

INDIAN ENGLISH WOMEN WRITERS- A STUDY OF COMPARISON OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN OEUVRE

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Abstract

Indian Women Authors are leading a step forward towards the successful outcome of their futuristic thought process in Indian Literature. Indian women writing in English is being recognized as major contemporary current in English Literature, including Anita Desai for *Cry*, Shashi Deshpande for *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Anita Nair for *Ladies Coupe*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni for *Palace of Illusions*, the list is endless. The Indian women writers now does not present the poor and pathetic India in their writing rather they deal with complex psychological problems on day to day basis. This is a revolutionary stride in the Indian English Literature. India was considered as a traditional and conservative place and the writers gallantly presented the conventional ideology of Indian mankind but a sudden shift in the mentation of the creative writers marked a significant change.

Indian Women Authors are leading a step forward towards the successful outcome of their futuristic thought process in Indian Literature. The innovative and imaginative work is acknowledged and appreciated on the global level. Indian women writing in English is being recognized as major contemporary current in English Literature, including Anita Desai for *Cry*, Shashi Deshpande for *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Anita Nair for *Ladies Coupe*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni for *Palace of Illusions*, the list is endless. These include the role of English as global lingua franca : the position of English in India. The Indian women writers now does not present the poor and pathetic India in their writing rather they deal with complex psychological problems on day to day basis. This is a revolutionary stride in the Indian English Literature. India was considered as a traditional and conservative place and the writers gallantly presented the

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Traditional Indian English Writing

Traditionally, the work of Indian Women Writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. The reason behind this prejudice is that the women writers did not get domestic space. The Indian women's dreams were within the framework of social or moral commitment. Indian Women Writers usually not got freedom of speech in the society. They even become the victims of another notion of their regional counterpart's. Proficiency in English is available only to writers of the intelligent, affluent and educated classes. Writer's works are often therefore, belong to high social strata and cut off from the reality of Indian life. As, Chaman Nahal writes about feminism in India:

“Both the awareness of woman's position in society as one of disadvantage or in generality compared with that of man and also a desire to remove those is advantages.”

The major works done by Indian Women Writers depict the apathy of Indian women in the patriarchal society. This subject matter is often considered superficial compared to the depiction of the replaced and oppressed lives of women.

Indian writing in English is now gaining ground rapidly. In the realm of fiction, it has heralded a new era and has earned many laurels both at home and abroad. Indian Women Writers have started questioning the prominent old patriarchal domination. They are no longer puppets in the hands of man. They have shown their worth in the field of Literature in terms of quantitatively and qualitatively and are showing it even today without any hurdle. Today, the work of Indian Feminist Writers like Anita Nair, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Manju Kapur, Shashi Deshpande and many more is apprehended in English fiction.

A major growth in Modern Indian fiction is the development of a feminist or women – centric approach that leads to share the emotions and expressions of a female in varied situations. As *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.”

Many Indian novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity of their. The theme varies from one writer to another but primarily, the focus is on feminism.

Kamla Markandya's *Two Virgins* (1994), Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* (1977), Githa Hariharan *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* (2003), Anita Nair's *Mistress* (2005), Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* (1993) and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of my Heart* (1999) are some of the leading Women Writers writing in Indian English Literature.

Modern Concept of Writing

The image of women in fiction has undergone a change during the last two decades. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring self-sacrificing women, towards conflicts, female characters searching for identity; no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status. Now through their work they present the plight of middle-class Indian women, who are oscillating between traditional and modern roles, the subordinate position of women in the orthodox tradition-bound Indian society. These existing norms axe the rights of women and sideline their existence as human beings, the issues of gender

discrimination and social conditioning of the girl-child, husband – wife relationship: the aggressor and the suppressed, and the sexual exploitation of women within and outside the marital frame. Most of the writers has assertively exhibited the plight of the girl-child who has to endure the trauma of gender-discrimination and social conditioning and is made to feel inferior to the progeny since her childhood. Social conditioning restricts the flowering of a girl's personality as it lays stress on the inculcation of pre-defined feminine traits-self- abnegation, servility, endurance, patience and forgiveness. Marriage is set as an ultimate goal for girls. Women have to mould and transform themselves to suit the interests of their male counterparts and in this process suppress their self-identity.

