



WOMEN NOVELISTS IN POST MODERN INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION: A REVIEW

Dr. Pravin Ratan Berad

*Assistant Professor, Department of English, Rajarshi Shahu Arts, Commerce and Science
College, Pathri Tq. Phulambri, Dist. Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, MS, India*

Abstract

Indian English fiction reached its peak in post Independence period because fiction in this period deals with the inner life and individual problems of men and women passing through revolutionary changes. The modern novelists in Indian English fiction become mediator or reflector on history of modern India. They are unconsciously involved in the process of transforming a historical accident, the emergence of the British Raj in India, its rise and fall. In post-independence period, Indian English fiction became medium to represent social realism. In post-independence era, men and women novelists focused their attention on man-woman relationship, plight of women, changing attitude of women towards sex and marriage and place of woman in Indian society. In Post modern period, majority of the novels depicts the female psyche, which has no accessibility. In the same manner psychological suffering of the frustrated housewife in the twenty first century women writers are discussing the quest of women to move on life.

Keywords

Inferior, Subaltern, Female Psyche, Plight of Women, Man-Woman Relationship, etc.

Full Article

It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experience and ideas in the context of our time. Like the novelists in English Literature, Indian women novelist has given a new dimension to the Indian English Literature. Patriarchy, norms of marriage, parents, child parent- relationship, love and sex such are changing speedily. Women novelists have incorporated the recurring female experience in their writings. Old age women writers used to write about women's perception and experience within enclosed domestic field. But now a day's new age women writers are focusing on the latest burning issues related with women as well as those issues that exist in the society since long.

In pre-independence period Raj Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan presented woman's traditional role, her relationship with man in their novels. After the Independence Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukharjee, Dina Mehta, Kiran Desai, Shobha De, Namita Gokhale, Manju Kapoor, Gauri Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Nair and Rama Mehta are depicting feminism and using regional themes. All these novelist deals with the theme of love, marriage, loneliness, search for identity and also with political, social and numerous themes.

Nayantara Sahgal's *This Time of Morning* (1968) speaks on sex and extra-marital relationship and the atmosphere of sexual freedom in general Uma represent woman chafing against the marriage code. Her *A Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) expresses her inmost thoughts on man-woman relations. The main story concern Inder and Saroj, Their marriage outwardly successful reeling on the rock of temperamental incompatibilities and radical divergence of



marital ideas. The novelist presents the marriage between Inder and Saroj as a marriage of two different cultures. Inder belongs to the he-man school and believe in male-predominance; therefore there is no question of any freedom for self-expression and growth for his wife.

Shashi Deshpande is known as the only Indian author who have made bold attempt to present a voice to the disappointments and frustration of women despite her denial of being a feminist. She explores contemporary India and illustrates the complex adjustments and social changes of the 1980's. Her first novel *The Darkness Holds No Terror* (1980) Shashi Deshpande through the character Saru says that the existence of a girl is subordinated to the fact that she must serve her husband and she has to make sacrifices for him. Deshpande discusses the gender discrimination shown by parents towards their daughter. Deshpande presents bitter truth that success of a woman can cause subversion of roles and destroy happiness of women. Saru success as doctor leads to dispute in her marriage and breakup with her husband and hurts male ego. Her *Roots and Shadows* (1983) is story of the agony and suffocation experienced by Indu in a male dominated society. In *That Long Silence* (1988) Deshpande presents real condition of educated women in their family. Jaya is central character in this novel, Jaya is a woman who lost her identity and was forced to make someone as her husband wants specially. Her father named her Jaya, means victory but after marriage she is named as Suhasini, it symbolizes submission. Jaya is a writer but she has a second position in her family, her husband Mohan is government servant, he earns money and he is man hence he is master of home. Jaya is neglected in her family therefore her married life is frustrated. Jaya's writing provides a solace from her frustrated life. Mohan takes pride in his writer wife, but he always suggest her to take up middle way of writing which should be free from all controversies. Jaya rebels against Mohan's dictatorship in family, she becomes separate from Mohan but at last she adjusts with Mohan. She remains silent in family and after the rebel she continued the silence for uncertain time. Jaya copes with her own suffering, silence and surrender and wins her freedom as an individual. *The Binding Vine* (1992) deals with the personal tragedy of the protagonist Urmi to focus attention on victims like Meera and Kalpana. Shashi Deshpande rejects the stereo type image of women described in literature.

Anita Nair is also a popular Indian English Writer. She was born in the Kerala state bestselling author of fiction and poetry. Her novel *The Better Man* (1999) deals with the sensitive issue of inequality suffered by women in the twenty first century. It projects the revolts against the traditional set up of society. The protagonist does not challenge cultural aspect only, but to social and economic aspect to show how suppression and oppression do not always come in recognizable form but often the guise of love, protection and assurance of security. *Ladies Coupe* (2001) is the story of a woman's search for independence and power. It focuses on the change from traditionalism to modernism that has gradually occurred in the women of our time. Anita Nair has woven the stories of five women with the story of single woman Akhila who is at the centre of novel. Akhila is middle aged woman who works as a clerk in income tax office. She is spinster who has been forced by circumstances to live strict, disciplined life wherein there is no room for own desires and needs. After the death of her father she bears the responsibilities of running the family sincerely. She neglects herself totally until the day she travels all alone to Kanyakumari for the first time in her life. During her journey Akhila comes in contact with five other women of different age groups who open their heart to one another and feel quite relaxed. The stereotyped image of a single woman is introduced through Akhila. It is revealed how society is inhuman and cruel towards a woman who does not have a male in the form of husband. Through the character of Akhila, Nair has exposed another facet of the exploitation of woman.

