



Resistance for identity: Upheaval of Indian Women Writing in English

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This article is an attempt to deal with the trends and features of Indian women writing in English. Indian Women writing in English is being considered as major contemporary genre in Indian English literature. They depict all sorts of sufferings and pathetic experiences who have been facing throughout the years, in their works. Rapidly, Indian women writing in English gained massive ground to express their own feelings and problems. They started questioning the major social rules governed by patriarchal society. Even today without any hurdle, they have expelled their worth in the realm of literature in terms of quality and quantity. A major development has taken place in the field of Indian women writing in English after the feminist or women centered approach that allows the writers to express in the point of view of feminine consciousness. Many Indian women novelists, who have dealt with female subjectivity in order to create the identity, have explored different psychological aspects of women related problems that have been suppressed since long times. Writers like Nayantara Sahgal, Geetha Hariharan, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapur, Bharathi Mukharjee, Kamla Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and etc made a clear difference in the field of Indian English literature. Hence, this research paper is an attempt to figure out the resistance mode of Indian women writings in English.

Indian women writers in English have made abundant input in the field of the 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 massive changes in narratives in terms of style and theme. They tried to express their frustrations and dissatisfaction of patriarchal setup of society through their works. Their writings are a reaction of subdued desires and suppressed feelings that have been long assembled and gathered.

Now, the trend of Indian women writers is to make awareness of women existence in the society. Traditionally, the works of women have been under rated without any reason and given priority to the male writers. However, the post colonial women writers show more resistance mode of writing to establish their own identity. They have enlightened the literature by producing varieties of works. It becomes a major genre in Indian English literature which cannot be ignored. It truly presents the Indian culture, tradition, history and all the variants required for the enrichment of literature.

Indian women have contributed remarkably to the literature as equal to their counter parts. The post independent Indian women writers have a diverse sense of their identity. Unlike earlier writers they are not conventional not influenced by any folktales, myth and epics. Whereas, they created their own literature by adapting current problems and issues especially related to women. Rashmi Bajaj says about the recent writings of Indian women writings in English in her book that "We have here increased social consciousness, a strong awareness of identity as woman, championing of women's cause, problems of alienation and identity crisis, daring portrayal of sex and emphasis on the study of personal relationships."(p.no.28)

Woman writers deal with the problems of women in general and issues of society in particular. The authors like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Bharati Mukharjee, Nayantara Sahgal and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala present, just after the colonial period, the struggle, man- woman relationship and identity crisis throughout their novels. The novels of 1960's of women writers started questioning the traditional mode of narrative. Kamala Markandaya's *The Nector in the Seive (1954)* gives the picture of a protagonist Rukmini who suffers and struggles for day today life in the rural area of India. In Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock*, the author portrays the protagonist Maya's struggle to live in the society throughout the narrative. Nayantara Sahal's novel *This Time of Morning* put forwards the narrow minded Indian society which compels to do arrange marriages. In all these narratives the authors present the resistant mode of writing which have long been subdued.

The woman novelists in 1970's gave new dimension to the narrative. The women novelist's of India bagged lot of prestigious awards in this period. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *'Heat and Dust'* (1975), the Booker prize winning

novel, discusses the female characters continuous struggle for the existence in the society. The protagonist Olivia suffocated by the decorum and restriction of her role as a wife in the civil society. The novelists like Geeta Hariharan and Rama Mehta wrote abundantly in this age to restore the status of woman in the Indian society. Geeta Hariharan explores educated woman's quest for root through her novels.

The 1980's Indian women writings witnessed lot of maturity in terms of language, style and themes. The novelists present women characters in search of self realization and identity in this stage. Especially authors like Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande both project about the issues and problems of middle class family.

The last three decade has seen the coming out of major feminists in Indian literature. Starting with Shashi Deshpande's writing will clearly denotes the whole sort of emergence of resistance writing in India. Her writings are from her subjective experience and embedded in culture in which she dwells. Her third novel *Roots and Shadows* projects a new female face and concerns more about middle class women. It is very evident that her characters were independent and rebel to all traditional norms.

