



A STUDY OF FEMINIST FACET IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF SASHI DESHPANDE

English

Dr. Pallavi

Assistant Professor English GJU S&T, Hisar, Haryana

ABSTRACT

The rise of Feminism in Europe, which was in 17th and 18th centuries, is related to the economic prosperity of the new bourgeois resulting in the use of servants to perform the domestic work. In 19th century, Feminism remained as a protest movement against the suppression of Women's right, against ego-testicle worldview'. In the 20th century, it expressed itself in the Suffrage Movement.

KEYWORDS

Feminism, Women, aspect, Novels

INTRODUCTION

The development in technology and mode of production and the rising demand for female labour have formulated the structure and texture of the suffrage movement. Mary Austell and much later, Virginia Woolf viewed that education alone can expand woman's consciousness of the world and ensure her place in the society.

She was intensely sympathetic. She excelled in the different arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the log, if there was a draught, she sat on it-in short, she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others-And when I came to write I encountered her with the very first words. The shadow of her wings fell of my page. I heard the rustling of her skirts in the rooms.

In the middle of the 17th century, the Puritan movement, no doubt, supported patriarchal authority, and it recognised women's right. During the 18th century, Sophia, a leader of women's liberation movement, questioned male authority over property and pleaded for women's open access to employment opportunities and political issues. In the 19th Century, Elizabeth Lady staton, American suffragist, stressed self-sovereignty as a moral imperative and not as a categorical absolute.

When Rich received the Nationalist Book Award for her "**Diving into the wreck**", she wrote in the name of all the women whose voices have gone and still go unheard in a patriarchal world. This is the voice of frustration, the female voice of failure, which we hear in Dorothy Parkin's Verses filled with bones, shrouds, weeds, graves, linen, ghosts, and worms, in the funeral titles of her books.

The woman of today no longer wants to be a Cinderella, a Lachingada, and a Madison. She is all set for a change; she has to release herself from all stork of exclusion.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thus the very basis of feminism is reformist it subverts male strategies of oppression. It gives a better understanding of the women's condition. Various Feminist organisations like-Emma Goldman Brigade, Combalee River collective, Grey Panthers, ANLU, NAWSA and Women's periodicals like 'Cawdron' in Australia, 'Revolt Women' in Canada, 'Siren' in Chicago, 'Grapevine' in Ontario, 'Gossip' in san Francisco, 'Up from under' in New York, the Furies in Washington, 'Ain I a woman' in Iowa, 'sojourner' in New England, 'Broadside' in Houston, 'Hysteria' in Cambridge, 'Trouble and strife' in leads, 'Enough' in Bristol, Leeds 'women in struggle' in Wisconsin, "Women Come Together" in Swansea etc- were started as instruments of change.

Today, the suppressed female voice is articulated. To a certain extent, the dignity of women is affirmed. She has a greater share of social responsibility and a greater readiness to author her own authority.

The National Council of women in 1921, All India Women's Conference in 1927 and 1930 protested against, the feudal forces, which kept Indian women under subjugation, kept them for cleaning, scrubbing, washing, ironing and cooking. They out rightly denounced 'this dependence syndrome'. Sarojini Naidu was in the forefront of the

Indian freedom struggle and struggled a lot to redeem Indian Women from the clutches of slavery and superstition. In 1920, the power of Vote was first given to women in Cochin and Travancore and in 1921 in Madras presidency. A lot many laws have been passed after 1947 like the Hindu Marriage Act and Hindu succession Act of 1956, Dowry prohibition Act of 1961, Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971 etc gave a wide spectrum of right to Indian women.

OLD PHASE

Traditionally, right from the ancient days, India is a male-dominated culture. Indian women was covered with many a thick, slack layers of prejudice, convention, ignorance and reticence' in literature as well as in life too. She was an inanimate object, who followed five paces behind their men... they had to be gentle, patient, gracious, and for generations together, Bengali women were hidden behind the barred windows of half dark rooms, spending centuries in washing clothes, kneading dough and murmuring aloud verses from "**The Bhagavad-Gita and The Ramayana**" in the dim light of sooty lamps. But with the western education and culture, the Indian woman has re-emerged as a new being. A new feminine literary tradition has spawned out of the curiosities and anxieties of a woman's life. The Indian woman today is no longer a Damayanti, she is a Draupadi or a damius or a Nora or a candid are Joan of Arc. Social reformers- Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and political revolutionaries like Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru lent her a new dimension, gave her a new direction.

