latest novel 'Jazz' adds a new dimension to the solution with the thematic emphasis on gender solidarity through women bonding. The wed for woman bonding is a viable solution to gender oppression which is peculiar to African women. Since sex and race have been so interrelated in the history of America, it is not surprising that black women have published novels reflecting that relationship. Just as blacks group are relegated to an underclass in America by virtue of their race, so women are relegated to a separate caste by virtue of their sex. But within that separate caste, a standard of woman is designed in terms of a class definition. Though in all the six novels of Morrison, the element of gender is present, the emphasis on them varies from novel to novel.

In 'Beloved' gender oppression is not a visible problem that exists between African men and women, but is one that exists within the context of the economic relationship between master and slave and race is only a later justification. It is not based on sex as in 'Song of Solomon' but the treatment of superiority to the male domination African women is satisfied with the real happiness that lone brings and not with the artificial contentment brought by status and wealth. Women are treated inferior and their life becomes a hell. The novel 'Beloved' precisely speaks of the bond forged between the African and the Indian based on their common oppression Morrison shows the Indian's willingness to make a home for run away African slaves, allowing them to become a part of the tribe or to leave as they pleased. Specially this thought made me to select the comparative study between the Africans and Indians. As I felt they are one amidst us and we both sail on the same boat in many factors.

Morrison in her latest novel 'Jazz' gives the story of African women because it is only they who experience the triple oppression of gender, race and class. She takes a current problem of African women confronted in the 1920. And shows that the solution then and now remains the same. Here, I would like to say one thing, though in America or India, Germany or Italy the fate of the women at the outstretch seems to be change but the problems that they are facing as second sex haven't changed at all. Though women have over come all the hurdles and have stepped further than man, she still feels or treated as inferior in one way or the other. As Toni Morrison speak of her country giving the examples of the news that comes in the paper every week, is the same case with the other country too. For examples man kills wife, eight accused of rape dismissed, woman commits suicides etc.

Toni Morrison is deeply concerned with and committed to African people in America. She uses each of her novels as a frame work for investigating various solutions to the African's race and gender oppression and class exploitation. The promotion gender solidarity to the major there in Jazz suggests how acute the problem of gender oppression is in the African community. The message of gender solidarity through women bonding is converged in a better way in her novel Jazz.

It is not only in Africa, but all over the world today, we find over 60% to 70%of the families headed or run by women. They are the back bone. In spite of this they

are exploited, harassed and treated cruelly. As Toni Morrison drives home to us the need for sisterhood is the summery everywhere.

In an introduction to African literature edited by Ulli Beir Longman we find how the writers of Africa are seeking a new means of expression to match a new social order. The novels of recent past are concerned with exploring the quality of the contemporary African mind and its operations. We see an authentic modern Africans, presenting the rich details of interval mental stress, external physical action and environmental force whose tension balance from these particular African personalities. Morrison has a considerable interest for my people, the Indians. She is the symbol of human struggle against the various kinds of oppression and of the global banging for liberation.

When I have the thematic study of Anita Desai I find that she too like Morrison depicts a new dimension to English fiction laying stress on the exploration of this troubled sensibility a typical Indian phenomenon. As K.R.S Iyengar says 'Her forte is the exploration of sensibility. The particular kind of modern Indian sensibility that is ill at ease in sterile set up.

The problem of an individual who feels emotionally and spiritually alone from the backbone is Mrs. Desai's themes in each of her novels. Moral values of women are conveniently altered to suit the demands of men who treat them as their objects.

'Cry the peacock' is a disturbing novel, where we find the tragic mental break down of a young Indian women Maya. The novel is of a young sensitive girl whose extreme sensitivity is rendered in terms of immeasurable alienation. This novel reminds us of Virginia wolf's 'To the Light House' .The central theme of marital incoherence and its impact lays stress particularly on women . Their marriage is more or less a marriage of convenience a marriage of traditional bond. Gautama and the father of Maya were friends of each other. And having much similarities in their attitudes makes Maya a victim. Maya is married to an older man, nearly twice of her age becomes her husband as per her father's wish and not hers. This is found in most of our Indian families, even in the midst of our families where if not directly, indirectly the death of a girl like Maya.

Even in this modern educated world such marriages are still to be noticed. Maya the heroin upholds the mystery of the feminine psyche in several ways and she has her own individual personality. But today, the realities of common human

existence is not love and romance but living and dying and working. Name and fame overrules the mental peace. Imagination doesn't have any value. Everything is practical. Anita's novels present each individual as an unsolved mystery. So each work of hers is a humanitarian discovery of the inner psyche.

There is a bird imagery in almost all of Desai's novels. Bird symbolizes freedom. Where as women are bound in chains. The freedom that women enjoy when compared with men is very less. Some novels of Desai such as 'Cry the Peacock', 'Bye Bye Blackbird', 'In custody' are indicative of this. Mrs. Desai presents the women who are like caged birds, for example Monisha. Their lives spent in waiting for nothing waiting on men self central and indifferent and hungry and demanding and critical. They are always behind bar waiting for dying.

In the novel 'where shall are go this summer?' also we find Sita, heroine of the novel suffering from ill-matched marriage like that of Maya in 'Cry the Peacock' Her relationship with her husband is not deep emotional and she is waiting for the day when her husband will be able to understand her correctly and emotionally. Maya and Sita are just symbolic here where as the fate of each and every woman's case is same like that of Maya and Sita. Men can never understand the feelings of a woman to an extent which the women does. They do not even bother to understand the feelings of a woman to an extent which the woman does. To them what the woman thinks and does seems to be silly. Many a times they fail to give what the women expects them to. Sita's condition is representative of the loneliness conditioned by family and society. Many a times the main tragedy of a women is that there is no one to share her feelings, loneliness, the bare and burden of her psyche. And the other thing is of sexual satisfaction. The sexual starvation makes women internally shatter. And this we find in most of Anita's women characters craving for sexual pleasure women prepares herself to be with men and to fulfill his needs.

Anita's character Monisha, presents a typical social situation of several young brides in India who has a capacity to bear the endless torment and provocative and pinching behavior of the husbands' family members and they end up their case either with suicide or self-immolation. Many daughters-in-law become jail birds in the houses of their husbands. It's a pity that even husbands fail to understand and communicate with them.

Here we see that a marriage is nothing but a convenience, when two souls come together through their marriage. But the wedlock's are used to be settled blindly and without considering the attitudes, feelings and outlooks of the brides and bridegrooms, which are compelled to fail in every spheres of their conjugal lines. Proper understanding of each other a sense of wisdom and love for each other can make their conjugal life successful. But in Indian male dominated society only women have to adjust. Adverse attitudes of the family members make the marital lives a great menace.

Anita Desai has presented in her novels the predicament of sensational women characters, who find it very difficult to adjust in present mechanical and urbanized setup. She is primarily concerned with the fate of the married woman in Indian society today. Her women become victims of the traditional modes of existence without a strong terra firma, which makes them intensely conscious of their lack of identity. Their protest mostly turns into frustration, for as an Indian girl a woman is brought up to be passive meek and obedient. Mrs. Desai presents the unhappy situations of women in Indian society and has handled the issues of violence against women artistically and veraciously.

In Desai's novels men are considered to be rational and women are sensitive and emotional. They have different attitudes and interests, they look at things in different ways and react to the same conditions differently. All these relationships between man and woman point out the plus points and minus points of brides and bridegrooms. Wedding is a union of two souls and two bodies. It is to be established very consciously and carefully. But general situations in society are such that no apt time or notion is offered to these affairs. Its outcomes are the clashes, desperations, obsession, alienation and loneliness. In Indian society if a marriage is successful, then credit is seldom given to a female for her contribution to male is successful. In fact it becomes successful because of her understanding, tolerance and sacrifice. And if it is unsuccessful, then also the woman is held responsible. Now-a-days this notions are not accepted by the self-conscious and self-respecting woman in one society. As this shows how a daughter is handed over to the male-partner without considering the delicacy of her mind and feelings. She has to either fulfil the parents responsibilities or the relatives demands with different intensions.

Since sex and race have been inter related in the history of America, black women have necessarily reflected that relationship in their novels. Just as blacks as group are relegated to an underclass in America by virtue of their race, so women are relegated to a separate cast by virtue of their sex.

