

## CHANGING TRENDS IN FEMINIST INDIAN WRITINGS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAMITA GOKHALE AND ANEES JUNG

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### **Abstract:**

*India is a vast country and most significantly dominated by diversity and inequality in all aspects of life. of course, many forms of inequality exist in India but the issues of Gender inequality have been prominent. In Indian Society, the voices against this type of inequality have been highlighted in various literary works, by both men and women but they often were overlapped with other social injustices and also, they were hardly written from female perspectives. This paper tries to highlight the issues that have emerged in setting up the trends of Feminist writing, with particular reference to the literary works of Namita Gokhale and Anees Jung.*

*Namita Gokhale is amongst few women authors who have 'claimed' to be a feminist writer. Her writings reflect the expressions of women with a profound understanding not only of love and loss, but also a network of evolving relationships. Anees Jung, can also be rightly accepted as a feminist writer. As she unveils the status of women facing a world of deprivation and oppression, feelings of hope and faith, echoing in the newly emerging womanhood. These were some of the among the early Feminist Writers who proclaimed themselves as Feminist and reflected the expressions and suffering of Indian women with a new approach.*

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Emerging Trends, Literary works, Gender Inequality, New Womanhood.*

### **Introduction:**

Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes<sup>1</sup>. Feminism incorporates the position that societies prioritize the male point of view, and that women are treated unjustly within these societies. There have been lot of shifts with issues relating to women in pre independence as well as post-independence. The idea of western liberalism was applied to women also but, slowly these got merged into poverty and socio-economic inequalities. Gender issues were subsumed in poverty related concerns and there were no such

specific programs, which aimed at women empowerment.<sup>2</sup>

For centuries there has been a tradition of writing about the problem of women's unequal social status for example the famous work of Mary Wollstonecraft in the Vindication of the Rights Women (1792), in India too, the idea of feminism was reflected in the works of women writers who have dealt with this social inequality and tried to express their views through their characters. for e.g.; Sobti, Ismat Chughtai and Mahadevi Verma revolutionizing the Indian literary world by daring to speak about a woman's everyday struggles and faced discriminations. These Indian Feminist Writers Dared to Change the Course of Our Literary World<sup>3,4</sup>.

The tradition was continued and carried forward by Indian writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, Suniti Namjoshi, Anees Jung, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati. They tried to redefine their role in the society, these feminist writers have taken it upon themselves to call out the daily prejudices and stereotyping faced by a woman in this country, stalled professional growth, unequal pay and opportunities, harassment at home and in the workspace and constant typecasting into playing the role of a wife and a mother without her own independent identity.

### **Aims of the research:**

- 1) To understand the condition of woman in India and their depiction in the literature of contemporary times.
- 2) To understand the emerging trends in Feministic literature in Indo Anglo Fiction.

### **Literature Review:**

The feminist literature developed a special theory of feminism, which was filled with female aesthetics; still it is difficult to form a canon of feminist writings, concentrating on fiction we found that there is no dearth of women writers engaging with female issues. There have been numerous writers like, 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. but the problem with them is they declared themselves as feminist yet the central theme was the fight against patriarchy, which existed in various forms and got overlapped with other forms of inequalities. Through this paper the researcher is trying to understand the gaps or if there are any authors who have written on these issues without writing in the shadow of Patriarchal norms.

#### **Research methodology**

The research was conducted in a descriptive fashion, where a detailed analysis of primary sources was undertaken. Other than the primary sources, the secondary sources were also utilized to support the theory and understand the current trends. Literary material highlighting the current trends of women upliftment have been genuinely discussed. The methodology applied was the in-depth analysis of the primary and the secondary sources to understand the changing trends feminist literature in Indo- Anglian fictional writers.

#### **Feminist Elements in the writings of Namita Gokhale**

The women eulogized by Namita Gokhale are fiery, strong and individualistic. Woman characters in her writings are powerful, assertive and emerge as role models and reflect cultural representation of adopting to the changing times but at the same time maintaining loyalty with their traditions. Her woman characters in the novels emerge as cultural icons, who are loyal to their clans but aligning them with new structures. She carved the women characters that have the courage to face their destinies.