Feminism, as a new way of life, as a new perspective came into existence in India with the feminine psyche trying to redefine woman's role in the society. Feminism in Indian English fiction has a series of counters and ordeals on the part of woman to strike at the roots, to belong and assert her ideality in a transitional society. Like Man, woman is born free, but she is in chains, not always and everywhere. All women do not conform, they rebel, they reconcile, and they are both kali and Durga, symbols of destruction as well as creation. During the Vedic period, Indian woman enjoyed the pride place with the extraordinary scholars like Gargi, Matreyi, Lopamudra, who walked equally with men. Even Sita, Savitri, Shakuntala and Draupadi, who make their appearance at a later period in history, were not said to be passive, submissive, docile and servile, Sita in the Ramayana has resisted the demoniac aggressiveness of Ravana, Shakuntala in the Mahabharata proved the strength of her nerves by meeting the challenge of Dushyanta, Draupadi displayed the female ferocity by washing her hair in the blood of Duhsasana who had attempted to disrobe her in the court of Kauravas. But Manu's male-dominated code of conduct enunciated in 'Manu Samhita' that the woman in India lost her pedestal, and disappeared behind the Pardah during the Muslim rule. It was only during India's Independence moment, Gandhi freed women from their trynically life, and plunged them into the freedom movement; Women broke their chains, walked hand in hand with men, raising their little fingers against the unmitigated autocratic rule at home and abroad.

This protest was voiced in many forms in Indian English fiction Not only women writers like-Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Jai Nimbkar, Sobha De, Kamala Markandaya, but male writers like Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Manohar Manohar Malgonkar etc dwell on the tortured womanhood.

R. K. Narayan project the lop-sided family of Ramani, in his novel the

'Dark Room' (1972) there is very little understanding between husband and wife. The others character Savitri makes an unsuccessful attempt to run away and to lead a life of her own. But her spirited protest leads to gratuitous house coming. Narayan marks the man woman relationship on the marital plane in his the **Italics Dark Room** and **The English Italics Teacher** and the extra marital plane is seen in his '**The Guide**', **The Vendor of sweets** and **The Italics painter of signs**'. Manohar Malgonkar's **The Princess** and **A Bend in the Ganges** picture Maharani and Sundari, struggling against the tyranny of tradition. Hiroji, her husband consigns the maharani to the dark lonely room in the palace. Her son calls her "Bitch", but exercises her right to live life in her own way in preference to an animal existence, to the life of a 'leper kept in segregation'. Thus she marries a Muslim and leaves the country.

Elaine Showalter talks of three phases in the growth of feminist tradition. First Limitation Second Protest and third self Discovery. Anita Desai's works are directly related to the third phase. They encapsulate her private vision that captures the long-smothered wail of a lacerated psyche that tells the harrowing tale of blunted human relationship. In the novel of Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal, women are no more goddess or an automaton, they are human beings and from bondage to freedom, from indecision to self-assertion, from weakness to strength. While these two women novelists deals with the urban upper class women, Shashi Deshpande delineates the middle class educated women to show that what man has made of woman. Her women are anti-patriarchal protagonists. Jai Nimbkar's presents her women who resent male protection and have the courage to tell the men'... Give me a real chance to deal with my problems in my own way.'

Sobha De projects woman as a creative force that controls the dynamics of the society. Her women oppose the three Ms; Marriage, motherhood and monotony. Kamala Markandaya's women lords over the male. Markandaya makes her woman a domineering professor, an active victimizer of an adolescent male. She pictures a woman's world where the man is manipulated, purchased, commanded, exploited and taken around like a pet. In inverting the sex roles, Markandaya thinks far in advance of her time and warns us of the consequences of a female dominated world. It is said.-

"A house run by a woman, a servant or a boy goes to ruin, so says Bhargava. O king!"

Relational feminists believe in a gender based but egalitarian society. They believe in 'equality in difference'. They do not tend to overlook the biological and cultural distinction between man and woman. The recent trend in feminist thought, seeks to destroy masculinist hierarchy but not sexual dualism. It is pro-woman but not anti-man.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The importance of human experience, denied of female voice is a titled, distorted one men, right from the beginning, have had every advantage in telling us their own stories. They had education, a much higher degree, to articulate and voice their dominance. But women had no education, nor were they strong to voice. Right from Christine de Pisan Mary Wollstone Craft, from Simone de Beauvior to Jane Austen and beyond, women have been demanding their right in a male centric world. Feminism is a protest movement launched by women of the west for equal social, political, legal moral, cultural rights with men. It is an anti-masculinise movement of the women, by the women and for the women.

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