

Influence of Female Novelists on Indian English Writing

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Abstract : When the art of novel writing began in India in the nineteenth century, the writers were mainly men. These men viewed the society and the condition or plight of its people through their own point of view, thus the earlier English novels written in India even by male authors express a very different social reality from those of women's. As Meenakshi Mukherjee says: 'Social conformity has always been more obligatory for a woman than a man, and generally a woman's identity tends to be defined by herself as well as by others, in terms of relationship with men – as a daughter, as a wife, and as a mother.' Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity. One that doesn't conform with the popular notion of the society. Their characters wanted to establish a different identity for themselves which was not bound to the traditional roles defined for them. This has led to a major change in the way society is portrayed in Indian English Novels. From a woman's point of view there are many changes that were made in the preset notions and hence these writers brought a revolution to the world of fiction.

KeyWords: identity, psychology, society, women, writing

I. INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS

Indian writings and expression on English saw many forms but, the widest reaching effect of Indian writing in English has been seen in the novels. Simple yet effective novels in language that could be understood easily by a common man began to surface in English from the late nineteenth century

Formal fame and recognition for the Indian novels in English globally came in the beginning of the twentieth century. The early writers popularly known as the 'Trio' - Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, and R K Narayan made a mark by their deep understanding of the complex Indian society under the colonial rule suffering acute poverty, social discrimination, unemployment and illiteracy and its simple yet enriching expression by means of a foreign language

II. FEMALE NOVELISTS

Slowly and steadily female authors like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai joined the ranks of English writers in the forefront. They brought women's struggle for survival outside homes and into the world of fiction. Their concern was a common Indian woman's quest for existence. How she has to face the opposition from her own family and blood before facing the world outside. She had to stand up before her own kin to fend for a life of her own choice. These writes gave a voice to the female psychology in Indian English novels. Their feminism was not influenced by the western concept but evolved within the ambit of Indian society with its own set of problems.

Earliest writings in Indian English were mainly by men. Thus the early description of society was in confirmation with a man's perception. This accounted for the voice of only fifty percent of the population. The other half was still silent. With women coming in the field, the other half got their voice in literature. Thus the description of the society, events, and emotions, etc as shown in Indian English Literature all changed. All of it was looked at through the eyes of a woman which is quite different from that of a man. Thus the view of Indian society in English novels kept on evolving with the time period in which the text was authored and also showed a marked difference depending upon the gender of the author. All this brought about a revolution in the world of Indian English fiction and popularised it as an important genre in world literature.

III. FEMALE PSYCHOLOGY

It refers to Feminine psychology which is an approach that focuses on social, economic, and political issues confronting women all throughout their lives. It can be considered a reaction to male-dominated theories such as Sigmund Freud's view of female sexuality. The groundbreaking works of Karen Horney argued that male realities cannot describe female psychology or define their gender because they are not informed by girls' or women's experiences. Theorists, thus, claim this new approach is required. There is the position that women's social existence is crucial in understanding their psychology. For instance, it is claimed that some characteristics of female psychology emerge to comply with the given social order defined by men and not necessarily because it is the nature of their gender or psychology.[

Throughout history, women have been regarded as the weaker of the sexes and afforded fewer rights, which include but are not limited to education, legal and career opportunities. For women, being a wife and a mother has long been regarded their most significant and only important profession. It was only in the 20th century that widespread countries finally saw women as a sex with a persuasive voice.

IV. INCLUSION OF FEMALE PSYCHOLOGY IN THE NOVELS

Perception is a guess or estimate of what is 'out there' depending on how we read the clues; therefore it can never be absolute.

Earl Kelley

Women writers comprise a sizeable segment of Indo-English writers. They present the age old problems of Indian womanhood. The women writers of the present century have the same thematic concerns as their predecessors but the treatments are their own. All of them present before a common reader the tension that has developed in the Indian society at the wake of development. Women want to develop a separate Identity of their own just like the developing nation but the age old traditions, customs and patriarchy hold these women behind. We find a conflict between tradition and modernity in the work of the female authors most of whom are pioneers of modern day Indian feminism. In the novels of women writers we come to know about women who are traditional in their way of living but modern in their outlook and have the desire as well as the capacity to retain their individuality.

There is a clash between awakening individual and the dominance of the conventional social fabric where the individual finds herself vulnerable. She keeps on trying hard (whether successful or not) to rise above the standards to which society holds her responsible. These women want more from life than spending their entire existence in a man's shadow. Kamala Markandaya is considered a pioneer in treating such themes in her novels. The women in women's fiction seek an identity of their own, independent of the men in their family.

Rukmani of Nectar in a Sieve by Kamala Markandaya spent her entire life coping with her marriage to an illiterate poor farmer despite being a reputable headman's daughter. She was not asked before marrying her off neither she had any actual power to protest against it. She was expected to accept her destiny without a word. It also shows how the newly found urbanisation and industrialisation led to disasters in the life of common people who are not accounted for in the entire process. The narrative gives us a detailed account of struggle of a common Indian woman bit against her personal woes as well as those generated by the apathy of the ruling class. We see how the upper class, those rich and fulfilled go on with their work without any sympathy for the ones they harm. Thus the novel presents a complete picture of a woman fighting against several odds all through her life.

