

## WOMEN'S VOICE IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE: ECHOES OF EMPOWERMENT

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**ABSTARCT:** Indian English literature challenges ingrained patriarchy and promotes gender equality, expressing and catalyst change in society. With an emphasis on the developing representation of women, the function of feminist theory is examined in this study of Indian English literature on the basis of the sociocultural changes occurring in Indian society. Early literary works that represented women in traditional, domesticated roles, involving sacrifice and an expression of feminine idealism, were the most prevalent. However, contemporary tales follow a very different trajectory, emphasizing themes of identity, autonomy, and resistance of patriarchal ideology. By contributing varied voices that challenge inherited stereotypes and show the complexity of women's lives, female authors have enhanced literary discourse. As the study examines how gender is intertwined with caste, class, and cultural norms to determine how women are narrated, the significance of intersectionality becomes clear. This paper analyses the thematic and ideological changes in women's writing in Indian English literature. It redefined gender narratives' roles and shaped feminist thought in the Indian context.

**KEYWORDS:** English Literature, Female Author, Feminine, Idealism, Women, Societal

### I. INTRODUCTION

The most significant contributions to the English novel have been made from Indian women writers. Indian novels have greatly expanded in maturity and variety. Indian novels follow specific patterns in their development, and their gradual progression through the stages of imitation, reality, psychology, and experimentation is easy to follow. The 1980s maintain a unique position in the evolution and growth of Indian English novels. Some highly qualified female novelists released their first work during this time.

In writings that exclusively represent the man-woman relationship, female authors are self-framed to advance their thoughts. They utilize feminism as a tool in every aspect of their writing. Man-woman relationships are discussed by a number of female authors, including Maya Angelou, Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, Mary Wollstone Craft, Toni Morrison, Kamini Roy, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Taslima Nasreen and etc. These authors think that they should focus on topics that must be related to women's domestic and public issues, and those conversations are always directed against the male community. In literature, some writers obsess over the idea that they are qualified to speak out for their place of origin. In the same way, female authors works exclusively address issues related to women rather than demonstrating world problems. They are imprisoned as prisoners in specific movements or advancements.

Additionally, some old masters produced works that demonstrate their creative abilities have remained unchanged over time. Indian women novelists achieved unprecedented recognition and distinction in the 1980s, both in India and abroad. The writings of these Indian women authors exhibit an originality and unmatched creativity, much like those of third-generation women novelists. It is impossible to ignore the existence of Indian English literature today. In India and abroad, a "hot-house plant" has attracted a lot of attention in recent decades, expanding its reach and extending its reach in various directions. According to Mulk Raj Anand, the most important contribution to the category of fiction has "come to stay as part of world literature" has come from female Indian authors. The

full potential of Indian literature can be seen by contrasting the more recent works with the earlier works in the same literary category.

However, in terms of artistic expression, in the current literary scenario, Indian literature and Indian writing in English are comparable. Furthermore, In recent years, Indian women writers have achieved worldwide recognition and success in all types of literature. The high level and vividness of English-language works by Indian women writers have improved literature by expressing women's status and role. It was a real representation of history, culture, and all the variances required to improve literature across the globe. India produces novels that transcend regionalism and focus on universal themes, ranking third in the world after the US and the UK. In terms of languages, religions, races, and cultures, India is a different country. Because of this variety, the writers were able to cover an extensive range of topics using extensive liberty. Indian women authors have addressed historical, cultural, philosophical, and other human-centered participants. Indian women writers have written about a wide range of subjects, including women, science and technology, diasporic elements, sociology, exploratory writing, and much more.

Alongside male authors, Indian women have made significant contributions to world literature. The main way that India has contributed is through its English-language writing, with novelists leading the way in this area. Indian English fiction has gained recognition as a unique component of global fiction due to a number of contemporary novelists who have expressed their creative messages exclusively in English. There have rarely been attempts at national creative expression in a foreign medium throughout human history, and this demonstrates the Indian mind's capacity to absorb the

complex problems and newly confronted situations of the modern world.

Novel areas are boldly addressed by the new English fiction, which also experiments with new approaches and tactics to address them. There are no preconceived notions about what constitutes literature when the novelists approach their work. As a result, they are motivated to give their themes epic growth and to concentrate on a very detailed canvas. All of these Indian female writers are capable of matching with the world's best, if not exceeding them in their own right: "It would be no exaggeration to say that the best English fiction in the World is being written by the Indian women writers or those of Indian origin"(1992:21-22). The globalized language of Indian literature may have made it simpler for these female novelists to express the most recent developments and difficulties. Moreover, the Indian diaspora produces a significant portion of the authors of new fiction.