I knew that these women had their own standards for judging people. Nothing about me..... my academic distinctions, my career, my success, my money None of these would impress her. To her I was just a childless woman. To get married, to bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren..... they were still for them the only successes a woman could have. I had almost forgotten this breed of women since I had left home. Now seeing them was like discovering a new world. Each one of them, riddled with ignorance, prejudice and superstition, was a world of darkness in herself. And even more amazing was their ignorance of their own darkness (Deshpande, p116)

Deshpande's protagonists are epitome of self aware, self development and self fulfilment. They all rejected the custom and tradition of society in which they live. Her novel *A Matter of time* is an exploration of female psyche, gender differences and women sufferings. The striking theme of her writings is human relationship especially between mother and daughter, husband and wife and father and daughter. However, in all these relationships Sashi Deshpande gives central stage to women characters and the narrations go in the perspective of female consciousness.

The other famous novelist is Manju Kapur who wrote richly on female experience. Manju Kapur's female protagonists are the example of female folk who wish to be escape from the traditional norms and customs. As her female protagonists are mostly well educated, it helps them to think independently. As Dr Alka says "Her female protagonists are mostly educated. Their education leads them to independent thinking, for which their family and society becomes intolerant towards them. They struggle between tradition and modernity. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunge into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified women with faultless backgrounds." (p 01)

Most of her novels, the protagonists undergo a deep struggle to figure out their real self. She has emphasised throughout her writing the problem of patriarchy and gender difference.

Anita Desai is another creative Indian women writer who made a clear cut differences through her narratives and writing and pictured the way of representation of pathetic and sad full situation of women before society. She is always concentrated to bring out the inner feelings of her protagonists who mostly played in the role of women. She basically brings forth in front of the society the sadness and struggles of modern women in the existing patriarchal society. Desai has written richly who published her first novel in 1963, *Cry The Peacock*. Then she continued her career as writing with *Clear Light of Day* (1980) which she judged as her most autobiographical work as the setting of the novel happened in her age and also in the atmosphere she lives in. Shortly, she came out with *In Custody* which was one of the listed novels for the Booker Prize, was talks about an Urdu poet. Besides these narratives and fictions Desai has produced many novels which got world wide acclaim of readers and writers at the same level. Particularly 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 the lost identity. Her writings are absolute attrition of clichéd depiction of women where they were mere a outsider.

Bharti Mukherjee is another notable post colonial writer who resists the traditional mode of representation of women in art and literature. The novel *Desirable Daughters* by Bharati Mukharjee searches the root of gender and identities. She projects the problems of women within the culture and society. Dr. N.D.R Chandra fittingly points out: "Like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya(Suraiya), Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Pravar Jhabwalla and Githa Hariharan Mukherjee exposes many facets of feminism, encompassing agitation for equal opportunity, sexual autonomy and right to self determination"(p.267). The character Tara in the novel *Desirable Daughters* is an apt example of new women who stand to create the space of liberty in all matters related to women.

Another popular Indian English woman writer is Arundhati Roy whose writings become major part of discussion within the spectrum of Indian English literature. Her novel *The God of Small Things* opened up a kind of activism and resistance against gender oppression. The protagonist of the novel Ammu rebels against many social structures and questions the institution of marriage. Murari Prasad aptly comments on Ammu's rebellious attitude that "Ammu's rebellion against maternal and marital conventionality, and finally, her liaison with dark-skinned and untouchable Velutha (ironically meaning white) constitutes a violation against a determinate social order, sponsoring the immutable, 'love laws'. Her rebellion or her "quest for self-identity". (p. 16)

Another striking and famous figure in this tradition is Kamala Markandaya whose *Nectar in Sieve* got world wide acclaim due to its subject matter. The author portrays the female protagonist Rukmani's identity crisis in the novel *Nectar in Sieve*. Most of her novels deal with the subject matters related to women.

Finally, there are many Indian women writers who fight and challenges against the victimisation of women in general by creating the feminist mode of writing.

Conclusion

Indian women writers are one of those ground-breaking battalions who stimulated the sword widely to get well and recover the self identity. In the entire their writing career, they hoisted their tone to locate a position in the society. They formed their own literature in which they challenged the system of patriarchal rules and regulation, and clichéd depiction, and restricted part of women in literature texts. They stamped out such sorts of perception and conception of society by producing their own entity as individual through representing the women as equal to the role of men. Cixous says, "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies." (78)

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