

FEMINISM AND INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS

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Abstract: The feminist voice is a socially constructed concept that cannot be set apart from experiences and emotions; it identifies struggles with bail and accuses the patriarchal system, who are suppressed, oppressed, ignored, and rejected by male-dominated society. In English literature, there are many female authors who raise their voices for a change in society, as Indian women strongly believe it would be unfortunate not only to confine them to the role of homemaker, but to retain their feminist aspects and desires in search of dignity and equality. This paper reflects and focuses on the voices of struggles faced by ordinary, middle-class women whose voices are for upliftment in society, and it should not affect the relationship between man and woman. It also shows how to empower people socially, politically, and economically. Many women writers generalize these issues and focus on recent modern women's transformation of lives from a patriarchal society to an image of professional, independent women. Despite her best efforts to break the age-old net of patriarchy, modern Indian women are no longer slaves to circumstances and patriarchal dominance. Even today, women seem to be suffering from certain weaknesses and complexes, which have become the central theme of most humanist and eminent writers like Jai Nimbakar, and Sudha Murthy. "The women of today are not looking for sympathy, pity, or charity. They are looking for a change in their mindset and the implementation of the laws of the land, which are just and fair. What they probably don't know is that they themselves are the harbingers of a change that is long overdue." Sudha Murty

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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 Renaissance of 14th - 16th century broke various anti-women stereotypes and presented them in more positive light. A large number of literary gems were written during the age in which women images were humanized to a great extent. Their roles were still greatly limited to the inspirations and guiding force of the colossal protagonists as well as the catalysts of major actions. But now, they were able to feel, think, and react and that too, in a positive sense. The virtue and beauty of female images is epitomized in the image of Virgin Mary, who still remained the model of femininity. Notwithstanding, the women images in literature were getting more natural as they were

endowed with more human attributes, Wife of Bath and the Prioress reflect the only ways in which women could achieve independence and status whether in the Church or in a trade. The former symbolizes those women, whose skills like weaving, gave them financial independence. The Wife is depicted as a champion of female rights and her tale brings out the idea that women should have mastery over men, but the Wife of Bath is a character in a story written by a man. The reappearance of drama in the late 16th century allowed the presentation of female roles onstage. The roles of women were enacted by young men which meant there were fewer parts written for them and they often had less to say. For example, Romeo speaks much more than Juliet. The seventeenth century literature witnessed a wide range of female representation although the common stereotypes were still prevalent. These included the coy nature of mistresses such as in the poems of John Donne, Herrick, and Marvell. The ideology also —privatized women's option for education, for work, for supporting reform or voicing opinions. The advocates of women's rights like Frances Wright, Harriet Martineau, and Mary Wollstonecraft were charged of disrupting

the natural order of things and condemned as unfeminine. During the progressive era, the ideal of the "New Woman" emerged as a response to the cult of true womanhood. The New Woman represented an ideal of femininity, which was diametrically opposed to the values of the cult of true womanhood. After World War II, the cult of domesticity was emphasized as American society sought to integrate veterans and emphasize the revival of family life. In the 1950s, television shows often presented serials that depicted fictional families, in which the primary work of the mother was to rear children and to run the household. The spheres of men and women were increasingly separated as many families lived in suburban settings from which men commuted to other cities for work.

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 (Deshpande 173) Feminism in India has existed since the Vedic period. During the Vedic period, there was no

gender discrimination in India. Women were extremely respected, revered, and revered by the male members of the family. Gender discrimination in India started in post-Vedic and contemporary times. We still live in a patriarchal society, with the gradually changing face of women coming to light at all ages. Feminist New Style, a journal published in 1927, aptly declared that --"the new woman is a blend of physical freedom and stamina with feminist self-assertiveness and traditional domestic femininity, a woman who can combine pleasure, career, and marriage. They are eager to participate in pleasure as they would in play, work, etc.2

Sudha Murty

Sudha Murty is an Indian English writer, one of the most emerging contemporary women writers and talented authors, who has recently made a significant contribution to the field of Indian writing in English. She is a philanthropist and a prolific author. Having published over 30 books. She attempted to share her message of optimism, joy, and wisdom through her work. To develop this approach among people, we must adopt some principles for feminist leaders: self-care and caring for others; dismantling bias inclusions; 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. Sudha Murthy's novels reflect the characteristics of feminism. She doesn't directly question the male-dominated society, but she uses her various characters in her novels to raise questions about male, egocentric society. Her heroines in her novels belong to middle-class, educated, working women. Her heroines deal with the problems, worries, and challenges of a painful situation that have never been exposed to society. Sudha Murthy lucidly describes her ideas in all her novels. She uses simple and clear words to express her thoughts. Sudha Murthy has the knack of writing about issues, much debated in all her novels. Her books have had a profound impact on readers all over the world and have helped to raise awareness about a wide range of social issues in Indian society. Through her books, Sudha has tackled a wide range of issues from gender inequalities to the tension between tradition and modernity in child marriages. Her novel furnishes mixed and sundry ideas prevalent in an orthodox Indian society and the firm conscientiousness of a modern Indian woman. Her novels shed light on

recent contemporary issues and the lack of insensitive human attitudes exhibited by society. As well as the mental agony and suffering experienced by people, particularly middle-class Indian women. Her novels are based on this idiom. "Beauty is not in the face; beauty is a light in the heart." She portrayed the feminist psychic; her heroines Vinuta, Shrimati, Anupama, Mridula, Bhagirathi, Nirmal, Rupinder, and Sumathi show their mettle in quest of their own freedom to be free from the clutches of patriarchal society. They voice out their predicaments boldly to be self-reliant and self-assertive. By adapting different strategies through feminist consciousness, these women emerge as powerful and become iconic inspirations for many women in society

