






<p>Research Paper in English</p>	    
<p>DR. SONALI RODE</p> <p>Asst Professor, Government Rajaram College, Kolhapur</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WRITERS WITH DIFFERENCE</p> <p>ABSTRACT</p> <p><i>India has a very diverse culture and the literature in different languages too is shaped by its own region, politics, cultural tradition, geography, gender and class. This Indian literature is polyvocal which expresses range of ideas related to the social fabric from which it emerged. Within Indian culture there are numerous voices like voice of marginalized, dalits, minorities, radical challenging existing power structures and hegemonies, orthodox and so on. This paper intends to study certain women writers who have created a different stamp on women writings in English.</i></p>

Since 1947 India has gone through various social and political upheavals which influenced Indian literature. Concept of gender was replaced by biological sex in intellectual discourses. Traditional disciplines have been shaken to the core and new trends have emerged during the process. One of the important trends among them is women writings in English. Traditionally women's writing was always neglected due to patriarchal dominance. Now in the age of development and flux in every field, one cannot ignore them easily. These writers have emerged out of their shelves and are acknowledging their space and place in this male-dominated society as well as literary field.

The concept of womanhood has undergone through various changes for time to time and all these changes including her change in her status and role from deity to devdasi, from shakti to abla, from housewife to breadwinner can be witnessed in their writings. Indian women has to survive through family an array of oppressive patriarchal family structures; age, ordinal status, relationship to men through family of origin, marriage and procreation as well as patriarchal attributes.

The writers always tried to restore the tarnished image of the woman and glorify it. These women writers show a revolutionary spirit with which they strive to write. Through

their works they try to make the society aware of the women's needs and demands in providing a medium for self expression and assertion. Many writers have explored female subjectivity in the search of identity. They try to project and interpret feminine identity and sensibility. Their writings are like windows to the unexplored female psyche which cannot be understood by male mind. "feminine and masculine represents social construct- pattern of sexuality and behavior imposed by cultural and social norms." (sushila Singh, Outlining Feminist Literary Criticism, In feminism and Literature New Point of View, ed by K.K. Sharma and K.K.Pub, Delhi 1966, p-3).

There is a galaxy of women writers who have contributed to the development of Indian writings in english. Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu were the first amongst the women writers who paved the path for women writers. These writers dealt with the contemporary social issues like partition, the urge for national unity, democracy and secularism, issues related to rural women, changing status and roles of women in society so on and so forth.

The partition of the country was a political action overriding pious thoughts and prayers of the common man. Many writers expressed this immediate experience in their works mostly in their own languages and the language areas which were directly affected by

it. Amrita Pritam , Punjabi writer, who experienced the traumas of partition first hand has dealt with it in her famous works like Pinjar, Ajj Akkhanu.....etc.

Kamla Das Kamala Das have shown serious concern with the depiction of women in literature and have expressed restlessness with the traditional positioning of women. In almost all her writing including *My Story*, her poems, her concern with the social and cultural construction of gender, her open protest against the treatment of women as sexual objects, her defiance of the stereotyped roles assigned to women, her bold effort to project the prejudiced attitude of society towards women are obvious. It was indeed bold against Kamala Das's part to raise voice against the treatment given to the women in their various roles as wife, mother, daughter, mistress and men as a prostitute. He bluntly reflects the exploitation of women in various ways and a woman's ungrudging acceptance of this torture.

Kamala Das, in her works, expresses the pain of women and while telling their sad tales she launches an attack on the practices of her society. Her poetry embodies agonies of women emerging from that state of subjugation and bondage, and seeking to establish their identity and self. In her poems the pitiable plight of a defenseless women who needs love, consideration and sympathy and desires a loving husband, warmth and home is reflected. Her's is essentially a poetry of protest of defiance and of emphatic assertion, all other moods ranging from weak feminine. Sense of helplessness and submission, to a restless search for happiness and shelter are different expressions of this basic Promethean spirit, which is lager to break the rusted shackles and have its voice heard.

Kamala Das's poetry presents Indian woman in a way that has outraged the usual male sense of decency and decorum. She inaugurates a new age for women poets by

doing so. Kamala Das deals with the conflict between the passivity and rebellion against the male-oriented universe. Her poetry is the acknowledgement and celebration of the beauty and courage of being women. When Kamala Das writes,

Of what does the burning mouth?

Of sun, burning in today's

Sky remind me----oh, yes, his

Mouth and ---- his limbs like pale and

Carnivorous plants reaching

Out for me-----

She is not celebrating unbridled sensuality, but projecting the stereotype of a wronged woman and at once asserting the need to establish her voice and identity.

In her collection of short stories titled "A Doll for the Child Prostitute" (1977) she analyses various feminist concerns. In these stories by placing women in certain situations, Kamala Das has made them frankly talk and expose the hypocrisy of the males, the latter's obscene desire for sex who consider a woman only an object to allure and please men by her charms, the double standards of morality in society regarding men and women, the neglected position of woman and her stereotyped role as wife in man-woman relationship. She has also brought forth the role of a woman in perpetuating the humiliation of women by the males.