Nayantara Sehgal writes about the political situation in the country, and politics becomes a metaphor for her fiction. Anita Desai, on the other hand, dives deep into human psyche and writes about psychological realism. Novels of Anita Desai dealt with human emotions. The shift was from collective to individual perspective. Her heroines represented the 'creative release of feminine sensibility' which began to emerge after World War 2. The journey from dependence to selfhood and freedom was the main concern of her novels. Fire on the Mountain is a 1977 novel by Anita Desai, received the Sahitya Akademi Award, one of the most prestigious awards in the field of Indian literature. The book focuses on an elderly widow Nanda Kaul's isolation and loneliness, who lives in Kasauli and leads a solitary existence.

This woman had spent her entire life working hard, taking care of her husband, children and grand children. Now Nanda had turned recluse and lives alone in a house away from the hustle bustle of the world outside the place. She loves her loneliness and lives peacefully until a great granddaughter turns up at her doorstep. The girl is young but sick and lives in her own inner world. Nanda finds the two of them to be in similar situation except that her reclusion is by choice while that of the girl is by birth, she was born that way. Nanda attempts to be a part of the child's inner world and make a connection with her. Her attempts bore no result but she is not discouraged. She keeps on working on the situation by sharing her life's story with the young great granddaughter.

The novels by modern day women like Manju Kapur, Shobha De, etc started exploring the idea of lovemaking, personal satisfaction, frustrations, pregnancies, abortions, love child, etc without any inhibition. The rise of feminism and the emergence of gender studies in world literature have emboldened women writers the write freely about love and sex and above all about a woman's right to live her life the way she likes. This gave rise to the description of lesbian relationship in fiction as Manju Kapur has done in A Married Woman. A woman's right to choose a lover and have a love child became favourite themes with women novelists. Arundhati Roy depicts love and sex boldly in The God of Small Things. Here, Ammu chooses her low caste lover Velutha against all odds of the society.

Viramti of Difficult Daughters by Manju Kapur accepts her desire for the Professor. She admits to her affair with a married man.

Being in a relationship with him, aborting his love child and expressing the agony related to it. These feelings of inner fury, lamentation, desires of women to be loved by someone now found place in Indian English writing.

Every individual has her own way of seeing the world around her. Our minds work in different ways, there is no one way of describing the events around us for every person can have a different point of view. The same is true for our novels. Every author has his or her own individual way of exploring the world, perceiving it, deciphering the situations and presenting it to the readers. There can be many reasons for this difference in perception of the world by every individual such as his or her childhood, family situation, the place they were raised in, the situations they faced, etc. Every little detail of our lives has a profound effect on our vision. One of the major factors that contribute to this difference in perception of the society around us and its description in the work under discussion in this chapter is the sex of the author.

Allen and Barbara in their essay, "Why Men Don't Listen & Women Can't Read Maps" say: All things are not equal, men and women are different. Not better or worse - different

Through their work these female authors show how new woman of India is breaking the silence of suffering, trying to move out of the caged existence and asserting the individual self. Simon de Beauvoir finds man –woman nexus quite unsymmetrical and uncomplimentary for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined criteria, without reciprocity.

When we talk of the inclusion of female psychology in Indian English novels we see a different society of India coming to fore. A woman's society is more difficult on them, it is strict and has specific rules that a woman is expected to follow. This sort of society requires struggle to break its shackles. Such a struggle needs support structures outside the family to enable women to survive. The state of Indian society and its treatment of women is often different in the work of a women writer as compared to men because somehow, at some or the other point of time, these female authors have themselves felt the pressure of society which changed their innocent perception to one of looking at the world around them with doubt that at any time they could be a victim to the numerous boundations laid on them by the patriarchy prevalent in the society. Such doubts have no place in a man's society hence it never foreshadows a male writers

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Patricia Meyer Specks remarks,

'There seems to be something that we call a women's point of view on outlook sufficiently distinct to be recognizable through the countries

She wants the world to know what happens in a family to a woman, a place or a relation that is supposed to be a person's safety net is equally responsible for a woman's subjugation

A Woman's society is more restricted. The surroundings of a woman have more boundaries as compared to the society shown or observed by a man. We see women a prisoner to this society. A painful picture is painted on the canvas of Indian English Novels by women which shows how female psychology is adversely affected by these shackles in their society. Male by virtue of their sex and patriarchy of our Indian society command greater respect and are free to carry on their lives at will. Thus a man's society is comparatively less cruel. A woman's society is less forgiving in nature. It tests her at all the steps of her lives and a small mistake could cost her dearly.

V. CONCLUSION

Owing to the history of the experiences of the two sexes in India, there is bound t be a difference in the way they think, act, perceive and hence depict the society. Even in the modern day there are traces of patriarchy present in our society. Women are trying hard to defy it. Also their inherent biological and emotional traits make their reflection of society different from those of male writers. This brings about a difference in their way of writing and evolution of characters in their novels. These women are trying their best and succeeding to a great level in the inclusion of female psychology in the novels through their deep understanding of a woman's life, her desires and the journey that poses a number of tests which a woman needs to pass to establish her individual; identity in the world.

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