Regarding gender, in 'Song of Soloman' we have seen the milkman, the protagonist, milking the life out of women. pissing on Lena, squealing on first Corinthians, spying on Ruth, stealing from Pilate and murdering Hagar are all acts of self hatred. The ultimate act of brutalization and betrayal for Pecola is seen when Cholly her own father rapes her. Today, in so called modern society this act has become very common even in Indian families, which we consider to be rich with family love and peace. It is an irony because the one who had to protect his child from this brutal act fails to do so and inturn puts her life to misery. Woman's beauty, simplicity, guilt, her pain, her generosity, and most of all her silence makes her victim. Pecola is the epitome of the victim in world that reduces persons to objects and makes them feel inferior as objects. We find the girls victimize by their parents as they are incapable of nurturing them by limiting phenomena of race, sex and class. They give them the fullest measure of their misery. In case Pecola her mother Pauline loves her but beats her, her father Cholly loves her but rapes her. Pecola as a woman shares almost the same experiences and undergoes the same subjugation and marginalization which any other woman would experience under patriarchal imperialism. Woman in particular society is the socially sanctioned 'other' and her psyche is the product of social constructs. As Simon de Beauvoir points out "one is not born, but rather becomes woman....." it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and female. From the moment of birth, when the conventional first question is asked regarding the gender of the child, female is constantly bombard with social images, rewards and punishments that are designed to ensure that she does not develop any quality associated with other half of humanity. She must be feminine and restrict herself to a woman's place. It is patriarchal civilization that defines woman as a marginalized creature. Her definition and differentiation is always made in difference to man. A woman is never considered an autonomous self, but as just incidental, the inessential and an appendage to man.

Morrison holds that girls growing up black and female in a white society experience the malady of internalizing the belief that an aesthetically pleasing

image is what constitutes the necessary precondition for receiving love and security. Clearly speaking sexism and racism are systems of society and psychological restrictions that have critically affected the lives of African American women. Sex and race have been so interrelated in the history of America that the black women have necessarily reflected that relationship in their novels. The similar case is no doubt even with Indians. Morrison has offered a wide platform to women's cause and made it an issue to seek the solution to each puzzle facing black women. She considers herself as a womanist rather than a feminist. Toni agrees with Alice Walker's statement on women as "A woman who loves other women appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength. Loves the spirit, loves herself". Toni Morrison also makes an enquiry of the truth that is hidden and suppressed. She emphatically makes an investigation of the relationship between black woman and man. Her work proceeds from her belief in the human potential and desire for change in which she is essentially optimistic. Dalit literature of India is similar to African American literature. The Dalits come lowest in the Hindu caste system based on the age-old institution called Chatur Varna. In the pattern of the African-American writer, the Dalit writer in India raises their voice against the establishment. And we find their writing as a protest and revolt.

Toni Morrison offers the documentation related to the living and burning conditions of African people in America, highlighting their consciousness in terms of race and gender. She finds that sexism is an accountable factor for the oppression of the blacks. Even in the novel 'The Bluest Eye' one thing that is remarkably exciting is that Pecola suffers not because she is black but also because she is a woman. But in the very next novel *Sula* we find the woman desiring to lead her life according to her own terms and conditions. She neglects everything that is imposed by the society on her and it makes out a way for her independent womanhood. *Beloved* is a saga of mother-daughter relationship dealing with the crimes and cruelties of bondage. We find the peculiar get-up of motherly love who decides to kill her baby so that she may not be a victim of physical and emotional torture. Here also we can realize the gender distinction. It is the story of three generations of women—Baby Suggs, Sethe, and Denver—which suggest that since three generations the fate of women or her issues are one and the same. There is no end to it.



Through all her novels Morrison makes one thing clear that love is a civilizing force and every woman wants to get it from the house of her parents and if she does not get it her later life becomes tortured and traumatic. Throughout the fiction Toni Morrison shows an inter-relationship in race, gender and class and presents a perfect picture of contemporary society.

Like Anita Desai's characters Toni Morrison's characters suffer from loneliness, frustration, depression and identity crisis. Major and minor characters are quite qualified, sensitive towards their life and society but they do not get things as to their expectation and hope. But they are optimistic. This is what we want in life. Her characters in course of their fight gradually find themselves elevated, enlightened and at last show their maturity. The novelist transcends the heart-rending lives of race- gender and class. She has her deep attachment to the concern of human beings. I have compared Toni Morrison with Anita Desai because of her considerable interest for my people, the Indians. Morrison is the symbol of human struggle against the various kinds of oppression and of the global warning of liberation. She is interested in struggle for individual rights in general and woman's rights in particular.

Anita Desai adds a new dimension to the genre by her novels 'Cry the Peacock' and 'Voices in the city'. Her book opens the minds and personalities of the female protagonists exposing the unjust conventions that make women passive slaves to the society. Her novels explore the turbulent psyche of the modern Indian women and their personal relationship with men. Anita Desai's 'Cry the Peacock' is a byproduct of the whims and fancies of the affluent society. Her novels are the continual search of human self. And her discourse is essentially on women Anita finds human dignity in little dark corners of life, among the oppressed and defeated among the victims of God or nature or of man Anita Desai interprets the reality of women in a post colonial / post modern situation as defeated and betrayed, exploited by future hunters and those with the courage when they must say 'Yes' or 'No' to confront ,life creatively. She uses the term 'female time' where she directly or indirectly through her novel stresses / emphasizes that each and every women should seek self-realization and self-fulfillment. The two types of women are portrayed by Anita Desai the conformists and the non conformists they are very realistic human beings. Everything depends solely on her observation and experience. She reflects on the condition of women and children in modern India and portrays them honestly in her novels. And she is successful

in bringing the Indian English novel into the mainstream of European and American fiction. Born of the social emotional milieu, Anita Desai's novels are a representation of feminine sensibility caught in the crisis of a post-modern society, represented by the upper middle-class people. But the identity of women that has moved away from family to society to social criticism in literary studies is given a new identity, a new literary studies is given a new identity, a new liberty and a new individuality. The discriminatory practices of people towards women, the consequent complexes of Indian men and women, their confused philosophy of life, the struggle of women to find their own identities are often found in the fiction of Anita Desai.

In Desai's novels we see the sensitive search for a scheme. Her characters represent the symbolic themes of search for identity, for example 'Voices in the city', 'Cry the Peacock', 'In Custody', 'Where shall we go this summer?'. All are with the motifs of longings of men and women. Through all her novels, Desai conveys a message of mankind, that friendship, sincerity and integrity are illusions as they have lost their value. Society is multidimensional. As it has an immense diversity, we have to protect it to bring about socio-culture – economic change. The solution lies in raising the voice and do what we can. No one can really get away from the voice of reality. In such a fabric it is the voice of men and women. Which becomes the voice of nation. Today one finds that they are caught in a complex-socio –culture economic crisis, where familiar routes of escape are shut off. Experiences like aloneness forsakenness, friendliness, lovelessness, rejection withdrawal, solitude, dissolution, dreadfulness darkness, decay and death seem to haunt every individual, the family, the society including the city. To come out of all these both men and women have to give up their egoism,Selfishness and have to transform themselves into friendly and loveable. In early societies the iconic representations of gender relation always replaced the sexes on equal footing. It was a later cultural development which saw men wanting to dominate women because they were perceived as threatening and subversive. Soumitra chakravarti demonstrates the universal dimensions of the partnership. Paradigm by focusing on an African American writer like Toni Morrison and as an Indian writer like Mahashweta Devi. Both women writers are an opposition to an upper-class. And their concentration is on Black women and tribal women and low caste women representatively. As per the survey of the women writer in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the main themes are the tradition versus

modernity, women's plight in the male dominated society and women quest for identity Dr. Mahashabde points out certain areas neglected by women writers and prefers a positive solutions to women problems. Dr. Asha kamal points ot the lack of humous in Indian fiction. Humous seves their purpose of a mask to bring forth the present reality. It is the western women who have the identity of their own but not an Indian. Through Anita Desai's novels we find how men and woen sufer from inner problems in this modern society. Though the search for identity still continues, yet they have made them selves heard and recognised in the form of awards.