Due to their Western literary and native English, they have been exposed to a variety of modern western literary movements, like magic realism, and other narrative techniques like postmodernism. They have succeeded in offering fiction a different perspective. However, in order to preserve the similarities between Europe and India, the best of them still have strong roots in India. Indian women's fiction captures the spirit of the time more successfully and accurately than other genres like poetry and drama. By its very nature, the novel is better suited to deal with social reality, regardless of the liberties it may take in projecting it. Therefore, then, Indian women writers of fiction made the greatest contributions to the time.

Among the third generation of Indian women writers, who wrote between the 1980s and 1990s, are Jhumpha Lahiri,

Arundhati Roy, Shashi Desh Pande, Nayantara Sehgal, Anitha Desai, Gita Mehta, and Bharathi Mukherjee, have helped to start a literary renaissance. The literary scene around the world has been greatly impacted by third-generation female novelists, who are recognized for their skilled language use and rich cultural heritage. Along with magnificent royalties and prestigious awards, they have gained recognition on a national and worldwide level.

## II. LITERATURE SURVEY

India has a rich tradition of literature. Writers from the smaller states and languages communicated with critics and other writers around the country. The popularity of Indian authors and their English-language works has led to the advancement of Indian literature. There are different perspectives within the 'Indian Imagination,' regardless of caste, color, creed, or culture. In realistic fiction, ideals and problems are closely related. Literature and tradition are linked to culture through feminist literary criticism. Women are presented in Indian English literature as a range of characters. Indian women have historically been represented as housewives, mothers, daughters, yoginis, prostitutes, peasants, workers, mythological women, sages, yoginis, and saints. Indian women are not the only ones who fall into this category. Although the image of the Indian woman is linked to tradition and culture, it appears that Western feminist critique also focuses on such characters. The ideas of Dharma, Kama, Artha, and Moksha form the foundation of Indian reality. Due to this fact, Indian women are considered either elite or subaltern [1].

In basic terms, feminist criticism is interdisciplinary. The primary focus of feminist scholars has been on literary and cultural studies to be valid fields of study. Patriotism, ancient myths, religious

treatises, rituals, moral values, superstitions, miracles, and the responsibilities of men and women are all included in the cultural texts of ancient India and the Indian English literary tradition. Even though Indian prose writings addressed women's status, I find that English-language memoirs, autobiographies, novels, short stories, etc., rarely address feminism. I was unable to find feminism in their times' fictions. It is not always possible to expect English fiction writers who write from an Indian perspective to support modern feminism. In other words, the age is reflected in fiction, and fiction is a mirror of the age. Although it is a challenging and time-consuming task, the restoration of Indian women's problems in all of their dimensions in English is extremely important to Indian literary discourse. In every tradition of socio-cultural and political history, women are discussed by both men and women [2].

The traditional idea of Indian womanhood has provided the foundation for the majority of the first representations of Indian women in our fiction. As might be expected, this also applied to our female writers, whether they were playwrights, novelists, poets, essayists, or short story writers. Women novelists of that era primarily wrote about women's identification with the home and their impact on their husbands and children. Given that the difficulties of urbanization, industrialization, and higher education during British rule, the second phase of this representation of women in literature clarifies the initial stereotypes. The negative effects of British colonialism on women gave rise to an extensive number of autobiographies, tragedies, and novels [3].

The historical context, the evolving society, and the position of women within it all affect that the women are presented in Indian English fiction. The history of this

period not only focuses on the women who wrote and studied, but also on the themes and motivations behind the works of the different female authors of the time. In Indian literature, the role of women has always been significant, and they are often seen as society's culture. Women's writing in a nation like India is complicated because women have historically faced discrimination and had their status and position decided by men rather than by their own wants or feelings. According to earlier studies, women have been impacted to various extents by changes in their lives and in the literature they produce. Both the quantity and quality of the work of women in India have changed since independence [4].

Social media's representation of female subjectivity, highlighting how these women's representations significantly impact the gendered discourses and narratives that influence public. In particular, the article looks at the pattern of femininity displayed by female influencers and the bond they can establish with their followers. It highlights these celebrities represent the ideals of empowerment, independence, and self-realization, beginning with the idea of sensitivity to post-feminism. Lastly, the numbers of Chiara Ferragni and Benedetta Rossi, they look at two of the most well-known social media influencers in Italy, emphasizing their capacity to act as a successful example of female digital entrepreneurs [5].

To remove all types of patriarchal societies' feminist oppression perpetrated by men, women of all generations began the mass movement known as feminism. The process aims to conceptualize and understand gender roles, oppose all forms of female oppression, and promote women's inclusion in social structures. The text aims to explain gender inequality and emphasizes that achieving gender equality in all societal areas is a political goal.

