

**Review of literature on Feminist consciousness in the Indian English novels**

**\*IMTIAZ QURRAT FATIMA and \*\*Dr. DHEERAJ KUMAR**

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, SunRise University, Alwar, Rajasthan (India)

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of English, SunRise University, Alwar, Rajasthan (India)

**Corresponding author Email: -[imtiqurrat@gmail.com](mailto:imtiqurrat@gmail.com)**

**Abstract:** Literature serves as a social commentary. It captures some issues of the era in which they are made. I talk about feminism in Indian English literature in this article. The goal of feminism in India is to define, develop, and protect the political, socioeconomic, and equal opportunity rights of Indian women. In India, women fight for gender equality, the right to equal pay for equal work, the right to equal access to health, education, and politics, as well as for food because in rural areas, women farm workers receive lower wages and subpar nutrition compared to their male counterparts. Indian feminists must struggle against the patriarchal culture in their country. They also had to endure sati, or the burning of widows.

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**Introduction:** The word feminism was first coined by French philosopher Charles Fourier in 1837. During the Communist movement, the theoretical developments were led prominently by middle-class white women from Western Europe and North America. In medieval Europe, women were denied the right to own property, to study, or to participate in public life. Women were prevented from conducting business without a male representative; in some parts of Germany in 19th century, a husband had the right to sell his wife. Moreover, a woman had little or no access to education. The feminist voices of the Renaissance coalesced into an enlightened rhetoric about liberty, equality, and natural rights. A person who supports feminism always believes in the political, social, and economic rights of all women, sharing power, responsible and transparent use of power, and accountable collaboration with respectful feedback. Emotional attachment is effacing, and human beings are becoming like machines. The woman protagonist asserts individuality above everything and ultimately achieves self-realization by building a successful career in their life. Human characters compromise and accept reality to maintain harmony. Feminism in Indian English has acquired great significance in recent years. Like feminists in other countries in India, women struggle for gender equality. Indian English writers attempt to portray the depth of human emotions in relation to social realities. They focus on issues like human conflict, social injustice, and the image of the professional world. Some contemporary writers emerge to spread social messages through their writings. The leading

and successful women writers portray middle-class women as sensitive, intelligent, educated, and career-oriented, but they are trapped in the roles assigned to them by family members and society. They believe in adapting and adjusting for the sake of domestic harmony rather than disruption. Deshpande rightly believes in "On the Writing of a Novel," *Problems and Struggles of Indian Women* (1991): Women have a great deal of strength. All humans do... But for women, the situation is made more complex by the fact that they have been told they are weak and are made to believe in their weakness, and they often learn to hide their own strength because a woman's strength seems to weaken men. 1 (Deshpande173)

According to the Cambridge online dictionary, feminism is the "belief that women should be given the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state." The English term "feminism" is an interpretation of the French word "féminisme." A cultural, political, or economic movement promoting gender equality is referred to as "feminism" in its own right. However, it wasn't until the 1970s that the terms "feminism" and "feminist" began to be used more regularly in everyday speech that they began to have a more general meaning. Sociological and political views about gender difference are a part of the feminist movement. The suffragette movement and the first feminist movement both emerged in the middle of the 1850s, when British women first started to struggle against injustice. The movement has existed for a while.

Since that time, women have worked to achieve their goals of being treated equally to men in terms of rights and social standing. The feminist framework also defines the topics that should be brought up and the language that should be utilised to express concerns. Using one of Jane L. Parpart's terms as an illustration. Inequality, according to Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development, is a result of the "need to establish unequal incentives to motivate the most talented people to do the most important jobs efficiently in society." Inequality, on the other hand, is said to be caused by "the practise of providing differential rewards to keep a less powerful working class fragmented by gender and race," according to one argument from the same book. Feminism is a fight for women's equality and a fight against all types of patriarchal violence. Literary feminism focused on the politics of female authorship and the literary depiction of the plight of women. Although the feminist movement and its writers were successful in securing legal rights for women, much work has to be done on a social level. Today's feminist authors unabashedly promote "womanhood" in their writings. The realm of Indian literature is brave in having well-known authors represent feminism, who have changed from theoretical concepts to historical and cultural realities, as well as women's perspectives and behaviors.

Regarding Maharashtra, Mahatma Phule founded Pune's first primary female school in 1848, and since then, only girls have attended schools. They proved that they were capable and equally brave as young men at the designated moment. The English training was well above the capabilities of Indian ladies. Instead of imitating the brave women like Rani Lakshmi Bai and Jijamata, it appears that Savitri and Sita had the wrong impact on Indian women in Maharashtra. The goddess image that had been presented to them by a male-centered culture looked to have received recognition. As soon as we had the chance, we Indians started thinking about women's concerns. In actuality, the arrival of the British provided a drive for the advancement of women. The British introduced education, and it altered the perspectives of a few academics in Maharashtra, including Agarkar, Maharsi Karve, and Ranade. Karve had started to discuss women's difficulties and their place in society, which helped to open doors of opportunity for women. Women had to deal with societal segregation at that time. They were victims of the young widow and tyke marriage. In order to avoid the lust of ruthless men, the young widow had to endure several abhorrent customs, such as shaving

