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**Book Review**

**Title of the Book:** *Sensible Sensuality: A Collection of Essays on Sexuality, Femininity and Literature*

**Author:** Sarojini Sahoo

**Publisher:** Authorspress, Delhi

**Publication Year:** 2010.

**Price:** Rs.475/-

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Sarojini Sahoo is an accomplished novelist, short story writer, critic and academician. She is a trendsetter of feminism in contemporary Indian Literature and always fond of analysing the inner dynamics of feminist sensibility. Sexuality is a device to question patriarchy in her works. Sahoo is unlike other theorists of feminism as her assertions and assumptions are free from abstractions and technical jargons. There is no attempt on her part to examine power relations in texts and in life. To her, reading is not a political act. An engaging transparency and straightforwardness characterize her feminist ideology. It is not her concern whether men and women are different because of biology or are socially constructed as different.

Sahoo's works treat women as sexual beings and probe culturally sensitive topics such as rape, abortion and menopause from a female perspective. She does not want to exaggerate the concept that feminism is a gender problem nor is she inclined to launch an

assault on male domination. In her own unique ways she redefines feminism which keeps her apart from the confirmed feminists in the West. She prefers to present the intense awareness of femininity with the help of unconventional stylistic devices.

2

*Sensible Sensuality* is an exquisitely composed collection of essays in which the author presents the essential difference in sensibility towards sexuality in the male and the female. Sahoo analyses and vehemently argues why sexuality is so central to the understanding of feminism. There are altogether twenty seven essays in the collection. Some of them are of personal nature. For example, in the first essay “Bicycle and Me” she narrates the experiences of her childhood. She grew up as a boy and was dressed as one and used to play games with boys and she concludes that the cross gender activities had no impact on her later development as a woman. But she theorises that in the West and in the East there is a reluctant attitude towards sexuality.

In some other essays she looks at feminism from the oriental perspective. She also examines the relationship between motherhood and sexuality. Sustained attempt is made in the book to critique the views of Simone De Beauvoire and others on feminism. Sahoo says that Simone was influenced by Marx and Hegelian theory and asserts categorically that motherhood and sexuality are closely connected to a woman’s experience and her gender identity. An excitingly new perception is introduced to explore the dynamics in mother-daughter conflict.

Another major concern of the author is the connection between marital practice and feminism. She is of the view that marriage should be taken out of the social domain

and explores some of the myths and idiosyncratic notions on sexuality and relates it to mysticism and politics. The reader is taken through the multifaceted dimensions of

3

sexuality. She tries to discover the physical, psychological, anthropological and sociological possibilities of sexuality. Sexuality is connected with creativity.

Sahoo concedes the fact that a female writer is inferior to her male counterpart in India. As an Indian feminist, her writings are frank and fearless depictions of female sexuality and the emotional dimensions in the life of women. Her insightful exploration of the intricate human relationships and the inner landscape of female experiences distinguish her from other female writers of her time. The book is eminently readable and will be a delicious, intellectual treat to anyone interested in the problems related to feminism. The delectable simplicity and engaging lucidity of her language and the unassuming stylistic strategies render her writings easily accessible to all.