



# Indian Women's Contributions in Indian Literature and Art

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## ABSTRACT

The Indian women have played an important role in shaping Indian English Literature and making it up to the level where it has been observed and valued by the greatest writers in the world of English Literature. Art has always used mediums for expressing the plight of women in India. Indian women artists have addressed gender issue and discrimination in the form of paintings. Sculptures and installations since pre-independence times. Indian women artists have contributed in representation at galleries, exhibitions and even in auction catalogues as sculpting has been thought to be a masculine endeavor.

Through their writings women writer tries to oppose the male dominance over them. Indian women writers depict the injustices, the anguish and the despair they received in a male dominated society. Many of the writings can be considered as a mutiny against the restraints which the society thrust upon women. In this man-centred world they are trying to bring out the feminine identity through their works.

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 barrier of class, gender and space boundaries. They try to project masculinity and femininity as equal categories. Though through their works the Indian women writers tries to project women's responses to gender questions. However, they tried to depict the fact that writings of women need not be differentiated by language or location.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Women are intrinsically artistic in nature. India is a patriarchal society where Man occupied a very prominent position as compared to women. In such a situation to do something different and intellectual is a challenge. The contributions of Indian Women writers are appreciated in all literary categories. Women writers try to express the discrimination, dissatisfaction and agony through their works. Each writings of these women writers go beyond all those gender theories and react against it. Their writing come out that urge for freedom and to break all those oppressive forces.

The Women in India have often played a regressive role in society. Bowing to the dictates of a predominantly patriarchal society, the woman was assigned the role of a homemaker, nurturer, a wife, a mother and at times a lover. Indian art and artists has mirrored the social status of women, which is why though most of Indian art does have women as the central theme, their portrayal is often one dimensional.

The Ajanta paintings are the most famous in the history of Indian art. Here too the 'heroines' of the works are portrayed as voluptuous temptresses, stressing in the fertility aspect in their ample curves. This trend is further

elaborated in the Mauryan, Buddhist art styles... the ideal of female beauty was always the broad-hipped child-bearing woman. If woman were ever depicted as having power it was always in the sexual sense-the sculptures of the women in Khajuraho frescos are assured and supremely confident in their sexuality. Yet, even in these depictions, we can glimpse the importance of women in Indian history and mythology.

In this exhibition on 'Women in Indian Art' the Allahabad Museum has displayed some of the finest work from its modern painting collection. In particular there is the spectacular painting 'Sanvari' which is one of the largest wash paintings in India. Similarly the work of the famous artist Jamini Roy in 'Santhal Women' is striking. The exhibition is a tribute to women and their important role in the world.

The Indian women writers like Shashi Desh Pande, Nayanthara Seghal, Arundathi Roy, and Kamala Markandaya expressed the role and position of woman through their writings in English. They have expressed the real oppression and fight of women to achieve gender equality.

Shashi Deshpande is the one novelist who is labelled as feminist novelist who dealt with the problems faced by women in our patriarchal society. Through her works she gave a detailed picture of women's issues, emotional and spiritual crisis they encounter in this male dominated society. The characters in her novel are having a quest for freedom and all they want is to come out of these oppressive bond and to reconstruct all those norms and patterns of womanhood. She talks about the women's struggle to secure self-identity and self-respect. Shashi Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence* (1988) tells the story of Jaya, an Indian upper- middle class house wife who retained her silence in Bombay throughout her life. Here she talks about the institution of marriage and its power to destroy the freedom of women. Through this work she tries to reveal the fact that women bear the levels of oppression not only within the male centred society but also within the institution of the family. In *The Binding Vine* (1993), through the narrator-protagonist Urmila highlights the despair of two women, one is Mira, who is a victim of marital rape and the other is Kalpana, who is a brutally raped outside marriage. This is a novel that takes up the issue of rape both within and outside marriage.

In another novel *Roots & Shadows* (1983), there is another rebellious woman who refuses to accept traditional family life and escapes to the city. In almost all novels of Deshpande dealt with a crisis in the heroines' life. This novel depicts the pain and suffocation of the protagonist Indu in the male dominated society. She tries to escape from an adulterous relationship with Narendra to find her real self.

Nayanthara Seghal is also another writer 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 the virtues of women to be equally valued as that of men. Her Novel presents the image of Indian Womanhood. Women are the principle characters in her novels. She comments on the freedom of females. Her feminist voice is strong and louder which is the result of her unhappy married life. Seghal's woman from *A Time to be Happy* (1957) to *Mistaken Identity* (1988) is all about the journey of women's struggle towards self-discovery. Motherhood is another category which has been critiqued and reviewed. Seghal's portrayal of motherhood is framed by a larger discourse. Her focus is more on women and value structures.

