

Question on Individual Identity and Empowering Women in Modern Perspectives through Indian English Literature

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Abstract

Literature plays an important role in the formation of the society because literature is like a mirror in which we can find the glimpse of several cultures, traditions and customs only one age but also many ages of past and future. Gender issues have been always an interesting topic in the society. There is a large scope of innovative and creative dimensions in the field of Gender study. Generally in earlier time gender was only limited to the masculinity and femininity but after Second World War the concept of individual identity emerged in the whole world. If we observe minutely the postcolonial literature it often put a question on individuality not universality. The battle between sexes has been going on for a long time. The stereotyped images of sita, Durga and Urvashi obsess Indian Imagination and distort the male vision of social reality. So the purpose of this research paper is to explore the dynamic changes in the stereotyped role of the women in the present society.

Key Words: Gender, Identity, stereotyped, Dynamic, Emergence

Introduction

Feminism in Indian fiction in English is as commonly conceived is a very sublime and over-the-top concept handled subtly that usually poetry and novels are capable of offering Indian writers have often raised their voice against social and cultural inequality that constrained women's liberty and perpetrated institutional seclusion of women Indian women novelist and other writers composing their thoughts in English range from array of writers like Toru Dutt to Kamala Das and from Sarojini Naidu to Suniti

Namjoshi, Arundhati Roy to Shashi Deshpande and from Manju Sharma to male novelists like Mulk Raj satirizes the socio-religious hypocrisy prevalent in various works of society. R.K. Narayan has also highlighted the sufferings of Indian housewife in the course of his representation of fictional imagination. Women writers explore into the life of housewives and condemn in there exploitation in order to make sense of the fast changing pace of the new world Kamala Das explores into the women's plight in India and the world around them.

In ancient India women were having equal status with men in early Vedic period. They were very educated and there are differences of women sages such as Maitrayi, in our ancient text .But with the coming of famous treatise of Manu that is Manusmriti, the status of women was neglected to a subordinate position to men on kind of discriminatory practices started such as child marriage devdasi pratha, Nagar Vadhu system sati pratha etc. Women socio political rights were curtailed and they were made fully dependent upon the male members of the family their right to education right to work and right to decide for themselves are taken away during medieval period the condition of women got worsened with the advent of Muslim ruler in India and also the British rule but the British rule also brought the Western ideas in the country.

A few enlightened Indians such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy influenced by the modern concept of freedom Liberty equality and justice is started to question the prevailing discriminatory practices against women through his unrelenting efforts the British word forced to abolish the ill practice of sati similarities several other social reformers such IshwarChandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, Acharya Vinoba Bhave etc worked for the betterment of women in India during freedom movement almost all the leaders of struggle were of the view that

women should be given equal status in free India and all type of discriminatory practices must stop and for this include such provisions in the constitution of India for empowering women social economically and politically. The worth of a civilization can be judged from the position that it bestows two women several factors justify the prosperity and greatness of India's ancient culture one of the greatest is the honoured place ascribed to women undoubtedly the modern era has brought a drastic change in the position of women but still there is a lot which is unheard and unsung thanks to female Indian English women novelist who have brought and still are bringing those mysterious multifaceted phases female universe which are still complicated puzzle to be solved.

Feminist unfurl the deep rooted cause leading to oppression of women and endeavour to remove them feminist try to bring about a change in the social milieu in which women are accepted as equal in all respects two men in the equal sharing of right opportunities and responsibilities in the process of evolution of human society. Number of female Indian writers are fighting for women's right through their literary immortal pieces thank to such novelist as Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya and Manju Kapoor who depicted the anxiety role as daughter wife and mother in a predominantly patriarchal society and her

new found sense of self longing for freedom and private space search for self identity has become a real palpable human problem of our society.

Indian women is typical social character quite different from her community members outside the subcontinent she has to play a vital role in family society and life as a whole she is mother sister wife and daughter, all rolled into one and she has to act and perform all to all the capacities in her life time. The question of feminine identity is a lively issue for women novelist and strikes a sympathetic cord in their hearts Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya and Manju Kapoor .These Indian female novelist have opened new vistas through their literary masterpieces to unsung unheard suppressed and Succumb voices Shashi Deshpande a prolific writer has shown staunch feminism in her works a close analysis of her novels leaves no doubt about her genuine concern for women protagonist are acutely aware of their smothered and fettered existence in an orthodox and male dominated society caught between tradition and modernity her protagonist search for identity with in marriage.

