

**POST FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF SUDHA MURTY'S *THE
MOTHER I NEVER KNEW***

Dissertation

Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirement for

The award of Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

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June 2022

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **POST FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF SUDHA MURTY'S *THE MOTHER I NEVER KNEW*** is a bonafide record of research work carried out by **SUBHASHINI K R**, student of M.A English Language and Literature, fourth semester, in this Department, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Arts in English Language and Literature.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **POST FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF SUDHA MURTY'S THE MOTHER I NEVER KNEW** has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship, or other similar title.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the preparation of this project I am happy to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to , Head of the Department of English as well as my supervisor **Dr.Reena Mohammed P M**, MES Asmabi College for her skilled guidance and painstaking correction and revision. I am grateful to her for providing me the valuable insights of words, appreciation and encouragement at every stage of this project.

I also thank the librarian and her crew for providing enough materials for project.

I express my gratitude to **Dr. A Biju**, the Principal, for the congenial research environment he has always tried to foster in the Department.

And finally, but immensely and most affectionately I acknowledge the love and affection always showered on me by my parents, whose love and prayers are the source of inspiration behind all my endeavours.

Above all I bow my head before God, the Almighty without whose blessing, this work would not have been fulfilled.

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Date:14/06/2022

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A novella is a narrative work of prose fiction shorter in both length and breadth than a novel, but longer than a short story. Typically, novellas dramatize individual events, or a short series of events, such as a day in the life, or an important turning point in a character's life. Like its counterpart "novel", the English word "novella" is derived from the Italian word "novella" meaning a tale; piece of news. Novella is a literary form emerged in the early fourteenth century in Italian renaissance literature, later gaining prestige through the late nineteenth century writings of Russian and German authors. Some famous and popular novellas include Franz Kafka's *the Metamorphosis*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

The seed of Indian Writing in English was sown during the period of the British rule in India. Now the seed has blossomed into an evergreen tree, fragrant flowers and ripe fruits. The fruits are being tasted not only by the native people, but they are also being 'chewed and digested' by the foreigners. It happened only after the constant caring, pruning and feeding. Gardeners like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, R K Narayan, Raja Rao- to name only a few, looked after the tender plant night and day. In modern time, it is guarded by a number of writers who are getting awards and accolades all over the world.

Indian English Literature is an honest enterprise to demonstrate the ever rare gems of Indian Writing in English. From being a singular and exceptional, rather gradual native flare-up of geniuses, Indian Writing has turned out to be a new form of Indian culture and voice in which India converses regularly.

Indian Writers- poets, novelists, essayists, and dramatists have been making momentous and considerable contributions to world literature since pre-independence era, the past few years have witnessed a gigantic prospering and thriving of Indian English Writing in the global Market.

Women novelists have played a crucial and momentous role in enhancing the quality and quantity of the Indian English fiction. They have further added the woman's perspectives and feminist dimensions to the literature. These rich contributions have widened the spectrum of issues deliberated in literature. In the past, the work by the Indian woman authors have always been undervalued because of some patriarchal assumptions. Male experiences get more priorities in Indian societies. In those days, women used to write about a women's perception and experiences within the enclosed domestic arena. On the other hand, male authors used to deal with heavy themes. Thus, it was assumed that their work would get more priority and acceptance in the society.

During the eighteenth century, these factors led towards the decline of Indian women writing. And with all these factors, production of women's literature declined further. In the nineteenth century, more and more women actively participated in India's reformist movement against the British rule. It again led to the women's literature. At that time, their write-ups mainly concentrated on the country's freedom struggle. Over the years, the world of feminist ideologies began to influence the English literature of India.

The contributions by women writers cannot go unnoticed. In fact the works by women writers constitute a major segment of the contemporary

Indian writing in English. Today women are seen establishing their identity in almost all walks of life and they have heralded a new consciousness in the realm of literature too. Anees Jung in her book *Unveiling India* states her ideology in the following words:

In the complex pantheon of diversities, the Indian woman remains the point of unity unveiling through each single experience a collective unconscious prized by a society that is looked in mortal combat with the power and weakness of age and time. She remains the still centre, like the centre the potter's wheel, circling to create new forms, unfolding the continuity of a racial life, which in turn has encircled and helped her acquire a quality of concentration. (48)

Among the women writers Sarojini Naidu, the great poetess charmed the readers with her writings. Feminism themes have also been used by authors like Nayantara Sahgal and Rama Mehta. Regional fiction theme has been aptly used by Kamala Das, Anita Nair and Susan Viswanathan. Novelists like Kamala Markandya and Anita Desai captured the spirit of Indian cultures and its traditional values.

During 1990's India became a popular literary nation as a number of women authors made their debut in this era. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Suniti Namjoshi and Anuradha Marwah Roy used realism as main theme of their novels. The novels of authors like Namita Gokhale or Shoba De are really out-spoken. Most of these female novelists are known for their bold views that are reflected in their novels. Basically, these are the novels of protest and an outburst of reservations and contaminations. Unlike the past,

where the works of women novelists were given less priority and were actually undervalued, classification of feministic or male writings hardly makes any sense today.

In the twentieth century, women's writing was considered as a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statements. The last two decades have witnessed phenomenal success in feminist writings of Indian English literature. Today is the generation of those women writers who have money and are mostly western education. Their novels consist of the latest burning issues that exist in the society since long. The publishers feel that the literature actually survives because of these types of bold topics and commercials used by the women novelists. They describe the whole world of women with simply stunning frankness. Their write-ups give a glimpse of the unexplored female psyche, which has no accessibility. The majority of these novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated housewife. At this point of time, it is essential to quote Virginia Woolf,

It is probable, however, that both in life and in art, the values of man. Thus, when a woman comes to write a novel, she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter the established values- to make serious what appears insignificant to a man, and trivial what is to him important. (Woolf 75-81)

Since long, feminism has been used by the women novelists. Their novels reflect that the present age women have realized that she is not helpless and is not dependent. They feel that a woman is an equal competent just like a man. Today a woman has also become a direct money earner and she is not

only confined to household works. The women of modern era think on different lines and that is what is depicted in the novels of the Indian women authors. These facts are incorporated by the women writers. Indian women writers explore the feminine subjectivity and apply the theme that ranges from childhood to complete womanhood. These women writers say that feminism means putting an end to the silent sufferings of women.

