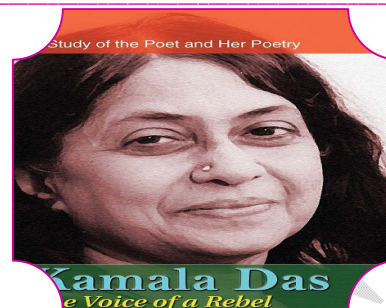




THE FEMINIST APPROACH IN KAMALA DAS NOVEL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Dr. R. Bakyaraj

Associate Professor, Department of English, MEA Engineering College, Perinthalmanna, Malappuram, Kerala.



ABSTRACT

Feminist is too elaborate expression to encapsulate within a specific one-line description. In other words, it can even be said that Feminism has not been defined in any precise manner. In short, feminism does not have a particular label or definition of any kind and this is well expressed by Alice Jardine, Yet in a broadly laid perspective it is a purposely structured stand against patriarchal exploitation of any kind and an attempt to recover a female identity and selfhood lost through time. For a proper inference of feminism, it may be interpreted as bid to extend membership in universal human nature, there by gaining eligibility for human rights, to that category of 'being' named 'woman'. This is perhaps the exact point conveyed by MARY WOLLSTONECRATT's title to her book a vindication of the Rights of Woman. Feminism thus tries to establish woman as not an object or a relative entity of man, instead it categorically insists on assimilating women to the class of human race. Thus feminism claims at not differentiating woman as a separate category but in incorporating and unifying her to whatever it is to be human, women are that too and therefore eligible for the rights that human beings are entitled for.

KEYWORDS: Assimilating, Recognition, Category, Incorporating, Perspective, Vindication.

INTRODUCTION :

These and many more inscriptions have been offered as prescriptions of feminism. Some other view points about feminism can also be read to get a better understanding of the feminist literature that extended and dealt with so many diverse aspects of a women's life. "Feminism meant equal opportunity, equal pay for equal work, recognition that a woman could do a job well as a man". In other words of historian Linda Gordon, feminism is an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change.

The concepts of feminism are found to have different interpretations in different countries and different people like diverse feminist theory of the American, French, Canadian, African, and Indian critics. To the French women, it is greater sexual perspicuity, the American women demand enhanced political and democratic liberty, and Indian women struggle is for equal social, economic, political and democratic independence. Elaine show alters in her Book. A literature of their own terms women's writing a "subculture" and defines the tradition by establishing three terms: "Feminine", "Feminist", and "female" show alters famous distinction states the feminine phase of internalization, the feminist phase of revolt and the female phase of self-discovery and self-recovery. Each of these phases is said to achieve greater emancipation than its fore runner, without losing its distinctiveness as women's writings.

One of the primal and seminal concerns of feminism was to declare that women is also a being, has an entity of her own and is not an appendage of man. The French dramatist Alexander Dumas, the younger

was the first to use the term 'Feminism' in a 1872 in a pamphlet 'L' 'Home-Femme', to label the then upcoming movement for women's rights. Women's Demand for equality with man has been a continual theme in the western society since the past two hundred years. As early as 1777 A Big ail Adams wrote to her husband John, a sitting member in the continental congress, and Munising him not to give such unlimited power to the husband.

Feminism in India is not just a by-product of the western feminist movement. Its birth in the Indian soil also credits to the Drawn of an independent notational identify that Indian obtained after her independence and resultant new awareness, which it developed among the women folk. The Indian women caught in the flux of tradition and modernity bearing the burden of the past and the aspirations of the future is the crux of feminism in Indian literature. Sushilasing has the following interpretation which she stays in the performance to her book, feminism and resent fiction in English." while dealing with feminism as an ideology and also as a critical tool, it is essential to take note of the fact that it assume different configurations in accordance with racial, class and cultural variations"

Till the late 19th century there was a long standing supremacy of the male, in the world of letters. This primacy changed around the early 20th century, with the encouragement of women writers, not only in Indian but also worldwide. Women's thoughts and dilemmas till then in the literature written by the male writers have been tantamount to masculine understanding. As mentioned Jane Austen's novels persuasion, where Elizabeth Eliot says to contain Hartville: "men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story .Education has been there in so much higher degree: the pen has been in their hands".

As a result of this, the image of women has been one sided and incomplete. In 1913 A determined articulate new breed of women inaugurated a struggle for the liberation of women. Women and their writings have made a tremendous impact in the world of literature. The literature written by those women writers cannot be captured in a simple definition. Their literature reflects many religious, historical and cultural traditions. It includes masterpieces in many forms, particularly novels, short stories, epics, poems, drama and essays.

It was the need to restore women her position in society that stirred the feminist literature to explore in to the forbidden and uninhabited areas dominated fill then by the male community. This effort for revival started around the 20th century with Virginia Woolf 's A room of one' s own, French feminist Simone De Beauvoir' s treatise Le Deuxieme sexe, a scholarly and passionate plea for the abolition of what she called the myth of the "eternal feminine". This seminal become a classic of feminist literature and many women writers drew inspiration from it. Other books in the line are American feminist Betty Friedan's the feminine mystique, Kate Millet's sexual politics. All these and many other feminist writers have given their view points about feminism and emphasized the need for feminist literature.

The status of the postcolonial Indian woman and her position in the Indian society come to the much more obscure than what it had been in the past decades. The Indian woman of the new age is a beautiful smart face, burying countless anxieties and doubts. The reason for this is accounted in her breaking free from the long standing social codes for domestic slavery and subservience, talking to active participation in the societal rules. She has finally dared to step forward from the breeder feeder image, and venture in to the diverse sectors of the male dominated public life. This stepping out from the familial life has exposed her to various threats like exploitation, sexual harassment, physical and mental abuse.