Even the British women novelists reveal a constant engagement of the women writers with the feminine self. Their novels explore the inner space of female experience and foreground the frustrations, conflicts and contradictions experienced by the woman protagonists. They explore their persistent quest for fulfillment through love, their disappointment in love, the way they attain private strength by developing a sense of detachment and posed vision. Their acceptance and resignation toward their solitary lines is the result of resilient energy attained by tapping their inner resource. In Anita Desai's 'Where shall we go this Summer?', her dreams of getting love and affection from her husband end in a nightmare. The point at issue is that her husband ignore her instincts and what she lies him to treat her in gentle way is what he can not do. This is the case with many women in the present society also. As a result, in the long run the husband-wife relationship is dragged into difficulties that come out in the form of identity crisis. This might lead the women to be exile, silent. As a land of self-exile she goes in search for her identity as Sita in the novel 'Where Shall We Go This Summer'. In India the struggle for woman's identity has been voiced more prominently in the last couple of decades. Anita Desai has challenged the male culture that prevail in the country. We find even Toni Morrison in her heightened consciousness traces race and sex at the sources of oppression of black people invite America.

The concept of marriage, a delicate union of two different minds has not been properly realized in most of the Indian male dominated families. Woman's individual identity has not been positively and open mindedly realized in Indian social life. Woman has never been accepted as full human being. She is taken for granted on number of fronts. And this has lead woman to suffer a miserable life.

Going through Anita Desai's novels we come to know how the female protagonist are deprived of due emotional attachment in the patriarchal family.

When we speak of gender, we have to refer to two different temperaments. Woman's feelings and emotions totally differ from man "a lady can feel without touching but the man touches without feelings" this temperament we find in Maya and Gautama, that characters that come in Anita's first novel 'Cry the Peacock'. We find Maya getting utterly frustrated Maya is a woman with a passion to live passionately. She, a sensuous woman needs the warmth of Gautama's company. But Gautama fails to understand Maya's emotional needs. This we can find in many relationships. It is not a common place house old situation showing a life grumbling against an over busy husband. It is the cry of an organized woman feeling lonely and unwanted she suffers acutely. A woman demands a flight from the embrace of protection to embrace love. Toni's Beloved and Anita Desai's first three novels and Fasting Feasting employ fiction to interrogate the patriarchal gaze and to recover women from their marginalized status in society. Toni Morrison's novel focus on the complex gender.

A common contemporary issue facing every country is the question of woman whether in Western or Indian literary tradition, the women are seen as launching themselves for their identity. The 'new woman' today is essentially a woman of awareness and consciousness of her low position in the family and society.

Anita Desai's new woman classes to protest and fight against the general, accepted norms and currents. They are prepared to face the consequences of their choices. Anita Desai's protagonists are new and different. Her protagonists are brought up to be quiet and meek in the face of exploitation and are yet highly sensitive and intelligent and are desperate to find an out to their pangs. In Anita's novel 'Clear Light of Day' we see two types of women hailing from the same family- the woman, who do not act but surrender and so keep the tradition alive and the woman who choose not to surrender and be meek but break the convention to face their situation and take up a new road where no one can dictate to them. Anita Desai's women are all about their condition. Their condition is not for equality but for the right to be acknowledge as individuals capable of intelligence and feeling. They do not look for freedom outside the house but within. This leads to the very concept of 'new woman'. She is new in the dimension of time by being a rebel against the general current of the patriarchal

society and in exploring her true potential, along with the struggle to fulfill her urges and needs.

Women in the present socio-cultural set-up feel deeply frustrated by their restricted and regimented lives. The lack of privacy, the physical burden and the drabness of a monotonous family life have impeded the free growth of their feminine self. The problem for women today is not sexual but a problem of identity. Women now are no longer controlled and regulated by Victorian morality, which did not permit them to gratify their basic sexual needs. They have become free. In Anita's novels we find a shift from the objective to the subjective and from the communal to the personal. Desai's thematic preoccupation is the exploration of the sensibility. She deals with the theme of sexual union without sexual communion. She depicts the dissolution and disintegration of the feminine sensibility in marriage.

The nature of the quest for identity of the female protagonist has been very deftly summed up by G. D. Garcke. In her quest for independence, she has developed certain complexes as well. One such complex is to look ever at the womanly instinct as sign of dependence. The fact that woman is basically a woman as well as a person. As woman, she definitely needs man and vice versa. In our social set up she has her two identities. Viz. a woman and a person, have been rolled into one, Viz. woman. And this has led to the confusion.

In the early Indian novel writers in English, woman had no identity. Their voice was an insurgent and subaltern voice. But gradually women moved out of their cocooned cloistered selves to the world outside. They moved out of the kitchen in to the parlor, they preferred a life of freedom to a life of bondage.

Gone are the days when Simone de Beauvoir called woman a second sex. She is no longer second sex. No longer is woman victim of patriarchy which subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior to male. The time has come to the women to throw off the shackles of tradition and educate themselves to carve out a distinct identity for themselves. They should come out of the suffocating and stupefying confines. They should not feel themselves as aliens and outsiders in the social matrix. They shall have to speak out, articulate, assert and affirm their feminine self. As behavior believed, a woman's role as a wife blocks her freedom. That the institution of marriage has marred the spontaneity

of feelings, between the husband and wife by transforming freely given feelings into mandatory duties and shrilly asserted rights.

Throughout history and in all civilizations, the personality of woman has been sought to be damaged and distorted and her very status as human beings 'interiorized' and man has subjugated women to his will used her as a mans to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasure to be instrumental in promoting his comforts. It goes without saying that irrespective of all the economic, political and social progress, invariably in all countries, whether western or Eastern women are subjugated to gender discrimination. There are not many a women who were ready to fight openly against gender discrimination till the advent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Such women-related issues are topics of discussion in almost every walk of life, namely sociology, politics, anthropology etc. Both Desai and Toni Morrison felt intensely the impulse of women who yearn for their emancipation. There is a voice within them restless to articulate their anguish and anxiety at the shackled state of women around them. They foreground the problems of accommodation and adjustment faced by female heroes in their struggle to find a space for themselves in a restrictive environment. The relationship and the power struggle between the sexes get ample exposition through their narratives and make the woman visible.

Fiction by women writers forms a remarkable segment of the contemporary literature. There is a marked difference in the range and quality of perception between a man and woman writer when both write on women's problems. Anita Desai and Toni Morrison focus on the gender roles of women seen through the lenses of female activities, goals, values, institutions relationships and modes of communication. women run households but their work is taken for granted. Men are identified with more domineering realness. A double standard is thus created with two different measuring tapes. A sort of tricky gender politics is at play. Only powerful and properly welded discourse can arm women to reclaim their legitimate share and status in life and society. Hence women's marginalization has ever been a complex issue in human history.

Whether in Western or Indian literary tradition, women are seen as launching themselves into a quest for identity. Through various bold strategies, woman have began to wage a war to regain their lost ground. As the economic scenario is charging, women's lives are changing and they organize themselves against

injustice. Thrown into the competitive world they discover their potential to earn, to strive and to develop self-esteem. Increasing consciousness of their oppressed condition has given rise to the women's struggle against male dominance. They have begun a crusade against despotism demanding an equal position with men and for human consideration and dignity due to them. To analyze the forces leading to the emergence of the New woman it is important to realize the traditional concept of both Western and Indian women. Now the women's status in the India set up has undergone dramatic changes down the centuries. The various socio- cultural and economic conditions of the society have been continually changing women lives and identity from era to era.

In Indian extreme commitment to traditional values which has marked the life of Indian womanhood, is slowly crumbling down. Women have realized that their prime duty is not merely to please and obey man but also to lead a life of dignity and equality. Today's new woman's roles are clearly defined. First to express her resentment against the suppression and marginalization ingrained in her since centuries by the patriarchal society and secondly to explore of her true potential and the search for her lost identity.

Art and literature not only mirror the contemporary life, but also reflect the writer's view of the prevalent social and conventional attitudes towards men and women. The restrictions socially imposed upon women not only strifle their psychic growth towards maturity, but also prevent men from having a better understanding of the female mind. It is believed that literature speaks of universal truth, but the definition of universality is stated specifically in the male terms. The literary works always bear a male outlook. Their views and counter views are expressed within a system of thinking in which the male was the norm. The stories revolve round heroes while the heroines are pushed into the background. She is never seen as subject of the play either in her own light or in relation to men. The question of frustrated female in the male world is completely ignored. Because of the evil conspiracies of men, women have been left out of history. To rectify this, a woman centered inquiry should be conducted to see what would history be like if it were seen through the eyes of women and ordered by values they define. Out of anxieties of woman's marginalization, a female literary tradition came into existence, which questioned the sexist assumptions and denial of female voices in literature. The only way for a woman, to find her and to know herself also a person is by creative work of her own. This

made the feminists like Anita Desai and Toni Morrison to overthrow the age old dominance of the male point of view in the world of letters and to project a feminist view of life. We find in their novels the protest against the legal social and economic restricting imposed on women, which infect changed their destiny and awakened the house wives.