A feminine Perspective

For centuries human experiences have been synonymous with the masculine experiences, which made the collective image of humanity one sided and incomplete. Woman has not been defined as a subject in her own right, but merely as an entity that concerns man either in his real life or in his fantasy life. This situation has continued to remain the same. What have shaped the feminine perspective differently from the concerned or parallel developments in the Western culture and in the Indian Continent are differences in dress, in attitudes, in cultural behaviour and family structures. In addition to this the feminist movement in its initial stages was submerged in the freedom struggle. And the freedom struggle liberated women from conventional social constraints and gave them Constitutional Rights. The changes that took place at the social level were the natural aftermath of the political upheaval. More and more women who joined the work force of freedom struggle were educated and became economically independent and even supported families. Despite this newly acquired power, they failed to question the accepted patriarchal and sexist oppression on them. In the early decades of the 20th century women took other women for granted and focused their attention on male dominated spheres. In the typical Indian families of that period, father was the central figure governing or controlling female members of the family. In this way a male child plays dominant role. As Anna Jameson points out, "Surely it is dangerous, it is wicked in these days, to follow the old law, to bring up woman to be 'happy wives and mothers' as it for woman these existed only one destiny one hope, one blessing, one object, one passion, in existence; some people say it out to be so, but we know that it is not so; we know that hundreds, that thousands of women are not happy

wives and mothers, are never either, wives are mothers at all. The Indian society believes that men have the power and cultural hegemony in the society. A peculiar feature of the Indian society is that men defend maleness and consider women not manly which is not basically human. Women are marginalised through cultural institutions and religious rituals. Feminist movements have been trying for removal of this marginalisation. The strong wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s helped theorize a woman's discourse. A feministically read text can lead to a better understanding of the woman's condition. Thus, the very basis of feminism which is reformistic in nature helps women to understand their position in a better manner. In this context Linda Gordon's opinion is that "feminism is an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out to change it deserves a mention". The women-centered perspective now locates specific virtues in the female experience. This should, conceptually speaking, take to a concentrated study of feminism so as to place in the proper perspective whatever is vital about woman in life and literature. Preferably this should be apart from whatever the 'ism' stands for in the history of ideas. "In the present context, the rise of women's awakening and of ripening consciousness causes the consequent battle against a tradition formed by male dominated society. Yet the fact remains that feminism is essentially a movement social in basics and socio-political in proliferated dimensions, and is primarily directed against the sufferings of women at the hands of wicked men". An ancient lawgiver of Hinduism, Manu says, "The father looks after her during childhood, the husband protects her during youth, and the sons take care of her when she becomes old. Woman is never fit for freedom". This form's Indian view of womanhood that relates primarily to the Indian fabric of living. It is necessary therefore, for the feminist to remember that the Indian society has provided a very complex picture of womanhood. In the modern times we have great political luminaries as Kasturiba, Sarojini Naidu, Indira Gandhi who took leading part in making India free. Services of Tara Bai, Ahalyabai, Razia Begum, Rani Durgaavathi, Jhansi Laxmi Bai etc to our nation are rare and remarkable in nature. Women like Gargi, Mitreyi of ancient times enriched our spiritual heritage. They are also examples of emancipated women

Education – Consciousness of Feminism

Today there are no constraints on the courses in the field of education that they take up. They are free to leave their parents' home and lead an independent life. However, Women are not completely

emancipated from sexual taboos. In the Scandinavian countries free sex before marriage is allowed. In some other countries occasional, extra marital love affairs after marriage take place. A rational solution is yet to be found to the problem of determining what kind of sexual morality would be best from the point of view of general health and happiness. This is no doubt a problem for sociologists to find solution for double standards. "Most people would agree," says Bertrand Russell, "that a sex relation is better when it has a large physical element than when it is purely physical, most moderns would agree that love should be an equal relation". If this is accepted, polygamy will have to be ruled out. If not, at least it can be considered as an ideal system. Women were looked upon as temptresses by Christian fathers. But the decay of the idea of sin in modern times has again begun to give freedom to women. The social emancipation of women is of primary importance as far as their morals and marriages are concerned. The demand for social equality between men and women naturally concerned itself with sexual morality. The feminists wanted to impose on men the moral fetters under which women had chafed so long. The World War I provided women greater opportunities to work with men under the exigency of war conditions particularly in England and America. Modern feminists are no longer so anxious as the feminists of thirty years ago to curtail the 'voices' of men are. Their predecessors sought equality in moral freedom. Primarily the modern Indian feminist movement may be said to have begun with Raja Ram Mohan Roy's success in making the East India Company Government pass a bill making it illegal and punishable for a widow to bum herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. Later, the Brahmo Samaja and Arya Samaja worked for the upliftment of women. In Maharashtra, Ramabai Ranade did laudable work for upliftment of women. Later, into the political sphere stepped women like Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalaxmi Pundit and others who fought shoulder to shoulder with men for political freedom under Gandhiji's leadership.

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