Contemporary Indian English Novels

Man-Woman Relationship

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Geetanjali Tiwari

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Preface

Literature is believed as the reality of society defined in words. It portrays the way societal beings regard, comprehend, or interpret various circumstances and things in their everyday life. Literature is a medium that influences the imagination and image of the society that eventually leads to the stereotypes and values that are inbuilt in the system. Once someone starts reading it, he/she has an image of another person's mind, even the one who is no more in existence. From the centuries, literature is passing on and mentioning clearly about the scenarios and situations of the world. It is therefore the greatest of human innovations, linking people together who never were mindful of each other. Literature is an addition to physical presence, not a mere explanation of it. It enriches the requisite capability and awareness in daily life. Through literature, people can traverse across the greatest and some trivial aspects in the human continuance. Husband-wife relation has occupied great importance as compared to many other forms of human relationships. It is the fountainhead of all the familial relations. Therefore, happiness in life depends on the accommodative nature of husband and wife. The

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society plays a pivotal role in accomplishing meaningful interaction between man and woman. The man-woman relationship, especially the husband-wife relationship, forms very important core of our social life, and being vital, this relationship has to be cherished and nurtured for meaningful coexistence.

The status of women in Indian Society is subject to assumption. The patriarchal oppressions have raided woman of her partisanship and have curved her into a inert object, incapable of acting on her individual. This opinion is grounded on indefensible theories and distortions of viewpoints. The woman is always measured as the 'essential other' in a male conquered society. From the start of civilisations the 'otherness' is associated with her weakness and reliance, making her a secondary species.

From time immemorial India has predominantly been a patriarchal society. Man occupied a prominent place in every sphere of life leaving woman as a fragile creature to depend upon him for everything beginning from her existence to her sustenance. In such a circumstance, a woman's struggle in a male dominated society can be but easily fathomed. She was considered good for nothing when it came to do something intellectual or artistic. Going to school or reading and writing were not something she was capable of. Her only work was to bring forth children, rear them up and look after household works. Operating with such background, it was inconceivable that women were able to think, study or able to make decisions, could express themselves in the form of speech, poetry, storytelling, art etc. A. Sinha opines, "Women in India are, by and large victim of social, economic and

political exploitation".

The novel, by its features, is better equipped to deal with social realism, whatever, liberations it may take in projecting it. Consequently that the most substantial contribution of the period comes from the Indian women writings of the fiction. The voice of new Indian women writers through their writings, published in between 1980s and 1990s, has helped in a literary renaissance as the third generation of women Indian English writers like, Anitha Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Desh Pande, Bharathi Mukherjee, Anita Nair and Jhumpha Lahiri etc. These are the foremost third generation women novelists and who hold centrality in the contemporary literary setup. They have made a distinctive mark on the world literary scene with their rich traditional heritage and skilful language control. They have received national and International appreciation, excellent royalties and esteemed awards

The picture of women in fiction has undergone a transformation during the last four decades. They have deviated from traditional descriptions of suffering, self-sacrificing women toward diverged female characters searching for identity, no longer viewed as and defined simply in terms of their victim status. In contrast to prior novels, female characters from the 1980s onwards assert themselves and challenge marriage and motherhood.

Modern writers portray both the miscellany of women and the diversity within each woman, rather than restraining the lives of women to one model. The novels evolving in the twenty-first century furnish samples of a entire range of attitudes towards the

imposition of tradition, some proposing as an analysis of the family structure and the caste system as the main fundamentals of patriarchal social organization. They as well re-interpret tradition by using new symbols and destabilizing the canon versions. The work of Indian women writers is important in making society conscious of women's demands, and in offering a medium for self-expression and, hence, re-writing the Saga of India.

The Indian women writers voiced the role and position of woman through their works in English, have enlightened the literature with its eminence and creativity. Actually, it represented the culture, history, and all the modifications necessary for the amelioration of the literature worldwide. Moreover, India is the third leading producer of the novels after USA and UK. Though the writings profoundly deal with regionalism, they traversed the natural boundaries with general themes. India is the land of multiplicity with so many vernaculars, religions, races, faiths and cultures. This diversity provided the writers a colossal freedom to deal with numerous subjects and themes. The opinion of Indian women writers also dealt with ancient, traditional, philosophical and much more building their themes about mankind. The Indian women writers have focussed their themes around sociocultural events, logical insights, diasporic subjects, feminine elements, science and discoveries, explorative writings, and much more. The bulk of novels written by Indian women writers portray the mental miseries of the exasperated homemakers. They have started

challenging the conspicuous deep-rooted patriarchal dominion.

The status and image of women in literature has undertaken a transformation during the preceding four decades. Women writers have relocated from old-fashioned representations of subjugated, enduring, selfless women to differed female characters in quest of individuality, no longer branded and defined purely in relations to their victimised past. In contrast to previous novels, feminine characters after the eighties stress and assert themselves and challenge marital bonding and maternity. A deep reading of several women novelists visibly shows that they are unique in their literary methods. Though they express in dissimilar words, their purposes are the similar. Their literary styles may be different from each other but their methodologies are alike and comparable. They are certain of women as human beings just like men and not submissive compliant subjects. The conventions and the customs dominant in patriarchal culture must be reformed.

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Anita Desai

INTRODUCTION

Man-woman relationship in majority of literary works has been integral part of feminism. Feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies armed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights for women. It is a global and revolutionary ideology as well as a socio-cultural movement that aims at the freedom of woman from male domination in the patriarchal society. It highlights various hidden and oppressive aspects of man- woman relationship. It has a profound impact on the debate concerning the relation between genders, culture and creativity and knocks down the claims of certain cultures, which believe that woman can only produce children and not art. This movement fought for the issues related to women like gender discrimination, male domination, oppressive culture, domestic violence, sexual harassment, reproductive rights, property rights, equal salary, equal opportunities for career and business, liberation and

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empowerment of women. It has swept the world and has brought a tremendous change in the status of women across the world. This movement began in the western world in the late 19th century and has gone through three waves. First wave feminism was oriented around the situation of middle or upper class women and involved suffrage and political equality. Second wave feminism attempted to further combat social and cultural inequalities. Third wave feminism includes renewed campaign for politics. The feminist apprehends certain features of social reality as intolerable as to be rejected if one is to transform society for a better future. The themes included in feminism include patriarchy, sexual objectification and oppression and studies a structural inequality.

In the light of feminist critical theory, novels of Anita Desai can be examined as the manifesto of female predicament dwelling on gender integration, and amalgamation with special focus on man –woman relationship. We can candidly analyses the creative urge and energy of her writing in her own frame work. The most recurrent theme in Anita Desai's novels is the hazards and complexities, man-woman relationships, the founding and nurturing of individuality and the establishing of individualism. Women in literary expression reflect and represent the writer's sense of bewilderment and vulnerability. Nevertheless, her element concern is to explore and to expound human psyche and self.

Anita Desai is one of the leading voices who have given the inner description of the woman's inner world, her sensibility, her sulking frustration and the