her head and dressing repulsively. All things considered, her only other option remained board of trustees suicide in the event that she became pregnant. (2004) Mangala Athalekar Indian women always have to prove that they are good mothers, good wives, good daughters, and good grandmothers. She needs to protect herself from her in-laws in her married life to avoid mental, physical, and emotional stress. She prefers to be modest versus being a haughty lady. She is revered as a goddess since it seems like she is always devoted and kind. In the Ramayana, "Sita" had to jump into the fire to prove her purity, but surprisingly, "Rama" had also spent fourteen years in the same woods before anybody had ever questioned him! The practise of reprimanding women for various reasons has persisted for a long time. The Indian woman is still playing the role of "Sita" and is still making an effort to prove her goodness and innocence. Names like Sita, Mira, Savitri, and Draupadi are those of the ladies whose stories reveal characteristics of Indian women. A woman who has been giving to show her love for the spouse found only in India for as long as she can recall. The male accomplices never have to put up with the same demand. Feminism in Indian literature, as it is typically understood, is a much more majestic and over-the-top idea that is addressed most discreetly in specific contexts. But as time has gone on, feminism has gained acceptance in India, partially displacing patriarchal dominance. Aside from the political and social crusaders and activists, Indian literature may also have made a significant contribution to feminism. But first, it's important to understand the fundamental meaning of the term "feminism" in the context of the nation, starting with its genesis, before understanding a more in-depth look at feminist literature in India. One approach to interpret India's history of feminism is as a "practical effort" for the most part.

#### **Review of Literature:**

In Mahashweta (2007), the heroine Anupama shows her intense and unconditional love for her lover, Dr. Anand. "Like Rohini to Chandra; Lakshmi to Narayana, am I to him?" Dr. Anand does not honor her love simply because she suffers from an incurable disease called Leukoderma, a rare skin disease. He leaves Anupama for his further studies; she faced a lot of hardships, amidst tainting the minds of people. No artist can recreate the vibrant colors of nature on canvas. We think we all know about beauty, but we understand that external beauty is shortlived. 3 (MS 147) Anupama is portrayed in the first half of the novel as meek, submissive, enduring and

condemning her fate, and expecting help from her husband, but in the second half of the novel, she emerges as a confident, self-sufficient, guiding, and respectable person. "We met accidentally, but we were not made for each other. Let us part with good grace." 4 (MS149) She remained a liberated countess Dollar Bahu (2005) depicts the life journey of a young protagonist, Vinuta, to find her identity through her feminine consciousness in the prevailing Indian contemporary society, in which a daughter-in-law is often treated like a sacrificial goat and always neglected. "She shed her tears while watering the garden, and no one in the house knew of her sadness." 5 (DB 14) Vinuta and Girish are married; the first encounter she faced with her mother-in-law was, "If you sit in the garden the whole day, who will do the household work? Dirty clothes are piling up. I am sick of reminding you about every task..." 6 (DS 11) Vinuta was treated as a slave by none other than the female members of their own family. Her mother-in-law constantly compares Jamuna and Vinuta in terms of their economic backgrounds. The pain and suffering that she has endured since her early formative years have chiseled her character to perfection. Through the astounding portrayal of Vinuta and her plight for survival in Dollar Bahu, Sudha Murthy successfully questioned and challenged age-old traditional beliefs and attempted to kindle the feminine sensibilities of her readers. Sudha Murthy sows the seed of great cultural change, paving a new path by projecting the character of Vinuta.

Sudha Murthy's first novel, *Gently Falls Bakula* (2008), portrays Shrimati as an individualist, goaldeterminator, dedication, dutiful, sincere, and affectionate wife from a small place in North Karnataka, Hubli. Shrimati is adjacent to Srikant; both are educated at the same school. She always wins and stands top in her academics; she receives appreciation from friends, teachers, and family members. Shrikant falls in love with Shrimati; both are married. Shrimati sacrifices her professional desire and dedicates her life to her husband's benefits. Shrikant climbs the highest ladder of success in the IT industry. He owns a company; in this process, he neglects his responsibilities and ignores his wife. "When I think of Shrimati, I continue to be amazed by her clear thinking and wise decisions..." 7 (GFB103) Eventually, Shrimati learns that Srikant loves his career more than her. Shrimati recognizes that she has become her personal secretary; there is no more love, affection, or respect in their relationship. She assumes that she gave him all the power and

authority to treat her like this, but when she looks back, she has nothing. Her life is filled with void and meaninglessness. "A house is made up of just four walls, but a home is where there is love, affection or a meaningful relationship. When that was not there, it was only a house, and the best thing was to get out of it" 8 (GFB 152). Sudha Murthy portrays life as a journey with learning and unlearning experiences. Shrimati puts an end to the solitude and yearns for freedom from the clutches of family shackles.

