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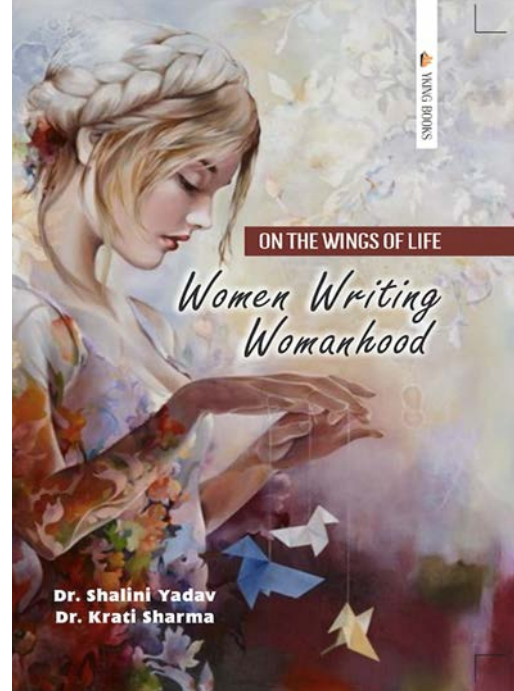


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BOOK REVIEW

	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>ON THE WINGS OF LIFE</i> Women Writing Womanhood</p> <p>Authored by: Dr. Shalini Yadav Dr Krati Sharma</p> <p>Publisher: YKing Books</p> <p>First Published: 2021</p> <p>ISBN: 978-81-949044-8-9</p> <p>Price: ₹ 1650</p> <p>Printed at: Trident Enterprises, New Delhi</p>
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The book titled *On the Wings of Life* with the subtitle *Women Writing Womanhood* authored by Shalini Yadav and Krati Sharma is intended to focus upon eminent Indian women autobiographers who wrote about their lives and shared their life stories boldly with the readers. The volume comprises of twenty-one scholarly research articles offering a critical insight into the autobiographies of illustrious Indian women; providing it as a valued resource for scholars and researchers who wish to decipher these women's lives in deeper sense for their study related to Indian Women Writings and Indian English Literature. Prabha Khaitan, Durga Khote, Hansa Wadkar, Tamsula Ao, Padma Desai, Maharani Gayatri Devi, Saina Nehwal, Meena Alexander, MK Binodini, Kamala Das, Baby Halder, Urmila Pawar, A. Revathi, Mrinalini Sarabhai, Amrita

Pritam, Parveena Ahanger, Bama Faustina, Nalini Jameela and Gunjan Saxena are revolutionary spirits who are acknowledged for their originality, candor and contribution to Indian Literature with their valuable works. They have boldly revealed their life stories and are much admired. The present volume emphatically speaks about traumatic childhood, familial histories, conventional beliefs, marital relationships, extra martial affair or sexual abuse etc.

The book enunciates that Writing about ‘self’ as an autobiography became a best gizmo in the hands of such Indian women post-independence who wished to write about their lives and exerted strenuously to break the restrictions imposed on them within the ‘four-walled peripheries’ to construct their own identity and exhibit their individuality. They have assertively voiced in the form of writing their life narratives to discard the burden of patriarchal dominance where with a prevalent sense of gender discrimination, they are considered feeble, inept or subjugated.

This book undoubtedly adds a new and ‘literary’ perspective where every autobiography or memoir is unique and sensible in its own sense motivating other Indian women to create their identities. The introduction of a literary dimension in a largely patriarchal domain is not only methodologically refreshing, but also intellectually stimulating, as it opens a new space for thinking about ‘breaking the four walls’ and its discontent in relation to the debates on Women empowerment in India. The reader is persuaded to reflect and re-think about woman creating her own space in the field of literary arena.

The authors delineate that reading of autobiographies of legendary figures has always been an act of hedonism liberating from the anxiety, moreover, thought-provoking with a refreshing clarity and conceivable potentiality; at times stir the ‘Self’ for good deeds evaporating a human psyche’s inside grey clouds. Whilst reading an autobiography, a person goes on the ride with the autobiographer the way he/she drives the narrative choosing the roads of reality and personal experiences so that one forgets one’s own fatigue and engrosses in the activity of self-healing and instilling impulse for ensuring happiness and harmony.

