Do Women Novelists Deal with only Women?

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Abstract

Indian women writers aim at a great deal of importance to the higher confidence and status of women; and consciousness has been evolving among women: knowing how their lives related to the general condition of women would make them better fighters on behalf of women as a whole. True to married life is highly believed in and through the women’s characters, women writers depict pain and feeling of guilt which reveals the mental make-up of a few powerless individuals, who are a pure combination of the real and the unreal, the ideal and the trivial.

But many of the problems involved in assessing attitudes toward a variety of women’s issues are the same problems involved in any type of assessment. It can be improved when the relationship between behavior and expressed attitudes toward women’s issues is investigated, a balanced view hoping for better co-operation from both men and women for a better society.

This paper aims at establishing the hidden truth in women’s writing, the ingenuity of being a powerful medium of modernism besides feminist statements making an attempt exploring the writers focus on every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence.

Introduction

Gender is a common term taken for granted while discussing the writings of women. People hardly think of the genuine validity of the word when they use it. The term would be authentic depending on the cultural or political perspective in the discussion. Perception and comprehension of any piece of writing is appreciated; correlating the literature and the psychology of the writer and the reader. In this context I would like to discuss how Indian Women Novelists in English deal with the place and position of Indian people with reference to selected writings of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Jhumpa Laha and Kiran Desai.

Why Do Women Write?

Mostly in western countries women activists or women writers focus on unity of women to fight for their rights. This study focuses on how Indian women writers, through their characters depict the higher confidence and status of women.

Gender Identity: The Woman Question

The literary work of the Indian women writers is quite remarkable. They portray the women characters sensitively. The protagonists make the readers look at themselves with their relationships to their surroundings, their society, their men, their children, their families; their mental make-ups and themselves.

Analytical Study

A woman who writes of women’s experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have affected her besides emphasizing the idea of colonial modernity. It shows, without judgment, what happens to those who leave for a new life and yet find themselves outcast both at home and abroad. These novels provide wider perspectives on the problems in post colonial Indian society and in a globalized world. Accomplishing that, novelists manage to be both sympathetic to human nature and clear-sighted about humanity’s imperfections.

Many of the problems involved in assessing attitudes toward a variety of women’s issues are the same problems involved in any type of assessment. It can be improved when the relationship between behavior and expressed attitudes toward the issues is explored.

The writers focus on the fortune of a few powerless individuals, exploring, with intimacy and insight, about every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence.
Conceptualizing the Problem:

Woman’s intelligence or consciousness is an identity constructed in the shadow of dominant western culture or powerlessness or dominant male culture in India. But woman has an inner self and it can be achieved only through self-analysis, self-understanding and self-empowerment. With that she develops a dual consciousness, a dual self, one that adheres to the cultural prescription of womanhood, the other which makes her realize the human relations.

Special Focus – Selected Writings:

1. ‘Bye-Bye Black Bird’ by Anita Desai
2. ‘Where Shall We Go This Summer?’ by Anita Desai
3. ‘That Long Silence’ by Sashi Deshpande
4. ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ by Jhumpa Lahiri
5. ‘Inheritance of Loss’ by Kiran Desai

These novels help the readers explore the textual discussion leading to vibrant perceptions, both on men and women.

Anita Desai’s novels ‘Bye-Bye Black Bird’ and ‘Where Shall We Go This Summer?’ raise the basic questions concerning the point of conventional thoughts and western way of living.

These novels deal with the problems, Sarah’s / Sita’s ‘Loneliness and Hollowness’ besides ‘Adjustment and Belonging’ seen in all the characters. Through the other characters, Dev and Anand the author depicts the tension and conflict between the locale and the individual; highlighting the issues of alienation and the immigrants struggle to be safe and secure.

Raman has always been considerate; values the tradition. The protagonists’ eventual re-integration with the existing societal frame work with enhanced awareness is achieved through a phase of intense self-reality, disclosing the emotional world of women – profound understanding of feminine sensibility.

These novels make the readers realize another fact that despite the prospects, the immigrants have to face racial conflict and hostile opposition.

This can be connected to Sashi Deshpande’s stance on motherhood in ‘That Long Silence’. The remarkable thing here is the male characters, especially Jaya’s father with his unconventional decisions, insisting that his daughter should be sent to an English medium school in spite of strong resistance from her grandmother. Her strong will is also remarkable in understanding and supporting her husband, despite the constraints.

Here, Deshpande through her novel makes the reader understand that both men and women, being the products of their culture, find it difficult to outgrow the images and roles allotted to them by society.

Similarly, In the title story of ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ through the portrayal of the emigrant Indian family, Mr. &Mrs. Das and their children Tina, Ronny, and Bobby; Jhumpa Lahiri highlights the socio-human relationships. The characters in Lahari’s stories seek love beyond the barriers of culture and generations. She authentically writes about the experiences and the ethnic beauty of India, a site of multiculturalism about the people who settled abroad without any exaggeration besides revealing how the men both the interpreter Mr. Kapashi and Mr. Das are bound to ethics and values.

The consciousness towards the Indian tradition; from dressing, food habits, visiting holy places to the bondage to the mother land. True to married life is highly believed in. The dichotomy seen here is the predicament of the Indians settled abroad. They can neither be completely traditional nor completely westernized.

Similarly, in the novel ‘Inheritance of Loss’ through the portrayal of the characters; the Judge, Sai, Biju and Gyan; Kiran Desai highlights the sense of loss and the sense of possession; between the big notion of Colonialism and the notion of Intimacy.

Through the experiences of Sai; the author emphasizes the Indian Consciousness among the emigrant families. Quite contrastingly neglected Nimi for her illiteracy is also been portrayed. There is the rejection and yet awe of the English way of life. The judge is one of those “ridiculous Indians,” “who couldn't rid themselves of what they had broken their souls to learn” and whose Anglophilia can only turn into self-hatred. These Indians are also an unwanted anachronism in postcolonial India, where long-suppressed people have begun to awaken to their disregard, to express their anger and despair. The reverence to the Indian tradition; the bondage to the mother land is seen in other characters.

Like her mother Anita Desai; Kiran also shows the bond between the past and the present. The meeting between the retired judge and his young granddaughter suggests, historically, the counter between discredited colonialism and secular modernity. It also shows the internal conflict in India between Muslim groups, and Buddhist groups, just as showing a conflict between past and present. A glimpse to the political background of the Gorkhaland movement is provided in the novel through a conversation between Lola and Noni.
What secures these seemingly disparate characters is a shared historical legacy and a common experience of impotence and humiliation. “Certain moves made long ago had produced all of them”, Desai writes, referring to centuries of subjection by the economic and cultural power of the West.

Though the novel focuses on the fate of a few powerless individuals, Kiran Desai extraordinarily explores every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence.

**Significance:**
A casual reading of these novels makes one conscious that the Women Writers establish their worth through their explicit writing style giving an aura of the life surrounding them while writing about their protagonists trying to erase their silence towards their problems, through self-revelation and self-assessment. This power makes the women take opportunity to act independently on one’s own behalf.

**References:**
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