



A Critical Review on Indian Writers and their Creation of Female Characters in the Post-Colonial Indian Literary Texts

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Abstract

In India, Women and literature are inseparable from each other because literature demands practical narration and a lot of artistic creativity. Fortunately, the creation of women characters is considered to be too smart in artistic creativity. Further, Indian novelists, through female characters, glorify Indian literature in English. Obviously, many Indian male and female writers explore Indian English literature in new directions. During the period when novels were not so popular in the world of literature, Indian writers used to contribute to literature in the form of writing songs, short stories, and small plays too. Even some educationists and great thinkers strongly believe that Indian writers were the one who supported the old tradition of narrating tales in India. In the beginning of post-independence era, a majority of men and women took up writing as their soul profession and they were later called Indian writers in English. During the course of time, they improved their writing skills and they were able register the emotions and feelings of women in their writings. So, this entry of Indian writers into the field of literature brought in sustainable growth and several changes in the usage of language patterns of Indian literature. Therefore, this paper investigates the representation of female characters for the growth of not only Indian literature but also Indian tradition and culture.

Keywords: *Indian literature, Tradition and Values, Women writers, Post-colonial period, Language Pattern and Style.*

It is a well-known fact that Indian English literature has several 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 depicted the typical images of women prevail in Indian society. At first, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife*, is a first published English novel by an Indian. This novel portrays the real image of women in Indian English fiction. For instance, Matangini is Rajmohan's Wife who 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.

Actually, the powerful image of women in society is reflected in the fictional works of Krupabai Sathianadhan. Her novel, *Shaguna*, is partly considered to be an autobiographical. *Shaguna* was a daughter of a Christian convert. Being a Christian convert, she did not have harmonious atmosphere in her life. However, she could manage things as her formal education helps her beats all the issues. However, she is able to get admission in medical college. At the end, *Shaguna* is satisfied and started enjoying her life as she finds a man who respects and treats her equally. In this way, Krupabai is presented as images of resilient and brave women in the society.

The Indian versatile writer Rabindranath Tagore's writings his wisdom and genius. Though he was not a feminist writer, his thoughts and writing deliberately show his strong understanding of woman's psyche. He wanted women to develop decision making power not only in family matters but also in social affairs. In his novels, one can easily find many images of different types of women. For example, in *The Wreck*, there is an important incident of boat wreck. In the boat, there were two families with their two brides and two grooms. But unfortunately, only two survives in the wreck. Therefore, Kamala and Ramesh consider themselves as husband and wife and settle somehow in their life. Unexpectedly, after sometime Kamala's real husband appears. In this juncture, Kamala's dilemma is depicted very aptly by Tagore.

Like that, in *Gora*, the Character of Suchitra has been depicted as a liberated young woman. She has a strong mind of her own and she gets relaxation at home as well as outside, While Anandamoyi, mother of the protagonist, limits her to be at home only and still ready to shake the conservative dogma of the society." (Sarah Edwards-Jonatha Charley, Google Book). In *The Home and The World*, the character of Bimal is caught between the demand of the home and the demand 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, experimentation and sufferings. She has to choose between Nikhil and Sandip to show difference between gold and tinsel" (Iyengar, 107)

However, many reviewers say that 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 the 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 side-lines 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.

The Indian novelist Mulk Raj Anand with the help of his rare veracity, bold experimentation and aesthetic sensibility has contributed a lot to Indian as well as world literature in English. He portrayed women who were all real in the society. "Anand feels that woman, whether she is rich or poor, is a marginalized being." (Uppal, Bajaj 114). His creation of women characters are mostly silent sufferer and continuously being victimized in the male dominated world. In his prime novel *Untouchable*, Anand mainly focuses on the dangers of Caste system and expressed his protest against Indian caste system. For instance, Sohini's portrayal in the novel *Untouchable* is full religious hypocrisy. Her molestation by Pandit Kali shows that how the people of upper caste cunningly use religion for their own sectarian benefits and surpassing the people of lower caste. Further, *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. But later, she silently suffers due to the tyranny of her husband and mother-in-law. At last, she was driven out of her house by her in-laws. After

a long time, Gauri returns home only to say good bye to her husband's home. Therefore Anand, the novelist, through Gauri presents multiple images of women like 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 pin-point 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 was a grand Old Man of Indian English fiction. (Kumar, 107). Though he is not a feminist writer, he has portrayed some of the memorable images of women in his fiction. That is why, the theme of emancipation of a new woman finds its expression in his novel *The Guide*. Although, it was a story of Raju, a guide, but it was the character of Rosie who clinched all the attention around her. Through the character, Rosie, the author has shown a woman who is experiencing a conflict between a strong yearning of self-fulfilment and traditional norms of the society. Further he presents the Indian society where how women have been the victim of circumstances and conventions. Because, Rosie also becomes the victim of circumstance as her husband ditches her for his research in archaeological study. However, through her rebellious attitude, she made her own way with pride and dignity. It shows that she was a newly liberated woman in the post-independence Indian society.

