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Persistence of Post-Colonial Indian Women Writers for Reconstruction of Emerging Women

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Abstract

The Indian English Novel had pass through several stages before reaching present position. The post-independence writing throw light on the contemporary problems such as poverty, corruption, caste related issues, lack of exposure for women, economic instability and so on. Indian women novelists constitute a new voyage in novel writing which provide keen insight towards the female psyche. Women novelist actively engaged in exploring the female consciousness and gradual emersion towards an awakening conscience and that leads to enrichment of their inner self in a patriarchal society. It is essential for that period because the large part of the feminine experience is out of the male psyche. There for post-colonial women writers were authentically portrayed conflicts and traumas of women experience and their engrossing study reveal the progression of women from feminine to female.

Keywords: Feminine, female, transmutation, stereotypes, trauma, marginalization, conscience.

Introduction

The emergence of Indian Novel and its reception has undergone a series of major shifts. The most spectacular change that took place in Indian English literature's narrative technique coincides with Indians journey from colonial to post-colonial phase. The Novel emerged as the most forceful and convincing of all the genres of literature in recent years. It has been widely accepted as the most appropriate form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in today's world. However, the Novel, leads the reader towards realism. It intends to appear as a slice of life itself to represent "real men and women in real situation". In fact, the Novelist is simultaneously, both an observer and preserver of his fictional universe. No doubt, he is an ardent critic of the contemporary society.

The Indian English Novel has passed through several stages before reaching present position. The evolution of Indian fiction in English may be broadly divided into four stages. The first stage includes the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chunder Dutt, B.R. Rajan, T.Ramakrishna and others. The period after the First World War has been considered the second period. In the first decade after the war, S.K. Venkita Ramani, Sharkar Ram and A.S.P.Ayyer were the Novelist who came to the fore. After them comes the emergence of the great 'Trio' Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao who are considered as the finest painters of Indian sensibilities. The post-independence Era, which is the third phase. The post-independence writing throw light on the contemporary problems such as poverty, hunger, death, disease, corruption, caste related issues, lack of education, lack of exposure for woman and so on. Economic instability has been a haunting problem for the poor. The contemporary writers have also written about the need for economic upliftment and eradication of poverty. Another important feature of this period was the growth of Indian woman Novelist. There was the impact in the post war period on the populace that gave rise to psychological disorders, loss of moral.

Values and disturbance to man's peace of mind. This agonized existence of modern man is sympathetically explored by many women writers and this endeavor changed the face of Indian English Novel.

After 1980 is the period of so called new fiction which includes new Novelists like Salman

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Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and others. These Novelists heralded a new era in the history of Indian English fiction. They experimented with new themes and technique. All the Novelists of this period have proved that Indian English fiction is conspicuous, prolific and unique.

The growth of Indian English Novel is remarkable from the historical perspective. Indian English literature has passed through several phases such as Indo- Anglican, Indo-English, Indian writing in English and recently, Indian English literature. The impact of English education, national awakening and the influence of European models are the chief factors responsible for the emergence and development of Indian Novel in English.

The intellectuals in India before independence concentrated on the national awakening and the society in a realist manner. The pioneer of Novelists including Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chunder Dutt, Toru Dutt and Rabindranath Tagore were trying to establish a new sense of social morality in place of the age – old social values. They were social reformers and with them the novel became an exercise to project social realism. The early novels were sketchy, domestic and aloof from the political happenings. The early Novelists depicted rural and domestic life filled with superstitions and religious whims with an equal emphasis on morals and social ills. In spite of that their creative efforts were very poor. The deeper issues of human life especially women do not enter in to the earlier Novels.

The writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao attempted to explore the cotemporary Indian society from their specific views without distorting the reality. They emerged on the literary scene in 1930. It was the real beginning of Indian Novel in English. Thus, the major contribution to the Indian Novel in English in the Pre-Independence era is of men and not of women. The Indian Novelists before Independence were mainly interested in social, political and historical concerns. But later in 1950s a new kind of novel dealing with the contemporary issues appeared on the Indian literary scene. The Psychological Novel depicting the human personality and inner realities of life replaced the realistic Novel. The Novels written in the post- Independence period successfully render the Indian reality.

A number of novelists explored the psychological and sociological conflicts in the social and the individual life. There is a kind of shift from Socio-political concerns to the Inner life of human being. In other words, the center of their novel is shifted from the society to an Individual. Another Important development, in this period is “resurgence of women’s writing” (Jain, 1995, P.60) Jasbir Jain’s words can be matched with Mukesh Ranjan Verma’s comment that “perhaps the most striking feature of the contemporary Indian English fiction has been emergence of feminist literature” (Verma 2002, P.5) He also notes that the women writers are giving voice to the sufferings, aspirations and asseverations of women in a traditionally male dominated world” (Verma, 2002 P.5). Thus, the rise of women writers creates a significant space in the terrain of post-colonial Indian English writing.

In the world women writers had been confronted many problems and challenges before reaching the present state traditionally; the work of women writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the

superior worth of male experience. There is general misconception that men are meant to dominate and rule women to subordinate and to be ruled and this hierarchy is biologically determined, natural and unchanging. Patriarchy curtails the freedom of women in all manners and deprives them all their resources. Their freedom of speech and even the very existence itself is prevented by the patriarchal society.

