

# Women in Literature

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Women find literature as the most expressive form of art, which is true to women's experience. Women's writing falls as a separate category, which articulates the gender specific concerns of women in feminist view point. Women's literature is intimate, confessional and autobiographical. Women are victimized by male cruelty and indifference, women's identity is formed out of pain and suffering. Women writers have proved their stuff to be more serious and that which requires attention. They handle things efficiently balancing tradition and womanhood. Now women in India have started questioning the age old patriarchal domination. Women are seen idealized and are made a divinity in religious scriptures. But on the real earth they have been the object of constant humiliation and persecution by an entirely indifferent, cold patriarchal society. But in the present scenario, woman have shown their mettle in every filed and in some respects, far worth in the field of literature both qualitatively and quantitatively and are showing it even today without any hurdle. They are being conferred not only national and international awards.

Traditionally, the work of Indian women writers was undervalued due to the bastion of male privilege. One factor contributing to this prejudice is the fact that most of the women wrote about the enclosed domestic space and their perceptions of the experience within it. As a result, a large number of scholars believed that women were simply meek and subjugated, not able to think beyond a home's four walls, as compared to literary male giants with strong and profound themes. Women writers have tried to explore the stance of male chauvinism and the cruel and violent acts against them. The portrayal of women characters enables them to grapple with the realities and reflect the plight of the sufferers.

Recent writers have depicted women within the threshold, women on significant in advocating women's demands. However, in spite of the gigantic expansions of their literature, women writers of today still struggle women writers have emerged with revolutionary ideas, changing the image of stereotypical ones. They adopted and adapted the approaches of the colonizer's language. Besides making significant contributions, contemporary women writers in English possess mastery of the English language as well as fresh and novel themes; in fact, their works are marvellous and have surpassed all beliefs and anticipations. It is interesting to note that they write from a unique position of having been doubly colonized. Their contributions are particularly valuable as they are from those who have twice been forced into the role as 'the other', first as the colonized and then as women. Having been 'doubly others', these writers are inclined to avail themselves of the literary strategies of subversion, deconstruction, and reconstruction in order to break their silence, retell tales and recount their points of views.

Among a thousand books on varied themes, contemporary women writers of today shows a plurality of words; the fact of the matter is they are no longer solely from the elite. In a struggle to sustain their identity, the diasporic women writers have added a great impetus to the growth of creative writing in English. Women have been central to the making of society in the building of civilizations and have shared in the preservation of collective memory that shapes cultural traditions, links generations, and connects the past and future. They have played a marginal role up till now in history making in the sense of ordering and interpreting the past, of giving meaning to events in other words in theorization.

‘Amitav Ghosh’ remarked

“Today a woman writing is a woman fighting

For truth, for honesty, freedom, even if not for equality”

For instance, the publicity of the success of Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai and Chitra Divakaruni, on both sides of the Atlantic, has brought world recognition for Indian women writers. The Indian women writers expressed the rule and position of woman through their writings in English, have enlightened the literature with its quality and vividness.

Women’s writing has always been ‘home centered’ and it is precisely because of this that not much interest is generated for their writing. The criticism has always been that they do not talk about the ‘larger issues’ of life and hence the focus and canvas is always limited and small. Women writers have had to face enormous challenges in their writing career. If we were to go back to 1929 and remember Virginia Woolf’s a room of one’s own, we would understand those challenges. Then it was a demand for ‘money’ and ‘space’ for creativity. Today that creative space is not deemed important. That ‘space’ is private and domestic and with the kind of men’s traditions available for women in writing, it is but natural that this domestic space is deemed valueless. Women construct their own histories through which they record their living as Indian women in the times they live.

Women play major roles during various stages of their life as daughter, sister, wife and mother etc. in spite of their contribution to human beings, she still belongs to a backward class on account of various social, political, economic and psychological barriers and impediments. On the one side, women is worshipped as a goddess and on the other side, she is oppresses, suppressed, depresses, exploited and victimized by a male dominated society. There is a serious dichotomy in our ideals and reality, which is particularly painful and especially when it comes to the status of women in our country. Women still suffer from discrimination, exploitation and victimization. The primary challenge facing women today, therefore, is to increase their participation in that they get hold of the situation and becomes actively involved in the process of decision making.

The constitution of India has guaranteed equality, liberty and dignity to the women. Women find literature the most expressive form of art, which is true to women’s experience. Women’s writing falls as a separate category, which articulates the gender specific concerns of women – feminist viewpoint.

The Indian women have significantly contributed to the overall world literature as equal with men writers. This contribution of India has been chiefly through the Indian writing in English, novelists being in the forefront in this respect. A number of novelists on the contemporary scene have given expression to their creative urge in no other language than English and have brought credit to the Indian English fiction as a distinctive force in the world fiction. To attempt creative expression on a national scale in an alien medium has seldom happened in human history, and it speaks of the prolific quality of the Indian mind to assimilate the newly confronting situations and the complex dilemmas of modern World. The new English fiction exhibits confidence in tackling new themes and experiments with new techniques and approaches to handle these themes. The novelists come to their task without any preconceived notions of what constitutes literary content. This encourages them to focus on a vast and comprehensive canvas and to invest their themes with epic dimensions. All these Indian women writers could compete with best in the World, perhaps that best in their own right: "It would be no exaggeration to say that the best English fiction in the World is being written by the Indian women writers or those of Indian origin. As far as Indian literature is concerned, it has perhaps been easier for these women novelists to reflect the new challenges and changes because of the simple fact that its vehicle itself is a globalised language. Again, the writers of the new fiction have mostly been a part of the Indian diaspora. Living in the west, and using English almost like a mother tongue, they have been thoroughly exposed to significant modern western literary movements like Post-Modernism, and to various narrative techniques like magic realism. This has enabled them to give a fresh orientation to fiction. At the same time, the best of them continue to have strong roots in India, so that they remain true to the kindred points of India and the west. It is significant that the spirit of the age is more pervasively and effectively reflected in the Indian woman's fiction than in other forms like poetry and drama.

The novel, by its very nature, is better equipped to deal with social reality, whatever, liberties it may take in projecting it. It is hardly surprising therefore that the most substantial contribution of the period comes from the Indian women writings of the fiction. The voice of new Indian women writers through their writings, published in between 1980s and 1990s, has ushered in a literary renaissance is the third generation of women Indian English writers like Nayantara Sehgal, Anitha Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Desh Pande, Gita Mehta, Bharathi Mukherjee, and Jhumpha Lahiri. These are the fore- most third generation women novelists and who hold centrality in the contemporary literary Scenario. They have made a distinct mark on the World literary scene with their rich cultural heritage and skilled language control. They have received national and International recognition, fabulous royalties and prestigious awards. On par with great Indian male novelists, the contribution of women novelists is immensely significant. A number of women novelists have debut in the nineties. Their first novels are quiet effective in revealing the true state of Indian Society when it comes to the treatment of women. All these writers were born after Indian Independence, and English does not have any colonial associations for them. Their work is marked by an impressive feel for language and completely authentic presentation of contemporary India, with all its regional variations. They generally wrote about the urban middle class, the stratum of society they know best.

It is from these perceptions one should view the contribution of women writers of the nineties like Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Gita Mehta, Gita Hariharan, Bharati Mukherjee, Uma Vasudev and Arundhati Roy. Undoubtedly, it is understood that they have perceived a good job in exposing the fallacies of the male – dominated society and letting the public beware of the various atrocities heaped upon women who dared to cross the various rigid boundaries that were laid on them by society.

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