



Contributions of Indian Women Writers in Indian Literature

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to deal with the trends and features of Indian women writing in English. The Indian women writers are the one who mainly talks about the male ego and female desire for freedom. They depict all sorts of sufferings and pathetic experiences who have been facing throughout the years, in their works. Hence Indian women writing in English gained massive ground to express their own feelings and problems. In this male centered world they are trying to bring out the feminine identity through their works. It was necessary for the women to oppose this male dominance over female. We observe that women continued to define the borders of the community, class and race. Indian women writers never attempted to adopt any masculine roles to achieve themselves as equal as men, but through their writings they came across all the barriers of class, gender and space boundaries. They tried to project masculinity and femininity as equal categories. It was a very difficult path as the women had to break through years of male dominance, taboos and beliefs that had heavily impregnated the society. Women are showing their spirit in every field, and in some respect, far better than the men. They are not a marionette in the hands of men. Our Indian English Literature has gifted numerous enthusiastic women novelist as Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Rama Mehta, Geeta Mehta, Kamala Markandaya and many more. All these female novelists are famous for their bold point of view that they tried to reflect in their novels. The literature not only flourishes the English literature but also colored the life of women. It means their novels focused on the women characters as a protagonists who are isolated in the male centered society. Through their works the Indian women writers tries to project women's responses to gender questions.

Keywords:- Indian women writers, Male dominated society, Masculinity, Feminism, Identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women has been the focus of many literary works down the centuries. Women are intrinsically artistic in nature. India is a patriarchal society here man occupied a very prominent position as compared to women. Hence in such a situation to do something different and intellectual is a challenge. Indian women writers in English have made abundant input the field of English literature. There are many Indian women writers both novelists and poets who write extensively to exert a place in society. Especially postcolonial Indian women writings witnessed extensive changes in terms of style and theme. Each writing of these women writers goes beyond all those gender theories and react against it. History has proved that Indian woman is capable of

becoming a ruler, good in the administration, a wonderful organizer and a tough fighters. It is the society that trampled her aspirations. But then a great renaissance is inevitable. She courageously breaks down the rigid conventions, that restraint her self-development, to accept the challenges with boldness and patience. A tough battle is before her, still she is not shaken and afraid. The change is taking place, still the struggle is on and will continue for many years till she acquires equality on all bases. Women find literature the most expensive form of art, which is true to women experience. Women's writing falls as a separate category which articulates the gender specific concerns of women from feminist viewpoint. Feminism in wider perspective includes whatever is vital about women in life and literature. It is a concept of theory that they are fighting for their rights, trying to break from the ideological form. So the ultimate aim of women's literature is to create a new awareness in men and women. She has found a new medium to raise the voice for protest against the injustice and inequalities meted out to them. Women's literature is intimate, confessional and autobiographical in nature. Women writers reflect the feeling of marginality and in return express their revolt against the purely masculine world. As women started writing in English, poems, stories and novels all came together frequent and dubious. Feminism has been artfully handled in the work of English novels in India. Feminism is defined as cultural, economic and political movements that are focused towards establishing legal protection and equality for the women. There are many Indian novelists who produced their novels that revealed the truth of Indian societies and how women are being treated here. There are many novels in English which depict the sketch of the real status of women in Indian societies. Women writers in India can no longer be claimed as the exclusive property of India only but their talent and art had reached to the skies. Indian women writing in English began with the writers like Sarojini Naidu, known as the nightingale of India, which represents her honest and heartfelt concerns about the situation of India. Women are not the puppets in the hands of men now they have come shoulder to shoulder to men. They have set their identity in every field. There are number of women writers such as Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Shobha De, Bharti Mukherjee, Kamala Das, Nayantara Sahgal, Geeta Mehta and many more. They tried their hand on almost every genre of literature. Their novels are novels of protest and outburst of emergent and contamination. Their writings change the mentality of males. The theme of feminine subjectivity which ranges from childhood to complete womanhood. They spread the message that what feminism is through their writings.

Arundhati Roy is one of the most popular writers in India, who won Booker prize for her debut novel "The God of Small Things" in 1997. This novel is a classic Indian novel by Roy which explore the forbidden love in Kerala and has been translated into more than forty languages. In the novel "The God of Small Things" Roy thinks beyond all the stereotype characters of women. The protagonist, Ammu a mother of twins, a son and a daughter- a divorcee is a rebel who embarks on the journey with a man whom she loved, an untouchable Velutha. She seems to assert that women is an individual soul who is having voice of her own. She is capable to shape her own identity and destiny and is as capable as men. They are having their own identity. Roy attacks the age - old traditional norms and tried to exert feminism in her works. She focuses more on the social injustice against women and has changed all the perception of women's identity in Indian society. Roy has succeeded in bringing out the existing social order. Being an activist she is constantly writing about social problems and the plight of women.

The novelist with the most sustained achievement is Shashi Deshpande who is labelled as feminist novelist succeeded in depicting the plight of a successful educated woman and problems of being a woman. She has written eight novels, six collections of short stories, and four children's books. Her popular novel "The Dark Holds No Terror" (1980) portrayed the life of a women who marries doctor and becomes the victim of

brutalization. It is a story of courage and determination that she developed from within herself to break loose of society's traditional norms to gain her individuality and freedom. She has achieved great popularity through her writings. In her writings she depicts the Indian middle-class mentality in her novels. Her protagonist emerges from cultural rootedness in middle class Indian society. Deshpande uses stream of consciousness technique. She generally has heroine as narrator. In another novel *Roots and Shadows* (1983), we are introduced to another rebellious woman who refuses to accept the old tradition family life and escapes to the city to work. There she marries a man of her own choice. With the passage of time, she realizes that life in city is no different from the village. All the novels of Shashi deals with cries in the heroine's life. Her work is woman oriented. She simply portrays, in depth the meaning of being women in modern India.