The portrayal of new woman, according to these two writers is to create the awareness that women have long been exploited and to create the feeling of humaneness and to see that all individuals feel free to determine their own lives as equals. It is neither male centered nor female centered but a sort of mid-way in which both women and men need to look upon themselves as equal partners in the creative enterprise of life-the attainment of both sexes to a viable humanity. What distinguishes the traditional Indian women from the modern is that the former willingly accepts the responsibility of being the custodian of the family honour and prestige. Usually she does not bother about her own personal happiness and comfort as much as making others happy and upholding traditions and conventions. But the modern refuses to be a self-sacrificing individual. In order to attack self expression and individual fulfillment She will question the connections and defy the traditions, which tend to undermine her importance and individuality. Desai's fiction does not have an overtly feminist agenda, but it certainly deals with the severe atrocities that Indian society imposes upon its member, particularly women. Through her novels She emphasizes the traditional status of woman in society and the dominance of male in it. For years woman has lived under the protection of either her parents or husband or her own children. Solely for their welfare, reducing her life to one of worthless, meaningless existence. Desai's focus is on the life of one of ceaseless passive waiting, lives spent in waiting for nothing, waiting on men self-centered and indifferent and hungry and demanding and critical, waiting for death and dying misunderstood always behind bars, terrifying bars that shut them in. For example voices in the city and clear light of day. The society doesn't offer any alternations to women. They undergo various types of subjugation-emotional psychological, economic, political and educational.

The novels like 'Cry the Peacock', 'Bye Bye Black Bird' and 'In Custody' signify the fettered entrapped and caged life of the women. The emotions and feelings of the women are not taken into account by one. No one bothers to admit that she too has her heart's requirement, that she is an individual with needs and cares of her



own. Unload and uncared for, the woman withdraws into her shell. Her name, her achievements is always adhered to a man. She is not known apart from her husband. Men defines woman not as herself, but as a relative to him. She is not regarded as an autonomous being. "Thus humanity is male" Simon de Beauvoir protests this. The quality and level of women's perception of the world have drastically changed and also her own awareness of herself and her relationship to the world. Indian women today is trying to break away from the ideals of Indian womanhood. She does not want to mould herself as Sita, Savitri or Gandhari. Hers is to condition the essential woman emerging in today's world. Exposure to the Western concept to the liberated, educated and timid person to a self respecting, self-confident individual. She is eager to bestir herself to shake off sloth of centuries which thwarts her personality. Some of her characters like Sita in 'where shall we go This Summer?' Nandu in 'Fire on the Mountain' and Bimla in 'Clear Light of Day'. Prove that women have shown an over powering urge to realize themselves to establish their own identity. They are unable to walk the off trodden path which is accepted as the only correct one for the Indian woman. In Desai's novels most of the women protagonists are exiled from the world, from society and from family and even from their own selves. Here we notice that deep inside, women yearn for recognition, to be respected and admired for things beyond the physical. It is in fact the state of alienation that motivates them in their quest for identity. Because she is lonely in heart, mind and spirit, unfulfilled and incomplete, there lives within her and agonizing desire to restructure her life, to retrieve her from its bitter depths something. She can call her own her lost identity. The existential struggle to establish one's identity, to assert one's individuality and the desperate fight to exist as a separate entity appears in all its intensity in her novels. What is hearting with the women is that there has been an inner consciousness for the right values of life and a more meaningful existence, This awareness and constant questioning and rejection of the present state of life are in itself kind of protest symbolizing the emergence of new awareness. The novel 'Fire on the Mountain' holds a mirror to the crisis in human values and the lot of the lonely women as they struggle to assert their lost identity.

Desai creates women who consciously rebel against and reject the socially sanctioned feminine codes. In 'Clear Light of Day' Desai pleads for a new social order where women are not solely dependent on men. For their spiritual and material happiness, but find sources of satisfaction other than those of marriage

and family. They are women who would struggle hard to break the shackles to cut a new path to a new world. In this new woman's voice that these novelist seem to articulate which helps them work towards building new attitudes among women and creating an awareness in them about their own potential. Here is the women's relentless battle against the tyrannical male domination. Modern women are distinct that they aspire, attempt and strive to be the their true selves. They rebel against sexist discrimination, question double standards and dual morality. They continue their struggle unmindful of the outcome.

Today, a distinct individual identity becomes the dream of every woman and the traditional concept of man-woman relationship and familiar ties is shaken . There is no longer the traditional pose of the second sex begging for favours at the feet of their husbands. They raise their voice against the hypocrisy and callousness of a male-dominated society that hunts women forever. The women now long to establish their own individuality. The image of the resisting woman who tries to liberate herself from the clutches of the victimizer called patriarchy is what emerges from the novels of Toni Morrison and Anita Desai. A careful study of their novels show that they advocate the need to cultivate a healthy and balanced relationship between man and woman. Thus we see the essence of the feminism neither male-centered nor female-centered but a sort of half way house in which both men and women should look upon themselves as equal partners in the creative enterprise of life to ensure the attainment of both sexes to a viable humanity. For attainment a viable equilibrium between the sexes, the only way is to stop pretending, dissembling cajoling and manipulating. Both the writers dream here a world which does not disfigure and disqualify women from excellence, a world where there is freedom without anarchy order without oppression, and a day when man and woman join hands to keep the world free from sexual exploitation and oppression. Their novels lead me to a universalistic vision, and give the belief that man and woman will free themselves from all false feelings and aversion and will seek each other not as opposites, but as brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, as neighbours and will come together as human beings.

A close study of inter-relationship of race and gender in the novels of Toni Morrison reveal the emergence of an evolutionary pattern. I have concern for her for the Women's voice. Toni Morrison through her fiction reaches out to the entire world, specially the third world country like India my motherland. And she

has considerable interest for my people, the Indians. I admire the ultimate message that “each person should and must respect the reality of human landscape of the world with its unlimited possibilities and interpretations, if mankind is to achieve wholeness and if the global community is to once again be whole.” Morrison’s novels inform us of what kind of life or lives the black in America lead similar to Dalits in India. And her novels suggest strategies for survival in a world.

I was very much touched when I read Toni’s. ‘The Bluest Eye’ for the first time. In my preliminary reading itself I was impressed by her ideas how influential society can be on an individual and how strongly its ideas and views can be impressed upon that individual.

One of the basic forms of sexual abuse that has continually terrorized the African American woman is rape. Toni adds a political dimension to it mentioning the fact that sexual violence of the flows directly from official policy. This is common even in India today. In this study of mine I have analysed the women characters as represented in the work of the two (writers) novelists their mental, social and physical abuse observed in their respective nations. The work also analyses the reason for gender inequalities and injustices which exist in society. The study focuses on culture and its various ways of assigning, different roles, responses and attributes to the male and female.

Through my study I noticed, how in Western society feminism has changed its outlook and perspective from culture to law. Feminist activists have campaigned for protection of women and girls from domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape, for workplace rights including maternity leave and equal pay and against other forms discrimination. I wish Eastern society too comes one step forward to implement these things within. So that each society can slowly transform a male or female into a man or woman with different qualities, behavior patterns, roles, responsibilities rights. Actually saying Gender does not take woman and man as separate identities but discusses its mutual interdependence of each other. But explained on the biological level itself the hierarchies of inequality privilege men and disadvantage women. Feminism attributes to the issue of equality and women’s rights movements and further defines an intellectual, philosophical and political discourse directed at the issues of gender difference and legal protection for women. To become a feminist is to possess a radically altered consciousness of

oneself. The effect of feminism has led women, all over the social world, to identify with the feminist stand, voicing against this 'otherness'.

Today the new women voice a note of dissent and resents being stifled under the oppressive restrictions. She has her own changed notions of life. Economic independence have tremendously influenced her out look on conjugal relationship and attitude towards marriage. She is developing a new sensibility and consciousness, which will no longer tolerate the suffocating familial, institutional, political and cultural norms which place her in a humanity subject status. All women are twice-born, since their elevative metamorphosis demands their transcendence of issues like gender and class, each of which is a re-birth for them. But African American women, like the Indian women are thrice born since their sustenance in this world demands their surmounting of the triple mountains of race, gender and class issues, while the Indian women need to traverse the gender caste and class issues. Although Marxism speaks of the general oppression of women, it fails to theorise the specificity of gender oppression. It does not precisely point out how women have been marginalized. The most important issue of how the oppression of women is connected with economic system, like capitalism. The advancement of capitalism money and commodities are mistaken for human values leading to the establishment of a false consciousness. Money has the power to distort even reality. This economic power has humiliated the status of women.

