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### **Abstract**

Women and literature are closely related to each other because it requires a lot of artistic creativity to be good at literature and women are too good when it comes to artistic creativity. Women novelists from India are the one to add a new dimension to the English literature of India. Obviously, the current Indian English literature is due to the effort of many prolific writers. At the time, when novels were not so popular in the world of literature, women writers in India used to create lyrics for songs, write short stories, and small plays too. Profound literary personalities believe that women writers were the one who supported the old tradition of narrating tales in India. In between the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more women became English writers, and as the time went on, women writers were able to inculcate the emotions of ladies in their writings. This had a great impact on the language patterns of Indian literature. Women writers introduced new styles in Indian writing, and such novels have become very popular among the Indian readers these days.

**Key Words:** English, equal, history, India, images, literature, popular, women, writers

Indian English literature poses many powerful images of women. In its short history many writers have poured their writing with the life like images of women. India being a conservative country many early Indian English writers have given the typical images of women in Indian society. At first, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya's *Rajmohan's Wife*, a first published English novel by an Indian gives us the first image of women in Indian English fiction. "Matangini is Rajmohan's Wife. Matangini overhears the plan of her husband to attack her sister's house. When Rajmohan comes to know about it, he sets out to kill Matangini. She goes against her husband." (Wordpress, Sowmya) She is a brave woman. The powerful image of women is reflected in the fictional works of Krupabai Sathianadhan. "Her two novels *Kamala, A Story of Hindu Wife* and *Shaguna, A Story of Native Christian Life*, exhibit images of women." (Mehrotra, 114-115) Kamala is a daughter of a learned sanyasi. She lives in least populated hilly area unaware of way of the world. She is married into a cast ridden family. The story is of her battle into new world. She does not match up to the expectations and remains a misfit in the family. The story of Shaguna is partly autobiographical. Shaguna was a daughter of a Christian convert. As a Christian convert she not had an easy life. But Shaguna manages formal education beating all odds. She gets admission in medical college. At the end Shaguna is satisfied with life as she finds a man who treats her equally. In this way Krupabai presented images of resilient and brave women.

Rabindranath Tagore is a versatile genius. He was not a feminist writer but his thoughts and writing shows his acute understanding of woman's psyche. He wanted women to have decision making power in family and the society too. In his novels we find many images of different types of women. In *The Wreck*, there is an important incident of boat wreck. There were two families on the boat. Two brides and two grooms with their family members were on it. But only two survives. Kamala and Ramesh considers themselves as husband and wife. They settle somehow in their life. But after sometime Kamala's real husband appears. In it Kamala's dilemma is depicted very aptly by Tagore. "In *Gora*, the Character of Suchitra is portrayed as a liberated young woman. She has a strong mind of her own and she is relaxed at home or outside, While Anandamoyi, mother of the protagonist, limits her to home only and still ready to shake the conservative dogma of the society." (Sarah Edwards-Jonatha Charley, Google Book) *The Home and The World*, the character of Bimal is caught between the pull of the home and the pull of the world. She is a wife of

Nikhil. Sandip is Nikhil's friend. "She has to change herself under the stress of trial and error and failure. She has to work her salvation out in diligence, through tribulations and experimentation and suffering and disasters.

She has to choose between Nikhil and Sandip to show difference between gold and tinsel" (Iyengar, 107)

There are three phases of Tagore's literary output. In his early period (1881-1897), in rural background his heroines face the injustice and they are confronted with the harsh realities of life. The second phase (1893-1913) is perhaps the most inventive phase of his literary career. It paved way for the portrayal of the urban and educated women as a new force in Bengali Society. His heroine in *Bachelors Club* begs for human rights. Tagore presents the images of widows very carefully. Binodini, the widow, fights with her own passion and unfulfilled love. Damini sidelines tradition and norms of the society, prepares herself for a new life with her new husband. In the mature period (1914-1941), his women now started to show agitation against the evils of society like the caste system, untouchability and religious hypocrisy. She now also takes side of those who want higher education and make a professional career with the help of it. In this way in the works of Rabindranath Tagore we find variety of images of women with different shades.