Women writers in India are moving forward with their strong and sure strides, matching the pace of the world. We see them bursting out in full bloom spreading their own individual fragrances. They are recognized for their originality, versatility and the indigenous flavor of the soil that they bring to their work.

Indian women writers like Sudha Murty, Kamala Markandaya, Bharathi Mukherjee, Anita Desai, Nayantara saghal and many more have played a pioneering role in conveying the readers a wild range of indigenous Indian issues, punctuated by a strong feministic outlook. It is amazing to note that these writers have climbed the ladder of success in a slow and painful way. Thus, this new voice of emerging modern India succeeded in drawing the attention of the public towards the pressing problems of gender inequality, social evils, and encroachment of land by foreign nationals and exploitation of women in a patriarchal society.

Some women are born to inspire. Be it Mother Teresa, Sarojini Naidu or Kalpana Chawla, women have always been a source of motivation and a catalyst for social change. One such name is Sudha Murty who has made a prominent impact on Indian society. A writer, philanthropist and entrepreneur,

Sudha Murty is greatly revered for being a prolific writer, facilitating the education of poor children and for being one of the brains behind Infosys, one of India's leading IT company. Soberly dressed in traditional Indian attire, Sudha Murty's philanthropic work has garnered global recognition. From becoming the first female engineer of India to heading a company like Infosys, her seriousness towards making a change in society and her educational journey has played a significant role in her making.

Sudha Murty has always been an advocate of women's rights and a pioneer in the development of education. Once he wrote to Tata Motors, also known as Telco about their men-only policy, and for that she was called to an interview, and later became the first female engineer to be employed in India. Her position at Telco was important in redefining the company's job policies.

Besides supporting her husband Narayana Murty in establishing Infosys and giving him the initial investment, she has written a humongous volume of literature which includes books for kids as well. Through her books, she has encouraged the young and elderly to inculcate a habit of reading in them. Sudha Murty's education and relentless efforts at contributing towards the improvement in society has made her a brand name. she is an active member of the Gates Foundation. Her efforts at revolutionizing the education system of India has been phenomenal in the country where she supported the use of Computer Technology in educational institutions in Karnataka. She also established the Murty Classical Library of India (MCLI) at Harvard.

Sudha Murty's education and her work in various domains have led her to win many awards. She has received numerous awards for her academic

excellence. In the year 2019, IIT Kanpur awarded her Honorary Doctor of Science (DSc) degree. Her achievements include a list of literary works in many languages. Initially, she started to write in Kannada and later wrote in English as well. They are all about family, marriage, social problems, etc. she has received several awards and distinctions for her achievements, including the R.K. Narayan Award for literature. She got India's fourth -highest civilian honor Padma Shri in 2006 and Best Teacher Award in 1995 by Rotary Club of Karnataka , 'Millenium Mahila Shiromani' award , Life Time Achievement Award at the Crossword-Raymond Book Awards and so on.

Sudha Murty has written and published many books which include novels, non-fiction, travelogues, technical books, and memoirs. Her books have been translated into all major Indian languages. She is also a columnist for English and Kannada newspapers. Some of Sudha Murty's widely acclaimed books include *The Mother I Never Knew*, *Three Thousand Stitches*, *The Man from the Egg* and *Magic of The Lost Temple*, *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read* , *Mahashweta* and *Dollar Bahu*.

This dissertation is a post feminist analysis of *The Mother I Never Knew* written by Sudha Murty. The book comprises of two novellas that explore quests by two men- each searching for a mother he never knew he had. *The Mother I Never Knew* is a poignant, dramatic book that reaches deep into the human heart to reveal what we really feel about those closest to us. Sudha Murty have dedicated this book to her friend Lakshmi. "To My friend Lakshmi for always giving me the right perspective through our decade-long friendship." Even though the main characters of the two novellas namely

Venkatesh and Mukesh are both men there are many female characters who were as important as the protagonists. They include the poor, struggling as well as the successful characters. This dissertation is a study about the successful characters of the two novellas of the book *The Mother I Never Knew*.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters including introduction. The second chapter deals with the exploration of feminist movement in India. Third chapter is a description about feminism and its developments that lead to the post-feminist ideologies. Fourth chapter gives a short character analysis of the female characters of the two novellas and post feminist elements in it. The final chapter is the conclusion to the study of *The Mother I Never Knew* on basis of the theory of post feminism.

CHAPTER 2

Exploration of feminist movement in India

The names that come to one's mind readily when one thinks of feminism are Virginia Woolf, Simon de Beauvoir, Adrienne Rich, and Elaine Showalter, since the growth of feminism is usually attributed to western influence. These spokeswomen initiated the task of theorizing the needs of women in a society where their inner feelings should be articulated loud and bold. They did it with more vigor and determination. But we cannot interpret history in monolithic way avoiding the difference in culture. Feminism is diasporic and multicultural. The needs and problems of women who live in different countries are also different, and they are conditioned by several factors: marital, economic, familial, social, cultural racial and subjectivity (individual consciousness) In such a diverse context, it would be far wrong to associate Indian feminism with the western, which is marked by radical norms, and invoke western feminist critics on the problems that women in Indian confront.

In Indian society, in ancient times women are discriminated traditionally and excluded from political and family related decisions. Their opinion are rarely accepted and their rights are limited. Women are perceived as inferior to men, in traditional Indian society. They are expected to stay at home, bear children, and take care of household chores. Even nowadays most women are forced into marrying a husband that their family chooses. According to a 2005 report from the Indian ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the infant mortality rate among girls is 61 percentage higher than that for boys. This gender inequality can see in the education also; only 65.46 percentages of women could read and

write in 2011 as compared to 82.14 percent of men. This 16.68 percentage-point gap can be attributed to the traditional view that women need not go to school. Instead of going to school, they forced to work in home in order to help their family. According to a report by the U.S Department of Commerce, the chief barriers to female education in India are inadequate school facilities such as sanitary facilities, shortage of female teachers and gender bias in the curriculum . Their uncertain situations often prevent them from receiving proper health care. For many Indian women, poor treatment, violence and exploitation take place on daily basis.

