

## FEMINISM IN INDIAN FICTION IN ENGLISH : AN OVERVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Feminism is strongly self-conscious and operates with an agenda, as do other social positions. It is also important to first state that feminism should not be traditionally regarded in literature. Clearly, we ought to familiarize ourselves with Feminism's core tenets. We need to see at what point it was born and why in history also relevant is the question of procedure. We ought to consider how feminism is a phenomenon, what basic tendencies it exhibits, and how it is continually changing. We need to see, in particular, how feminism expresses itself in English in India and in Indian literature. We will limit ourselves in this attempt to the literature of children and women from 1980 onwards. In Indian English fiction, we will see if there is a feminist philosophy of literature or whether Indian authors in English shift towards a feminist ideology because of their choice of topic and style of language. Here we have to find out that simple cataloguing of the lives and woes of women is not feminism. There is a temptation to group all women's writing into feminist writing, just as it is often wrongly thought that feminists are just females.

**Keywords:** Building, Feminist, Independent India

### INTRODUCTION

It is possible to date the roots of Indian writing in English by women back to the last quarter of the 19th century. For feminism in India, this advent is a major landmark. One of the key reasons for the modernization of Indian women's thought has been access to English education. Women were motivated by the wide reach of higher education to seek English education, which had a visible influence on women's status. Indian women have come into contact with Western society, ideas, ideology, art, and glamorous and thought-provoking movements. They had a chance to communicate in the newly learned English language to their compatriots.

The academic work and teaching of Feminism and Women's Studies in India is well considered to have been highly based on western feminist philosophy. In terms of cultural determinants, place and tradition, definitions, while embraced in India, have yet to be indigenized. "The survey of literature reveals common pamphlets with headings such as" What is patriarchy? or "Women and

Law," which has provided a helpful role through NGOs and the community workforce to raise awareness. However, interdisciplinary theoretical criteria have not been developed within the higher levels of the classroom, or to lead high quality academic study in India. In particular fields such as literacy, population and wellbeing, commendable empirical research has been carried out, but one lacks the wider base that specifically defines, with pedagogical metrics, the frames of reference suitable for India's feminist discourse. There have been intermittent initiatives in this direction by Women's Studies Centers and NGOs. There is no consolidated body of theory, however, and its demonstrable correlation with scientific studies.

### **Early Indian Women Writers - Vernaculars & English**

There is a long and complicated tradition of the battle of women authors for their right to claim a niche, to have their voices known. In different historical times and in diverse countries, the status of women differed. In accordance with the new social system, their status has shifted. In a patriarchal society, the general situation was one of suppression and male dominance. Women enjoyed a respected place in society in the early Vedic period. Girls were raised in the same manner that boys were raised. Girls had total independence. As the embodiment of grace, tradition and wisdom, women were considered. The acclaimed Vedic scholars were Gargi and Maitreyee. The famous poets whose verses were inserted into the Vedas and Puranas were Val, Saraswati, Ubhayabharati, Lopamudra, Ghosa, Apala, Romasa, Suiya, Savitri, Juhu, Yami, etc.

The status of women began to deteriorate in the later Vedic period, however. Men have founded themselves as society's masters. Education became theirs, allowing them to compose to their benefit 'shastras'. These scriptures are the law of the world. Evils have come into being, such as women's subjugation, slavery, child-marriage, widowhood. This has taken women's imagination to a halt.

Then came the Smriti and Puranic Ages. The regime consolidated and became rigid toward women. A great blow to the role of women was Manu Smriti. It has imposed several constraints on women's activities, especially on widows. The Smritis argue that, even though he has no personality, the wife should regard her husband as God. A woman's sole obligation is to follow her lord, and so on. Women have been submissive, illiterate, frail and dependent as a result.

Next, the status of women changed to some degree during the Epic Period. In order to grow their personality, they have better reach. There was equality for girls to pick their partners. As Buddhism came into being, it resurrected the early-Brahmanic society's virtues of offering women an acceptable position. This offered women opportunities to join the Bhikshuni Sangh. This allowed them keys to schooling and self-culture. Their presence in public life was acknowledged. It gave birth to many trained women who were professional in the holy texts.

### **Women In Indian Fiction in English**

Language has a vital capacity to change or chain individuals. Literature uses language as its medium to delineate reality in the wake of going it through the cauldron of human innovative psyche and vision. Language passes on with it the speculations and assessments of a culture and the child while learning the language accepts these photos and characteristics ordinarily as the individual grows up. As Ngugi wa Thiong 'O, a Kenyan writer states, "Language brings culture and culture helps particularly through orature and literature the entire combination of characteristics by which we come to see ourselves just as others."