Manju Kapoor is one of the new novelists in Indian writing in English. She has portrayed the new woman in her novels - *Difficult Daughters* (1999), *A Married Woman* (2003), *Home* (2006) and *The Immigrants* (2009). She mentions that women are constantly under patriarchal pressure.



Her female protagonist are educated, but caged within the confines of a conservative society, they are always in a search for independence and identity of women.

Jai Nimkar's *Temporary Answer* (1974) is the quest for realizing a unique identity seen in the character Vineeta. The novel opens with her widowhood showing the emptiness in the Vineeta's life after the sudden death of her husband. It is because in India the socio- cultural conditions make the widow an outcast.

Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950) presents dislocation physical and mental violence against women during the partition holocaust. Puro is abducted by Muslim youth Rashida, when she was out in the field to get vegetables. In this novel Pritam narrates the condition of before and after the partition. During the partition days Hindu money lender had abducted a girl of Rashida's family. At that time Muslims were helpless, but now in Pakistan abducting a Hindu girl has retailed the situation. Rashida forcibly kept Puro with him and one night when Puro escaped from Rashida's imprisonment and managed to return to her family, she was rejected by her parents. *Pinjar* is record of suffering and humiliation of women on both side who abducted and polluted them and another side their own families rejected because they were polluted by men of other community.

Anita Desai also wrote impact of the partition of India in *Clear Light of Day* (1980) there is no dislocation in the lives of Bim, Raja and Tara but their relationship influenced by the partition. This novel evinces how the partition affected even the lives of those who were neither involved with nationalist political movement, nor were the victims of forced migration and displacement after the partition.

Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* (2001) is the partition novel. It is about two women married to Sardarji, a rich landowner whose heart is in India but whose head is in England. This novel set in 1937 in Punjab; it reveals the tension that before the partition. This tension reflected in the life of a respected man whose wife Satya who lives for her husband but cannot give him children. Sardarji married to Roop who was much younger. Sardarji married for the express purpose of providing the family with an heir. In this novel, Baldwin achieved an artistic success on two levels capturing the political and religious history of modern India and Pakistan. The novel narrates the dramatic and brutal story behind the 1947 the partition of India.

Attia Hosain in *Translating Partition* (2001) also recorded picture of displaced communities, the stories about people as religious and linguistic minorities in post – the partition India and Pakistan. This novel offers individual experience and breaks the silence of collective sphere.

Shobha De is one of the boldest Indian Novelist who have shaken the entire roots of social up where women is supposed to be the symbol of silence. The current of realistic psycho-sexual stream is the main strength of her novels. Shobha De entered in the literary world with her erotic novels *Starry Night* (1990), *Socialite Evening* (1989), *Sultry Days* (1994), *Sisters* (1992), *Second Thought* (1996), *Spouse* (2005), *Surviving Man* (1997) and *Socialite Evening* (1991).

To conclude, it is the fact that only woman can understand the plight, her struggle, her actual position in family and society of another women. In post modern period women novelists like Anita Nair, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal highlighted plight of women, subaltern status of women in family and society, gender discrimination, quest for identity of educated women in post modern period. Therefore novels of women novelists in post modern period in Indian English fictions are record of bitter social reality regarding actual status of women in Indian society.

References

- Agrawal, Malti, and Beena Agrawal. *Paradigm Shift in Indian English Literature: From Local to Global*. Aadi Publications, 2011.



- Bedre, R. T., A. V. Jahav, and V. S. Dhanve. *New Trends in the Asian Literature in English*. Vol. 1, New Man, 2015.
- Das, Bijay Kumar. *Critical Essays on Post Colonial Literature*. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2012.
- Kumar, Vivek. "Preface." *Paradigm Shift in Indian English Literature: From Local to Global*, edited by Malti Agrawal and Beena Agrawal, Aadi Publications, 2011, p. 197.
- Lakhadive, Rajkumar M. *English Literature*. Nikita Publication, 2009.
- Naik, M. K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademi, 2012.
- Prasad, Amar Nath. *Indian Novelist in English: Critical Perspectives*. Sarup and Sons, 2000.
- Satarkar-Pande, Yogini. *Indian Writers in English: A Treatise (Prose, Fiction and Drama)*. Current Publications, 2012.
- Tilak, Raghukul. *History of English Literature*. Surjeet Publications, 2012.



This is an Open Access e-Journal Published Under A Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Article Received: 04/09/2025

Article Accepted: 18/09/2025

Published Online: 30/09/2025

To Cite the Article: **Berad, Pravin.** "Women Novelists in Post Modern Indian English Fiction: A Review." *Literary Cognizance: An International Refereed/Peer Reviewed e-Journal of English Language, Literature and Criticism*, Vol.-VI, Issue-2, September, 2025, 114-117.
www.literarycognizance.com