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Research Paper Literature

# Indian Women Writers in English: An Overview

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**ABSTRACT**

*Indian literary scene has seen a complete change as far as women writings are concerned. It has got quite richer in the span of time. Writers like Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, Gita Mehta, Shobha De, Gita Hariharan, , Bharati Mukharjee, Kamala Das, Mahasweta Devi etc have made feministic and women writing popular in the world.*

**KEYWORDS : Women writing, Indian writers, Feministic writing, Indian English Writers**

The term 'Status' signifies the sum total of the various culturally ascribed roles one has to play and the rights and duties inherent in a social position. Besides the ascribed status, there is also the 'achieved status', which results from one's efforts and personal achievements. The concept of status clearly indicates the placement of individual on the basis of education, occupation, income, perception of one's status, freedom and so on. Considering 'status' in the light of these attributes it is to be noted that the level of status of women varies from country to country the widest difference in levels being between women in developed and developing countries. Even within a country, the level of status of women differs from rural to urban areas.

Taking the case of India, though perennial efforts are made in the awakening and emancipation of Indian women but majority of them are still not aware of their rights, not provided with facilities and opportunities to exercise them. It is said that if you are born and Indian woman, cultivate extra-patience, docility and capacity for suffering. It is not considered a slow, torturous process, but it is taken for granted that you are born with them along with flesh and blood. Another image apart from this is unimaginable.

But slowly the trend is changing and needs to be changed. History has proved that Indian woman is capable of becoming a ruler, good in the administration, a wonderful organizer, and a tough fighter. It's the society that trampled her aspirations. But then a great renaissance is inevitable. She sought to break down the rigid conventions, that restraint her self-development, to accept the challenges with boldness and patience. A tough battle is before her. But she is not disheartened. The change is taking place at a slower pace, till now the struggle is on and will continue for many years till she acquires equality on all bases.

"Literature is not only a mirror. It is also a map, a geography of he mind."

Literature has always held a faithfully mirror to the society under investigation and men and women are among the subjects of an extraordinary study in literature whether as victors or victims, as protagonist or mere creatures of a plot. Present literature comprises the multitudinous aspects of society, the complex, demanding, and far diverse arrangements that men and women make with one another.

Women find literature the most expressive form of art, which is true to women's experience. Women's writing falls as a separate category, which articulates the gender specific concerns of women – feminist viewpoint. Feminism if taken in a wider perspective includes whatever is vital about women in life and literature. Feminism is essentially a movement primarily directed against the sufferings of women at the hands of heartless, soulless male villains. Feminist is the concept of the theory that they are fighting for their rights, trying to break from the ideological form. Feminist was a stance or tone of women striving for the recognition of their rights and the fight for their identity as individuals in the society.

So the ultimate aim of women's literature is to create a new awareness in men and women. She has found a new medium for self-expression, to raise a voice of protest against the injustice and inequalities in the treatment of women, the disadvantages women have to bear on account of their gender. It seeks to influence public opinion in order to change women's situation.

Women's literature is intimate, confessional, and autobiographical. Victimized as women are by male cruelty and indifference, the identity of women is formed out of pain and suffering. Celebration of femininity is a collectively identity of the female world. The collective identity is constructed on their collective oppression, which is a shared experience. Women's literature provides role-models. Individual women find their identity.

It was the pen of male writer that the image was created as we see in literature today. It is the male writer who has painted with words her image in the mould of his whims, fancies, and dreams, love and hate, sometimes with regard and at other times with venom. Women were dominated by men in every fields. It is only after the 19th Century that their lot has improved to some extent. Till then, the image of women in Indian literature has been the creation of dominantly male writers. So we may say that it is the male writers who have opened the door for women to fight for their rights and equal position in society. Gradually the women writers have come to the force and claimed their rightful place in Indian literature.

Among the Indian writers, probably it was Mirza Mohammed Rushra (1858-1931) who first portrayed the true picture of a woman in his work – *Umrao Jan Ada*. It is a fine example of a life story written by male writer with such true feelings that it comes out very vividly in a realistic mould.

Sarat Chandra, in his novels, moulded his women in all their different aspects of love. chastity, tenderness, loyalty, sacrifice and also in the darker shades of nature, in such an attractive palette of dark and bright colours, that the readers found these women characters just irresistible. The works of other male writers cannot be sidelined, as there are many who have portrayed women with a balanced outlook.

A number of women novelists have arrived on the literary scenes, they have set out making new forays into the world of women. The fiction of the nineties is dominated by women writers like Gita Mehta, Shobha De, Gita Hariharan, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukharjee, Kamala Das, Mahasweta Devi etc. among others. Mahasweta Devi, winner of Padmashree and Sahitya Academy Award, is not professedly a feminist. In her novels, the fight is not against male chauvinism, but men and women fight shoulder to shoulder agaisnt a common foe-the establishment. Her female characters symbolize abundance and motherhood. From the grueling poverty of village life, these women emerge as sources of simple strength and indomitable rural courage to their men. Some of them become legends in their lifetime.

Suraiya or Kamala Das is the most outspoken and outstanding writer of the present generation, who has given birth to a host of women characters of unique distinction. The women characters in her short stories are all modern, sophisticated, independent, unconventional, uninhibited, and protesting individuals. She even goes to the extent of justifying free sex. Pre-marital and extra-marital sex is an all-pervading theme in her short stories. According to her, prostitution stands for forcing wom-

en against her approval. It is highly rewarding and exhilarating experience to go through her short stories which mark the artistic excellence in concept, style and presentation.

In the novels of Anita Desai (1937), there is the world of radical female resistance against a defined concept of normally. Women are mostly files quarters. In her psychological novels, she creates an image of suffering women preoccupied with her inner world, her sulking frustration, and the storm within the existential predicament of a woman in a male dominated society. Through her characters, she makes a plea for a better way of living for women. In *Cry the Peacock*, marital discord drives Maya to the limits of her emotional tether. Monisha in *Voices in the City* wants to live on a higher plane but her ife is spent in endless, meaningless waiting.

There is a wider explortion – sociological and economic – in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. She portrays a large repertoire of women in a changing Indian Society. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani struggles in a village passing through the transitional phase and is shown as exploited. In *Some Inner Fury*, Sarojini Dandekar shows battle between tradition and modernity in contemporary India. What distinguishes Kamala Markandaya's novels is an awareness of the socio-economic forces and their impact on women.

Shashi Deshpande shows considerable promise in delineating characters from the middle class. Shashi Deshpande's women wish to be architects of their own fate. Hers are the authentic and poignant tales of the middle class educated women and their exploitation ina conventionally male-dominated society. She writes about the Herculean obstacles in their path. In The *Dark Holds No Terror*, the protagonist a medical doctor, finds herself treated brutally by the husband because she does much better in her profession in the novel she ponders over the protagonist's marital life, the discord for with she returns to her home. IN the end, she decides to see her husband, but lives on her own and pursues her career, of course, with a new awareness.

In the novels of Nayantara Sahgal (1927) the emphasis is non freedom and a new definition of "the virtuous woman". She emphasizes the need of awareness for women. In most of her novels, the heroines are aware of the injustice done to them in their marriage and they walk out of their homes. Nayantara Sahgal projects a new angle of the concept of virtue. The conventional woman suffers quretly, the New Woman is determined to live with self-respect. Her virtue is courage and a willingness to risk the unknown. Most of her characters feel that man is still not fit to be an equal partner.

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