Right from the beginning of human culture, language has been shaped and mentioned by the male conviction framework, the condition reflecting the man driven set up when the social construction rested cautiously and quintessentially on the division of work and an undeniable separation of individuals overall and private circles among individuals. This solicitation has continued with various many years afterward even till today notwithstanding the legitimization and the care acknowledged through the progress of science and advancement. Incredibly, the sound and basic division of work in the hidden periods of humankind's set of experiences takes the dishonorable and awful kind of exhibiting the instrument of limit and control on ladies rehearsed by men, who have a respectably beneficial situation in the monetary, political and social fields of society. And a male driven society, reformist frameworks and polarization in the people " s relationship happen in view of the speculations or the proper viewpoints by which they attempt to appreciate themselves similarly as others. Having a key position and being arranged in the point of convergence of social affiliations, male dispenses minor space to the female. Human tendency to manage and control and think similarly as matched boundaries of dominating/shoddy, culture/nature, average/uncommon, etc properties the less preferred qualities to ladies who exist on the periphery space of society. Speculations, "by and large the impression of culture" than being observational basically, show up as data in Foucault " s terms. These are the indications of the incomplete dispositions of people propelling adverse appraisal of the other sex. These thoughts engender in the public arena through foundations, for instance, family, guidance, and media and become fundamental piece of the technique of socialization of the animals achieving ladies having the opportunity to be both the losses of the maltreatment approach similarly as the guilty parties of their own abuse.

### **Awakening of Feminism**

The awakening of feminism in the world can be dated to the middle of the 19th century. This time witnessed the rise of a collection of educated, articulate, independent women with new ideas and thoughts in western countries. They were absolutely persuaded that women were able to do things as well as men. The social movement contributed to this kind of awakening in women. In their essays, they have sought to redefine themselves. They began to challenge the partiality and structure of gender. They felt that there should be more women joining the

new movement and writing about their social issues. Many of them shared, in their books, their difficulties, perceptions, emotions, wishes, expectations, and shortcomings. Few of them spoke from their private lives, using their own stories to campaign against women's low socioeconomic standing and disparity. They masked themselves in a way, as fictitious heroines of their writings and displayed their own encounters, in order to escape the potential humiliation in their traditional setting. Their literature presented a new woman who had declined to submit to a man. Feminism was coined as this global and progressive notion. This term was first used to designate the nascent women's rights movement by the French dramatist, Alexander Dumas. It has steadily grown to be a major intellectual phenomenon to ensure women's equality with men in all aspects of life.

These movements, albeit with separate names, were already started by women in England and America. In the late 1860s, the Suffragette Movement, which marked the beginning of the Women's Emancipation Movement, began to fight for the rights of women and to improve their living conditions in society, especially in developed cities. The campaign was profoundly concerned with the protection from institutional violence and workplace risks of women and girls. The degrading prison conditions that exploited the lives of many women and children were noted by Elizabeth Fry, who advocated for jail improvements. She campaigned for the inmates to provide more facilities. Margaret Sanger campaigned against abuse and sexual assault. In order to support destitute women and girls, Angela Burdetteoutts established charitable organizations. More and more women have been involved in civic events.

Their groups agitated against their small place in the culture. In their essays, this increased feminist understanding is evident. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, *The Second Sex* of Simone de Beauvoir, *Erotic Politics* of Kate Millett, *Dreaming About Women* of Mary Ellmann, *Sexual / Textual Politics* of Elaine Showalter, *A Doll's House* of Ibsen, etc. are some noteworthy examples. Such thought-provoking books are primarily responsible for instilling a modern awakening in women that has inspired the feminist ideas of academics. As Elaine Showalter says:

We started to draw parallels between our own work and our lives through the Women's Liberation Movement, to note the differences between the personalities and desires that drew us, along with thousands of other women, to the study and teaching of literature, and the restricted and secondary roles offered to fictional heroines, female poets, or female scholars. Literary experience includes feminism with the fierce desperation of discovery or a great awakening.

### **Writers in English and Feminism - Post Independence Period**

A community of modern feminist authors in English appeared in the post-independence era of India, who had a distinct sense of their identity. Sources such as epics, mythology, legends and folktales are not traditional, not inspired by them. They are well trained, audacious and persuasive. They know the definition of masculine superiority. This time marks a shift in mindset, perspective, themes, and imagery. Such authors express a modern personal perception and feminine experience. By rehearsing relevant problems in their essays, they build their own literature, making it a good

medium to bear their feminist thoughts and convictions. They attempt to expose the aspects of 'self buried beneath the constructs of selfhood that were cultural and patriarchal. Via characters specially designed for this purpose, they represent their experiences and real life circumstances. Rashmi Bajaj gives the following remark regarding the recent works of Indian women authors in English:

We also expanded social consciousness, a strong awareness of women's identity, activism for the cause of women, questions of alienation and identity crisis, a daring representation of gender and a focus on the study of personal relationships.