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offering Indian writers have often raised their voice against social and cultural inequality that constrained women's liberty and perpetrated institutional seclusion of women Indian women novelist and other writers composing their thoughts in English range from array of writers like Toru Dutt to Kamala Das and from Sarojini Naidu to Suniti Namjoshi, Arundhati Roy to Shashi Deshpande and from Manju Sharma to male novelists like Mulk Raj satirizes the socio-religious hypocrisy prevalent in various works of society. R.K. Narayan has also highlighted the sufferings of Indian housewife in the course of his representation of fictional imagination. Women writers explore into the life of housewives and condemn in there exploitation in order to make sense of the fast changing pace of the new world Kamala Das explores into the women's plight in India and the world around them.

Kamala Das's autobiography *Summer in Calcutta* (1965) shows how her urge for identity and depression find its fulfilment in the super imposition of her poetic self over the domestic cell which compelled her to play the monotonous and enslaved rule of a wife they are one among the worst sufferers of your cultural political and economic exploitation injustice oppression and violence there.... and miseries are boundless. They do not enjoy any social security. As Kamala Das said "He did not beat me but my I said women

body, The weight of my breast and womb crushed me I shrank pitifully.” (3)

Violence against women in India has ever been uncommon phenomenon women in Indian society have been victims of humiliation torture and harassment as one can observe from written records and newspaper reports. Kamla Markandaya can be called a feminist writer on the basis of the feminist perspective. She shows the woman who is struggling to find out her identity in the male dominated world, awakened woman is represented by Kamala Markandaya in her novels like *Nectar in a Sieve*, *A Handful of Rice*, *Some Inner Fury*, *The Golden Honey Comb* and *Silence of Desire*. A woman's quest for identity and defining herself finds reflection in her noble and shows an important motive of female characters she portrays a realistic picture of contemporary women through the characters like Rukamani, Nalini, Ira, Mira, Roshan, Helen, Lalita, Mohini, Usha and Valli etc.

She explores the emotional reaction and spiritual responses of women and their predicament with sympathetic understanding her heroines are in constant search for meaning and value of life they are ready for sacrificing themselves they move from self denial to self-assertion and from self negation to self-affirmation The feminist voice is heard in all her novels characters in Rukamani, in

Nectar in a Sieve is stronger than other characters in her novels. Her life is full of hopes and frustration pleasures and pain rise and fall an awakened woman is completely different from the woman who thinks of seeking equality with men as a writing her own personality and emphasizing on her own rights as a woman.

Hindi sequence Shashi Deshpande women's character her portrayal of women needs to be studied from a feminist angle. As an author of the 70s and 80s, she mirrors a realistic picture of the contemporary middle class, educated urban Indian women. Her novels portray the miserable plight of the contemporary middle class urban Indian women and also analyse how their lot it has not changed much even in the 20th century. Shashi Deshpande has made bold attempts at giving a voice to the disappointments and frustration of women despite the vehement denial of being as feminist A look at her novels will reveal her treatment of major women characters and will show how the terms in them are related to women's problem.

Shashi Deshpande has exposed the cross gender discrimination and its fall out in a male dominated society in her first novel *Roots and Shadows*. In her novels, she depicts the agony and suffocation experienced by the protagonist Indu. *The Dark Holds No Terrors*,

her second novel is about the traumatic experience, the protagonist Saru undergoes as her husband refuses to play a second fiddle role. *The Long silence*, the third novel is about Jaya who despite having played the role of a wife and mother to perfection find herself lonely and estranged. Jaya realises that she has been unjust to herself and her career as a writer and she is afraid of inviting any displeasure from her acknowledging her friendship with another man. A close analysis of her novels leave no doubt her genuine concern for women her protagonist are acutely aware of their smothered and fettered existence in an orthodox male dominated society caught between tradition and modernity her protagonist search for identity within marriage.

The novels of Manju Kapoor discloses that deviation in modernity have led to the hollowness in our society of the modern life. As one of the strongest feminist Indian authors, she has insisted on the up-lift of women written five great novels namely *A Married women, Custody, Difficult Daughters, Home and The Immigrant* besides this novels, Kapoor has written short stories, *The Necklece, The Birth of a Baby, The Power behind the Shame* and .In all her novels, the readers get to experience the women of modern era and problems and her desire to become independent the husband wife relationship has been taken up as a major theme in all her

novels she exposes the exploitative trends of the patriarchal society in which male plays the dominating role and poultry the women who want changes in the norms of traditions

Bapsi Sidhwa, born in Karachi and grown up in Lahore, Pakistan, has been widely celebrated as the finest novelist produced by her country. She now lives in Houston Texas but she frequently visits to the Indian subcontinent. She has graduated from Kinnaird collage for women, Lahore and began writing in her twenties after birth of two children. Sidhwa has received several honours and awards. She is also recipient of the national award for English literature by the Pakistan academy of letter in 1991 and the putrasbokhari award for literature for 1992. Her most important and unforgettable novels include; *“The crow Eaters”* (1980), *“The Pakistani Bride”* (1983), *“Ice candy Man* (1988), *“ An American Brat ”*(1994), and *“water ”*(2006).