I recall the saying of Swami Vivekananda "Women must be put in a position to solve their problems in their own way. Our women are capable of doing it as any in the world". Man woman relationship can not be based on the principle of a master and a slave. Women are longing to become economically and ideologically independent. As we have seen in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, although women's silence is socio-culturally purposed but it can be extremely articulate of the sense of suffering. There is much more that remain unsaid and unspoken and these unsaid unspoken speak of the plight of women in many voices. Women's silence sometimes convey the stronger message than that of speech. Silence is not that women aim at but is effect of socio-cultured conditioning.

Whether in Western or Indian literary tradition women are seen as launching themselves in to a quest for identity. Through various bold strategies, have home began to wage war to regain their lost of round. As the economic scenario is

changing, women's lives are changing and they organize themselves against injustice. Thrown into the competitive world, they discover their potential to earn to survive and to develop self esteem. Increasing consciousness of their oppressed condition has given rise to woman's struggle against male dominance. They have begun crusade against despotism demanding equal position with men and for human consideration and dignity. The woman is not only the symbol of generation, but the actual producer of life.

Throughout history, the personality of woman has been sought to be damaged and distorted and her very status of a human being interiorized under the overwhelming male domination. Women's status and rights are assigned within a patriarchal setup whether Eastern or Western, women are subject to gender discrimination. Man to rule and woman to obey. Man the master and woman the slave, man the god and woman the devout, man for the field and woman for the health and so on. Such women-related issues are lapsis of discussion in almost every walk of life.

Anita Desai and Toni Morrison focus on the gender roles of women seen through the lenses of female activities, experiences, goals, values institutions, relationships and modes of communication. Women work is taken for granted. Men are identified worth none domineering realness. A double standard is thus created with two different measuring tapes.

Today in India extreme commitment to traditional values, is slowly crumbling down. Women have realized that their prime duty is not merely to please and obey man but also to lead a life of dignity and equality. Today's new roles are defined. First to express her resentment against the suppression and marginalization ingrained in her since centuries by the patriarchal society. Second exploration of her true potential and the search for her lost identity. The restrictions socially imposed upon women not only stifle their psychic growth towards maturity, but also prevent men from having a better understanding of the female mind, It is believed that literature speaks about universal truth but the definition of universality is stated specifically in male terms. According to Michele Wandon the literary works always bear the male outlook their views and counter views are expressed within a system of aesthetic thinking in which the male was the norm. The stories revolve round the heroes while the heroines are pushed into the background. This itself shows woman is never seen as subject

of the play either in her own right or in relation to men. The writers are more concerned with the emotional life and social attitudes of man and the question of frustrated female in the male world is completely ignored. It is apparent that all religions and cultures expect women to maintain the traditional gender roles heavily loaded against them.

The new woman portrayed both by Desai and Tony is in the process of emerging. To have the awareness that they have long been exploited and the feeling that it is time to become human and that all individuals be free to determine their own lives as equals. It is neither male centered nor female centered but it is a sort of mid-way in which both men and women need to look upon themselves as equal partners in the creative enterprise of life the attainment of both sexes to a viable humanity. Indian woman today is trying to break away from the ideals of Indian womanhood. She does not want to mould herself as Sita Savitri or Gandhari. Hers is the condition of essential woman emerging in today's world. Exposure to the western concept of the liberated educated, independent individual has enabled the woman in India to undertake a journey of transformation from the timid, dependent and dumb person to a self-confident individual. She is eager to bestir herself to stake off the sloth of centuries, which thwarts her personality. Anita Desai's characters like Sita in 'Where shall we go this Summer'. Nanda in 'Fire on the mountain' and Bimla in clear light of Day have refused to flow with the current. These women have shown an over pouring urge to realize themselves, to establish their own identity. They are unable to walk the oft-trodden path which is accepted as the only correct for the Indian woman. Anita Desai is also aware of the peculiar predicament of the Indian woman and the awakening of the Indian woman and the awakening among modern educated woman who are engaged in a quest to determine their place in society. Women, though mentally and spiritually starved, performs her duties toward her family. True to the meaning of her womanhood, she has tried to please everyone husband, children, friends servants and the numerous visitors. Women have two choices before them either to withdraw from the mainstream of life in order to preserve her identity and sanity or to get involved in the painful battle called life. Thus the women finds her life problems intolerable torn between these two extremes. This situation we can find in Anita Desai's novel 'Fire on the Mountain' where the protagonist Nanda Kaul faces the same problem. Many a times husbands use women as a necessary adjunct to their status and she puts up with a show of life and suppress her help

of successful marriage.. She can do nothing but compromise with the harsh realities of life and suppress her helplessness what is heartening with the women is that there has been an inner consciousness for the right values of life and a more meaningful existence.

Now we are finding a new social order where women are not solely dependent on men for their spiritual and material happiness. They find source of satisfaction other than those of marriage and the family. A state of openness, peace and detachment are shown as necessary factors in achieving an enlightened sense of being. It is in Bim in 'Clear Light of Day' we recognize the emerging new independent woman that Simon De Beauvoir points out.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has been an unprecedented upsurge of women's resistance to collective male authority both in theory and practice. Reacting strongly to the Victorian age is imposition of gendered roles pursuing women into frozen, static images of femininity. The women have pushed back state-supported male dominated hegemony of patriarchal ideology. The concerted efforts of women to change their cultural situation and their enquiry in to the meaning of gendered identities have been strengthened immensely in the initial stages by the theoretical formulations of writers like Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir. They were concerned with redefining the nature, role and status of women in society. Simon de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex' establishes the importance of woman's questioning of her social and intellectual milieu. It is Beauvoir's exploration of the nature of woman's life and status in society. She tries to clarify and understand woman's life rather than ask for more rights and privileges. Here is the quest, trying to remove the confusion and mystery, surrounding the concepts 'woman' and 'womanliness'. We women have to understand the hidden political male bias of all forms of knowledge that are defining and explaining woman's nature. The well fortified ideology supporting the notion of female inferiority and male domination can not be shaken easily. So we need to go to the ground roots of lined experiences and make our protest by taking a stand in direct opposition.

## **V. Conclusion : Gender Identity**

The question “what is woman?” is in itself an indication of the different status and significance of the two sexes. A man never feels the need to explain himself. He thinks he is in the right in being a man; it is the woman, who is in the wrong...” Man enjoys the prime position in the hierarchy of sexes he becomes the absolute type where as woman is ‘relative to him.” This is a surprising condition distorting the co-existence of man and woman in nature. This inversion in stature makes the woman question her position. At what stage in history and for what reason did this unequal status of women come to prevail? Most of the definitions of ‘woman’ nature’ has come from male thinkers. Though, man has treated woman as the ‘other’, woman has never resisted or reciprocated this gage. She has never turned man into the ‘other’. But one point is clear. Woman has always been man’s dependent if not his slave; and the two sexes have not shared the world in equality. Man’s domination over woman’s body, mind and life is one of the many forms of colonization that are found in the world. Women, like been forced into inauthentic, inessential roles. Woman should not be merged in to the universal terms, human or mankind as we the women know the feminine world, more intimately than do the men. We grasp more immediately than do men what it means to a human being to be feminine and we are more concerned with such knowledge.

I mean to say here that man and woman could have worked on a collaborative basis and both would have led better lives. If not, this struggle of power destroys the nature of relationship. The woman looks beyond towards a society where both man and woman would value the freedom and dignity of the other. Man and woman relationship will be profoundly altered for the better, if their relations are based on an equal footing. But the practical, physical experiences which women in their lives have been facing throughout the successive generations the world over is common; either it is Eastern countries or Western.