In the 1960s, many Indian woman poets in English made their debut. Kamala Das, Monika Varma, Margaret Chatterjee, Ira De, Roshan Alkazi, Sujatha Modayil, Mamta Kalia, Gauri Deshpande, Sunita Jain, Lila Ray, Suniti Namjoshi, Mary Gupta, Indira Dhanrajgir, Shri Devi Singh, Lalita Venkateswaran, Gauri Pant, Tillottama Rajan, Chitra Pershad, Nasima Aziz, Vimla Rao, Malathi Rao, Dorothy Sinha, etc. They are poets equipped with poetic genius. Mostly, they are confessionals. They talk about their personal experiences, reflecting the sensibility of femininity. They are creating the man-woman relationship theme. They represent the grievances of women living in a society dominated by men and coping with themselves, such as passion, ambition, sex, sadness, grief, etc. They are the founders of certain special fields of sensuality and intimacy for women to discover. They do not hesitate to chat about issues such as abortion, menstruation, masturbation, lesbianism, etc. Thus, the post-independence scenario offers a better indulgence of Indian woman authors through their marvellous creations, who have carved a permanent niche in English poetry.

### **Male Indian Writers in English and Feminism**

As far as English-language male Indian authors are concerned, their relative presence and interest in coping with feminist concerns has remained less than expected. K. Meera Bai observes: While the 'modern woman' finds appreciation of her life and support for her cause from some quarters in Indian-English literature too, she only makes her appearance in flesh and blood in female writers' novels. Nonetheless, there are a few exceptional works by male writers too, such as, *The Old Woman and the Cow* by Mulk Raj Anand and *So Many Hungers* by Bhabani Bhattacharya, in which due emphasis was given to female characters and their issues. Such authors as Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan made every attempt to consider the issues affecting women in a evolving world. But there are very limited numbers of such male Indian authors, who attributed due merit to the position of women, and those who succeeded in persuading readers to this cause through equal treatment.

It is important to note that authors in regional languages still do not fall behind in their works when describing the identity crisis. Tarabai Shinde (Marathi), Nanjanagudu Tirumalamba (Kannada), Kashibai Kanitkar (Marathi), Kalyanamma (Kannada), M. K. Indira (Kannada), Shyamala Devi (Kannada), Triveni (Kannada), Vishvasundaramma Tallapada (Telugu), Acchamamba Bandaru

(Telugu), Devi Homavati (Hindi), Raghavan Chudamani (Tamil), P. Some of the women feminist authors in the regional Indian languages are Vatsala (Malayalam), Varsha Adalja (Gujarati), Malini Bhattacharya (Bengali).

### **THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To build the Indian Feminist Theory Viewpoint by rethinking core words such as patriarchy, gender difference, freedom, labour, family , culture, etc.;
2. Suggesting a methodology acceptable for Women's Studies study in India;

Ultimately and most notably, as it continues to be even today, all significant feminist writing by men and women, and there is a wide corpus of it, was in regional literature. While there has been a singular absence of Indian literature in English from a female viewpoint. The female voice or figure or concern or environment, however, has recorded in Indian English Writing to a considerable extent. But we must first establish the idea of a female aesthetic in the evolution of the canon of feminist Indian English Literature. We ought to remember quite carefully, in the absence of any definitive description of a feminine aesthetic, the various ways in which writing can be feminist. Let us see in what respects, among Indian English poets, we may speak of a canon of feminism. By questioning in what respects a writer can be called a feminist, we should address the creation of a Feminist canon. Next, we will address the problems involved in the evolution of such a canon.

Indian academics have replied to arguments on feminism and the challenges of women in Feminist philosophy. Much of the widely available research on women, however, has an empirical foundation rooted in Indian environments, while well-honed western methods have been used in the study. At many stages of awareness building and policy activism, this has culminated in differences. New content has been taken to the market and academia by Indian publishers such as Kali, Zubaan, Woman Unlimited, Sage, Oxford University Press, Macmillan, Rawat Publishers, Sahitya Akademi, The Indian Institute of Advanced Research, Allied Publishers. NGOs like Jagori and Saheli have been publishing pamphlets to increase consciousness. Such contributions are praiseworthy and we appreciate their commitment to advancing our thoughts on the initiative. Yet there is a perceived need for books that are interdisciplinary, contribute to the curriculum of colleges, and are produced by a continual process of consulting with students and groups of teachers.

### **CONCLUSION**

Feminism, generally speaking, is a social movement phenomenon that aims to liberate women from the shackles and grip of male patriarchal society, empowering them to assert their freedom as autonomous human beings. It aims to rebel against the oppressive climate in which a woman is expected to work. The primary aim of feminism is to increase the status of women and to provide men with equal opportunities and respect. Compulsory education for women and better jobs are

the goals of feminism. In their works, the authors, who were inspired by the feminist ideology, engaged in communicating their thoughts, which contributed to the creation of feminist literature. The above study demonstrates that many Indian woman authors have achieved a phenomenal height of accomplishment in English. The methods, tone, graft and form have been understood by them and applied in their writings. They preferred different subjects, such as their male counterparts, but they gave the role of women particular significance. The same challenges and predictions that have gotten in the way of women's advancement have been known by them. Their works show different facets of the thoughts of contemporary women and demonstrate the truly awakened sensitivity of feminism and feminist views. These female authors are brave, blunt and have demonstrated a rational approach towards marriage, intimacy, desire and relationships between men and women. In Indo-English literature, they've developed a new tradition. Their contributions are clearly impressive and they have acquired an excellent place in the literature of Indo-English.

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