As long as she obeyed the patriarchal constraints and stayed within the four walls of the house, her hardships remained limited to the house-hold, but once she ventured out, she was compelled to counter atrocities from the outside world also. The hostile behaviour towards woman is an all-pervading element in every area where she stands equal to her male counter parts. Her apprehensions and worries, which were lately restricted to her family, have intensified with her emergency into the public life. Today she is beckoned to new challenges but with greater adversities. The modern-day woman is subjected to greater abuse, both physical and psychological from within and outside the family, than in the earlier days. Statistics show that instances of rape, molestation, eve-teasing, physical and mental ill treatment have increased.

Though the Indian constitution has enacted much legislation to safe guard and protects her, she is most of the time denied justice.

Indian English feminist literature thus took up the responsibility to address all these diverse problems and issues of women in an attempt to build social revelation and seek solutions to her problems. Many women writers took up this task in earnest and have been quite successful in their endeavour. The feminist movements which began in the west, directed to the realization of the strategies used to oppress the woman and keep her subservient to men. This movement guided to an urgent need to acknowledge the necessity of viewing women's problems and their needs on a wider canvas. It was this revolutionary feminist movement that led to the dawn of feminist literature. This movement did not leave the Indian women unaffected and its impact could be sensed in the writings of many of the women writers of India.

In the Indian English fiction, the women characters were influenced by the Traditional images. Mythical portrayals have been all-pervading, dominating and influential element in literature. The Indian literary tradition as one overshadowed by the traditional, suffering ideal of women hood. This representation continued in the culture saturated by the devout portrayals of virtuous goddesses dedicated to their husbands and family. The Sita - Savitri image still exists as a powerful ideal for women in India and the Indian fiction.

To understand feminist overturns in the Indian English literature particularly the short story genre by women, the stories of three major women writers Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and kamala das are taken up for discussion and analysis. These women writers have dealt with and exposed through their stories diverse topics ranging from the physical to the psychological aspects affecting the Indian womanhood. Their female characters stretch from women who covertly endure namelessly fulfilling the ideals of the mythical image of woman, to the modern overtly conflicting women, trying to break free from the traditional archetype. The verity and diversity that the feminine literature presents is too vast to encapsulated in a proper definition. It would be difficult to clearly differentiate and define the womanly practice of writing by the women writers.

The latest developments in Indian English fiction of the women authors is the depiction of women characters who endure endlessly fulfilling the ideals of a devout write to women who have progressed to a conflicting yet liberated and self-aware individuals. These women writers' works have thus witnessed their incorporated experience of the two worlds, in an attempt to make a new, empowering image of women. Their stories realize both the diversity of a woman and the diversity within each woman rather than limiting the lives of woman to one ideal, these writers push the ideals towards the full expression of each woman's potential.

Examining the stories of the Indian woman writers, one can appreciate both the diversity of woman and diversity within each woman. The feminist woman of thoughts allowed the writers as critics to attack the meaning sexual difference in the patriarchal ideology. Another, most recent development of the feminist view, was of an over-arching gender theory, which considers gender, both male and female, as a social construction upon biological differences. Critics of this vein found gender as imprisoning, and voiced their views against this prejudice. Images of male-wrought representation of woman came under fire, prompting the emergence of a unique female consciousness and a feminist tradition in the literature.

A cursory glance into the Indian English short stories by woman writers plausibly portrays the long course of journey that the feminist literature has traversed. Women are believed to be natural story tellers and the genre of short story has effectively grown in the hands of these woman writers. They have engaged this form of prose fiction in revealing various predicaments of a woman's life that needs sincere examination and deciphering of the dilemmas. Reading through the short stories of Anita Desai, Kamala Das, and Shashi Deshpande the Indian woman's outlook can be comprehended to a large extent.

Desai's short fiction is in a way, an advocacy for the legitimate rights and freedom of woman and is especially noted for her sensitive portrayal of her female characters. Several of Desai's works explore tensions between family members and the alienation of middle-class woman her forte lies in the experimentation of the psychological complexities. Uncertainties of human life and concern for the

emancipation of woman. Through her characters consciousness Desai examines the same events from different points of view. Some of the author's characters are members of the anglicized Indian bourgeoisie, whose marital problems are in the fore front. In Desai's work, her characters have often adopted an escapist way to cope with the monotonous everybody life or world outside comfortable living. Desai has commented about her work, "My novels are no reflection of Indian society politics or character. They are my private attempt to seize upon the raw material of life". Most of Desai's important representations of woman existence, however, concern the daily lives of ordinary women in the traditional role as wives, mothers, and widows.

Indian English feminist writing have thus been emphasizing and advocating the need for women's emancipation and gender equality. These writers have addressed aspects that have been tormenting the womanhood of India right from female foeticide and equal pay to that of dowry and rape. To sum up in the word of Helene Cixous, almost everything is yet to be written by woman about femininity: about their sexuality, that is, its infinite and mobile complexity. A definite strategy needs to be evolves by women to negotiate and look at the world they live in with new eyes. the approach of the outlook of women will be an important index that will determine and change the future course of Indian womanhood, A determined dedication is needed to make gender equality a reality, and to achieve this, woman should start with the assumption that woman can marshal their power and win. However the evolution of feminist consciousness cannot stop.

At mere awareness, instead a resolution of daring and overt writings is needed to assert female self-hood. Meditating about the feminine writings of the present age, Namita Gokhale feels that through these women writers. A new identity and a new credo of individuality and pragmatism is being given voice.

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