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## The Genesis of Indian Women in Literature

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This paper traces the evolution of Indian feminist consciousness in Indian Writing in English. The premise of the paper is to establish that the first generation of Indian woman writers intentionally imposed their creativity and the ability of articulation in the spiritual framework of themes. This aspect is illustrated from the writings of Tour Dutt, Aru Dutt and sarojini Naidu. The transition of the spiritual subjectivity is shown with particular reference to the Second generation of writers like kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Babhani Bhattacharya etc.. It is at this literary juncture the need for the emergence of writers like Sashi deshpane, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapoor, jumpa lahri etc., in the line of third generation of women writers in Indian is framed.

Society characterizes women as ideally warm, gentle, dependent and submissive. Family life and the work patterns convey the idea that woman should be subordinate to a dependent man. She is the mother of man who subsequently rules over her and wants to protect her and keeps her under his control. Manu, as quoted by Hunter College Women's studies Collective declared :

"Day and night women must be kept in subordination to the males of the family in childhood to the father, in youth to her husband, in old age to her sons-- Even though the husband be destitute of virtue and seeks pleasure elsewhere, he must be worshipped as God".  
(Women's Realities, women's Choices: An introduction to women's studies 68.)

Shanta Krishnaswamy explaining the position of woman in the Indian society makes out similar observation: "She is a creature who as a child is sold off to strangers for a bridal price, or when she grows up, serves as a supplier of dowry for her husbands' family, or who as widow, in a final act of obliteration immolates.

In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jothiba Phule, Mahatma Gandhi etc., started a new movement to reform the society and

especially the condition of women in our country. It became a time of political, cultural and social change. Women, most of the time, remained in the family, became a part of the stirring movement. The writers of the contemporary world came out rapidly from historical romance and mythical stories and presented the realities of the life of women. The introduction of English education, by British government (William Bentick), was instrumental in bringing significant change in the middle –class life style and started creating questions in minds of readers. Few intellectual women, after reading English novels, got the idea of romantic love and they yearned for it in their Indian surroundings which became the subject for the Indian writers, especially for women writers. In their writings, they began to portray woman as the one facing conflicts and problems, fusing tradition and modernity.

Elaine Showalter's tripartite diachronic phases of the western women's writing into the *Feminine* (consisting of prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition), *feminist* (consisting of a phase of protest against these standards and values including a demand for autonomy) and *female* (consisting of a phase of self-discovery) is appropriate terminology for women writers. (Literature of Their own: British women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing. 13).

Indian English literature in the recent past has attracted a widespread interest, both in Indian and abroad. It has come to be realized of a great significance in world literature. One can feel that, this writing in English has now entered a new phase. The phase of an inimitable representation of the “New Indian Woman” who is dissatisfied with the inhibiting cultural, natural or sexual roles assigned to the women from the unconscious dawn of the patriarchal India. The term “New Woman”, has come to signify the awakening of women into a new realization of her place and position in family and society, conscious of her individuality. Ellen E. Jordan observes that “the English feminists endowed the 'New Women' with her hostility to men, her questioning of marriage, her determination to escape from the restrictions of her home life and her belief that education could make a woman capable of leading a financially self sufficient single and yet fulfilling life”(Christening of the New Women. Victorian Newsletter, Spring 1083.19).

Feminism in Indian English literature is a by –product of the western feminist movement but it acquired sustenance from the freedom struggle. The availability of western feminist theory should not lead us to its indiscriminate application because cultural contexts must be considered first .This is inevitable because we have a different history, different ethos, different forms of social stratification and patriarchal domination and if we need a

feminism specific to our social situation we also ought to develop. As K. Satchidanandan observes: “a feminist literary theory specific to our own creative and critical situation, by which is not meant an unconsidered abandonment of shared patterns of reading and writing.” (The Laughing Medusa or the Raging Draupadi, Indian Literature, No 157. September-October, 1993. p.5)

The history of emergence of women writers in Indian writing in English, was of great significance during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As K.S. Ramamurti supports the points by saying that though the "output was scanty, it was qualitatively superior to those of many others who wrote before and after them". (K.S. Ramamurti, Rise of the Indian Novel in English. 1987.66.)