The question with relation to the choices which women have; they are always being asked to choose to give up something in order to have something else. But it doesn’t happen with men. In every generation women face psychological pressure and emotional turmoil. Women are accepted as symbols of virtues. She stands for self-sacrificing. Those women who are not self-sacrificing meet with social criticism. We visualize life as an endless cycle of feminine struggle and



sacrifice carried out from one generation to the other. Each woman times to live up to the expectation of society, Though it is a great mental stress to allow sustain that height of expectations which men demand from her. Although everything like the outward appearances, dress, style, language and approach change with time, the deep rooted yearning to love and be loved remain unchanged. Thus women's lives are always hedged in by rules; they are expected to live with confines of various kinds.

What I wish to suggest to the men through my writing is to closely examine the emotional world of womankind. They are humans with their weaknesses and potentialities who are indeed caught in the web of their own compulsions. In the novels of Anita Desai, you can find out how men fail to understand the sensitive nature of women. In *Cry, the Peacock*, Gautma, a rather insensitive advocate fails to understand the nature of Maya. Monisha's plight and psychic life in the novel, *Voices in the City* shows the women as female birds in the cages. In 'Bye-Bye Black' Bird Sarah remains an outsider in her own chosen world. Maya's depression because of her loneliness, Monish's suffering due to lack of privacy and solitude, Cemo's depression is trust upon her from within.

Systematic subject-deprivation of women has been a fact as much in life as in literature. Women have realized that their prime duty is not merely to please and obey man but also to lead a life of dignity and equity. Even the great philosophers have treated woman as an object to be used by man. To Aristotle, she is an inferior man. Xlietzsehe said "She is God's second mistake" Shakespeare to refers women as 'Frailty the name is woman'. In Indian Vedic age Manu, the law giver of Hindu Dharm Shastra clearly assigns woman a subordinate position to man.

But today, the new woman challenges the traditional notions. The new woman is essentially a woman of awareness and consciousness of her low position in the family and society. She has brought about a radical transformation in public attitude towards man-woman relationship. The concern of feminist social theory is to understand and explain the subordinate position of women in society with reference to gender difference specially in terms of a theory of patriarchy. I feel sorry to say that traditional forms on female oppression still exists in modern society. While many countries have made progress towards gender equality, yet there are regional disparities. Gender discrimination has been identified as one of the most pervading forms of institutional deprivation. The mad dominance of

greed over all human goodness has undermined the position of women in the patriarchal set up. Gender is matter of culture. The down grading gender to sex may be understood as a key make in the ideological justification of patriarchy .

The primary identity of a person in a human society is that of gender. Gender inequality springs from many sources and it is difficult to determine which from of inequality is declining by the effects of globalization. This inequality many a times leads to mental illness of women. In the backward societies which are economically and intellectually backward, women are almost considered as slaves. They are bound with several kinds of un-freedoms including economic dependency over her master husband. Even in some of the culturally and advanced parts of society in India, (like in West Bengal and other parts) women are facing drudgeries of life obeying the orders of the householder.

In the modern society of 21th century the instances of female feticide and domestic violence in the countries of Asia, Africa have taken such a dangerous proportion that it has become a major issue of human rights. Many countries have made progress towards gender equality, yet there are regional disparities. Moving towards gender equality is political process which requires new way of thinking, giving way to new philosophy. Equality between man and women is more than a matter of social justice. It is a fundamental human right. Gender equality also makes economic sense. When women have equal access to education and go on to participate fully in business and in economic decision-making they are a key driving force against power. Women with equal rights are better educated, healthier and have greater access to land, jobs and financial resources. Their increased power in turn raises household incomes. Gender equality is a condition for inclusive, democratic violence free and sustainable development of women's inner self, their agonies their pleasures are better and are better and more truly depicted by the women novelists than man as they have experienced themselves all pains and pleasures. Literature which until recently was male dominated has started reflecting sparks that have emanated from this struggle of woman to be herself. The educated women have now begun to feel an increasing urge to voice their feelings. When I read the novels of Anita Desai, I notice that she goes deep in to the sources of marital disharmony in a male dominated society. She communicates the sense of social fashion with the tender sensibility of a woman and gives it depth and meaning through a highly communicative symbolism. To me the novels of Anita Desai unfold not a

totalitarian ideology of their unified goal; rather it will reveal a prospect of achieving a feminine consensus where each novel voices her story. Here the feminine issues are peculiarly considered because a large part of the feminine experience is out of reach of the male psyche. Desai's feminism is not hating man or abandoning families and relationships. But as a feminist Desai wants women beings. In her portrayal we have both kinds of women. Those who are symbols of growth and change and those who are powerful means of withdrawal, decay regression, death and distraction and in most of the cases the disturbed psyche of the Indian woman lying emphasis on the factors of loneliness and alienation.

Feminism is a concept emerging as a protest against male domination and the marginalization of women. The new woman has raised her voice against the atrocity of injustice done to her. So the modern woman protests and dares to pronounce her convictions. For Desai feminism in Indian context lies in the spread of education, economic self sufficiency preservation of human rights and in the awareness of the desire for liberation from mythical and social values which constrain women as well as men socially and physically.

Anita Desai projects the theme of alienation in marital life in a more controlled and less exotic manner. The loneliness of the Sita is symbolic of the loneliness of a woman, a wife and a mother- a loneliness conditional by family and society. In 'Where Shall We Go This Summer' the protagonist is ironically the modern version of the mythological Sita. She takes to smoking and neurotic out bursts obviously as a result of growing unbearable fever and fret of urban domesticity. Anita Desai in her novels projects women grappling with social forces working against their individual identity. Her females are not antifamily or anti male. But they only try to over power their solitary, marginal and oppressed situations. Their lines are full of turbulent passions, unfulfilled dreams and chaos. I find the women in Anita's novels not totally cut off from families and societies but women who remain within these orbits and protest against monotony, injustice and humiliation. They are not mere goddess or a robot but a self-actualising and self-realising individual in the society. Her concern with the individual psyche and its interaction with the social values I liked the most. Anita's Protagonists are unhappy with society in general. They feel disturbed by the pretentiousness and violence in society and nurture utopian dreams. Her characters seem to be mere cogs in the machinery called society. Oppression of women in Indian today is directly related to the corrupt customs and culture. This we notice in Anita

Desai's latest novel 'Fasting Feasting'. The novel throws light on certain social practices of modern Indian. The status of women raised when she bears a son, the deprivation of girl schooling and studies, marriage seen as the only career for the girl and home as her confinement etc., show the difference of treatment between the male and the female. Even the treatment and humiliation meted out to a girl by her in laws is realistically portrayed in Anita's novel and is the same condition of girls today, even in this 21th century.

In the Indian society, the distinction can be pointed out in day- to- day activities also. At the point of serving meals in shifts-first the men, then the children and finally the women, who has spent her entire time in the kitchen, cooking for family. Such things have made the woman in general, unhappy with the society they live in. They are unable to communicate with social milieu around them. Thus the novels of Anita Desai are critical essays on man's relationship to society. Usually men fail in understanding the sensitive nature of women. And women remain as outsiders in their own chosen world. This we can notice almost all novels of Anita.

Any writing always has a cause. It is Toni Morrison's radicalism in her writings and Anita Desai's new vision of women which brought a new era in the realms of psychological portrayal of the women characters prompted me to select them as the part of my study. A close study of inter-relationship of race and gender and class in the novels of them reveal the emergence of an evolutionary pattern. I have concern for them for the women's voice.

Toni Morrison in her fiction reaches out to the entire world, specifically the third world countries like India-my mother land. And has considerable interest for my people; the Indians I admire her ultimate message that "each person should and must respect the reality of human landscape of the world with its unlimited possibilities and interpretations. If mankind is to achieve wholeness and if the global community is to once again be whole." Indeed Morrison has become the symbol of human struggle against the various kinds of oppression and the global longing for liberation. Toni prefers drastic changes with regard to on a views on class and gender. She stands as an apt comparison with novelist of other countries and placed with a variety of view points as whites and blacks, husband and wives. In Morrison's novels of Black American's life appearance and reality. The magical and the real the comic and tragic are continually juxtaposed as in the

fictions of R.K. Narayan, the Indian writer. As a novelist, dealing with racism and sexism as source of oppression of Black women in white American, Morrison reminds us of Anita Desai, a distinguish contemporary Indian women novelist in English. In the fiction of both Toni and Anita, the crucial issues of female alienation and oppression deal with the world of loneliness and sensitive heroine. Like Toni Morrison's heroines Peacola, Sula and Jadine, Desai's heroines are a study of female psyche alienated to a lack of compassionate companionship. Morrison's work is always symbolic of the shared human condition, both engaging with and transcending lines of race and gender. The novels of Morrison inform us of what kind of life or lives the black in America lead similar to Dalits in India. Her novels suggest strategies for survival .