*House of Cards* (2013) is the story of Mridula, a young lady hailing from a small village in Karnataka. She gets married to Dr. Sanjay. Sanjay gave his salary to Mridula and told her to manage the money. Later, Sanjay quits his government job and starts a nursing home. His quest for power and wealth manages him to manipulate her completely due to her ignorance and foolishness. Sanjay's ambition to earn more and more moves him to correct his practices. "It's all about the faith that a wife has in her husband; without it, we have nothing. How can Sanjay destroy the faith I had in him?" 9 (HOC 186) Marriage was not the destination for her. She goes away to release herself from the emotional obligation. She felt that it is better to be alone and happy than to be with someone who makes you feel inferior, undesirable, or inadequate. Mridula came out with a white cotton saree and a glow of peace on her face. "I have spent more than twenty-five of the most important years, and yet I never felt I belonged to you and your family. I am still an outsider. Now I want to live for myself. I have my job, my school, and my village. You don't have to worry about me any longer." 10 (HOCs 218) Mridula was honest, caring, and bold. She had enormous enthusiasm for life and unlimited energy. She wants to spend every minute of it fruitfully.

Staying at home with parents, particularly her mother, is a big ordeal for her. Vineeta experiences her mother's dominance at the age of twenty-eight; "Her parents think that even at twenty-eight she is not old enough to choose her friends." 13 (23) Vineeta's first marriage has crippled her fully, but nobody seems to be aware of the damage. She seems to be fully convinced that social marriage has a damaging effect on human personality, particularly on the personality of women. Vineeta's second encounter is with Vilash, her childhood friend who has given up his practice as a doctor in the U.S.A. He comes to Pune to meet widowed Vineeta. He encourages her to take up medical practice again and arranges for it in a joint setup. When he proposes to her, she considers Vilash only as a friend but not as her future life

partner. The third one is the most decisive of Vineeta's relationship with Prof. Abhijit Gokhale, who was introduced to her by her friend Kishori at a party. When she encounters Abhijeet, she at once feels that he is a totally unique person, a person of solidity and substance. She is attracted to him and desirous of more and more of his company. But finally, she realizes that love is also a temporary answer after going through intimate physical contact with Abhijit, who has nothing more to give. Vineeta observes: In any marriage, if one person asks more than the other is willing to give, then it's not a good relationship. It can destroy them both.<sup>14</sup> (117) Therefore, marriage, like love, is another temporary answer for her. Betty Frieden says that the core problem for women is not sex but identity, which has always been denied to them. Friedan opines about it in her book *The Feminine Mystic* 1963: "For women, as for man, the need for self-fulfillment, autonomy, self-realization, and independence is more important than the sexual need, with serious consequences when it is thwarted."<sup>15</sup> (TFM 282)

Ann, a newly married American wife, feels that she was left out and neglected by Ravi, an Indian husband always dominated by her mother, Mrs. Gogte. Mrs. Gogte humiliates and expresses her dissatisfaction in bitter words to her son: "Overnight, you forget all that I did for you and can be rude to me for the sake of this white monkey."<sup>16</sup> (CR 33) Ann's encounter with Mohini, Ravi's sister, and her lack of foresight makes her amazed and worried. Ravi measures a woman's self-respect in her engagement with "shopping, cooking, and looking after the baby."<sup>17</sup>(CR 255). Ann stands firmly for her identity. Despite her mother-in-law's unbending stance, she decides to set up a separate house and stands under obligation. "Getting together has to be a conscious act of will."<sup>18</sup> (CR 4) Ann, in response to her resolution, walked out and strongly refused her mother-in-law, "Thank you, Aai. I appreciate your offer, but I would rather be independent."<sup>19</sup> (CR 266) Jai Nimbkar projects and elevates Ann's character to celebrate her heroine's refraining and create a new female verbal oration. Jai Nimbkar has successfully presented the real social conditions and families in India. However, she doesn't take credit for her realistic portrayals. In an interview, she explains, "I am just a writer and perhaps put forward the woman's point of view more effectively because I am a woman. It is just like writing about the place and the people that I really know. I can get inside the woman because I am a woman." In fact, Jai Nambiar's vision of a woman's predicament is

sharper than that of the other writers. Her ability to capture the subtle nuances of interpersonal relationships and to breathe life into her characters so that they remain rooted in the social reality around them are her assets.

**Conclusion :** Cultural, economic, and political movements aimed at giving women full legal protection and equality are referred to as feminism. Feminism has been employed in Indian literature as a modest attempt to assess the actual social situation as it relates to women. There are a number of Indian English-language books that accurately depict the position of women in Indian societies. In contrast to the past, when males were thought to be the only wage earners, modern women have realised that they are as capable to men and that they are not helpless. Today, women too have become the direct wage earners of any home. The topic of feminism, which affects and engages readers alike, is used by current Indian English authors to write for the general public. Feminism emphasises empathy, respect, and understanding from male peers rather than focusing primarily on equality and the rights of women. The dominant attitude of the males throughout today's society is the primary reason why women are dissatisfied; women have suffered in silence and feminism specifically addresses this issue, which has been openly emphasised by Indian and English writers. The different facets of the male-dominated society have really been employed as the major topic by authors like Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and Kamala Markandya.

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