However, the situation of women in India has greatly improved in the last decades. An increasing number of Indian women are entering local and national politics. Indeed, Indian society recognizes many women's rights, including rights of political movement, family allowance, and set up a business. In rural areas, poverty and lack of information are the real barriers to women's independence and empowerment. Therefore programs aimed at advancing human rights, literary and microfinance are necessary in order to uplift Indian women to the place they deserve and open doors to a better future.

Scholars have recognized a rapidly growing critical body of thought while exploring many kinds of Indian feminism in twentieth century. These ideas range from 'feminist nationalists of the Indian national movement to the "Gandhian feminism", "eco feminism" and the idea of "new women" as viewed through the rise of the Hindi Right. The use of the term 'feminism' as understood in Europe and America on the grounds that it projected an "anti-male" ideology. Indian women who were active in the national movement

strictly opposed this from the 1920s. This relationship between western and Indian feminism continuous to be debated excessively within India's women's movement. The rise of liberal and radical feminism in the west in 1970s have the idea that, there would be a focus on equal opportunities in education, employment and also towards ending violence against women all around the world. But regardless of how, it was soon understood that India had not benefited from this international feminist wave.

Therefore, while Indian feminism was influenced by the western debates, it should consider the national and local concerns of women, and that is exactly what happened. In her book *'The Emergence of Feminism in India'*, Padma Anagol defines Indian feminism as "A theory and practice based on presenting a challenge to the subordination of women in society and attempting to redress the power between sexes." The brilliant use of the term "subordination" as opposed to "oppression" makes the uniqueness in this definition. As suggested by Karen often in her work 'European feminism' there is an intense difference between oppression and subordination. through examining laws, institutional practices and norms and customs of a society, subordination can be verified. Whereas oppression is a psychological response which is highly subjective. Feminist movements in India have faced many challenges to traditional patriarchal institutions such as family, dominant social values and legal structures mainly with regard to violence against women.

Create space for women to fight against cultural impositions and religious restrictions, which underline and reinforce the economic social, political, and psychological suppression (The Hindu). There is also a dire need

to represent the entire femdom rather than reflecting the experiences of Indian women. By recognizing this fact, Indian feminism can more effectively challenge historically entrenched and varied systems of oppression. Commenting on feminism in India, Dwijendre Nath Thakur opines that “The history of feminism in India is regarded as mainly a practical effort and mostly nonexistent. Compared to some other countries there has been only sparse theoretical writing in feminism”(458). Taraasha Chopra, an Indian Psychologist comments on the feminism that prevails in the present scenario as,

The more education I received, the more aware I became, the conversation on feminism changed. The problems of underprivileged women became nothing more than just facts and figures on a paper. The feminist discourse became more nuanced and we moved on to talking about issues such as socialization, subtle messages of discrimination, rape culture, glass ceilings etc. so the focus of my feminism was more oriented towards the privileged, urban, educated women who were stuck in traditionalist roles while having modern mindsets (The Ugly Truth About Feminism in India).

In modern India, feminist needs and demands led to several appeals in the form of Convention Against Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on Combating the Crimes of Trafficking in Women and Children etc. And feminists have focused on specific roles and factors that patriarchy plays in the perpetration of these gender based crimes such as dowry, deaths, sati prohibition, custodial rape, and other issues. At present India have many important women’s organizations, which may be separated by political

ideologies however often come together and show unity while voicing their concerns about violence against women. National federation of Indian Women (NFIW) ,All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), All India Women's Conference (AIWC), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA); Mahila Dakshita Samiti (MDS), Joint Women's Programme (TWP) and Centre for Womens's Development Studies (CWDS) are some of them. These are also referred to as the "seven sisters".

Because of all these women organizations and activities the situation of women in India have improved a lot. Many girls and women came into the forefront of social life and achieve their goals. Women starts understanding their needs and rights and act according to that. Women starts working equally to men. Contrary to common perception, a large percentage of women in India are actively engaged in traditional and nontraditional work. In urban India, women participate in the workforce in impressive numbers. In the software industry, thirty percent of the workforce is female.

Several women in our country have served in various senior official positions in the government, including that of the speaker of lokh sabha, prime minister of India and even the president of India. Shri Mahila Geiha Udyog Lijjat Papad is one of the most famous female business success stories from the rural India. Seven women from Mumbai started it in 1959 with a seed capital of only 80 rupees and in 2018, it had an annual turnover of more than 800 crore. It also provides employment to 43,000 women across the country. In Anand in the western state of Gujarat, one of the largest dairy cooperatives in the world, Amul began by mobilizing rural women. In 2006, Kiran

MazumdarShaw, who founded Biocon, one of India's first biotech companies, was rated India's richest women. According to the 'Kotak Wealth Hurun Leading Wealthy Women 2018 list, which compiled the 100 wealthiest Indian women based on their net worth as on 30 June 2018 Shaw was one of two women, the other being Jayashree Ullal, who did not inherit their current wealth from family relatives in the top ten. Even though the major part of the country continued to be male controlled directly or indirectly India has a strong history of many women with inherited wealth establishing large enterprises or launching successful careers in their own rights. (wiki)

When look at the present generation Indian feminists, Kruttika Susarla, a Delhi based graphic designer and illustrator focuses on the Indian feminist movement, by using an alphanumeric character each day to represent a different facet, personality or issue within the diverse Indian feminist movement. She states that; " I wanted to work on a series that would contextualize the feminist movement within the realities and experiences of women and minorities in India... the issues surrounding women and minorities here are so complex it's mixed with religion, caste sexualities and majority of public discourse" (feminism in India). Jasbir Jain analyses the feminist movement in India from a historical perspective, free from the hangover of western concerns. In six chapters, she makes a clear survey of the feminist discourse, textualising history and historicizing texts. She holds up for close examination select principal texts, ranging from the Upanishads and the Epics down to the contemporary regional novels and films. Vandana Shrivastava on Jasbir's conviction of feminism states that " feminism is more than a voice of

protest or questioning. It is moral self reflection, a conquering of inner fears and a realization of self worth.... It does not abandon values or relationships but goes on to create new ones". According to her, feminism represents the struggle of women against cultural and religious restriction as well as sociopolitical and economic oppression.