I was touched when I first read Toni's 'The Bluest Eye' I was very much impressed by her ideas when she gets across a very powerful idea that is found in a very society today. She speaks of the ideas pertaining to beauty and what makes an individual beautiful and suggest how the beauty can turn one's life upside down and can lead them to any disaster.

The various shades and forms of the construct of feminity emerge from the structuring of the society. Feminism describes an ideological position which works of the emancipation of women through cultural and structural transformation of society which aims to cease all the forms of discrimination, oppression and exploitation of woman. Gender is a social construction, which sex refers to what is biological. Gender resists the discrimination between men and women explained on the biological level that sets the hierarchies of inequality that privilege Men and disadvantage women. Gender does not take woman and man as separate identities but discussed its mutual inter dependence on each other. At present feminism continues in its Endeavour to establish itself as the ground for women's political, economic and cultural ascendancy in the face of its own internal debates about the significance of differences among women. The effect of feminism has led women, all over the social world, to identify with the feminist stand, voicing against the 'otherness'. Indian feminism and western feminism have always shared common theoretical positions.

In India the stature of Indian woman is inserted into its patriarchal structure the rough religion. The outcome of this change in attitude owes to a deep and intensive study of Indian women rural or urban, rich or poor, high caste or Dalits ,

aristocratic or bourgeois. During the pre-independence period, at the time of Indian's struggle against the colonial power, issues related to women's life became an integral part within the male dominated culture. It created a new kind of women by bringing them out of Purdha and making them an important part of the national struggle. The first phase of Indian feminism was started by men to curb such social evils. So they were being recognized in newer forms and roles other than pre-existing feminine roles.

We have to reach the second phase of feminism (1915-47) which involved Indian women in public activities like the civil participation in the various freedom struggle movements and was glorified for her feminine rules of sacrifice like tolerance, self-abrogation and care. This lead to the introduction of civic rights of women in the Indian constitution society imposing its own expectations and norms on woman made it difficult for them to break free from the mountain of conventions and traditions.

The burning question is that though the women even like Virmati, have the courage to rebel against and escape from social tyranny and oppressive restrictions they are not seen as completely free individuals. Their bodies are not their own. Thus there is uncertainty concerning the position of women in the Indian social scenario. No matter how much a woman attains her education, establishes her identity but her conventional domestic life is the only determinate on the basis of which a woman is evaluated and estimated. It is only the domestic bliss and intellectual fulfillment which can ensure a woman's respect and happiness.

Toni Morrison is a first African American woman writer to hold a named chair at any of the Ivy league universities. She shows in her novels the Black women's experience in an unjust society and the search for cultural identity. She uses fantasy and mythic element along with realistic depiction of racial gender and class conflict.

The use of personal voice and self revelation are means of self assertion, an expression inner reality. Women want to redefine her identity. In psychological term it can defined as a women's quest for identity. Like Kamala Das an Indian writer even Tony Morrison revolts against male dominated world and society in her novels.

Desai's major themes like frustration loneliness and defeat of woman in contemporary Indian are of modern poetic sensibility. We find in her first novel the complex psychic experience of woman. It is an exploration of young girl's married loneliness. Men fail to read the mind of woman being lost in their duty and even fail to realize own even the little happiness counts much to the woman. The related images of loneliness are found even in her other novels *Mouish* in 'voices in the city', *Sita* 'where shall we go this summer'. And in 'Cry the Peacock' a lady has been brought up by a doing father without being exposed to the realities of life.

Many people today would not classify her work as feminist. But I do as I notice her pioneer status of writing of feminist issues. By giving us the heroines of helpless and hopeless women, she is realistic. By writing about women who have no control over their lives, she is trying to make them realize the truth that they too can fight back and need not put an end to it. She has belief and concern more with thought, emotion and sensation than with action and achievement. Desai has fashioned a new concept of feminist fiction. The woman in her literary world is on a ceaseless quest, for a more meaningful life not only for herself but for humanity in general. Dealing with several types of severe psychological society from the view point of solitary individuals who look upon themselves as parentally uprooted beings. Her whole style is ironical. All the heroines of Anita's novels sail in the same boat. Male domination and no mutual understanding we find the women in the novels of Anita Desai presenting different picture of their inner life. She visualizes life for a woman as a series of obligations and commitments. In addition to existentialists reality of life she evokes the sentiments and sensibility of woman for their role and respect in society. She sets herself to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of millions of married women to tormented by existentialist problems and predicaments. Thus we can focus the life of woman in the contemporary urban milieu bravely straggling against or helplessly submitting to the relentless forces of absurd life.

Anita Desai closely examines the serious world of womankind. She sees at the trying situation women and visible life of women as a series of indebtedness for kindness and to entrust. She sets herself to voice the salient great unhappiness and helplessness of married women.

The lives of African American women have been critically affected by racism sexism and classicism. Just as blacks as group are relegated to an underclass by virtue of their race, women are related to separate caste by virtue of their sex. Black woman have been victimized by class exploitation which is perhaps the greatest source of oppression of Blacks in America. Thus to be black and female is to suffer from twin disadvantages of racial discrimination and gender bias.

One of the serious bifurcation of trends in literature and culture of our age is between the serious and popular artists. The kind of mutual bond that used to exist between the common people and serious thinkers is dissolving fast in our times. Most of the writings are for the academicians rather than for the mass audience. Though I am writing this article from an academic point of view, my intention is to convey my feelings to the mass audience. It is in this contest that I have considered the works of Toni Morrison and Anita Desai, the promising and revealing writer who have tried to bring some drastic changes in the life of women through their writings.

Toni Morrison's novels tell us what it means to be human, a condition not entirely determined by genetic makeup but is also comprised of conscious volition. Her fictional characters engage in perplexing struggles to maintain their human dignity and emotional sensitivity in an impersonal, alien and frequently threatening worlds.

It is the study of relationship between two or more literatures. The term 'comparative' world literature. The concept of world literature. The concept of world literature comes from Goeth's Welt literature which means all literature should be studied and taken as one. Comparative literature should encompass. The study of national literatures applying certain modes and methods of critical inquiry. It comes out of the premise that a literature is to be studied with reference to other literatures within and outside the country. It transcends the narrowness, provinciality and parochialism of notional and general literatures. The question is how to promote comparative studies in our time. Here I have mentioned the difference between literature in India and the West. The fact that the impacts and influences on the Indian psyche have been more or less similar in various regions cannot be overlooked. Comparative literature broadens the horizon of our study of literature and gives us a cosmopolitan view.



Feminism is a cry against male chauvinism eternal degradation, constant humiliation and perpetual victimization. African Novels of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century have generally depicted the patriarchal society dominated by male. Women in the society are relegated to a secondary place. The African novels depict how the suppressed and oppressed women are sacrificed at the altar of male-dominated society and the men's exploitation of women to maintain the male dominance. So taking the works of Toni Morrison, I have tried to prove it.

Post modernism is often charged of being a product of capitalist tendency in the view of the fact that it is associate with the new economic policies like liberalization and globalization. The scope it produce for the have not's of the world for the perpetually exploited section of the society the blacks, the aborigines and women are in position to contribute to the overall developments and reap benefits for themselves. The feminist assertions in every walk of life today are evidence of the post modernist scenario in countries like India. Through the miserable plight of the Indian women continues to haunt, a bright future for them can be carved out with determined efforts. Contemporary Indian literature contains voices of women writers who show considerable concern for the common cause of women. For example Anita Desai delves deep into the feminine psyche and displays the sufferings of women caused by tradition while the position of women called for a serious questioning, the impact of feminism raised an issue in the postmodern representation of women in the so called Third world countries. Anita Desai campaigns for change and new frontiers of women in India through her novels. It is ironic that postmodern aesthetics have reduced women to shopping animals whose pleasure power and the cultural language are double coded. Anita Desai is a product of those socio-cultural factors which opened up in to new phase of history now known as post modernism. Her novels demonstrate the new-socio-cultural trend that set in after the fall of Empire which was a supporting pillar of modernism .

