Research Paper LITERATURE

The Contribution of Women to the Indian English Novel: The Past and the Present

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ABSTRACT

The Indian English novel is globally recognised today. It has come of age in terms of quality, quantity and variety. The credit also goes to women novelists whose contribution counts a lot in the novel writing and publishing. They try varied themes, locales, techniques or styles; raise issues of caste, class, gender and identity; and derive the stuff for their books from home, society, politics, deep psychology or self- story. Some women writers went abroad and got settled there. They include Attia Hosain who migrated to Britain in 1947; Kamala Markandaya married an Englishman; Bharti Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee and Kiran Desai now reside in America. But they never forget their motherland. The books, they wrote and published , are concerned with Indian themes , characters , problems and locations .

Krupabai Satthianadhan is one of the early women novelists. Her contemporaries are Raj LakshmiDevi,ToruDutt and Shevantibai M Nikambe.They were serious about the difficulties ,women face at home and outside .Nayantara Sahgal ,Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande witnessed both pre- Independence and post –Independence eras ; record national events , psychological or social impacts or the collapse of human values and relationships in society . Shama Futehally and Githa Hariharan wrote their respective books in free India .Arundhati Roy ,the creator of The God of Small Things , is a great achiever ; she is perhaps the most contemporary living woman novelist in the country ; she remains dynamic ; courts controversy by engaging herself with national problems and ranks among the icons today . She is being referred to as the 'conscience' of the country.

KEYWORDS Contemporary, Identity, Tradition, Society

Krupabai Satthianadhan (1862-94):-She is a nineteenth century novelist who wrote two English novels Kamala, A Story of Hindu Life (1894) and Saguna, A Story of Native Christian, published after her death in 1895. She explores the importance of education for women through her protagonists in both books.

Attia Hosain (1913- 98):- Her reputation as a novelist rests on her only novel Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961). It is concerned with the struggles of a nation and a girl called Laila. The heroine emerges finally a mature and independent person.

Kamala Markandaya (1924- 2004):- A prolific writer who wrote ten novels; she became a celebrity with the publication of Nectar in a Sieve (1954)in which an immortal character Rukmini appears . The theme of conflict between tradition and modernity, East and West, etc prevails in her books. The Nowhere Man (1972) is her another much acclaimed work; it depicts the life and tragic death of Srinivas, an Indian , a victim of racial violence in Britain.

Nayantara Sahgal (1927-):-She knows how to mix history and politics in her novels. Rich Like Us (1985) is perhaps her best known work; well-appreciated in the country and abroad. We should learn to adjust ourselves in changing social and political situations for survival in contemporary society. Central characters Rose and Sonali struggle a lot for survival in the book.

Anita Desai (1937-):-Reading Anita Desai is a new experience; her subject is to study the mental or psychological activity of the protagonists. Fire on the Mountain (1977) and The Village by the Sea (1982) brought her national and international awards. The first one shows that human relationships are collapsing and lack vitality or more appropriately fire. Nanda Kaul wants to stay undisturbed and is reluctant to communicate withothers. The second novel has portrayed an Indian family life.

Shashi Deshpande (1938-):-As a novelist she is a realist; wrote at least half a dozen novels ; and won the Sahitya Academi Award in 1989 for That Long Silence (1988).She examines the roles and duties of a woman in a family and society through Jaya; Jaya ,an Indian lady , represents every woman and her search for identity . The novel records some most intimate feelings .

Bharti Mukherjee (1940-):-has written at least eight novels and out of them her third novel Jasmine (1989) remains perhaps the best . It is a story of the struggles of a young girl from India, who went to America in search of shelter , employment and identity, or above all, a new life she wants to start in a foreign society diametrically different from the previous one, after the tragic death of her first husband .

Shama Futehally(1952-2004):- left a permanent impression on our mind by creating a character Tahera in her novel Tara Lane (1993). The fortunes of Tahera and her family, changing times and lives , are described in simple prose .It is a short but excellent work . She ranks with senior writers of the fiction.

Githa Hariharan(1954-):-Her first celebrated novel The Thousand Faces of Night (1992)won the prestigious Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1993. The book describes the difficulties and dilemmas, Indian women face in society; society expects obedience and submission still from them .In her fiction the past and the present mingle .She has written a couple of more novels .

Chitra Banerjee (1956-):- is a versatile literary figure ; as a novelist she is remembered for The Mistress of Spices (1997) and Sister of My Heart (1999). Tilo finally transforms herself into the Mistress of Spices. But she has to choose one between business and romance .The second novel focuses on the close connection between the sisters, Anju and Sudha .

Arundhati Roy (1960-): - The writer of The God of Small Things (1997) succeeded in achieving big things; this book made her an international celebrity; raises some serious issues relating to religion, sex , caste and class; society can not tolerate the relationship of Velutha (aDalit) with Ammu; and he is

beaten to death mercilessly . His death means that inter- caste marriage or love is fraught with risks; leads to the disaster.

Kiran Desai (1971-): -is one of the most contemporary living women novelists . She is a successful international writer of the fiction; explores the issue of fractured identity; points out a clash between the cultures or the communities, or changing life styles in her books Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard (1998) and The Inheritance of Loss (2006).

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