

CONTRIBUTION OF INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS IN THE GLOBAL LITERATURE: A BRIEF STUDY

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Abstract: The Indian women writers who tried to stamp their authority in a male dominated environment as best as it is possible to them. Though the Indian women writers try to depict the women as strong and focused in their vision to succeed in lives, they were, however, ablest to succeed in their lives only in the space allotted to them by the men. They know very well that it is a very difficult path, as the women had to break through years of male dominance, taboos and beliefs that had heavily impregnated the society. The Indian women writers who expressed their views and agony through their writings in the Postcolonial times for two major reasons.

Because of this, it was important for the experiences of women under the patriarchal influence to come out to the forefront and expose the undue cruelty be held on them by men. It was necessary for the women to oppose this male dominance over them. We observe that women continued to define the borders of the community, class and race. They tried to express their agony and dissatisfaction of male dominated attitude through their works. In addition, critics argued that colonialism operated very differently for women and for men.

Keywords: Male Dominance, Writing Style, Social Blend,

INTRODUCTION

Woman has been the focus of many literary works down the centuries. In an age of development and flux in every field, one cannot easily ignore half the population. Indian writers in English have also come out of their cocoons of "non-attachment" and have started acknowledging the status of the Indian woman in a male-dominated society. The concept of Indian womanhood is as divergent as the country itself and has undergone drastic and dramatic changes from era to era. India has travelled from her glorious past to degeneration; from spiritual ascendancy to communal clashes; from captivity to independence; from agrarian revolution to cyber technology. The role of the Indian woman has also changed from that of deity to *devadasi*, from *shakti* to *abala*, from homebound creature to a professional.

The Indo-Anglian fiction presents a consistent picture of the changing social realities during this eventful century. Those interested in categorizing may find it convenient to divide the Indian English Fiction into two broad categories - the pre- and post-Independence groups of writers.

The Post-Independence period in the recent Indian history corresponds suitably with her concept of the "nodal period" when a number of Indian writers of fiction in English try to explore and manifest Indian reality. In these writers we do not find either the commitment of the earlier period or even the amused narration of the trials of the middle class, trying to unite the past traditional outlook with the fast emerging realities of the modern living conditions. In this effort, the writers of the post-Independence phase move inward. They get more and more psychologically intended and try to assess the sociological effect on the psyche of their characters.

This movement, from the outward gross realities to inward complexities, found as its mouth-piece, a number of women novelists who, by the peculiar situation of their existence, have been able to see the Indian complexities from close quarters, where constraints of varied hues and shades work upon the sensitive individuals. Fiction by women writers provides insights, a wealth of understanding, a reservoir of meanings and a basis of discussion. There has been a growing interest on women's issues and women writers focus on these issues. Many creative writings in English and many writers including Nayantara Sehgal, Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De have dealt with such issues.

There is a galaxy of women writers who have contributed to the development of Indo-English prose and verse. Toru Datt and Sarojini Naidu were the pathfinders and made way and inspired the new generation of men and women writers. There is a fine amalgamation of Indian artistic sensibility and western literary types and genre in their poetry. The Indo-English literature has presented the political, social and cultural crises in India. Social hypocrisies, ugly social practices of caste-system, and superstitions in Indian society have been analysed thoroughly in Indo-English literature. The synthesis of the Eastern and Western literary modes have given a comprehensive perspective to the Indo-English writers and they have successfully analysed the psychological, emotional and spiritual crises experienced by the Indian intellectuals as well as by men and women representing the different strata of Indian society.

There are many Indian women writers both novelists and poets, based in the USA and Britain. Some like Jhabvala and Anita Desai are late immigrants while others, like Jhumpa Lahiri belongs to the second generation of Indians abroad. Most expatriate writers have a weak grasp of actual conditions in contemporary India, and tend to recreate it through the lens of nostalgia. Their

best works deal with the Indian immigrants, the section of society they know at first hand. Sunithi Nam Joshi, Chitra Benerji, Divakarvas and Bharathi Mukherjee are the oldest, and naturally, the most prolific.

Writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, Manju Kapoor, Kiran Desai, and Arundhati Roy too have written novels of Magic Realism, Social Realism and Regional fiction, and benefited from the increasing attention that this fiction has received National and International awards. They have probed into human relationships, since the present problem is closely concerned with mind and heart and the crusade is against age-old established systems. In order to make the process of changes smooth and really meaningful, women writers have taken upon themselves this great task.

Away from this line of writing the lives of women, the most successful of the Indian women writers is Jhumpa Lahiri who created the difference among all the Indian women writers. She is a dazzling storyteller with a distinctive voice. She is different from other Indian writers writing in English. Most of the first generation writers of Indian fiction are born and brought up in India. But Jhumpa Lahiri's connection with India is through her parents and grandparents. India would appear to her sometimes full of wonders, sometimes full of beggars. Moreover, the writers who live outside comment confidently on economic social and political scenario may appear very often exaggerating or understanding. However, Lahiri is honest and authentic to her experiences.