Mulk Raj Anand with the help of his rare veracity, bold experimentation and aesthetic sensibility has given a lot to Indian as well as world literature in English. His portrayal of women is very real. "*Anand feels that woman, whether she is rich or poor, is a marginalized being.*" (Uppal, Bajaj 114) Anand's women are silent sufferer and constantly being victimized in the patriarchal world. In his magnum opus *Untouchable*, Anand presents his long preserved feeling for protest against Indian caste system. Sohini's portrayal in *Untouchable* is full religious hypocrisy. She was molested by Pandit Kali shows that how the people of upper caste, use religion for their own sectarian benefit and surpassing the people of lower caste. *Gauri* is the only novel of him with a woman protagonist. The old title of the novel was *The Old Woman and the Cow*. G.S. Balarama Gupta remarks, *Anand's principal objective in writing The Old Woman and the Cow is to hint at the emergence of Modern Indian Women, and He achieves it admirably.* (Gupta, 95)

In *Gauri*, Anand shows Gauri, as gentle as cow in the beginning. She silently suffers the tyranny of her husband and mother-in-law. Gauri was driven out of her house by in-laws. At the end Gauri returns home only to leave her husband's home. Anand through *Gauri* presents many images of women- the young girl, the married woman, the mother to be, the obedient wife and the tortured one. Anand portrays a woman in rural India who "has been considered untouchable during her period, isolated, and given food away from kitchen, and not allowed to contaminate." (*Gauri*, 41) Through this Anand wants to point out that woman during her period often isolated in a lonely place or room and treated as untouchable. While at her in-laws' house Gauri was advised by her mother as "be like Sita". (*Gauri*, 30) In this way Mulk Raj Anand portrayed the images of Indian women who are trapped in society with the ills of the societies like religious hypocrisy.

"R. K. Narayan is the Grand Old Man of Indian English fiction." (Kumar, 107) Narayan is by no means a feminist writer but he has portrayed some of the memorable images of women in his fiction. The theme of emancipation of a new woman finds its expression in his *The Guide*, his magnum opus. Although, it is a story of Raju, a guide, but it was the character of Rosie which clinched all the attention. In *Rosie*, Narayan has shown a woman experiencing a conflict between a strong yearning of self fulfillment and traditional norms of the society. In it Narayan presents the Indian society where women have been the victim of circumstances and conventions. Rosie also becomes the victim of circumstance as her husband ditches her for his research in archeological study and other woman, but through her rebellious attitude, she make her own way with pride and dignity. It shows a newly liberated woman in the post independence Indian society. *The Guide* presents the traditional Indian where women have no opportunity for expressing their talent. Rosie comes from a "family traditionally dedicated to the temples as dancers" (*The Guide*, 75) Rosie commits adultery with Raju, although being a married woman. It is a crucial stage in her life. Her marital relation with Marco, her husband, forces her to adultery with Raju. Narayan portrays the character of Rosie with bold attitude towards fulfilling her life goals with the help of Raju. Their marriage collapse as the instances of their clash of expectation, interest, desire and hope grows.

R. K. Narayan in *Dark Room* portrays with sympathy the sufferings of women and shows the readers how important are their roles both in family and society. It is a story of disturbed married life. Savitri, the heroine, is eternal feminine and the womanly women. Her married life was going smoothly with her husband Ramani and their three children. But with the entry of Shanta, the other woman, everything changes. She somehow manages to rouse the feeling of love in Ramani. This shatters their married life. Savitri tried to commit suicide but she is saved. She returns home thinking about her children. Ramani is wandering with Shanta, leaving children at the theatre. Narayan portrays the two completely different images women in *Dark Room*. *The English Teacher* is about love in a married life. Susila is a wife of Krishna. Both love each other immensely. After few years of their marriage Susila is gripped by typhoid, after sometime she dies. Narayan portrays in Susila, the image of woman who can write poetry and who has womanly quality. She is totally different from Rosie or Savitri. Narayan's women are not good or bad but they behave in accordance with their whims and wishes and also milieu around them. K. R, Srinivas Ayenger states, *Susila of The English Teacher, Brinda of The Financial Expert and Bharati of Waiting for Mahatma are all variations on the theme of Indian girlhood, and Shanta of The Dark Room, Shanti of Mr.Shampath and Rosie of The Guide are also kindred soul. There are no 'good' or 'bad' characters in Narayan's novels.* (Iyengar, 363)

Raja Rao is a prolific writer, who has written novels and short stories. His works display a profound commitment to Indian philosophy, acquired through a lasting attachment to gurus and ashrams during his life. Leena Gandhi observes,

*However, Unlike Anand's work, where women are incidental to the random libidinal and political energies of his heroes, Rao's narrative foregrounds its female characters. In addition to its use of a female narrator, it shows how the conclusive leadership of the satyagraha in Kanthapura is undertaken by a young widow called Ratna."* (Gandhi, 205)

