A number of Indian women novelists made their debut in the 1990s, producing novels which revealed the true state of Indian society and its treatment of women. These writers were born after Indian independence, and the English language does not have colonial associations for them. Their work is marked by an impressive feel for the language, and an authentic presentation of contemporary India, with all its regional variations. They generally write about the urban middle class, the stratum of society they know best. They have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is imposed by the patriarchal society. Thus, the theme of growth of a girl, in the Indian middle class family, begins with much discrimination with her male siblings and later on marriage again throws her to a lot of challenge in the new family set up where her voice remains unheard and suppressed, in the long stretch she forgets her individuality and ultimately becomes frozen to stuff like self respect, liberty, individuality are all dealt with.

The image of the New Woman and her struggle for an identity of her own also emerges in the Indian English novel. Such a struggle needs support structures outside the family to enable women to survive. The Hindu moral code known as The Laws of Manu denies woman an existence apart from that of her husband or his family, and since the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s Rajmohan’s Wife in 1864 a significant number of authors have portrayed Indian women as long-suffering wives and mothers silenced by patriarchy. The ideal of the traditional, oppressed woman persisted in a culture permeated by religious images of virtuous goddesses devoted to their husbands, the Hindu goddesses Sita and Savitri serving as powerful cultural ideals for women. In mythical terms, the dominant feminine prototype is the chaste, patient, self-denying wife, Sita, supported by other figures such as Savitri, Draupadi and Gandhari. When looking at these narratives silence/speech can be a useful guide to interpreting women’s responses to
patriarchal hegemony. Silence is a symbol of oppression, a characteristic of the subaltern condition, while speech signifies self-expression and liberation.

The image of women in fiction has undergone a change during the last three decades. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women toward conflicted female characters searching for identity, no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status. In contrast to earlier novels, female characters from the 1980s onwards assert themselves and defy marriage and motherhood. Santha Rama Rau’s *Remember the House* (1956), Ruth Prawar Jhabvala’s first novel *To Whom She Will* (1955) and her later *Heat and Dust* (1975) which was awarded the Booker Prize, and Kamala Markandaya’s *Two Virgins* (1973) are good examples. Sex is implied in these novels, but depicted more explicitly in *Socialite Evenings* (1989) by Shobha De, in which she describes the exotic sex lives of the high society in Mumbai.

Recent writers depict both the diversity of women and the diversity within each woman, rather than limiting the lives of women to one ideal. The novels emerging in the twenty-first century furnish examples of a whole range of attitudes towards the imposition of tradition, some offering an analysis of the family structure and the caste system as the key elements of patriarchal social organization. They also re-interpret mythology by using new symbols and subverting the canonic versions. Indian women writers have grown more important in making society aware of women’s demands, and in providing a medium for self-expression.

Shoba De is known for bold and frank style of writing. Feminism and its various facets of gender discrimination are one main theme of her novels. She explored the lives of bored housewives and their loveless rich husband and family. She is known as Indian Jackie Collins. Many a times, she has been held responsible for accelerating the pace and bringing about a sexual revolution through her writing in the column “The Sexes’ of the magazine “The Week”. She is known for erotic novels. Her novels also have got immense literary value due to her use of language and creation of new idioms by acclimatizing idioms from Indian languages to English language. The narrative holds our
breath for sensuous opulence and subtlety of variation and the result is that the novel becomes a best seller.

Shoba De is the most contemporary Indian novelist in voicing the present milieu with its entire tarry version. Under her belt she has twelve novels to speak about cornucopia of women psychology and her other sundry perceptions of them. She drives deep into the realm of women’s problem in the present scenario and the way she analyses them acclaims her as the most candid satirist. Though a feminist her approach is new in handling her women characters by bringing them out of the threshold of conservatism which sways her as the voice of the contemporary women. Shobha De is primarily a socialite, a regular contributor to magazine articles and newspaper editorials; she has penned quite a few books. Shobha De is a bold writer. She writes mostly on the high-flying-upper-class society of India. Mumbai’s upper class has given her a species which just tries to imitate the upper class American lifestyle. She deserves a great adulation in writing boldly on species that are around her orbit. Thus she accentuates on matters that are veracious and substantial. Most of her works begin with the letter ‘S’ just as her name begins with is the juicy detail of her novels.

Shobha De’s novel *Sisters* is one such species which explicitly describes the tinsel city of Mumbai with all its parochialism. By shimmering a vibrant beam on Mumbai’s elite denominations De fulfills her observance as a mature novelist. More significantly, her novel demonstrates a horrifically snide perception of the depraved cults. Perhaps, her work reverberates the views of an immaculate satirist. Men and women invariably recent years have out-grown all taboos of morality. They evince clearly their interest in enjoying life and consuming love even outside marriage. The idea of marriage and constancy in love has undergone a sea-change. Sex and sensuality are part of life and in order to accept life one has to affirm sensuality. Shoba De depicts the life of young men and women particularly rich upper class people who no longer consider faithfulness and constancy in love and virtue. It is often said that Shoba De’s novels border on pornography and there is a grain of truth in it. Shoba De observes “I am the first to
explorer the world of the urban women in India”. *Sisters* is a miniature of the messy life and moral chaos of the urban women.

