



## International Journal of Current Research and Academic Review

ISSN: 2347-3215 Volume 2 Number 2 (February- 2014) pp. 72-75

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### Women as Writers

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#### KEYWORDS

The growth and progress of women;  
Early Women Writings;  
Women Fiction Writers;  
Women Play Writers.

#### A B S T R A C T

This paper briefly describes the growth and progress of women as writers in Indian perspective. The status of women in India has witnessed many ups and downs. Beginning from the sangam period till the present day women writings have contributed much to the growth of literature and have presented issues in the spotlight highlighting a women's world. Be it poetry, prose or fiction these writers have done it in a new dimension and still continues expressing their strong feelings in the form of writing.

### Introduction

Gender plays an important role in the life of a human being. In a country like India, the role of a man and women is being defined clearly, and most of the time people are naturally taught to follow a strict code of behavior that differs depending on sexes. Thus men and women are forced to experience life only from their point of view as men or women. Art is said to be a reflection of life. When the life of a man is being reflected in his work of art, a Women's experiences and suffering can be brought out in words accurately only by a women. Men who write from female perspectives bring forth life only from a man's view. In patriarchal societies men

define strict roles and rules for women in their work of art.

Women represent almost half of the total population of our country. No schemes whether in the field of economic development and social development can be successful unless women play their constructive role in such programmes. In spite of the social imbalances existing in the society, there has been considerable improvement in their social status. The status of women in India has seen many ups and downs. In the Vedic period they were worshipped as goddess. During the Muslim age and British regime they were looked down upon as 'slaves of slaves'. Since

independence the wave goes in favour for women. Today the fact cannot be denied regarding the progress of women in social legislation, in the field of education health and economy. One can witness women is almost all sphere of life.

### **Early Women Writings**

*Abithana Chintamani*, the first encyclopedia on Tamil literature states that the "Awaiyar" was the little of more than one female poet who was active during different periods of Tamil literature. Among them Awaiyar I lived during the sangam period 'ie' during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century, and had cordial relation with Tamil chieftains Paari and Athiyaman. She wrote 59 poems in the *purananuru*. Awaiyar ii lived during the period of Kambar and ottakuttar during the reign of Chola dynasty in the 13th century. She wrote many of the poems that remain very popular even now and are inculcated in school textbooks in Tamil Nadu. Her quote "Katrathu Kai Mann Alavu, Kallathathu Ulagalavu" has been translated as "What you have learned is a mere handful; What you haven't learned is the size of the world" and exhibited at NASA. It is to be noted that the term Awaiyar means respected old women or grandmother even though her real name is not known.

Novels by women writers before independence include Raj Lakshmi Debi's *The Hindu Wife*, or *The Enchanted Fruit* (1876) and Krupabai Sathianandhan's *Kamala, A Story of Hindu Life* (1894) and *Saguna, A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895). Ghoshal's translation of the Bengali novel, *An Unfinished Song* (1913) and *The Fatal Garland* (1915). *Tales of Bengal* (1922) *The Cage of Gold* (1923) and *The Garden Creeper* (1931) are Bengali novels

by Santa and Sita Chatterjee which were later translated in to English.

### **Women Fiction Writers**

Today fiction by women writers contributes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. It provides insights, a wealth of understanding, reservoirs of meaning and a basis of discussion. The world is being seen in a new dimension through the eyes of women fiction writers. The confrontation between the east and the west, the strange love hate relationships cultural alienation and loss of identity faced by expatriates and immigrants are some of the aspects that are presented with a deep insight by writers like Kamala Markandeya, Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal. Kamala Markandeyas the *Nowhere Man* explores the evil and ugly nature of racial prejudice. The novel is an angry protest against the global problem of racial hatred. In the novel, Srinivas with his wife Vasanta, migrates to England where he sets up a home. In spite of his best efforts to adopt the country of his choice as his own, he is treated as an alien. Another celebrated and prolific living novelist who has thrashed with the theme of alienation in a systematic way is Anitha Desai. She was born on 24th June in 1937 of a German mother and a Bengali father, a business man. She began to write short stories at the tender age of 9. As a novelist Desai made her debut in 1963. *Cry the peacock* (1963) *Voices in the city* (1965) *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *The peacock Garden* (1974), *Where shall we go this Summer*(1975) *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Games at Twilight and other stories* (1978), *Clear light of day* (1980), *Village by the sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984) *Baumgartners Bombay* (1989). *Journey to Ithaca* (1996) *Fasting Feasting* (1999), *Diamond Dust* (2000) are

her works through which she expressed her world. Writing to her is an intellectual exercise.

In her first novel '*Cry the peacock*' she portrays the tale of a young sensitive girl named Maya who longs for love, care and understanding. The gap between the wife Maya and her husband Gautama is the centre theme of the novel. *Baumgartners Bombay*, the tenth novel of Anita Desai is considered as the darkest novel. In this novel the author pursues the solitary life of Hugo Baumgartner as the flees of Nazi Germany who tries to find a home in a politically torn India struggling to carry on after British rule. As the author of "*Baumgartners Bombay*" was born of a German mother, the congenial aesthetic environment at home contributed a great ideal to fertilize her creative imagination and her grass root level experiences helped in consolidating the maturity of her vision. "Among the Indian novelists Comelia Sorabji, Iqbalunnisa Hussain, R.P. Jhabvala, Anitha Desai, Rama Mehta, Shashi Deshpande, Shobba De, Kamala Das, Mahasweta devi and Arundhati Roy are primarily concerned in their novels with the psychological crises in the lives of Indian women who are subjected to physical and psychological torture in a male dominated society." (Sree 21) In the novels of these women writers the inner mind of the Indian women is being studied from their outlook perspective. These writers dive deep in to the inner mind of the women and bring to light the issues faced by a women in a male dominated society governed by rigid traditions and restrictions.

### **Women Play Writers**

Drama, a challenging literacy creation, is cleverly handled by women writers like

Manjula Padmanabhan, Dina Mehta and Mahasweta Devi. Manjula Padmanabhans pioneering play *Harvest* is a futuristic play about the sale of body parts and exploitative relationships between developed and developing countries. It won the first price in Onassis International Cultural Competition. Dina Mehta's play *Brides are not for Burning* bring out the post-colonial issues related to the existence of women in the country. The play was highly acclaimed that it won an International award from the B.B.C. Mahasweta Devi, the playwright belonging to Bengal deals with social issues throughout her works. Most of her themes centre around the untouchable deprived of their basic rights. *Aajir* and *Water* are her notable plays that deals with oppression and inhumanity. Feminist – theater is the process of women's awareness and empowerment. The contribution of women playwrights have always something distinct to offer to the audience.

### **Women as Poets**

Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu are the pioneers of Indian poetry in English. The Quest for identify loneliness and alienation are the major themes of their poetry. In the poems of modern Indian poets such as Monika Varma, Komala Das, Suniti Namjoshi, Roshea Alkazi, Gauri Deshpande, Mamta Kalia search for identify and struggle for new identify finds a prominent place. Other themes such as social discrimination male oppression, self realization and consequent evolution of consciousness are the other themes in their writings.

### **Conclusion**

The prevalence of difference in the literary works of men and women is a topic for

much further research. However the success of women writings is highly acclaimed that it has won international recognitions breaking the barriers of Gender, Race and Region. The imbalance between women writing in poetry prose and Drama still exists. Indian women novelist are progressing leaps and bounds. But poetry and drama still awaits to be treated with the profound and rich dynamic dimension from a women's perspective.

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