It was same period when the well known, reputed writers like Toru Dutt, Mrs. Ghosal, Sorabji Cornella, Krupabal Sathianathan Raj Lakshmi Debi, Swarna Kumari Debi Ghoshal, Sita Chatterjee were on the scene. Their fictional works appear to be full of shortcomings, but their historical significance can hardly be ignored. They aim at accommodating their experiences as women as well as their views on social reforms. As John B. Alphonso Karkala observes: “They tried to exhibit the obstacles women faced are the disadvantages they suffered in an orthodox Hindu world. These women writers struggled to give form and shape to their autobiographical accounts, which attracted publishers both in India and abroad”. (Indo- English literature in the Nineteenth Century, Mysore University, 1979.78.)

It is to be observed that the first generation of women writers like Toru Dutt were confined to the spiritual themes. Their consciousness and sensibilities are imprisoned in the exploration of spiritual themes. This particular phenomenon is obviously seen in West Bengal as Bengal was the place that responded to the assimilating tendencies initiated by the Colonial powers. Toru Dutt's sister Aru Dutt equally shares the credit of exploring and testing her poetic abilities in the realm of spiritual frame work.

Like Tagore and Aurobindo, it was Sarojini Naidu who caught the attention of the public with her poetic excellence and patriotic fervor. But in the course of time patriotism has exceeded the poetic talent, and Sarojini Naidu came to occupy some of the highest unofficial and official positions in the public life of India. But Sarojini Naidu is criticized for failing to represent the evolving consciousness. She was almost silent in the emerging feminist Indian consciousness and pledged her belief in the patriarchal pattern. The second generation of

women writers concentrated more on the reuniting positions of women. Women were often portrayed as experiencing the transition from the domestic space to the public space.

To the greater extent the novels of second generation have a vast emotional, political, cultural geographical and historical sweep. They seem to have the ability to face life I the harsh, to confront it unflinchingly and yet to laugh at the lighter side. They projected to be different from the earlier novels of idealism. Here fantasy, magical realism, parody, humour took over to subvert unseemingly reality. In the light of this literary backdrop it is observed that the protagonists of the novels of Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan, belonged to a securer world where eternal reality stood by to dominate the temporary vicissitudes of life. The protagonists of the second generations Indian novel's are insecure, anxious, tense, and skeptical sitting on the edge of the world, waiting to be catapulted into plumb less depth. The parallels between the life of the individual and the history of nation are dovetailed in these novels of kamala Markandeya , Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Babini Battacharya, Anita Desai and Nayanthara Sahagal. Sreenivas Iyyengar in Indian Writing in English (1985) succinctly offers us the thematic cartography of the changed subjective concerns of the Second generation of women writers.

M.E.Derett in *The Modern Indian Novel in English* (1966) observes that though many of women novelists were born in India, they have either lived or have been educated in the West. This particular aspect has resulted into de-Indianisation of their attitudes.

The third generation of Indian women writers has almost radically transformed the status of Indian novel. The new Indian novel as it is addressed rose to the level of global feminist concerns that tried to transcend the barriers of time and space. Indian Characters are comparatively more cosmopolitan and deregionalized in their outlook than are the characters in the novels of the 1960s and 70s. The predicament of new Indian Woman has been taken up for fuller treatment by third generation of Indian Woman novelists like Sashi Deshapande, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapoor, Jumba Lahri etc. These novelists have generally concentrated on the plights and problems of educated women mostly with an urban base. The self-avowed aim of writing fiction in the case of novelists like Shoba De and Namita 'Gokhale portrayed the challenges educated by "Socialite" women with an urban base and sensibility have to force.

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