In her first story "A Doll for the child prostitute " She focuses on the wrong done to a female child who is forced to become a prostitute. It is a story about a brothel, controlled by a head prostitute called Ayee, who gives good food to the girls, elaborate bath and the days rest. So that they could appear more attractive and she makes them sleep with new men daily, just to make money. There are girls like Saraswati who are willing prostitutes, Rukhmani and Sita who are forced for it. Rukhmani, who was raped by her step-father,

when her mother was away to a house in the neighborhood, was sold to Ayee by her own mother as there was nothing in the house to eat and they were starving practically. Instead of protesting against the shameful act of her second husband who raped her own daughter, the mother further pushed the daughter into the abyss of dirt and fifth and went back to her youthful husband to live a life of lust. In *My Story* Kamala Das tells the reader how the girls and maidservants are mutilated by men. Ironically the man goes Scot free while the victimized woman is called "immoral" and she carries this stigma with her throughout her life.

In the Indian cultural context the birth of a female child is generally not welcomed and a daughter is considered a burden. Pointing out the crime of abandoning, selling or throwing away of the female children on the heap of rubbish or outside the gate of a brother by the parents, Kamala Das says in the story, "*Perhaps the mistake they committed was that they got born as girls in a society that regarded the female as a burden a liability*"⁴⁶ By presenting the shocking experiences of the sexual exploitation of the helpless women, Kamala Das seems to be questioning the humiliation and mutilation of women. She lashes at the system of society in which the dejected and abandoned girls are made to live the degraded life.

While presenting the psychic geography of prostitutes Das also highlights that a woman who is forced to become a prostitute is basically a human being and she wants to lead a normal married life. Through this story Kamala Das seems to suggest that there is need to shake men and make them realize what they are doing. A change is needed in the attitude of women too. Women like mother of Rukmani, who sell their daughters for money should be condemned and boycotted. This story is an eye-opener to the problems of one section of women.

In another story *The young man with the pitted face* Kamala Das has shown how most of the Indian woman live through the process of married life. There is generally lack of conversation, companionship, warmth and love between husband and wife. In this story the husband's unconcerned attitude towards the ailing wife compels her to look for love outside the loveless married life. While in her another story *December* Kamala Das has presented the dilemma in which an intellectual woman is caught between the conventionally assigned role to her as a playing for a man. The man in the story looks at the girl not as she is but in the color he wants and he calls her beautiful "not seeing her with eyes but with hands". The woman too succumbs to the lust of the man whenever he comes to her and becomes very sentimental and emotional, though every time she determines not to go with him in future and devote herself independently to her creative work. Kamala Das hints that becoming sentimental, emotional and non-sincere to her self will debar a woman from utilizing her creative powers. The woman needs to stop covering beneath the "monstrous ego of man." She should not lose her will and reason to all her emotions.

In *The Little Kitten* a very typical situation pertaining to the lot of married women has been presented. In married life wife is always busy, trying to please her husband with good looks and make-up. But husband feds up after some days and starts going to other women. Instead of rebelling, wife tries to lure husband with added efforts and make-up. The male psyche basically tends to treat woman as "desirable commodity." In this story Kamala Das brings out the foolishness of wives for letting their beauty to be "a feast" for the lustful eyes of men. In another story "*The Sign of the Lion*" Das registers her hatred against a grossly exploitative view of woman as a purely

sexual object, as a possession of man, a passive creature.

Thus in the collection *A Doll for the Child Prostitute*, Kamala Das has focused her attention on various concern of women. She has highlighted the problems faced by woman in her different roles and has shown that woman is in a victim position and is admired the most when she acts as a dumb-driven cattle. An overall image of woman that emerges from the analysis of these stories is that of a passive creature who has accepted her role as an object Kamala Das tries to project that woman cannot revolt against society and is thus has to suffer. She protests against women's acceptance of their images established by patriarchy. By the negation she wants to redefine femininity and also to redefine the proper place for women in the changing society. She feels that there is a needs of raising consciousness among men and women regarding the gender stenotypes, and this will help in creating a beautiful world where the consciousness of being male or female will not exist.

Mahashewta Devi In *Mother of 1084*,

Mahashewta Devi has portrayed, the character of an apolitical mother Sujata. She belongs to a middle-class family. Though she is a sensitive wife and a loving mother, she is a stranger in her own household. Where she is reduced to a mere cog. But she feels at home in the company of her younger son, Brati, who is a man of ideals. But ironically she fails to understand Brati's life and activities while he is alive. Exactly two years after his death of her favorite son, coinciding with his birthday, Sujata gets to know of the facts behind his sacrifice. The learning process continues till the end of the play involving her in a series of encounters with the people whose cause Brati championed. At the end of the play, Sujata shorn of all prejudices finds herself drifting towards a

kinship with her sons ideology as she bursts out angrily at the lassitude of the audience.