Women and men should have equal rights and freedoms, according to feminists. This study makes an effort to address an extensive understanding of feminism and its various subsets [6].

Utilizing intersectionality, mixed embeddedness, and human capital theory, they examine theories about how spatially concentrated deprivation may moderate the association between gender disparities in human capital and nascent entrepreneurial activity across geographic regions. According to data from the UK's Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, social exclusion is the primary factor contributing to the disadvantage experienced by female aspiring business owners. In particular, we discover that geographical differences in general and particular human capital are directly related to gender differences in early entrepreneurial activity. Additionally, because they are not able to take advantage of any human capital advantages that they might have over men, women in underprivileged areas are at a double disadvantage. Our results contribute to the amount of literature on disadvantage entrepreneurship in a novel way, while also addressing policy options to address double disadvantage in deprived locales [7].

Through the penultimate years of apartheid, Using particular creative deviations and concentrating on the interactions between white men and black women, South African literary works represent the systemic violence and gendered hierarchy of apartheid. Another example is *Daughters of the Twilight* (1986) by Farida Karodia, which not only reveals the male gaze's patriarchal, racialized, and masculine apartheid structure, but also, due to its classification and racial-sexual connotations, relegates the female characters to a space between day and night, as the term "twilight" suggests. In light of these gaze and racial segregation dynamics, as well as Homi K.



Bhabha's concept of hybridity and Judith Butler's concepts of precarity and vulnerability, this article attempts to illustrate how statutory racial exclusion had a negative impact on the family's emotional well-being in Karodia's story. As a result, the article illustrates how gendered mechanisms, politics, and culture function as matrices that the female characters use to negotiate aspects of their agency. This article's goal is to examine sexual violence and show how apartheid's combination of racial and sexual hegemony silenced subaltern voices [8].

The autobiographies of Dalit women capture the anguish of marginalization on many levels. Both implicitly and explicitly, the Dalit women's writings are filled with pain and rage over the serious injustices that they and earlier generations have had to endure. The initial attempts toward structural changes may include the need for more robust constitutional amendments, the efficient application of rules preventing discrimination based on caste and crimes, and making sure that public areas and resources are still available to lower castes. In order to address the collective and intergenerational trauma experienced by Dalit women, positive, structural socio-cultural and socio-economic changes must be made to all aspects of their lives. Dalit women must use their personal accounts to make their voices heard until equality is achieved. As extreme forms of violence against Dalit women continue, like the gang rape and death of a young Dalit woman in Hathras, where four upper caste men seriously damaged her body, these acts of inhuman violence act as a reminder of the brutalities that Dalit women commonly face before giving in to these ghastly crimes [9].

### **III. WOMEN'S VOICE IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE: ECHOES OF EMPOWERMENT**

Several regional languages' creative writing after independence was significantly impacted by Indian literature. Both the reading public and the government became more aware of the existence of numerous, after India achieved independence, the limited restricts of one's own mother tongue or province gave development to more successful languages and literatures. Many writers, mostly in Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu literature, were impacted emotionally from the division of India. The topic has been the subject of several significant short stories and poems by authors such as Manoj Basu, Premendra Mitra, Arundhati Roy, Krishan Chander, Khushwant Singh, Kartar Singh Duggal, and AMrita Pritam to mention a more.

In today's ultra adhunika (post-modern) era, the effort of the contemporary writers is to be natural, to be Indian, to be socially conscious and to be near to the common man. Indian writers like Salman Rushdie, Shahshi Tharoor or Amitav Ghosh came out of the shadow of British English only to decorate the Indianized English distinctively. Also the regional languages were freely used in the prose forms; thus breaking, restructuring and adding a new twist and dimension to the traditional narrative patterns. Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Marathi writers followed to the 'modern' and 'postmodern' idiom of writing. For instance, Mulk Raj Anand's work is supplied with Hindi and Punjabi words like 'haanaa', 'saalam-huzoor', 'shabash-shabash'. The most path breaking of all, however, is Arundhati Roy's use of untranslated Malayalam words in day to day conversations in her „ "Chacko sir vannu," "she is very beautiful sundarikutty," and "oower, orkunniley,

kushambi" are examples of the God of Small Things.