These characters seek the affirmation of womanhood by reversal of roles, out doing their male counterparts and have the mettle to rise above the mundane and ordinary life, without completely breaking the moral traditions. These also show an earning towards release from self-imposed restrictions and adopt the models of Amba, Ambika or Ambalika, overcoming the image of Sita which the society expects from them. The author has unraveled femininity among those traumatized by psychological violence and driven into exile from their body and identities. Her characters have a sense of commitment along with spiritual values, depicting astounding life by giving her, an immense canvas for her works. Her other works like, A Himalayan Love Story (2002); Divine beings, Graves, and Grandmother (2001), The Book of Shadows (1999), Paro: Dreams of

fashion (1984) and Priya: In Incredible Indyya (2011), all reflect strong female characters that deal with different shades of emotions diligently and confidently.

Her first book Paro: Dreams of Passion published in 1984; makes an attempt to reflect the status of women in the contemporary society. She tries to portray the main character as an economically independent woman who tries to establish her own identity. Her love affairs and her unfulfilled desires completely changes her life and in fact ending in death.

Priya: In Incredible Indyya (2011), is also one of the great works on 'A satirical comment on the high life of the capital' (Deccan Herald). This novel reflects the conflict between modernity and tradition, a comparison of the social life of metro societies and how two men respond to it. It is a statement on how a woman tries to assert herself in such a manner not ashamed of her extramarital affairs which is a definite break from the traditional society's expectation from woman. Giving a picture of changing India.

*"Paro and Priya are two extremes in terms of their position and social status. Yet, as women, they are at par. Both have a fierce sense of independence, and irreverence. In a twist of fate, their lives are intertwined. what is striking is that both these women are a strong and powerful protagonist who have not accepted the norms of patriarchal society."*

Her another work of fiction, "Gods, Graves and Grandmother", which is a simple story of Gudiya and her almost aged grandmother (Ammi), who, along with Gudiya's mother, settle in the suburbs of Delhi. This novel beautifully underlines the writer's knowledge of society and its changing dimensions. Both Ammi and Gudiya reflect the woman who have not blindly accepted the past and lament about it but rather look forward to a new and bright future which is definitely a changing feature of the trodden traditions. The author has trailed the developments of her characters right from adolescence and she has very well narrated the torments and the torture which they have to face, if they attempt to break their ordained codes of conduct.

Through her other work, 'The book of shadows', the author adopts the character of Rachita expresses her experiences of an ambushed soul completely disfigured by the society and its norms but at the same time it expresses hopes, aspirations and the feeling of optimism. The character is in a dilemma whether to continue to live in pristine

glory of the past or boldly accept the reality of the present, which she gallantly decides to do.

### **Feminist Elements in the writings of Anees Jung**

Anees Jung, an Indian Author also has bravely written on Feminist themes. Her most known work, *Unveiling India* (1987), is true depiction of women in Burkha.<sup>9</sup> She has written several subsequent books on the same, talking to women about their everyday lives, including *Night of the New Moon: Encounters with Muslim women in India* (1993), *Seven Sisters* (1994), *Breaking the Silence* (1997), all are like the voices of women subdued till date. Anees Jung, the author, brought up in Purdah, succeeded in shaking off the restricting influences of her traditional upbringing to become a highly successful, independent career woman, still a comparatively rare phenomenon in India.

The author has adopted a different style in *Unveiling India* where entire narration is based on real life interviews conducted by the author with the women thus presenting the real incidents and experiences of women.

*Unveiling India* is rightly deserved title of this book. it makes a real attempt to narrate the uneven life of the women in this book which is simple and not extraordinary, yet their stories provide a passionate, often deeply touching, revelation of what it means to be a woman in India today. There are stories of women, their experiences of marriage, unfair work practices, sexual servitude, the problems of bearing and rearing children in poverty, religion, discrimination, yet they also talk of fulfilling relationships, the joys of marriage and children, the exhilaration of breaking free from the bonds of tradition, rituals, castes and religion.