The main plot of *Sisters* moves around Mikki Hira Lal who, leaving her studies in U.S.A. comes to Mumbai to attend the funeral of her parents who were killed. She becomes the sole owner of her father’s mammoth property. Mikki is least emotionally upset over her dead parents. She remembers her mother never wore sindoor. The crowd assembled at her house to mourn the death of Hira Lal betrays no emotion. Her father, who rose from scraps to riches, was the undisputed tycoon of tycoons. Mikki is stranger to funeral rituals and the crowd. The realism in her feelings exposes the parental indifference which she felt in her childhood.

As Mikki tries to hold firmly on her father’s business beset among business tycoons, creditors and associates. Secondly, she tries to win over her step-sister Alisha from her father’s kept Leelaben. Alisha dislikes and mistrusts Mikki. She finds extremely difficult in handling both due to her inexperience. She with no choice for her, trusts Ramanbhai, an old associate of her father. The latter however intents to grab all her property. His advice is a piece of tricky manipulation. She trusts him “the corporate world is full of sharks, Ramankaka. I am glad that I have you on my side”. Her wearing of her mother’s pearls father’s signet ring is an attempt to combine beauty and confidence delicacy and strength in her personality. She finds new strength in her resolve to head her father’s empire and steer it towards even greater success. Ramabhai tries to reduce her to a puppet by frightening her of the vicious world, simply to increase her dependence upon him.

Alisha appears as an angry young woman. Her reaction to the news of Seth Hiralal’s death survived by his only daughter Mikki, shakes her terribly. Her own identity as another daughter of Seth Hiralal seems to be lost in this news. Her questions, “and what about me? What am I? A puppy? A kitten? A pet? “Speak of her search for individual identity. She cannot tolerate being lost. She resolves to fight for her self and her share in her father’s business and regards Mikki as her enemy number one. The contrast between these two sisters gives a dramatic touch to the narrative. For Alisha,
money gives identity and is more important then any human relations. To Mikki, blood relations are more valuable than wealth. She is apologetic and reconciliatory in her approach to her step sister. Alisha is rough, abusive and at war with Mikki who begs her financially. Alisha distrusts her, hates her “fucking charity” and calls her “bitch”. The contrast between these two sisters is the most important aspect of the growth of the plot of the novel.

Mikki moves cautiously in her journey to the business world. Anjanabeen wants her to marry her son, Shanny so that he may take over Hira Lal industries. Ramanbhai advises her to leave everything to his experienced hands. Shanay, who works in Mikki’s office, confides in her that Ramanbhai is in touch with Alisha and there are rumours that her father died of conspiracy. She even discloses that Ramanbhai feeds Alisha’s mind that she is going to inherit all her father’s business and Mikki will get nothing expect her mother’s jewellery and some other fixed assets. Benny Malhotra, a business tycoon with whom she had sex before her marriage asks her to marry him, leave her business to his care and live like a good wife. Shoba De uses very suggestive images to characters her predicament when Anjanaben says, “the girl is like a small mouse with vultures all around just to pounce on her”.

Mikki is attracted to Benny Malhotra but he is “a shark ready to snap up the first fish in the ocean”. Her friend Amy also cautions her against Binny. Mikki decides to marry Navin another business man not for love but to save her business. She frankly admits it when she says to Amy, “love? Why should I love him? I am looking for a husband, marriage…..not an affair”. She breaks engagement with him, the moment she discovers him weak, indecisive and dependent on his mother who is unwilling to save her collapsing business. Mikki marries to Binny despite opposition from Amy, Shanay and Ramanbhai.

Sisters is a story of an urban Indian girl, Mikki, who has to confront with a vicious world of conspiracy and betrayal that sprawls across the corrupt Mumbai corporate world of business. The high-flying culture of this corporate world is eating away the bowels of Indian culture and tradition. It has assumed money has its sole god
and there is no scope for any real human affection. All human values are shooed away to grab on the high magnitude of materialistic success. Shoba De’s also depicts the disintegration of parent child relationship in this novel. The heroine Mikki, daughter of Seth Hiralal, an industrialist, inherits a sick-but-huge industrial empire after a sudden death of her father. All she wants after that is to get close to her half-sister Alisha, daughter of her father’s kept Leelaben. In between there are two half engagements (later broken) and her marriage ends with Binny Malhotra (another tycoon) who already has a mistress and children, dies in a car accident only days before his divorce with Mikki. Mikki eventually wins over her step sister’s love when the latter is hospitalized and needs blood. Of course the good news of all this is that she inherits all of her husband’s property too. Though the novel ends happily the happenings in the novel show how women refuse to forgo with their gullibility and set the scaffold to young woman like Mikki to germinate flexibility. Economic freedom, promiscuity and uncontrolled passion result in frustration in life and that is what happens to Mikki and Alisha. Infidelity of men and women becomes the order of the day where no relationship lasts beyond the flesh-meeting. It offends our sensibility and distracts our attention. The novel deals with the fast emerging abortive urban culture with the intensity of women’s awareness of self and gender predicament in the social structure.

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