Women, in order to survive in the present world, needs a lot of self confidence, will power ,strength to face even unpleasant things in life, the capacity to take up challenges that might hurt. About the position and prospects of women, a critic comments that “ women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way”. This demonstrates the fact that Indian women are as efficient as anyone else in the world. Women of the past from the mythologies such as Sita from Ramayana, Kunti and Droupadi from Mahabharata, to the women of the modern era are all engulfed by posterity. But times are changing in India, where women enjoy the dual role of a home maker and a working women. They are traditional as wives, sisters mothers, daughters balancing the cultural expectations at the same time not losing their individual self. Today women shine in various fields as business entrepreneurs, professionals, scientists, politicians, actors, etc. and also end up as housemaids or helpers, but whatever be their job, they are financially independent and secure thus redefining their roles in an ever changing versatile scenario.

When considering the beginnings of modern-day feminism fortunately, some of the later day Indian feminists had better luck with their male relatives, and helped move the narrative forward. One such trailblazer was

Savitribai Phule, who is rightfully considered the pioneer of women's education in India. Along with her husband, Jyotirao Phule, she worked tirelessly for those oppressed by caste and provide access to education for girls. She wrote poetry reflecting her struggles and ideals, which were published as the compilations titled 'Kavya Phule and Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar.

India's second wave of feminism was reflected in the works of post-Independence writers like Ismat Chughtai, Amrita Pritam, Mahasweta Devi, Krishna Sobti, Kamala Das and Kamala Markandaya. Exploring notions of boundaries, bodies and sexualities, these writers were negotiating their place in a new nation still smarting from the fresh wound of partition. Placing selfhood above nationhood and convention, their books were defiant and progressive, inevitably drawing criticism. While some of these authors opposed violence through their words and characters, others turned witnesses and truth tellers about the sorry state of Indian women. Chughtai was known for her especially radical feminist views, and the story of *Lihaf* (1942) and her persecution is of course well known.

Other notable books that form a must read list of feminist writing from India include Sobti's *Mitro Marjani* (1966), Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950), Das's autobiography *My life* (1973), Mahasweta Devi's *Breast Stories* (translated from Bengali by Gayatri Chakrorty Spivak. 1997), and Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1995). In addition to these fiction writers academics such as Uma Chakravarti and Kumkum Roy, and activists such as Kondapalli Koteswaramma and Kama Bhasin have contributed remarkably to the understanding and foresting of feminism in India. The next generation of notable feminist writers

include Anita Nair, and mother-daughter duo Anita and Kiran Desai. Ahobhaa De's books also want a mention here, for many an Indian women of the 1990s first encountered an unapologetic, liberalized view of feminine sexuality through her "pop novels". Their writings are reflective of urban Indian women and the way they navigate the complexities of contemporary womanhood. The more serious voices of feminism found a champion in publishers like Urvashi Butalia, who co-founded Kali for women in 1984, along with Ritu Menon. It was India's first exclusively feminist publishing house in English, which gave us memorable books like *sharer ki Jankari*, *The History of Doing*, *Staying Alive* and *Recasting Women; Essays in Colonial History*. After Butalia and Menon split in 2003, the former started *zubaan* books, which continues to support feminist writing and ensures a steady, quality stream of women's literature.

Feminist literature by women writing about caste and gender has among its recent champions, Bama (Karukku;1992), sociologist Sharmila Rege (*Writing Caste, Writing Gender*;2006) and, most recently, Sujatha Gidla(*Ants Among Elephants*;2017) The way for them and their books was paved by writers like Baby Kamble, Pradnya Pawar, Chaya Koregaonkar, and Shilpa Kamble, who presented some of the most suppressed voices of Indian society and offered a sweeping view of Dalit identity, Ambedkarite learnings and Neo-Buddhist ideas.

CHAPTER 3

Journey from feminism to post feminism

Feminism is an amalgam of diverse approaches that adopt various strategies to assuage forms of social, economic, political and cultural discrimination that women are subjected to. Feminist theory is the theoretical and rational approach that takes up the political position to study the representation of women in art, literature and forms of culture. Feminist theory recognizes the uneven gender relations as the product of social construction and comprehends that the experiences of the women are not homogeneous. Hence, feminisms address women's concerns from all over the world and the heterogeneity projected, showcases the innate complicated issues that feminisms engage in.

As a distinctive and concerted approach to literature, feminist criticism was not inaugurated until late in the 1960s. behind it, however, lie two centuries of struggle for the recognition of women's cultural roles and achievements and for women's social and political rights, marked by such books as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of Rights of Women* (1792), John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*(1869), and the American Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth Century*(1845). Much of feminist literary criticism continues in our time to be interrelated with the movement by political feminists for social, legal, and cultural freedom and equality.

Throughout the history, women were confined to the domestic sphere, while public life was reserved for men. Women were denied the right to own property, to study, or to participate in public life. Women are prevented from conducting business without a male representative, be it father, brother, husband, legal agent, or even son. Married women could not exercise control over their own children without the permission of their husbands. Moreover, women had little or no access to education and were barred from most professions. In some parts of the world, such restrictions on women continue today.

Academics has categorized feminist thought of the twentieth century into three waves, with the fourth wave in the twenty first century. The period from 1830-1920: First Wave- suffrage movement and civil right movement; 1960-1980: Second wave- formation of women's group and engaging in political debates; late 1980s onward- Third wave-post feminism, post colonialism, eco feminism and cyber feminism; 2012 onward -Fourth wave- sexual harassment, body shaming and rape culture, among other issues. Women's studies as a discipline began in USA in the late 1960s and emerged in other nations of the First World in the 1970s.

The first wave of feminism starts with the publication of revolutionary "*Vindication of Rights of Women* " by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792. Even though the first wave feminism was not the first appearance of feminist ideals, it was the first real political movement for the women in western world. In 1848, about 200 women met in a church with 12 resolutions asking for

specific rights, such as the right to vote. Reproductive rights also became an important issue for early feminists. Congress finally passed the 19th amendment in 1920 and gave women the vote after years of feminist activism. This was almost 30 years after New Zealand became the first country where women could vote.