It is interesting to note the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural displacement. Women's presentation is more assertive, more liberated in their view and more articulate in their expression than the woman of the past.

Famous Women Writers of India

The last three decade has seen the emergence of prominent Feminist in Indian Literature to begin with Shashi Deshpande.

(a) Shashi Deshpande's works

Shashi Deshpande is the second daughter of the famous Kannada dramatist in Karnataka and Sanskrit Scholar Shiranga. She did a graduation in Journalism at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Mumbai and worked for a couple of months as a journalist for the magazine *On Looker*. Her first novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* was published in June 1999. She is a winner of the Sahitya Akademi award, for her novel *That Long Silence*. Her third famous novel is *Roots and Shadow*. She has projected objectively a new female face with subjective experiences with a geocentric vision. She reflects on the problems and concerns of the middle class Indian women. Her writings are rooted in the culture in which she lives. Her remarks are sensitive to the common everyday events and experiences and give an artistic expression to something that is simple and mundane. Her feminism is particularly Indian in the sense that it is borne out of the predicament of Indian women placed between contradictory identities. The women characters are with traditional approaches trying to tie family and profession to maintain the virtues of Indian culture.

Deshpande's simple yet powerful prose reads like a grandmother's tale that pierces the deep into heart and settles. At one point, the use of omniscient narration teases the reader.as the speaker forces events but is not to share until time and plot unfolds it .The underlying theme in Shashi Deshpande's novels is human relationships especially the ones that exist between father and daughter, husband and wife, between mother and daughter. In all relationships, the women occupy the central stage and significantly, the narration shifts through her feminine consciousness. Being a woman herself, she sympathises with women. As *Shashi Deshpande* clarifies in one of the interviews about feminist approach in her writing,

“If others see something feminist in my writings, I must say that it is not consciously done. It is because the world for women is like that and I am mirroring the world.”

(b) Manju Kapur's work

The other well known novelist is Manju Kapur. She is a professor in Delhi University. Her first novel *Difficult Daughters* won Common Wealth Writer's Prize for Eurasian region and *The*

Immigrants received DSC prize for South Asia. look at the books deeply. All Manju Kapur's novels take shape in the family background. In an interview with Jai Arjun , Manju Kapur says:

“Literature by women, about families, always has these larger considerations, with years of studying texts, it becomes almost second nature to look beneath the surface at social and economic forces, gender relationships and how they are played out in an arena that, in my writing happens to be the home. But then, all sort of things happening outside do affect what is happening inside the home.” (Singh)

Difficult Daughters is about the saga of three generations set during the partition times, no doubt Manju Kapur's protagonists are essentially women and their quest for identity.

Malti Agrawal in “*Manju Kapur's Home: A Chronicle of Urban Middle Class in India*” observes, “*Manju Kapur's depiction of her heroine, her travelling the labyrinth of rules and regulations of traditional middle class milieu and stepping out to start earning for her existence are superb. A girl in Indian family is whining under the burden of patriarchy. She while living in her home feels herself homeless-shelter less. She strives to explore space for herself. She tries to be self-reliant in order to survive*”.

In her writings, Manju Kapur has emphasised on the issues in the context of patriarchy; inter-religious marriage; family bond, male-female bond, co-existence of past and present. She has narrated her women protagonists as a victim of biology, gender, domestic violence, and circumstances. *Kapur* thinks that,

“*There is a man within every woman and a woman in every man. When, manhood is questioned womanhood is fragmented.*”

She presents a glimpse of feminism keeping in mind the Indian context and manages to be simultaneously both Indian and Universal.