The women question is a global contemporary issue Desai's preoccupation with women and their problems brought to the forefront the feminist concerns in the Indian sub-continent. The new socio-cultural condition began to offer post-modernist strategies to establish socio-cultural norms and alternate canons to raise the status of women. These were the products of new changing environment. The new relationship of women with men and other expatriate features marked, post-modern culture or became 'novelistic'. This emerged to a

shared set of the social structures and dictates the roles and inter-actions of the gendered subjectivity. The novel today narrates the stories of ordinary people whose voices need to be heard. In the post-modernist perspective the feminist has proved to be literally unavoidable. The ways in which question on gender, sexuality, reading, writing subjectively, enunciation, voice and performance are raised are unthinkable without the impact of feminism even though many of these activities occur within the margin.

If women's liberation on the global scene had bought with it a whole bandwagon of booties to women to advance their economic and intellectual status, in India, the issues were different. It was not the question who brings the bigger pay packet, or who would do the dish washing, change the nappies and wash the curtains etc. If these were the priorities in the West, for the Indian women, the problems were different. It is not just economic equality that she has to fight for. It is social equality and emotional independence that she has to achieve. The problems of the urban working women were no different from the problems of the rural and urban situations, she is the last to be lined first to be fined. The Indian woman seeks to be delivered of bondage by love and not by manipulation, regardless of class, cast religion and community. The woman in India has more dimensions to her plight than the western women. Women in India were treated as shows by the male domination and the society. In Shashi Deshapande's novels, we find the heroines who struggle from oppression. Shashi, like Toni Morrison from the west brings out powerfully the psychological problem of a woman and discusses it artistically without crossing barriers of art. The message given in almost all the feminist novels are that women should assert and ascertain herself so that she can overcome or thrash the suppressing forces. In each successive novels of Anita Desai the problem of involvement versus detachment, of surrender versus freedom is viewed. Her novels portray the kinds of women who are symbols of growth and change, regression, decay, death and destruction, women of disturbed psyche, loneliness and alienation. We find in them the pictures of women in flesh and blood with a distinct mind, along with Anita Desai, find Shashi Deshapande, Arundati Roy and Kamala Markandeya who have fashioned a new concept of feminist fiction, whose novel have concern for the women's voice. A radical feminist theory begins the assumption that women from a 'sex class'. The condition of women not just as a class but as the fundamentally oppressed class.

Ever since antiquity there have been women fighting to their half of total populations of the world from the oppression. Political feminism began with women's liberation movement in 1970's and the critical feminism shaped much richer understanding of difference. And with such conceptions feminism has come a long way from power politics to an understanding of cultural diversification.

Only a few literary writers have dealt with the issues of women's sexual violence and have peeped in to their pains and silences. Even the birth of female child is considered a burden in many Indian families And certainly we find the sufferings of female in one or the other way. They are considered as 'Second Sex' or 'Weaker Sex'. They are pushed into the field of prostitutes. Though these victimized and marginalized women have tender feelings, desires and dreams, they find themselves extrapped in the given life of rat and hurt from which there is no escape for them and they keep on suffering mutely. The feminist novelists like Anita Desai and Toni Morrison have made us the readers to give a thought to many issues which are still question marks, such as "will woman being a female body, continue to remain as a commodity of sexual pleasure and uphold men's sexual power over the powerless?"

The feminist writer in USA., particularly the African American woman are naturally drawn towards the triple jeopardy of race, class and gender. Toni Morrison , the Noble prize winning author is a female, black and a U. S citizen all in one. When I peep into the novels of Toni as well as Anita I see the characters in their novels suffer from a double stigma of class and colour often revealing scars in their minds caused by sexual and racial exploitations. A Western woman's demand for an equal status with man is quite a natural outburst of the oppressed and humiliated class. In Indian woman in general have experienced duplicaty in the attitude of male. They worship the goddesses as their protectors. A newly wed 'bride' is accepted as goddess Laxmi in her in-laws house. But in real life, the picture is often different . the women hardly has the decision making power in the family or the society. Yet mother worship is prevent.

But with the progress of Western education and the emergence of National movement in colonial India, there developed a new patriarchy that strongly protests all sorts of barbaric customs inflicting tortures on women and allows the

new woman an exposure to the outer world. They are inspired to develop modernization without westernization.

Since 1990's activists have embarked on a mission to create a new global community, and the notion of women's rights as human rights is intrinsic to it. Women's human rights now hold out the promise of good life, free from torture, intimidation scarcity and pollution with access to good education health care, choices of child bearing and meaningful work. Women's constant appearance in public spaces such as the international meetings of the United Nations is part of strategy to weave women in to every conversation.

In every generation women face the psychological pressure and emotional turmoil. Although the out word appearance, dress, style language and approach change with time, the deep rooted yearning to love and be loved remain unchanged. There is so much of expectation from women that at times it becomes difficult to live up to these expectations. And those women who are not self-sacrificing, meet with social criticism . They visualize life as an endless cycle of feminine struggle and sacrifice carried out from one generation to the other . Here we have men's selfish attitude and women's endurance. Each woman tries to live up to the expectation of society, conform social standards and comply with the idea of woman being virtuous and good. It is a great mental stress to attain and sustain the height of expectation. Women are always being asked to choose, to give up something in order to have something else. But it doesn't happen with men. Women's life are always hedged in by rules, they expected to live within confines of various kinds.

The well-fortified ideology supporting the nation of female inferiority and male domination could not be shaken easily and called for a radical and through examination. Asking the question "what is woman?" is in itself an indication of the different status and significance of the two sexes. "A man never feels the need to explain himself he is in the right in being a man; it is the woman, who is in the wrong..." Man enjoys the prime position in the hierarchy of sexes "and he becomes" the absolute type" where as woman is relative to him. This is a surprising condition distorting the co-existence of man and woman in nature. Though man has treated the woman as 'other' woman has never resisted or reciprocated this gaze. She has never reacted in most natural way by turning man in to the 'other' for her. Woman's acceptance of her objectified image and

unwillingness to resist this situation farther reduces her status. Women like other oppressed human- beings, have been forced into inauthentic, inessential roles. Man and woman relationship will be profoundly altered for the better, if their relations are based on an equal footing. And the writing women can play an important role in generating feminist awareness. This has made me to take up this topic.

I would like to conclude my article with a message to the famine women that, instead of projecting helplessness as the typical feminine behavior, they have to be strong-willed women and pursue their goals with determination and intelligence.

If is not man who created epics but the epics created man. Originally men are human. But they are created beasts. It is the mutual understanding which leads to success. To love and respect other is the religion. Woman is the other name for religion. But today we notice that woman are totally exploited in the name of religion. It is the religious feelings what mislead her. One should recall Vachanas in which women was given the first preference. Women are never against gender but gender power. It is their egoism which has lead to their exploitation.

As a woman and with my emotions and perceptions, I have a question in my mind. We call Tony Morrison as a 'black' woman novelist. Here the word 'woman' is it necessary is my question. When we say man, woman is included in him. But the word 'woman' doesn't include man. why? This is the difference we are noticing all through the years. Why not just a wonderful novelist even for a woman writer? Can't she compete with man? Is she not equivalent to him? As a woman Toni herself has experienced inch by inch the sufferings that all other women experience and they have come in the form of her writings. 'Beloved' is the haunting presence who becomes the sprit of the women from the other side-

Now the scenario has changed. A woman has a 'room' of her own. Women has come in the tone front to express their minds, feelings and sentiments. A new woman has her own changed notions of life. Woman's educations, her rights of citizenship and other legal rights and above all her gainful employment and economic independence have tremendously influenced her outlook on conjugal relationship and attitude towards marriage. The new woman spiritually and factually denied of equality, freedom and opportunity has been struggling to

break her change and incarnate an avatar of womanhood. She is developing a sensibility and consciousness which will no longer tolerate the suffocating familial institutional, political and cultural norms which place her in a humiliating subject status. When I read Maya Angelou's poem 'Woman Work' and Judy Brady's essay 'why I want a wife' I feel nothing has change in the life of woman. It might not be in the situation of you and me but above eighty percent of the women are still struggling to have their identity. "Why I still want a wife?" – lashes out against the stereotypes of modern society to which women fail victim and shows how woman are obliged to fulfill certain roles that have been earmarked them. And how such stereotypes aggravate gender discrimination.

Always women were left to do the work which the men considered as not powerful. Women provided food, water, clothing and values. They were left to do the powerful things like caring and sharing which is now called as an emotional intelligence in this period of privatization and extraction. This is how mother is the reason that you are sustained. We all are part of the food community where mother's role is the whole. That is the capacity of women. With these the women is a teacher who leads the life of human in future.

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