In the *Unveiling India* the author has revealed the ironical stories of the women and portrayed the complex face of the women world in Indian society. The women in this book are not extraordinary or famous but they are women of the common society whose problems have been traced and printed in the media.

*'Beyond the Courtyard, is also one of the remarkable works of this author and the sequel to her Jung's first book, Unveiling India. In spite of the gap of 19 years, the work reflects the same trail, older, wiser, but on a depressive note. She tried to find the difference but is very unhappy but she sees very little improvement and the girls are in the same circumstances as their mother, instead there is an anguish of seeing a rise in female feticide, the unchanged reference to a woman vis-à-vis the man in her life'*<sup>10</sup>.

The novel, 'Breaking the Silence' the agony of male domination is continued and the exploitation

of woman and the status of women being inferior remains the same. The novel is a piece of realism and it gives first hand reflection of the agonies of middle-class woman.

*'The women characters are speaking out against the age-old traditions that have kept them silent for so long and in so doing are gaining strength'*.<sup>11</sup>

### **Discussion:**

- Emergence of Indian feminist literary theory around which there may be a body of writers and what is the scope and limitations of Indian feminist literary theory in the context of Indian writing in English.
- There are some problems in defining the canon of feministic literature. As the issues are not dominated by feminism but are often overlapped with other social issues overlooking the gender inequalities.
- The early feminist writers were male and had not questioned the patriarchal norms and unequal rights of property.
- Women writers in contemporary times have definitely explored the hitherto unexplained feelings of woman and presenting their views of feministic nature.
- The authors have rightly highlighted the issues which are ignored by men or described by them in their male- centered terms. Women writers have considered such experiences worthy of exploration and female patterns of living and dealing with the world have produced a female perspective.
- The point of discussion is also that they only have described the status of women rather than considering them as the agents of change.
- But then there are some women authors who dared to write on the changing network of relations as an attempt to break away from the traditions. It was for the first time that sexuality of middle class was celebrated and emotions and desires marked in an uninhibited manner. This is the first time that such issues were discussed in literature which is definitely a break from the past Indo-Anglian fictional writers works.
- They have tried to etch out for us the dilemma, anxieties, violence of a female existence that walks on the tightrope between the traditional and modern societies.
- It was the first time that the stories concentrated on ordinary women and their struggles.
- These writings documented the reality of their lives and metaphorically, unveiled a world of

deprivation, oppression, hope and faith and a sense of community and at the same time, and trying to successfully recuperate the new images of women.

- A different mode of narration was adopted which led an epic quality to the writings.
- The women characters have started voicing their protests, speaking out their sufferings and trying to confront it in their own way. This is how a 'voice' started to take a shape.
- These writings speak about the indomitable spirit of women characteristically, trapped between two worlds, reined in by tradition, struggling to break free and yet lacking the wherewithal to do so.
- Through their writings, they wanted to show the changing face of India, i.e., India at cross roads on one side it claims to be modern and, on the side, they condemn and discourage any attempt made by women to break from the shackles, it is picture of hypocrisy.
- Their works also have been on female sexuality which was a taboo during those times.
- One of the most important aspect of these feminine authors was the characters are ordinary middle-class women not any female goddess representing an ideal women depicted in our myths and Soap operas. They try to break the image of woman as Sita a woman who sacrifices everything for the sake of her family.
- The spotlight of their writings is the true representation of women who are in conflicts, while maintaining balance between traditions and modernity.
- It shows that if woman like Parois protesting the male members is responsible for it. They are in such a mental state because of cultural erasure.
- All their works speak about women who are rising against the stultifying culture which retards women's progress and rebel against all.

**Conclusion:**

In this paper we have tried to familiarize ourselves with the Feminist literary trends that are emerging in Indian writings. We have seen how different literary theories have come up. It was rightly absorbed that a feminist literature would need a female aesthetic and that this was still in the process of taking form. Evolving a definite theory would not be possible at this juncture but there is no dearth of women writers engaging with a

female universe, its specific issues, its special modes of perception, its silences and its speech.

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**Further Readings**

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