In the similar vein, authors have aptly reflected the vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems which has amplified after frequent lockdowns and affected women the most. Crowded homes, substance abuse, limited access to services and reduced peer support are

worsened day by day. Unpaid care work has increased, with children out-of-school full time at home, moreover heightened care needs of older persons and other family members. Gender-based violence has also been increased exponentially in restricted peripheries of home. Thus, reading articles on these Indian women autobiographers who stepped ahead with their resilient and certain strides on the revolutionary trail to make changes, enthralls the spirit of all those not only women of the country who are struggling hard to survive at various levels including mental, physical, psychological and financial in this dreadful circumstance. Every autobiography or memoir is unique and sensible in its own sense motivating those all to create their identities who feel feeble or helpless in present situation.

The book begins with the first article reconnoitered by the author, Shalini Yadav. It is about well-off industrialist and writer, Prabha Khaitan's autobiography *A Life Apart*. It is a spectacular work on the arduous trail between the passion for love, work and independence and the pull of traditions and family restrictions to create one's own identity.

Nextly, the journeys of Durga Khote and Hansa Wadkar as the performing artists in the Marathi cinema and theatre, had not been so easy, consequently, are explored parallel by the second author, Krati Sharma in her article, in context of sociological, psychological or economic fronts.

Thereafter, Anjali Singh Chauhan, in the article entitled "Gayatri, the Royal Reformer, an Icon of Social Progress: Dispelling Darkness and Raising Awareness" throws light on the life of Maharani Gayatri Devi from Royal Rajasthan who stood out as a woman writing womanhood; inspiring many others to follow in her footsteps pre-independence and post-independence era for the upliftment of women.

Another article, a must read is "Transformed Femininity: A Route to Performativity and Success in Saina Nehwal's *Playing to Win*" discusses the overarching "true" narrative of Sania's life who has been instrumental in popularizing badminton amongst a new generation of young women and works within the binaries of subjectivity and identity for the formulation of her transformed femininity via her commendable performances in sports.

Also, Dalit women narratives such as *A Life Less Ordinary*, *Karukku* and *The Weave of My Life* highlight the pathetic real-life events and the struggles underwent by Baby Halder,

Bama Faustina and Urmila Pawar as Dalit women being symbolic for resilience and the representative of women of their whole community. On the other hand, platonic love and longing for Sahir Ludhyanavi in Amrita Pritam's *The Revenue Stamp* rejuvenate the readers escalating them high on the couch of spiritual love.

Interpretation of Sumedha Mahajan's *Miles to Run Before I Sleep* instills the strength in present situation whereas humanity is at stake struggling for oxygen to breathe and developing stamina to fight with pandemics such as Corona and Black Fungus.

The *Kargil Girl* of Gunjan Saxena, being a 'Saga of Success and Reclamation of Identity', demonstrates that one need not to have a masculine body to serve one's nation; only one's skills and courage matter and shows a female's struggle and victory in achieving the sole goal of equality. It encourages everyone to give a hand to safeguard lives of people in such situation of crisis due to pandemics and epidemics.

Varied in persona from ordinary to exceptional women; showcasing commonality to royalty, all women *littérateurs* who contributed in this venture, exhibited 'unity in diversity' and no doubt have succeeded in inspiring via their writings in their own style is praiseworthy enough.

This emergent 'New Woman' with her power, her ideas and her story infuse the vaccine inside one for developing inner vigor and creating 'self' and reminds the lines of Maya Angelou's poem where she expresses her resilience, dreams and hopes through metaphorical language-

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear

I rise

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear

I rise

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

I rise.

Hopefully all will rise soon above adverse circumstances befallen on humanity.

The book *On the Wings of Life* is an exemplary collection of twenty-one articles which is a brain-food for intellectuals and laymen, for those who are by any means connected to the humanistic approach and philosophy of life. Moreover, it is for those aiming at a nullifier for the incursion of modern life; it is for those who also recognize that universal perception can have astounding value in our changing world and life accolades our close attention. Turn the pages and join Shalini Yadav and Krati Sharma on their journey into the study of most astounding women autobiographical writers. The selected articles are interesting and meaningful in present day situations. As you turn the pages of the book, each article acts as a remedy to get rid of miseries, pain and suffering one gets from hustle-bustle and rush of modern life. It inspires us to act strongly in tough situations.

To conclude this discussion on the book *On the Wings of Life*, it can be said that the present book shall serve as an indispensable book for both academicians and scholars of literature as well as women studies and also for those who are passionate about reading and writing autobiographies.