Anita Desai is another creative Indian women writer who through her writings, pictured the way of representation of pathetic and sad situation of women before society. Anita Desai, winner of Sahitya Academy Award as well as Padma Bhushan Award for her contribution in 2014, is most accomplished writer in India. She always concentrated to portray the inner feelings of her protagonist women character. She brings before the society the sadness and struggle of modern women in the existing patriarchal society. Her novels like *In Custom*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer* and *Voices in the City*. She has been short listed three times for The Booker Prize. The suppression and oppression of Indian women were the subjects of her first novel, *Cry, The Peacock* (1963), and the later novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer ?* (1975). Desai continued her career as writing with *Clear Light of The Day* (1980) which was an autobiographical work as the setting of the novel happened in her age and also in the atmosphere she lives in. This novel highly evocative portrait of two sisters caught in the lassitude of Indian life. *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) takes its subject the connection and gaps between Indian and American culture, while *The Zigzag way* (2004) tells the story of an American academic who travels to Mexico to trace his Cornish ancestry. The characters of Anita Desai showed a kind of interest to rebel against patriarchal system of society. Her female protagonists face many kinds of nuisances and trouble to get back lost identity. Her daughter Kiran Desai won the Booker Prize for the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006).

Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in Sieve* (1954) is about a strong hero, character by the name of Rukmani. Through her novels, the reader are involved in her pain. Losing sons and seeing her daughters became a prostitute, Rukmani still stands strong. Rukmani the main character and her daughter Ira display suffering through the novel. She works hard and is devoted to her husband. She faced poverty, famine and divorce of her barren daughters, the death of her sons, her daughter's prostitution and finally her husband's death.

Nayantara Sahgal is another novelist who portrayed the image of women who suffered due to the sexist bias in the patriarchal society. Through her writings she envisions a world which is based on equality and virtues of women. Her novel presents the image of Indian independence. Women are the principal characters in her novels. She comments on freedom of females. Because of her unhappy married life, her female voice is stronger and louder. Sahgal's woman from "A Time To Be Happy" (1957) to "Mistaken Identity" (1988) is all about the journey of women's struggle towards self-identity. Motherhood is another category which has been critiqued and reviewed. Her last novel "Plans for Departure" got her the Sahitya Academy Award.

Bharti Mukherjee the post-colonial writer who resists the traditional mode of representation of women in art and literature. In her novel *Desirable Daughters*, she searches the root of gender and identities. She portrays the problems of women within the culture and society. She exposes many facets of feminism, encompassing agitation for equal opportunity, sexual autonomy and right to self-determination. The character Tara in the novel *Desirable Daughters* is an apt example of liberty in all matters to women. Another writer Shobha De has highlighted the emotional and sexual needs of an Indian middle-class woman through her story "Second

Thoughts". The story revolves around a young middle-class woman who falls in love with a man other than her husband. However, Maya cherishes old traditions and cannot continue with the extra marital relationship for long. In this story, the author has exhibited the importance of emotion and sexuality and their interdependence in maintaining healthy relationship.

Manju Kapoor arrests the attention when she very nicely depicts the new women, is very boldly take the road not taken and walking on their own road. She appeared in the limelight of the literary scene with her well acclaimed and common wealth prize winning first novel. *Difficult Daughters* (1998) and was a best seller in India. Such was a popularity of this book that it has been translated into seven languages. Her second novel "A Married Woman" (2002) was fluent and witty, in the Independent. Kapoor negotiates different issues emerging out of socio-political upheaval in her country while third novel "Home" (2006), was a glistening with detail emotion. It explores the complex terrain of Indian family. Her recent novel "The Immigrant" (2009), has been short listed for the DSC Prize foe South Asian Literature. Kapoor's novel represents the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self- sacrificing, assertive and ambitious women making society aware of their demands and in this way providing medium of self -expression.

II. CONCLUSION

Hence we see that all the women writers of India bring out the oppression and suppression of the women in this patriarchal society from their writings. The women writers in Indian writing in English suggests that women writers have made rapid development in the foeld of literature even they have gone through many difficulties, still all of them have expressed their concerns for women and their problems. Each work is an open window to the feminine world to reconstruct the world of suppressed emotions of women. They are moving forward with their strong wings, matching the pace of the world. We see them bursting out in full bloom spreading their own individual fragrances. They began tp utilize the power of pen. People are enjoying the reading of new age women writers. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women towards conflicted female characters searching for identity. They have touched variety of subjects with great contribution in creating awareness for the modern women all over the world. They have boldly handled the social inhibitions and cultural taboos laid by society. Now the women writers in India can no longer be claimed as the exclusive property of India. Their work and art is just like an open book to the world. Majority of Indian readers either male or female read the novels of Indian women authors with certain expectations. So it is the women novelists whose contribution counts a lot. Only the women novelist of India are capable to conveying the message of feminism in an Indian way. So the contribution of Indian women writers to Indian novel is immense.

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