The second wave feminism built on first wave feminism and challenged what women's role in society should be. Traditional gender and family roles were questioned this time and queer theory became more established. Inspired by the civil rights movement and protests against the Vietnam War, activists focused on the institutions that held women back. And this meant taking a closer look at why women were oppressed. There were major victories in this era including the Equal Pay Act of 1963, and other supreme Court cases.

Three main types of feminism emerged at this time were mainstream feminism/liberal feminism, radical feminism and cultural feminism. Mainstream feminism focused on institutional reforms, which meant reducing gender discrimination, giving women access to male dominated spaces, and promoting equality. Radical feminism wanted to reshape society entirely, saying that the system was inherently patriarchal and only an overall would bring liberation. It resisted the belief that men and women were basically the same. Cultural feminism had a similar view and taught that there is a "female essence" that is distinct from men.

Third wave feminism was an era of reclaiming. Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, the Guerilla Girls, and punk rock riot girls were some of

the important cultural touchstones in this era. Many women more freely expressed their sexuality in how they spoke, dressed, and acted. This sometimes bewildered second wave feminists, many of whom had resisted traditional femininity. While many ideas and mini- movements swirled around in this time, the one “rule” was that there were not rules. A women should choose how she lived her life.

Third wave feminism also became more conscious of race. Kimberle Crenshaw, a gender and critical-race scholar, coined the phrase “intersectionality” in 1989. The term refers to how different kinds of oppression - like those based on gender and race- intersect with each other. While mainstream first and second wave feminism had largely ignored or neglected racial disparities within gender, the third wave paid more attention. The phrase “ third wave feminism” was coined in 1992 by Rebecca Walker, a 23- year old Black bisexual woman. When the internet became more commonplace, it was even easier to hear perspectives and ideas from feminists around the world.

It is believed that the fourth wave of criticism focuses on a range of issues from sexual harassment, body shaming and rape culture though the use of social media to project, spread and raise awareness of these concerns. The wave of criticism originates in India in December 2012 that witnessed the gang-rape of a young woman. The Me Too Movement that was initiated in 2006 in the USA to support survivors of sexual violence, especially women of color. This movement gained momentum in 2017 when Harvey Weinstein was

exposed of sexually harassing and assaulting women in industry. Since then, women from all over the world, irrespective of any group share their stories of sexual harassment using the #Me Too to condemn and publicly disgrace the wrongdoers, the powerful men in politics, business, entertainment and the media.

It builds on the third wave's emphasis on inclusivity and asks hard questions about what empowerment, equality, and freedom really mean. Many fourth wave feminists are working to combat the exclusion of problems of women of color and trans genders. As with every wave before it, the fourth wave is complex and encompasses many movements that both complement and clash with each other.

Having a variety of voices makes feminism more inclusive and successful. Post feminism is a stand taken to find out whether feminism has achieved all its goals through years of struggle and won its cause. Several feminist critics use the term post feminism in a negative manner when renewed interest in activities and positions of various generations of feminists, either earlier or later are considered either sexist or suppressive. Hence, the term post feminism has wide implications.

In the essay "Post feminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility" (2007), the British sociologist and feminist cultural theorist Rosalind Gill (b.1963) notes that the term "post feminist" can be used as an accusation against feminist scholars whose work is seen as insufficiently feminist (148).

In the essay “The Myth of Post feminism”(2003), Elaine J. Hall and Marnie Salupo Rodriguez comment that post feminism began in the 1990s. the authors outline five claims made by post feminism;

1. Feminism received less support in the 1980s and 1990s,
2. Several women have turned anti-feminist
3. Many young women feel that since feminism had already achieved its goal through the diverse movements over the years, therefore feminism is neither relevant nor required for women
4. Women have adopted a “no, but...” version of feminism, whereby they refuse to be recognized as feminists, but they would continue to support feminist demands of pay for work done par with men and economic self-reliance.
5. Feminism could be considered “anti-male,” which is set against “anti-patriarchy, anti-oppression, or anti-sexism.”

Considering all these points, it could be inferred that post feminism takes an ambivalent stand whereby it advocates gender equality and female empowerment, but does not provide a strong feminist critique of the prevalent patriarchal notions. In her book Post feminisms(1997), Ann Brooks mentions that post feminism is a theoretical stand that relates with deconstructive challenges to identity politics: “Post feminism expresses the intersection of feminism with post modernism, post structuralism and post-colonialism, and as such represents a dynamic movement capable of

challenging modernist, patriarchal and imperialist frameworks (qtd. In Genz and Brabon)

Post feminism provides a new form of feminism that portrays an optimistic and triumphant portrayal of young women who have accomplished and are highly successful in both private and public domains (Genz and Brabon 64). A feature of post feminism is “Girl Power” that rejects the principles of second-wave feminists related to women being less powerful or facing suppression in society dominated by males. “Girl power” is the articulation of young feminity and represents ‘a feminist ideal of a new, robust, young woman with agency and a strong sense of self’ that gives them the power to discuss their gender role and this brings in greater independence and liberation raised by the feminist movement (qtd. In Genz and Brabon 76).

Post feminism can be considered a critical way of understanding the changed relations between feminism, popular culture and feminity. Post feminism may also present a critique of second wave feminism or third wave feminism by questioning their binary thinking and essentialism, their vision of sexuality, and their perception of relationships between feminity and feminism.

The term “post feminism” has been first used in 1919, in the journal “female literary radicals” in which stated that “ we are interested in people now- not in men and women”, that “moral, social, economic, and political standards ‘should not have anything to do with sex’”, that it

would “be ‘pro-woman without being anti-man’ ” ,and that “their stance is called ‘post-feminist’ “.

The 1990s saw the popularization of this term, in both the academic world as well as the media world. It was seen as a term of both commendation and scorn. Toril Moi, a professor at Duke University, originally coined the term in 1985 in *Sexual / Textual Politics* to advocate a feminism that would deconstruct the binary between equality based on “liberal” feminism and difference-based or “radical” feminism. There is confusion surrounding the intended meaning of “post” in the context of “post feminism”. This confusion has plagued the very meaning of “post feminism” since the 1990s. While the term has seemed on the one hand to announce the end of feminism, on the other hand it has itself become a site of feminist politics.