Raja Rao always portrays women keeping in mind the scriptures of Manu Smriti, which shows the duties and behaviour of women. A submissive attitude is one of the striking features on Raja Rao's characterisation. His ideal women - Savitri, Shantaha and Jayalakshmi are submissive ones. In *Kanthapura*, not at all assertive but fully obedient wife to her husband is highlighted. During the training of the women at the

Kanthapura village, Rangamma advises "*Be strong sister. When your husband beats you, you do not hit back. do you? You only grumble and weep.*" (Kanthapura, 175) According to Ram in *The Serpent and the Rope*, bondage is woman's destiny. *The Serpent and the Rope* describes that woman has to marry whether she is blind, deaf, mute or she has tuberculosis. For any woman her womb is her life. While for Shantha in *The Cat and Shakespeare* marriage does not mean anything to her. Savithri says, "*No woman who is a woman can choose her destiny. Men make her destiny. For woman to choose is to betray biology.*" (*The Serpent and the Rope*, 291) For women to do anything opposite would nullify one's womanhood. In *Kanthapura* we find painful portrayal of Ramabai Ranade who is torn between her husband's wish to be educated and her mother-in-law's taunts. For some extent it is true that Gandhian movement had a vital role to play in bringing the woman out of purdah. There is a reference of Rani Lakshmbai in *Kanthapura*, but the ideal woman in it is projected in the figure of the submissive ones. Rao's mastery is seen in employing an old grandmother as the narrator in *Kanthapura*. In Rao's work marriage for women is very vital as it brings motherhood for her. The images which Rao portrays lay much emphasis on the ability of a woman to produce a child. She is regarded holy during her motherhood state. All in all Raja Rao portrayed images of women quite different his contemporaries. His women characterisations are influenced by the Gandhian movement.

Bhabani Bhattacharya is a social realist novelist who was much impressed by Tagore and Anand. His novels are built on social issues. But still there are some images of women which needed to be mentioned. In *So Many Hungers*, Kajoli is a rustic girl. She is raped by a soldier. Most of the rustic and downtrodden women are destitute to brothels after rape but Kajoli, for her dignity and self respect rejects it. Later she decides to earn for herself instead of selling newspaper here and there. Her story is a given a happy ending by Bhattacharya. Here through Kajoli, he portrays the image of the rustic girl who suffers a lot but at the end gets a happy life. In *Music for Mohini* also portrays wonderful image of Mohini, a Calcutta born Brahmin girl. She is a renowned radio artist. She marries to Jaydev. Jaydev's sister Ruplekha. Ruplekha tells Mohini after marriage that she city bred and village wed and I village bred and city wed. Both of us are common in many ways. We have to change our lifestyle to settle in our in-laws house. In this way images of women who changes their

lifestyle to settle in their married life. It also shows how much Indian women have to adjust in their in-laws homes.

Kamala Markandya has portrayed different images of women in her novels. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani is a child bride of twelve years. Nathan, a poor farmer, is her husband. Rukmani gives birth to a baby Ira but her husband wants male child. After some time Rukmani bears many male children. Then one day townsmen came to her village to build a tannery. Rukmani is against this sudden intrusion of modernity and industrialism enters rural life. Rukmani arranged for Ira's marriage. But Ira returns as she could not bear a child. Due to less rain crop fails. Her family falls into starvation. In the mean time Ira sells her body for family and also gives birth to an illegal baby. At the end Rukmani and Nathan have to settle for charity. They do petty job for their family. In this way Markandaya portrays the image of Rukmani who sacrifice her happiness for the sake of her family. Ira's portrayal is also vital. As she is rejected by her in-laws as she is barren. She then sells her body to her starvation gripped family. She is also the embodiment of the family woman who can do anything for her family. A. V. Krishna Rao asserts:

*Rukmani's calm acceptance of the reality of the situation is more in agreement with the tradition of an Indian woman. (Rao, 57)*

### **Conclusion:**

In the last century, the readers acknowledged the work of women writers as a strong way to spread modernism and feminist statements. In the past 20 years, there has been a remarkable progress when we talk about feminist writings in the Indian literature. In today's generation, women writers are wealthier and are foreign qualified too. Novels written by modern women writers focus on the issues related to women, for instance; rape, and other societal issues as well, like corruption and injustice. Most of the stories focus on the themes of unknown psyche of females, and we can witness many such stories where the sorrows of an unlucky housewife are portrayed. These novels are much appreciated by the readers and it adds wealth to the bank accounts of the publishers too.

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