

Naveena: Contribution of Women to Indian Writing in English

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“One of the most beautiful things in the world is a woman’s heart. It is fragile yet strong. Delicate yet resilient when a woman gives you her heart, she gives her most prized possession. If you love, nurture, cherish and protect it; she’ll give you the world”. Fawn Weaver

Indian writing in English has won a lot of critical acclaim in the world of literature, and Indian authors have really made it immense with many fantastic masterpieces. Indian writing in English has been acclaimed around the world for its creativity in story-telling, use of language and modern approaches. Women have also proved their excellence and contributed a major share in Indian writing in English.

Once the silent spectator, a secondary living, a puppet in the hands of man and suffocated like a slave in the clutches of tradition and culture, has taken up the pen as a weapon to set up a new world for her better survival in male dominance and has proved that pen is mightier than sword thus won the global recognition through impressive record in fact there is no field without the entry of her. Man has dominated the women down the history not because of his greatness but because of her tolerance and acceptance. Women’s writing has occupied a significant and prominent place in women’s lives. In male-dominated Indian society, woman is still a “second person”. However woman does not enjoy an equal status on par with men in any part of the world. Thank god! India has witnessed the woman president and an influential woman prime minister as it hasn’t happened in many super power nations.

Women writers particularly shared the experiences of Indian women in general and transmuted them into fictional form. While reading them it becomes necessary to understand the situation which provides the material and motivation for their fictional writings. The early fiction by Indian women in all Indian languages was an effort to give expression to their agonies and suffering. While the older generation continues to produce literary masterworks, a newer generation of writing ability has emerged, ensuring that the seed of imagination in the country has not run dry. The majority of Indian women writers depict the psychological sufferings of the frustrated homemakers.

“The woman who follows the crowd will usually go on further than the crowd. The woman who walks alone is likely to find herself in places no one has ever been before”. Albert Einstein

Thus in this paper I wish to focus on some Indian women diasporic writers who have elevated the glory of Indian writing in English in 21st century with their creative and innovative writings.

Many Indian women writers focus on women’s issues; they have a women’s perspective on the world. It involves the writing of the materials and literature that deal, in a direct or implied fashion, women’s improvements and their general enlightenment. One of the reasons that women have, in such large number, taken up their pen is because it has allowed them to create their own world. It has allowed them to set the conditions of existence, free from the direct interference of men. Similarly, so many women have taken to reading women’s writings because it allows them to a ‘safe place’ from which they can explore a wide range of experience of the world, from which they can identify their existences. Women’s writing has occupied a

significant and central place in women's lives. In male-dominated Indian society, woman is still a "second person". By and large, woman does not enjoy an equal status with men.

Indian women writers tried to expose the plight of the women who lived like encaged animals deprived of freedom and discretion. They tried to explore female subjectivity in order to establish the identity. A number of women novelists made their debut in the 1990s. They produced novels which revealed the true state of Indian society and its treatment of women. They generally write about the urban middle class, the stratum of society they know best. Many of these authors, such as Chitra Banarjee Divakaruni 'The Mistress of Spices' (1997), Arundhati Roy winning the Booker Prize for 'The God of Small Things' in 1997, Meena Alexander, Rani Dharker, Manju Kapur and Jai Shree Misra, have well portrayed their feelings.

In the field of regional fiction, four women writers, Arundhati Roy, Anita Nair, Kamala Das and Susan Viswanathan, have put the southern state of Kerala on the fictional map, while the culture of other regions has been represented by other women writers. Another example of the western educated female protagonist's quest for her cultural roots is Gita Hariharan's 'The Thousand faces of Night' (1992).

Anita Desai in her psychological novels, presents the image of a suffering woman preoccupied with her inner world, her sulking frustration and the storm within; the existential predicament of a woman in a male dominated society.

For Jaishree Mishra life is with all its sufferings, acts of injustice, and rationally incomprehensible puzzles. Therefore she strongly views that why should innocent people suffer, should people accept suffering as their fate. May be this is inspiration for her to write novels. The ideas represented by various characters in all her novels spring from her heart.

Jai Shree Misra, the London based Indian author writes in English about Indian society, traditions and cultures. In spite of her traditional background, she was brought in a cosmopolitan culture. She lives in London and says "I like the mix of cultures, the mix of languages I like London because of you don't feel like a foreigner". This multicultural background drives her not to belong anywhere - rootless. She herself says, "Rootlessness is not to be pitied but an advantage to a writer". As an Indian women writer, Misra in novels, tells the story of Indian woman with a lot of adventurous spirit. Misra believes in the dormant inner strength of the Indian woman. Her characters and themes are purely Indians. The characters belong to India are at least have roots in India. They might have become rootless and might have become citizens of another country, yet Indianess is never washed away. 'Ancient Promises' is her debut novel which has got the world wide recognition. 'Ancient Promises' is about a woman liberating herself, while 'Afterwards' deals with the bereavement and reconciliation. As Misra herself comments, "A common thread runs through the stories because they are about who I am and my life".

Jai Shree Misra's "Ancient Promises" is a chef d'oeuvre of women literature. This magnificent work is an ornament for Indian women. She ameliorates this great work with all the essential traits of human nature with an endeavour to make it successful. The great Indian writer Kushwanth Singh applauds Jai Shree Misra in 'The Hindustan Times',

"Reading Mishra's Ancient promises was an exhilarating experience...the making of the novel is in its flawless, felicitous prose...it is hard to believe that ancient promises is Mishra's first novel. I can predict a great future for her."

The setting of the novel is middle class Indian Society. She takes the characters from her real life and portrays her characters with the limits of the society. She narrates the plight of an Indian woman in the present society with the blend of all the emotions. She occupies a very distinctive place among the Indian leading literatures of the contemporary age with her novels especially with debut novel "Ancient Promises".

Regionalism is one of the devices in which an author employs in his/her novels to portray the native feelings, landscapes, languages and cultural habits. It is an excellent device in the hands of a few authors. Jai shree Misra wants to infuse much regionalism habits language and even culture also. Every character does not speak as a pure English man. He speaks English as if he speaks his mother tongue. He speaks Indian

English. Swarn uses the terms like Union – Shoonion rubbish, firangi, a white woman, beeta, Cheese Pakoras, Konjivaram Sarees, Bijness-bijness Manny – Accha other terms like Muruku, samosa, Aiiyyo etc., Even Neena criticizes Malayalis as Mallus and she pokes jokes on them. Swarn does not like the presence of South Indians. She calls every South Indian as Madrasi, a typical phrase she uses. She does not like the Konjivaram sarees, and dark legs of Madrasis. (Accidents like Love and Marriage, second novel).

Thus In this paper I wish to present the overwhelming effects of man's attitude and status of women in modern India. My aim is to highlight the unsympathetic reality of the suppression, struggle, torture, atrocities and hardships women face every day of their miserable lives and sacrifices they make for the honour of their families through the works of eminent women writers with an emphasis on Jai Shree Misra.

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