Over the years, the meaning of post feminism has broadened in scope, encompassing many different meanings, as is the case with feminism. Within feminist literature, definitions tend to fall in to two main categories:

1. “death of feminism”, “anti-feminism”, “feminism is irrelevant now”
2. The next stage in feminism, or feminism that intersects with other “post-“ philosophies / theories, such as post modernism, post structuralism and post colonialism.

Post-feminist ideology is a new form of empowerment, individual choice, independence, consumer culture, fashion, hybridism, humor and (sexual) pleasure, and the renewed focus on the female body can be consider important for this contemporary feminism. In the present scenario, post feministic views are applicable for every field a person could possibly think of. Brooks in his book Post-feminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Form states that “ post feminism is not against feminism, it’s about feminism today.”

The literature on post feminist reaction theory is well illustrated in chick lit novels. Popular culture seems to be sending out the message that women are free: free from the constraints of feminism, tradition, objectivity, and stereotypes. They are free to choose anything and everything they want and are happy about this. Post feminism tell us that women, instead of having to experience the pressure of choosing a feminist or feminine path in life, have the ultimate responsibility to choose any path they want. Women face the pressures of finding a partner, determining their careers, achieving financial independence, and creating their living situations, social lives, and life direction, not to mention looking good and being thin.

CHAPTER 4

Female character analysis and Post Feminist elements

“Venkitesh” is the first novella written in the book *“The Mother I Never Knew”* by Sudha Murty. In this novella, there are many female characters having a very good importance and role in the story. And all these female characters are directly or indirectly connected to the protagonist of the novella called Venkitesh. The name of the novella itself is Venkitesh itself. First few female characters described in the first portion of the novella are the family members or friends or other relatives of Venkitesh. And later in the story, Venkitesh goes through many different faces of life after his transfer to a distant place called Hubli from Bangalore, and have met different people. through Venkatesh’s life we can see the status of women how it transforms from feminism period to the post feminist era. Now the life of women are completely changed from the old days and now they are liberated and enjoying the space in all genres.

The first female character who presented in the novella is Santa who is the wife of Venkitesh. Santa represents a post feminist life by leading an independent life. When the novel starts, Venkitesh is mentioned as “madam’s husband” and it is a very good example for the importance given to Santa. She doesn’t want to depend anyone and successfully manages her house and profession. She is a business women and ran the house very efficiently and handled the family finances better than an investment banker. She said to be

grew up like a princess with her parents, Surya Narayana Rao, a government employee and Savithramma fulfilling all her demands Santa graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Maharani's College, Bangalore. She is described as a personality who speak little, and always to the point. Venkitesh has an opinion that his wife is a business minded person and always think about profit. (Murty). In the story she is portrayed as a character who is devoid of all feeling and this lack of emotions can be showed in many instances . She has a good sense of common knowledge and very sound knowledge in business. She has much more money . And because of that she lived independently did not even care about her husband's salary. She has connections with other people who were in the so called higher strata of the society. We can look a description about Santa according to Venkatesh given in the book.

During every social event, Santa would whine, "Oh I don't want to go. I Really don't like the food they eat or the way they dress, but we have

To. Otherwise, our hosts will think we are rude." But when Santa me the hosts at the event, she would smile brightly and say, "heartiest congratulations on your new home. You have built a palace! And of course, you are looking stunning."

The next important female character is Gouri who is the daughter of Venkitesh and Santa. Gouri had completed her MBBS and student of MD in gynecology. She is an intelligent, patient and an eternal optimist. She is very studious and has an opinion about her education and aware about the need of education. According to her mother Gouri has the ability to remain calm in any situation and would have been very successful had she opted for an

MBA. She shows her stubbornness to follow her desire and during marriage also she proclaims with Venkitesh's consideration she chooses her partner. At one occasion Gouri said to her father "I am not saying that I will marry a boy you choose, but I will discuss it with you and I will obtain your consent." Her love towards her father is clear here. Behind this it shows the change in society. She is said to have an ideologist by thoughts. She often turn philosophic when speak. She says "No matter what people say, I will always follow my conscience. Gouri insists her interest and decision outward hesitantly. She shows that education and marriage are two important things which the individual can decide without considering gender.

The third female character in the novella is Chambakka who is the grandmother of Venkitesh and stubborn character. She is loud mouthed old women when she was twenty had become a widow . after that, she had a tough life and lived solely for the sake of her son, J.M.Rao and ensured that she was no less than a tigress protecting her cubs. When she died the author said that "the captain of the ship was no more.

Fourth important female character is Bhageerati and one of the weak personality of the novella. She could not live like her wishes but had to live a life of hardships and problems from being an orphan girl and to a widow. Actually she had to live like a widow wearing white saree with pallu over her clean shaved head according to their tradition even though her husband alive. And later lived and work had to look after her son, Sankar. She portrayed as fair and attractive and had long, black hair when she was in her youth.

Bhageerati and Indiramma 's miserable life shows the oppression and discrimination of the primitive age, from that women changed their life by creating self identity with the help of education which helps them to awaken their knowledge.

There are other female characters are also present in the novella. Veena Purushothaman is one among them. She is the secretary of women's club. And a rich women. Her daughter pinky had studied fashion designing which is a job of modern kind according to Santa. And the three daughters of sankar also intelligent girls who study very well. Elder daughter Mandakini have passed her Bachelor of Science with a first class. Applied for many jobs both private and government and for the time being go to people's houses and teach children.

The second daughter, " Alakananda is also very intelligent girl who obtained a top rank and easily got admission into the best engineering colleges of the state ." (59 Murty). But she enrolled into a diploma course because the family could not afford the fees. The third daughter Sarayu " is in the tenth class. She is intelligent too and wants to become a doctor. Her teachers expect her to do very well." Compared to the Indian traditional families who have killed the female child and try to arrange child marriages even if the brought up one, here a poor family brought up three daughters and given good education as well. And they tried their best to do the best for them. The girls also are very intelligent and smart. Sankar knows the importance of educating his daughters.