In *The God of small things* (1997), Arundathi Roy thinks beyond all the stereotypical characters of Women. The protagonist, Ammu –a mother of a son and a daughter – a divorcee is a rebel, who embarks on a journey with a man she loved - an untouchable thereby defies the planet altogether She seems to assert that women is an individual soul who is having a voice of their own. She has the ability to shape her own destiny and is as capable as men. They are having their own identity and individuality. Roy attacks the age old traditional norms and tried to exert feminism in her works. She focuses more on the social injustices against women and she had changed all the perception of women's identity in Indian society. Arundathi Roy succeeded in bringing down

the existing social order. Being an activist, she is constantly writing about social problems and the plight of woman. Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), depicts women's issues and problems very deeply. She explores and interprets the emotional reactions and spiritual responses of the women and their predicament with sympathetic understanding and shows that women are not lesser than human; rather they are sometimes more dignified than men due to their greater human virtues, qualities and creativity. They suffer heroically, though they are strong willed. A number of women sublimate their desires in religious faith. She describes that an Indian woman has to face between tradition and modernity. Kamala Markandaya's main focus, which she effectively presents, is the predicament of women in these situations. Her *Rukmani*, no doubt, may be a triumph of the spirit of tradition. In a male dominated society, it had been a serious effort for the women writers to show what society called as the mechanics of patriarchy. The work of Indian women writers has been undervalued due to these patriarchal assumptions. To fight against the cultural a mind set in men and women, one of the first things that these women writers did was to form their writings more eclectic. Another critical issue that was handled by these women writers was the difficulty of 'Style in language'. It was Jane Austen who devised a way for writing that was perfectly natural, elegant and proper for the utilization of women writers. Women could now write in clauses that were linked in loose sequences, instead of balanced and patterned as used by male writers. The majority of writings by Indian women writers depict the sufferings of the frustrated homemakers and questions of the prominent old patriarchal domination. Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundathi Roy represent their heroines defying patriarchal notions and they possess their own individuality and identity. They want to lead their life independently. They are bold, strong and independent human beings. They want to live freely and fully. By their novels these women writers try to tackle the systems that oppress and subjugate women.

Leela Mukherjee trained as a painter and sculptor at Shantiniketan where she met her future husband, Benode Behari Mukherjee, a visionary Indian artist. Mrinalini Mukherjee (1949 – 2015) also went on to become a sculptor of international repute.

She was known for her distinct contemporary style and the use of dyed and woven hemp fibre – an unconventional material for sculpting.

Meera Mukherjee was one of the most prolific Indian sculptors to emerge in the post-Independence era. As a staunch individualist, she denied any feminist context in her work. No conversation on Indian Modern Art is complete without the mention of Amrita Shergil. The nation's most celebrated woman artist, she is popularly referred to as India's Frida Kahlo. 30-Mar-2017

The women of India have been embroiled in a constant struggle against stigmatisation and persecution by society for centuries. All the while, countless attempts have been made to spread awareness about, and ultimately bring to an end, the charge of horrific gender-biased crimes (like sati, dowry harassment, and sexual assault) perpetuated in the name of a misguided notion of 'culture' and 'tradition'.

Art has always been one of the most widely used mediums for expressing the plight of women in India. Indian women artists, in particular, have emphasised gender issues and discrimination in the form of paintings, sculptures, and installations since pre-independence times. And despite the decades that have transpired since, most of the same issues are still prevalent in today's society. In this article, we go through the history of Indian women artists and the issues they've addressed in their work to see what, if anything, has changed in all these years.

The most famous woman artist from India's pre-independence era, Amrita Sher-Gil is responsible for influencing entire generations of painters with her artwork. Born in Hungary, Budapest in 1913 to a Punjabi-

Sikh father and a Hungarian mother, Sher-Gil's earlier work was inspired by the European culture and style which she acquired during her residency and education in Paris. Sher-Gil's captivating self-portraits bestowed upon her the title of India's Frida Kahlo. Her return to India in 1934 sparked a thematic change in her artwork, which now incorporated traditional Indian art styles marked by the vivid use of colours and the Renaissance-era 'chiaroscuro' technique, through which she portrayed the culture, despair, and poverty of Indian villagers. Sher-Gil died at the tender age of 28 in Lahore having achieved critical, if not commercial, success. Posthumously, however, her paintings rapidly gained recognition around the world and she is now hailed as one of the most prominent Indian artists of all time.

## II. CONCLUSION

This paper gave a view of how Indian women writers bring out the oppression and suppression of the women in this patriarchal society. Each work is an open window to the feminine world to reconstruct the world of suppressed emotions of women. From this it is evident that women began to utilize the power of the pen. Women's writing of all kinds is considered to be valuable as that of men. It has come the age in terms of quality and variety. So the credit goes to women novelists whose contribution counts a lot in the writing and publishing of novel. They try varied themes, techniques or styles, raise issues of caste, class, gender, identity and individuality. So the contribution of Indian women writers to Indian novel in English is tremendous.

## III. REFERENCES

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