As per the gender roles that are socially determined men are given more freedom. Women are not given access and authority to make decisions within and outside the family. Gender injustice is escalated all over the world. The male centered theories were not ready to view them as a matter of difference. They hold that women are inferior, less intelligent and less creative.

Male centered models are inadequate for the analysis of female experience. The experience and behavior of women cannot be accommodated by the patriarchy and it is considered as deviant or uncultured. In such a model of culture two groups come in existence. The dominant (men) and the muted (women).

It found separate roles for men and women, women were considered inferior and no overlap of roles was allowed. Male critics do not consider what the women thinkers are saying. On the other hand, they even boast of their ignorance of feminist criticism. At the same time feminist writers are anxious for the approval from their “white fathers”

Language related debates is one of the most exciting areas of feminist of writing. In Elaine Showalter’s view plenty of words are there in any language to express very strong emotions but women are not allowed to use them. They are beyond their reach. On the other hand, they are often forced in silence, euphemism or circumlocution. Virginia Woolf clearly writes. “--- Men shocked if a woman says what she feels”. Women haven’t got deserving space and see it as a result of conspiracies of male historians. International women’s movement, the assumptions of literary study have been profoundly altered. In Indian sexism is still a threat to women, who are exposed to murder, rape, torture and variety of other crimes. But our sensitive women writers do not lose their sight towards the plight of sisterhood in our society. With the rise of feminism in India, in the seventies, the feminist literary critics came to believe that women had to create literature of their own, in which the feminine sensibility could consider and confront the peculiarly feminine issues and experience. It was essential to do so, because a large part of the feminine experience is out of the reach of the male psyche and therefore an authentic and sensitive portrayal of the conflicts and traumas could be achieved only by women writers. Thus, later part of seventies saw a spurt in feminist writing which concentrated in the vivid range of the exploited female. Such works presented women as oppressed, exploited, tortured, cheated, angry, Alienated and rebellious. Thus, protest taking in different forms against the “male domination”. In India, study of female psyche is an effort to liberate women from their marginalized condition. It is also an attempt to reinterpret their status in the world. Feminist consciousness has certainly given a fresh ardor and excitement to literary studies.

Indian women writers made their significant contribution to enrichment of Indian English novels. Though Indian Women writers constitute fiction, a new genre, which

became a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. It provides insight towards the female psyche. Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Desh Panda, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Bharathi Mukherjee, R.P Jhabvala, Maya Kapoor and Geetha Mehta have heralded new consciousness, particularly the pathetic plight of the Indian women. Women writers have attempted to understand how social restrictions influence lives of women and how it has affected their relationship to art and literature. If the male writers concentrated on the individuals predicament, Socio-economic- political changes and an over simplification of the feminine, while women writers concentrated themselves with the subtleties of oppression, issues of power in a patriarchal set up and unjust marginalization of women.

Indian women novelists have turned towards the women's world with great introspective intensity and authenticity. They have launched a voyage in Novel writing to explore the inner consciousness of women's characters. In the novels of Shashi Desh Pande, three types of suffering women characters reoccur with subtle changes. The first type belongs to the traditional woman, who believes that her place is with her husband and family. The second type of women is bolder more self-reliant and rebellious. The third type of women characters are the women in between neither traditional nor radical in their ideas and practice.

Other noted novelist is Anita Desai, who breaks a new ground in the world of Indian English fiction by shifting the emphasis from the external to the internal world. She is known as the pioneer of psychological novel in modern Indian English literature. She penetrates psychologically deep in to the inner working of women and externalizes their passive reaction.

Bharathi Mukherjee is yet another significant woman novelist, who explores the phenomenon of migration, the status of the new immigrants, their feeling of alienation as expatriates and the Indian women sojourning abroad and her struggle for identity. Her novels are an engrossing study in the progression of women from feminine to female.

Arundhati Roy, emerged on the international fictional scene by her first novel, 'The God of Small Things', a Booker prize winner Book, she seems to be a harsh critic of the traditional way of Indian life. In her works she deals with universal theme of social consciousness.

Kamala Markandaya, in her writing shown the impact of modernity on the traditional Indian society and depict how changes in economic and social order adversely affect women more than men.

The brief survey of Indian women novelists in English clearly shows that women writers have made their permanent mark in the field of English fiction. Women novelists writing in English attempt to emphasize women as the central figure and keenly perceived the problems and predicaments of the women. Each one of them has daring and realistically portrayed the feminist issues in the post-independence Indian epoch. post- Independence women novelist actively engaged in exploring the female consciousness of the women character and gradual emersion towards an awakening conscience and that leads to enrichment of their inner self in a patriarchal society. Self-evaluation and self-discovery help the women characters to realize their own inner strength. Most of the women novelist focuses on women's issues. It is essential for that period because the large part of the feminine

experience is out of reach of the male psyche. Therefore, an authentic and sensitive portrayal of the conflicts and traumas of women experience could be profoundly achieved by women writers

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