In the second novella named 'Mukesh' is a story revolved around the protagonist Mukesh and his life. There are five female characters whose characters were main and also four other female characters. It shows different women's life which tangles by the restriction constructed in society. Sumati is an important character in this novella who is the mother of the main character. Even though Mukesh is their adopted son they treated him more than a real parent do and raise the boy with good education and manners. She is depicted as a courageous practical women who make practical as well as good decisions in life. 'She was an orphan who was living with her brother and his family. And married to Krishna Rao, who worked as a clerk in the goods division in railways. Being a determined lady she can live according to the situation and easily adapted. When the family had a tough situation in their life Sumati suddenly decided to work as a tailor and buy a tailoring machine by mortgaging their son's gift from his biological mother. 'eventually, she became the manager and rest was history. Sumati's business grew exponentially with each passing year. Krishna also took an interest in her business and began managing the administrative work and odd jobs'(162). She loves her daughter in law as her daughter and formal towards son in law. She loves her husband and an equal partner. At the time when her husband died she felt utter pain and the author describe it as " for the first time in his life, he saw his mother losing control too.'(130) Though she is not well educated, she works hard and take the mortgaged chain of Mukesh. Sumati,s courage not only gives herself identity instead it lends hand to build fame and status in the society. The value of Mukesh's garment lies in Sumati's courage.

The next character is Vasanti who is the wife of Mukesh. She is an understanding partner who was the 'youngest daughter of pandit and had three older sisters. The family was orthodox and lived on a meager income.'(119) 'she was very slim, fair tall and her long straight hair hat fell to her waist' (119). She was described as 'so good at skiing that nobody would ever guess that she had grown up in Mysore in a conservative family that discouraged girls from from participating in sports.'(119) by these descriptions her identity is visible. Mukesh helps her to be independent. It helps her to decides things positively. She never considered the cast religion and so on. Education helps women to think beyond the segregation of the barriers. She frees herself from all tradition and custom.

Neeraja is the sister of Mukesh. And she married to Satheesh whom she met during her MBA at the university campus during his visit there for an inter college debate. There is not any further details about her in the novella. But it is clear that her parents give her a good education and she also have the opportunity to marry a person she loves. And another strong bold female character in this novella is the grandmother of Mukesh. But she has lived in a patriarchal traditional society and because of that she refuse to go to see the new born girl child of Sumati and Krishna Rao. She also said that she will come only when they have a baby boy.

Rupinder is the other female character who actually bring the baby boy Mukesh to Sumati. She was a hard working girl from a poor family and married to a reach family at her early age. And in her husband's house she

had to suffer a lot of problems and her tough mother in law treated her like a servant. ' She had no support from her maternal home, no money no power, and a useless husband. The only positive thing in her life was her love for her son, whom she get actually from another lady called Nirmala. The superstitious belief separates from the adopted son. He is considered as a bad omen child. Rupinder had a mother in law who is a stubborn and unkind character and she died with a heart attack.

Nirmala is the real biological mother of Mukesh who had to abandon her child right after her pregnancy . she was daughter of Choudhary Charan Singh, who was a big zamindar and the most powerful man in his village. She loved reading at her childhood and studied well. Though the village has not any high school she studied with private tuitions and passed the exams with high marks. Being an intelligent and beautiful girl she fell in love with the private tuition teacher Anandh who is a college student came to the village in order to do a project. The relationship with Anandh resulted in pregnancy and her father threatened her and send her to a far village, with a servant, Dulari. And there Nirmala had to abandon her son because she doesn't have any other option. Status and political power of her father alienated her.

'A mother who had abandoned him within hours of his birth, a mother who had conceived him without preparing for the consequences, a mother who thought that teenage sex was enjoyable but did not know that it would result in a pregnancy, a mother who was dominated by the men in her life(199)'.
'

Being a journalist the protagonist himself have the opinion that 'lack of sex education and job opportunities, and the strict norms of society made the life of an unwed mother and her child very difficult in India. But he'd never imagined in his wildest dreams that himself was one of the children born of unwed mothers'(195).

By analyzing all the female characters in the novella some had to suffer a lot of problems only because they were women. But besides showing only the pathetic fate of women Sudha Murty here portrayed both the problems as well as the strength of being a women. By showing girl power and achievement it gives an inspiration to the readers and also gives a clear picture of real society. Usually the feminist novels portray the women as oppressed and suffering. But there are many women in the rural India too who are achieved their goal and live happily.

So the feminist as well as the post feminist elements can be seen here. SudhaMurthy describes the importance of the individual identity of women. The era has changed where women are supposed to be dependent and feeble because of their miserable life. Now are granted to do according to their desire so that they can assert their space in society. The novella shows the different life of two eras as Bhagirati and Nirmala as primitive stage and Shanta and Vasanthi as emerged women who belongs to the post modern era. It shows the courage and knowledge of women to lead an independent life.

The Mother I Never Knew is a book consisted of two novellas, where the son deserted from his mother. The reason behind this is the structure of

society. It is a good proof of Mary Astell's opinion that education only helps women to free from their inferiority and insecurity. Education helps her to ensures her place in society. The post feminism deconstruct the root causes of the problem which is gender to demolish and considered as equal were feminism claims equality for female as male. So that women can assert their identity and enjoy their life.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The Mother I Never Knew is a book comprises two realistic novellas which talks about human relations. Both the novellas based on completely different backgrounds but strike a similar chord of emotion in the readers. Both the stories deal with family values and discuss the turn of situations when maintaining a steady relationship with the family can become too difficult. The novellas portrays two different men searching for their mother both never knew they had.

The first story is about Venkatesh, a kind -hearted banker, who lives in Bangalore with his wife who is successful business woman and two children. When Venkatesh gets transferred to Hubli, he discovers his look-alike and on further investigation, he finds out that the look-alike is the abandoned son of his father. He probes on and find his step mother. After listening to her sad story, he is moved and decides to atone for the injustices done to his half-brother.

The second story is about Mukesh, an NRI, who is married to an Indian girl who is very supportive of him. Mukesh gets the news of the sudden death of his father and moves to India. There, a shocking revelation of his adoption shatters him. His foster mother tells him that she is not his biological mother and starts his journey to find more about his real mother, though he is not sure how he is going to confront her. Travelling through the

lanes of Amritsar and then Delhi, he comes to know about the complicated truth of his birth and at last trace out and see his real mother and returns to his loyal foster mother.