Anita Nair's work

Anita Nair who has recently been shining among the galaxy of Indian Women Writers during present times. She is one of the finest writers in Indian Writing in English with an international reputation. Born at Mundakottakurissi near Shoranur in Kerala State, Anita was brought up in a suburb in Chennai (Madras), Tamil Nadu.. Her first book, a collection of short stories named *Satyr of the Subway* won her a fellowship from the Virginia Center for Creative Arts. Since then, Anita published a number of books and every creative output bears peculiar characteristic. She also received FLO FICCI Women Achievers Award in 2008 for her contribution in Literature. Anita Nair's geographical location and area has made deep impact on her writing. She has written about . Her works also include many travelogues. Thus, Nair's writing has wide range of themes.

Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* is the story of a woman's search for strength and independence. Akhilandeshwari is single and forty five years old, an income-tax clerk, and a woman who has never been allowed to live her own life - always the daughter, the sister, the aunt, the provider. Until the day she gets herself a one-way ticket to the seaside town of Kanyakumari, gloriously alone for the first time in her life and determined to break free of all that her conservative Tamil Brahmin life has bound her to. In the intimate atmosphere of the ladies coupé which she shares with five other women, Akhila gets to know her fellow travellers.

The author poses many a taboo question on the role of women in contemporary India. Her India echoes a system of a sex-role and oppression of women under patriarchal organization. Patriarchy under the garb of cultural and traditional forms tries to repress, and humiliate women.

Her novel sounds like a discourse on feminism. All her characters are subject to gruelling experiences of domestic oppression at the hands of their families and each of them acquires resilience to battle and also to discover their inner source of strength, capability and dynamism.

Christina Koning praised her work by saying-

“Nair conveys her protagonists' dilemmas with a freshness and charm that makes her story more than just the predictable feminist homily it might appear. She is particularly good on the domestic details such as lazy Sunday lunches, a family row, the sights, sounds and smells of a busy railway station, which make up her characters' lives. These give her writing a sharpness and immediacy that lifts it above the commonplace.”

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's work

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award –winning Indian author, poet, activist and teacher. Her themes include the Indian experience, contemporary America , women, immigration, history, myth and the joys and challenges of living in a multi- cultural world. Several of her novels and stories have been made into films and plays. She has won an American Book Award and a Light of India award. Divakaruni teaches Creative Writing at the University of Houston and writes for both adults and children.

Divakaruni's second novel, *Sister of My Heart*, is a realistic treatment of the relationship between two cousins, Sudha and Anju, who narrate alternating chapters of this modern drama that develops over decades. Divakaruni returns to the lives of Sudha and Anju in *The Vine of Desire*. In this sequel, Sudha comes to live with Anju after leaving her abusive husband. According to a *Publishers Weekly* critic,

“the author's ‘lyrical descriptions of the characters’ inner and outer worlds bring a rich emotional chiaroscuro to an uplifting story about two women who learn to make peace with the difficult choices circumstances have forced upon them.”

She has grappled with contemporary issues and a variety of themes- motherhood, mothering, marriage, individuation, class, conflicts, marginalization, woman as wife, mother, sister and lastly, yet significantly, woman as human, not just a sex object. She seems skeptical about tradition and, yet discover in her heritage the solutions for the needs and longings of women in contemporary times. She aspires to modernity; attempt to be universal; feel bound to the roots and as a result, find herself in an anomalous and jarring position. Striving for identity in the postcolonial world, her protagonists present the dilemma of the modern day woman covering each and every aspect of her life. In fact, her works have mapped the social, political and cultural changes brought about by colonization, postcolonial consciousness and globalization. Her manner of expression may be different but her ultimate aim is the same i.e. a peaceful and progressive life beneficial for the woman community.

Conclusion

The above study shows that Women Writers have gone up from difficult to tribal and rural areas too, but all of them have expressed their concern for women and their problems. The variety of subjects, they have touched upon is a great contribution in creating awareness for the modern

women all over the globe. The variety of subjects handled by them considering Indian environment needs an appreciation. Some of the writers have not claimed that they belong to feminist's movement yet their writings suggest that their inner spirit and feelings are for the welfare of the women only.

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