For Lahiri "Every visit was an emotional see-saw across continents and cultures". Lahiri is an Indian by ancestry, British by birth, American by immigration. She targets the Western audience by deliberately portraying the Indian American life. She also admits, "I learnt to observe things as an outsider and yet I knew that as different Calcutta is from Rhode Island, I belonged there in some fundamental way, in the way, I didn't seem to belong in the U.S." (*The Times of India*, 13 April 2000). This sense of freedom is one of the greatest thrills of writing fiction for her and she discovered her authorial freedom by publishing her debut book i.e. *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) her debut anthology is collected stories that deal with the question of identity. Her another famous novel *The Namesake* (2003) which is essentially a story about life in the United States. But Lahiri says that *Namesake* deals with Indian immigrants in the United States as well as their children. For instance, though she is much more American than her parents she inherited a sense of exile from her parents. After her Ph.D. in Renaissance studies from Boston University, she had planned to write about her roots and origin. It appears "She is more American than her parents ... her characters move constantly between two worlds grappling bravely with this cultural displacement" (*The Times of India*, April 7, 2000).

Anitha Desai is the best known of the contemporary women writers. Of all the contemporary novelists, she is indisputably the most popular and powerful novelist. She has made commendable contribution to the Indian English fiction. She is a novelist of urban milieu and is a fine mixture of Indian European and American sensibilities. She is essentially a psychological novelist. She claims that her novels are not reflection of Indian society or character. She does not reflect on social issues in her works like Mulk Raj Anand. She sees social realities from a psychological point of view and does not look at them as a social intimate expression of the inner world of her characters. She makes each of her work a haunting exploration of the psychic self. Her last novel *Baumgartner's Bombay*, written at Griton College, Cambridge, was published in 1988. In the nineties, she has not published any novel as yet. Thus, she has double sensibility, which gives her novels an objective effect. She however travelled widely in almost all the parts of India and her experiences of different sort of people and places have enriched her writing. Moreover, the same is true of Nayantara Sahgal, whose last novel *Plans for Departure*, published at the turn of the decade got her the Sahitya Academy Award.

The novelist with the most sustained achievement is Shashi Deshpande who is labeled 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 woman who marries a doctor and becomes the victim of brutalization. It is a story of courage and perseverance that she developed from within herself to break loose of society's traditional norms to gain her individuality and freedom. She has achieved tremendous amount of popularity through her writings. She depicts the Indian middle class mentality in all her novels. Her protagonist emerges from cultural rootedness in middle class Indian Society. Deshpande generally has the heroine as the narrator and employs a kind of stream - of - consciousness technique. In another novel *Roots & Shadows* (1983), we are introduced to another rebellious woman who refuses to accept traditional family life and escapes to the city to work. She later marries a man of her own choice. As time goes by, she realizes that life in the city is no different from the village. Almost all her novels deal with a crisis in the heroine's life. Her work is women-oriented, but it would not be correct to term her a feminist, as she consistently rebates with the feminist identity. She simply portrays, in depth the meaning of being women in modern India.

CONCLUSION

In the contemporary Indian Literary scenario, Indian women writers in English who reflect the truth of Indian reality. They bear numerous responsibilities in the world of literature. They execute with admirable aplomb as the anthropologists, sociologists, novelists, essayists, travel writers, teachers and slip into global responsibility for establishing peace as the ambassadors. They have excelled the global literary standards set by the post-colonial and postmodern writers men and women like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, Shashi Tharoor and Arundhati Roy etc. These have become the colossal central socio literary figures with the substantial bodies of work drawing the global attention. They also have become the only negotiators to mediate the core social and cultural problems of India and other colonized nations. All their major works have enjoyed immense academic attention across the globe and which have invited and produced a great amount of literary criticism especially on *feminism*. They have created a wide readership and a strong critical endorsement that reflect the attention of serious academicians and scholars. All the post-colonial and postmodern predicaments are wrestled to demonstrate a high level of self-consciousness, which continue, interrogate the social, philosophical, cultural issues of rape and sexual harassment of innocent women in the

contemporary Indian society. Their works have initiated the emergence of critique of *feminism* with nationalism. Their intellectual insights, conceptual, theoretical and textual experiments have engaged and interpreted the complex colonial and postcolonial situations. They have also established a peculiar paradox of reading and appreciation eloquently responding to the issues of sexually harassed women both in post-colonial and postmodern issues of *rape and exploitation on the Indian women* in the contemporary society.

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(All parenthetical reference of the text are to this edition).