Both the stories beautifully capture the emotional turmoil faced by the protagonists. The setting of both the stories is contemporary. The writing is quite simple which is an advantage for a novice reader. The easy flow of the story is helpful as it does not force the reader to think too much. The minute details given about the characters help the readers in imagining the characters better, this book present a situation, where things going smoothly, all of a sudden turn upside down by a single incident. Sudha Murty dives deep into the hearts of the people and dig out their behaviors, faults and agonies in these two stories.

There are many female characters in the book who are the main characters in the plot line. *The mother I Never Knew* explicit the life of Bhagirathi and Santa feminism as well as post feminism respectively, how their life has changed and emancipated with lots of effort. It describes the life Mukesh and Venkitesh from primitive stage of women to modern era. This dissertation analyses post feminist perspective in the novellas.

Post feminism origin in the recent period to demonstrate the ability of women. The post-feminist women give more importance to their career more than the marriage and family. In the modern era, women are proving

themselves as multitalented. Where the gender is subdued, now it is not considered. Post feminist notion studiously ignored the features of feminist point-of-view, which is irrelevant to modern society. Sudha Murty is one of recent time Indian writer depicts the post-feminist thought in her writing. She not only writes and also exercises in her life for the sake of society. According to Judith Butler gender is what we “do” rather what we “are”. Sudha Murty proves her best in her individual life.

Sudha Murty is a principled writer and trailblazer and known for her philanthropic work. Sudhaa Murty is a post- feminist litterateur not because of her writing insist on the terms of post- feminist aspects. In her real life also she trashed the entire fence to prove herself. She acknowledges that women should not be submissive but have to prove themselves by their effort. She becomes a female engineer in her whole college and asserts herself as a first female engineer in the TATA firm. She insists the value of individual identity of female and their achievements.

Sudha Murty describes the importance of the individual identity of women. The era has changed were women are supposed to be dependent and feeble because of their miserable life. Now women are granted to do according to their desire so that they can assert their space in society. The novella shows the different life of two eras as Bhagirathy and Nirmala as primitive stage and Santa and Vasanthi as emerged women who belongs to the post modern era. It shows the importance of individual identity and knowledge of women to lead an independent life.

Gendered attributions of responsibilities are usually made implicitly via a supposed biological or natural correlation of femininity and motherhood. “motherly love” is still constructed as bound to biology and being natural, female and unique. The psychological concept of bonding is mainly connected to female parent , which creates a boundary between the mother-child bond and the “outside”. Although it is often claimed that bonding is also important for fathers , it is rarely mentioned when the role of the father is discussed.

Here, in the case of Bhagirathi she has taken the role of parenting her son as her responsibility. She had to look after her child even in the miserable conditions.

Everybody considers it as her own responsibility. And in the middle of all problems we succeeded in her own way by build a life by her own will and determination. Even the society also becomes a barrier to her growth which affects her whole future. Without education and financially independent, she can help her son to educate if she is good in education it helps him in all his life.

Gender plays a significant role throughout the life of Gouri. Gouri and Ravi are siblings and the way treated is same. Both built their career according to their interest. Gouri shows that education and marriage are two important things which the individual can decide without considering gender. When Gouri,s mother insists her to do MBA finance, she shows her stubbornness to follow her desire and during marriage also she proclaims with Venkatesh’s considerations she chooses her life partner. She does not have

fully given her life in her father's hand. It also shows the changes in the society.

Santa is another post feminist character in the book. She lead a completely independent life. She is a business minded money minded woman who always think about her social status. But the thing is that she does not even have to ask about the income of her husband. She doesn't need it. All the decisions in the family including marriages are taken by her and I is a powerful example for the post feminist characterization of The Mother I Never Knew.

Sumati's courage not only gives her self-identity instead it lends hand to built fame and status in the society. By her hard works she changes her economic status and built a secured life. By the arrival of Mukesh, they required many things. So that they plan to mortgage his chain but Krishna aback, the courage of Sumati mortgage and commence a garment and built it successfully.

Mukesh a BBC reporter covers many incidents but once he records the life of unwed mothers, he could not understand their emotions. As a reporter, he registers every incident when finally he learns about his past life his life changes. Before that, he supports and helps his wife to become courageous. Though she was brought up in a conservative family, where the liberty of the woman is restricted but after marriage, he completely supports her to learn everything. It makes Vasanthi breaks the shackles made for her. Mukesh helps her to be independent and learn a lot when finally Mukesh knows his past

and informs Vasanthi to decide things according to her desire. The supportiveness of Mukesh and the knowledge helps her to decide the thing highly positive. She never considered the caste, religion, and so on. She gives importance only to humanity. Education helps human to think beyond the segregation of the barriers. She frees herself from all tradition and customs.

The Mother I Never Knew is the plot where the son deserted from their biological mother. The reason behind this is the structure of the society. Santa and Vasanthi create their identity and prove themselves as successful women. It helps them to lead an economically free, self-respectable life and to be independent. It is considered as the post feminist perspective of women in the modern era.

It is often argued that women don't need feminism anymore, men and women now have equal rights and opportunities in western society, and feminism serves no purpose other than to show women as victims. But in other places especially in Indian society it is not like that. There should have go far for achieving equality. And the thing is that feminism is a void concept, which perpetuates the image of 'victimization', fixing its locus on its struggle rather than its success. So here is the relevance of post feminism.

By using post feminism in literatures readers can perceive women as successful and by giving an importance to the girl power , education and empowerment it is a good awareness too. *The Mother I Never Knew* written by Sudha Murty is thus a great example for this kind of literature which give importance to the post feminist elements.

The concept of post feminism has its both positive and negative aspects since it is a debatable topic. One of the wide spread negative aspects of it is that it is suitable only for the western countries, which is a wrong assumption. Many post feminist supporters in India support the ideology in Indian literature just like how a good idea is appreciated all around the world. The present study is a pointer to the fact that post feminism ideology is available in Indian literature and they tend to change people's mindset.

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