It is indeed surprising that Sujata, with an innate resentment like her favorite son, against all the shams that are inherent in the patriarchal institution, fails to take cognizance of the rising tide of revolt in Brati. She is caught in the conflict within herself between a sympathetic mother and a silent protester against the immoral life, which her household stands for. She feels suffocated under the weight of the stifling values enjoined on her by the patriarchal institution. She feels satisfied in Brati's revolt and finds in it a parallel to her suppressed protest against the decaying middle class mores. She is a working mother for whom her work in the bank is in itself a form of protest and self-assertion against the patriarchal authority of her husband.

In fact, Sujata's discovery of Brati and his cause helps her to discover her "self" and her cause as a mother, a woman and a human being. She does not regret being classed with Brati. She recalls:

*"With Brati, they've cast me too in the opposite camp. If Brati had been like Jyoti or drunkard like Neepa's husband, Amit or a hardened fraud like Tony or had run after the typists like his father, he'd have belonged to their camp"*⁴⁷.

The relationship, established between Sujata and Somu's mother-both of them victims of the holocaust during the 1970's is not unnatural and it possibly turns a major threat to the prevailing social system as the victims learn to make common cause by revolting against all kinds of oppression. Somu's mother asks Sujata not to come again to her house she is told to forbid her as she may prove dangerous to her.

The rift between Dibyanath and Sujata widens further when he accuses her for being responsible for the death of Brati. The accusation accelerates her realization of which

sides she on ideologically. She seems to have felt relieved of the burden of sinful life she has lived all the years. She appeals the audience, that is people, not to be silent sufferers, but respond actively to the reality and the cause. She knows it is a common cause in which she has merged her 'self'. While making an appeal to the people, Sujata shakes herself off the shackles of patriarchal values enjoined on women. Enlightened she takes up cudgels against the society. But in a society which is full of Diblyanath's and Saroj's Pals, She seems to have realized that a greater revolt and higher sacrifice like Brati's is essential to safeguard human values. Though the establishment dehumanizes Brati and his ilk by giving a number to their corpses, they have really lived their lives whose spark will keep on coming through a Sujata's angry outburst "*Do the living die, only to leave the world to the dead to enjoy ? No! never!*"⁴⁸ Thus we see Sujata standing against the society fulfilling the task of her son which she feels remains incomplete yet.

Both **Ismat Chughtai** and **Kundanika Kapadia** in their works reject the hierarchies' gender ideologies. Their women characters find access to freedom not in an opposition to men but to the internalized patriarchal attitude in both men and women. It is through the un-demanding male-female relations that do not force servitude on women, as a patriarchal society would, that they find fulfillment.

In Chughtai's novel ***The Heart Breaks Free***, the youthful, Vital, nonchalant and exuberant Bua is destroyed body and spirit, when she submits to the so-called reforming control of the traditional family. In contrast the rebellions Qudisia and Shabir, by isolating themselves from the traditional community, are able to find a new, fulfilling life that also paves the way to prevent the deaths of women like Bua. But Chughtai's vision of feminist Utopia, although it preserves the identity and happiness of the oppressed subjects, is not

conspicuously transformative as far as the patriarchal structure is concerned. What Shabir and Qudisia are able to achieve is a blissful separatist retreat from the world, an individualistic and subjective feminist utopia that does not offer any synthesis of sociality and individuality within the normative community.

Kundanika Kapadia's male and female characters are also considered misfit by the traditional society because they question the validity of its values. Their struggle to change these damaging patriarchal norms leads to their subjugation by the upholders of the traditional society. As a way of negating the victimization, the outsiders in Kapadia's most explicitly feminist novel ***Seven Steps in the Sky*** create their own community "Anandgram", that espouses the values of freedom, androgyny and collective growth through mutual dependence and empowerment. The characters in Kapadia's novel do not retreat from the world but openly reveal and reinforce the revolutionary and reconstructive features of their utopian community to the society at large. In Anandgram both men and women are "*given chance to earn merit—besides earning money.*"

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They also do not live in one house but like friends living with each other, where each is independent but not lonely, where everyone has their own room or their own house. This arrangement first shows the characteristic of mutual friendship and sharing as humanly valuable and secondly and more importantly it shows that personal freedom and social life are interdependent and mutually supportive. Female Characters Vasudha, Mitra, Aabha, Aana all stand firmly against the dominant patriarchy and are successful to achieve personal freedom, a freedom which gives them self-identity.

In the words of Kapadia, "The outlook of the Hindu woman is enlarged, her opinions find perspective, her creative energies are enfolded,

her personality is developed, also she realized her rights and place in society".

Earlier women writers were known for writing about their enclosed domestic spheres, have now emerged out of their comfort zones and are talking about things like self identity and the things like sex, extra-marital affairs and love, which were considered as taboos. They are no more "the second sex" but exploring the pathos, the humility, the subjugation of her existence lending it a voice, which would prove at large that she was an equal, challenging the male dominance. The woman as a writer had appeared on the world scenario and contemporary women's writing is a tribute to the representation of women power and talent.

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