Literature is the mirror of the contemporary society. Themes in fictional writings find their origin in the experiences and aspirations of the novelists. There exist innumerable potential themes in Indian fiction as are stars in the galaxy. Theme is essentially the subject of a piece of writing which means that theme is the subject matter of any literary work. The themes can be arbitrary concrete. The theme of any novel provides

meaning to the work or can be called the lesson or moral of the novel. It's the meaning running under the story's surface. It is significant to note that themes must be related to understanding of human conditions, which might include psychological, political, sociological aspects on the contemporary situation of the society, the current trends and reader's interpretation and perception. These novels reflected the social, economic, cultural and political changes. Role of women and their struggle for self-emancipation became the most widely written theme along with other social issues. Various social, cultural, political and psychological factors have influenced our novelists in shaping their manuscripts. They narrate their experiences with truth and boldness. At the same time they demand equality in the male dominated society.

Shobha De doesn't believe in describing her women character as love slave for mere helpmates at home. Shobha De as a writer tries to mirror or portray her feminist mind set while putting women in her novel a broader evolution of her work reveals her protest against the gold old image of women who can't live the way she want to and do things the way she wants to. Women in her novels are represented as sexually departed and free thinking who have been termed as new woman. she talked about the self realisation of women the high class educated

sensible women become protagonist in her novels. These new class of women who lives were not affected by problems dowry and poverty. This Indian woman lived a blessed life as far as material standards are concerned but there was something wanting some vacuum in their lives these women were facing the problem of identity. Shobha De concerned about basic human problems and to them women is a mother a wife and daughter a housewife a working woman and about all she is a woman.

Their women are victims of a male dominated society in her novels men are not always sinners and oppressors. She explores the problem of women through her novels she has raised women's issue and stroke to reach to their solutions as well. In all her writings de represent new morality according to which woman is not to be taken as a mere toy an object of lust and momentary pleasure but means equal and honoured partner women character undoubtedly reveals their feminist ideology she portrays a variety of women from the traditional subjugated and marginalised to extremely modern and liberated women explore the lives of bored housewife and their love less rich husbands and family her novels mirror the lifestyles of the elite and the middle class of urban world.

The portrayal of the image of subjugated and marginalised women in

Shobha De's novel *Socialite Evenings*, *Second Thoughts*, *Starry Nights*, *Sisters* have been started with a system as the real forces of the oppression and exploitation of women. She draws our attention to women's exploitation, decimation and emancipation; she constantly tries to set a patriarchal system as many and raises a voice of protest against male dominance in *Socialite Evening*, the first novel of Shobha De is about the journey of prominent Bombay socialite Karuna, from a middle class girl to a self-sufficient woman making a feminist approach; the novel gives us the picture of marginalization of the Indian women at the hands of their husbands.

Socialite Evening is an over that presents the institution of family and marriage existing in the wealthy class of the Indian society; an enduring theme in the novel is the search for identity and selfhood. Karuna suffers due to the callous and non-responsive attitude of her husband. Her husband treats her as a mere object subjected to his will; as a result, there is a complete loss of identity. Her entry in the glamorous world of modeling and friendship with Bounty are the act of rebellion. After marriage, she established an extra-marital relationship with Krish, who revolts against her insensitive husband and finally divorces him. Similarly, Anjali, a young socialite, also suffers much because of her incompatible marriage and her husband's oppressive attitude. Here, Shobha De's attack is not

against the individuals; it is against the system that favours men and causes women subjugation and marginalisation.

To awaken the people, it is a human who must be awakened once she is on the move; the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves. This famous saying by PT Jawaharlal Nehru lays emphasis on the need of women empowerment in order to see and listen, striding forward on the path of progress and prosperity, the seeds of empowerment. It should be sown right from the childhood so that a little girl can bloom into a strong, confident and self-reliant woman. Nothing can be better for this than the educational institutes which are imparting knowledge and wisdom to girls without any gender discrimination. These institutes can play a pivotal role in empowering the women; as education is one of the most important, effective and strongest tools to make a woman establish her identity in the society and help her gain economic empowerment. Women empowerment is a life-giving process, especially those women who are the victims of patriarchy. In our Hindu religion, husband is addressed as Lord, Pati, Parmeshwar, Nath, Swami and Malik. It means a role of husband as a saviour for a wife and marriage is a great shelter for a woman until she dies, but in my aspect, sometimes it happens that a woman has to play the role of male to survive her life. So

physically she is female but mentally she becomes very strong to take her decision.

Therefore in my views everyone is playing his or her part of life breaking the stereotyped gender norms.

“ Being a woman, not a woman,

Being a man, not a man;

only art Of an artist on worldly stage”.

(Author’s own poetic expression)

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