The subcontinent's regional literatures resembled the many important developments that came about as a result of the impact of English literature on women's personal and professional lives. Due to the contributions of well-known Indian women writers in English, such as Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Shashi Deshpande, and Anita Desai, feminism emerged in India<sup>37</sup>. Writing by emancipatory women has successfully appeared in all Indian languages as a means of challenging the male-dominated social order. Women writers who have produced revisionary myths and counter-metaphors include Rajam Krishnan (Tamil), Ashapura Devi (Bengali), Krishna Sobti (Hindi), Kamala Das (Malayalam, English), and others. Many writers share the objective of identifying a pattern of problem-solving within the traditional system and maintaining an indigenous process of renewal. English is no longer a language of the colonial authors' understanding of their heritage, complexity, and individuality is evident in their writing. Feminism is an ideology that prevents women from being underrepresented in politics, the economy, and culture. Given that hierarchical Indian society has always been, the circumstances facing Indian feminists differ from those facing those who are Westerners. In addition, there are many classifications in the family based on age, sex, and ordinal position, as well as in the community based on caste lineage, education, occupation, and relationship to the ruling power. These hierarchies are strictly maintained. There are three different "waves" of contemporary Western feminist movements in India, which are distinguished by looking at the same issues from differently.

Given that Sivakami and Bama discuss Dalit issues in their writings, they are considered Dalit writers and are labeled. They think they are only suitable for discussing the Dalit issue. Similar to writers from Islam, the majority of their arguments center on their community. Women writers are generally persistent in their position that feminism and its sub-branches are the sole inspiration for their works. Jumpa Lahiri, Kamala Das, and Arundhati Roy are among the female authors who are not included in this vision. Despite being a woman, Arundhati is well-known for speaking out against injustice and protesting against marginalized communities. Despite the fact that many researchers have stated that Kamala Das was a feminist, she never agreed with the classification since her voice was not exclusive to the female community; it also included the transgender community. In addition to being a writer in the community, she was a determined fighter for her beliefs.

Unlike other feminist authors, American poet Carolyn Ashley Kizer does more than just criticize the male community. Because of their irresponsibility, she has also accused women of being the cause of their suffering. In her poem *Pro Femina*, Kizers examines the nuanced emotions and motivating factors behind women's competitive behavior with men. [201]. The main reason why women want to attract men's attention. They constantly wear masks that conceal their uniqueness and give the impression that they are not real to the public. The paper's message appears to be in opposition to feminism's tenets, but in reality, it aims to demonstrate that women's empowerment is important for improving society and shouldn't have an impact on men and women's relationships; rather, it should make them equal partners for the community's social, political, and economic well-being.

The feminist movement that took place between 1850 and 1915 is referred. Renowned Maharashtra sociologist Suma Chitnis claims that this movement was initiated by Reformers such as Men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, as well as Ishwarchandra Vidya Sagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Matahari, Phule, Agarkar, Ranade, Tagore, Madan Mohan Malviya, and Maharshi Krave. Women also joined the cause of change. The fight against colonial rule grew stronger during this time. Self-government emerged as the leading cause. In order to extend and legitimize their public activities, To join the nonviolent civil disobedience movement against the British Raj, Gandhi enlisted Indian women. He emphasized the feminine features of selfless service, sacrifice, compassion, and tolerance while also making an impression on public sector employees. The rural Satyagrahas of Borsad and Bardoli based heavily on peasant women. Among these were the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC). Women were addressing issues related to their political participation, leadership positions in political parties, communal honors, and women's rights. The mass use of women became a vital component of Indian nationalism under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and the nationalist and anti-colonialist freedom movement.

The sexual division in the workforce was accepted by the majority of feminists prior to independence. However, feminists of the 1970s worked to change the differences and dared to speak out against them. These included limiting the number of women in the reserve army, degrading them to "unskilled" occupations, and paying them less than men. The result is evident in 1966, when India elected its first female prime minister, Indira Gandhi. She was India's prime minister for three terms in a row.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Men believed that no woman was deserving of an education because of the patriarchal culture that prevalent India and significantly harmed the Indian mind. Men believed they were superior, independent, and even all-powerful. Men were always the breadwinners, and women were only expected to share what men had worked so hard to earn. Without a woman, it appeared like a man's world. Ancient India saw women as weak, reliant on men, and confined to the house, despite their enormous potential. The women's voice in Indian English literature has evolved into a powerful instrument of self-expression, resistance, and transformation. From indefinite assertions of individuality in early writings will be bold, unapologetic explorations of contemporary authors. The women's narratives have dismantled stereotypes and expanded the thematic scope of Indian English literature. Therefore, contributing significantly to both literary and socio-cultural progress will illuminate the complexities of gender, class, caste, and identity. Women writers have not only enriched the literary canon but also inspired broader conversations on equality, justice, and representation by reclaiming their narratives. The tradition signals growth through an enduring commitment to telling women's stories in all their diversity and depth.

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