Through the novel, *The Guide*, the author presents the traditional India where women have no freedom and opportunity for expressing their expertise and talent. For example, Rosie comes from a "family-traditionally dedicated to the temples as dancers" (The Guide, 75). But against her family tradition, Rosie commits adultery with Raju, although being a married woman. It is a crucial stage in her life. Because her marital relation with Marco, her husband, is not satisfactory and her inner emotions and feelings force her to get adultery with Raju. Therefore, Narayan portrays the character of Rosie to inform the world that there are some women who are with bold attitude towards fulfilling her life goals with the help of people like Raju. Their marriage collapse as the instances of their clash of expectation, interest, desire and hope grows.

R. K. Narayan in his *Dark Room* portrays with sympathy the sufferings of women and how important are their roles both in family and society. It is a story of disturbed married life. Here, Savitri, the heroine, is

eternal feminine and her married life was going smoothly with her husband Ramani along with their three children. But, unexpectedly, with the entry of Shanta, the other woman, everything changes. Because, she used to rouse the feeling of love in Ramani. Hence, their married life was totally shattered. As a result, Savitri tried to commit suicide but she was saved. Actually, she returns home only to take care of her children. But, Ramani is wandering here and there with Shanta. So, through this novel, *Dark Room*, Narayan portrays the two completely different images of women who were sample in a society.

His other novel, *The English Teacher*, is all about love in a married life. The character Susila is a wife of Krishna. Both of them love each other intimately. However, after a few years of their marriage, Susila is gripped by typhoid, after sometime she dies. Here, Narayan portrays Susila as an image of woman who can write poetry and who has womanly quality. So, she is totally different from Rosie or Savitri. Surprisingly, Narayan's women are neither good or bad but they behave in accordance with their whims and wishes and also milieu around them. That's why K. R, Srinivas Ayengar 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. In addition Shanta of *The Dark Room*, Shanti of Mr.Shampath and Rosie of *The Guide* are also kind souls. Therefore, here are no 'good' or 'bad' characters in Narayan's novels. (Iyengar, 363)

Further, Raja Rao is a prolific writer who has written novels and short stories. Generally, all his works reflect a profound commitment to Indian philosophy, acquired through a lasting attachment to gurus and ashrams during his life. Leena Gandhi observes, unlike Mulk Raj 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)

Actually, Raja Rao's writings always portray women keeping in mind the scriptures of Manu Smriti, which shows the duties and behaviour of women. Portrayal of submissive attitude of women is one of the striking features of Raja Rao's characterisation. His ideal women - Savithri, 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. That's why the novel, *The Serpent and*

the Rope describes that woman must be married to someone even if she is blind, deaf, mute or suffering from diseases like tuberculosis. Because, 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)

In Kanthapura, we find a 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 also 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. That is why, all in all, Raja Rao deliberately portrayed the original images of women quite different that of his contemporaries. Because his women characterisations are influenced by the Gandhian philosophies, thoughts and movement.

The novelist, Bhabani Bhattacharya is a social realist who was much impressed by Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mulk Raj Anand. Almost all his novels portray the then existing social issues. But still, there are some images of women which needed to be mentioned. For example, in *So Many Hungers*, Kajoli is a rustic girl and she is raped by a soldier. Normally, most of the rustic and downtrodden women will turn to be 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 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. To explain the value of adjustment in in-laws house, the author has used the novel *Music for Mohini* where he portrays wonderful image of Mohini, a Calcutta born Brahmin girl. She is a renowned radio artist. She is married to Jaydev, whose sister is Rooplekha who tells Mohini after marriage "you are city based and wedded to the village where as I am village based and wedded to city. As both of us are common in many ways, we have to change our lifestyle to settle in our in-law's house". In this way the author created the 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-law's homes.

Kamala Markandya wanted to introduce multicultural women in her novels. Therefore, she has portrayed different images of women in her novels. For instance, 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 girl Ira but her husband wants a male child. After years, Rukmani bears many male children. Then one day some townsmen came to her village to build a tannery. But Rukmani is against this sudden intrusion of modernity and industrialism entering into her rural life. Meanwhile, Rukmani arranged for Ira's marriage. But Ira returns home from her husband's house after sometime as she could not bear a child. During the course of time, her family became poor and faced starvation as there is no sufficient rain which is essential for agriculture. So, being barren and the situation of poverty compelled Ira to sell her body for running the family and also gives birth to an illegal baby. At the end Rukmani and Nathan have to settle for charity. They do petty jobs for their family. In this way Markandaya portrays the image of Rukmani who sacrifice her happiness for the sake of her family. She is also portrayed as 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)

After the post-independence era, the Indian readers acknowledged the work of Indian writers as a strong way to spread tradition, culture and modernism. In the past 60 years, there has been a remarkable progress in Indian literature. Novels written by Post-modern writers who focus on the current issues related to women and society like rape, sufferings, corruption and injustice. Most of the stories focus on the themes of unknown or untold or untraceable psyche of females, and one can witness many such stories where the sorrows and sufferings of girls and housewives are portrayed. So, this paper appreciates the Indian writers for portraying Post-Colonial Indian current society and the role of female characters.

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