

## **Presentation of Women in Literature from Past to Present**

**Tippabhotla Vyomakesisri**  
*M.A English literature, Osmania University*

---

**Abstract:** Literacy has witnessed the role of women being evolved through ages. The following paper discusses the evolution of women from ancient period to last ultra modern tech savaged period. The paper discuss the feminism, the women problems and issues portrayed in the literature through the women centered roles. The presentation of modern women by different female authors is discussed.

---

Date of Submission: 09-11-2017

Date of acceptance: 23-11-2017

---

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

It is widely acknowledged that literature is the reflection of the society. Literature reflects the perceptions and attitudes of the society. It portrays human life through characters, by their words and deeds convey message for the purpose of instruction, information and delight. It is not wrong to say that literature is witness to evolution of women through ages. The changing role of women in literature from the past to present indicates the evolution of women and women empowerment.

From the ancient scriptures the status of women in India can be stated as equal to men. Veds like Rig ved and Upanishads wrote about women sage and seer like Gargi and Matreyi. Classic Sanskrit literature begins with epics and puranas. These serves as source of inspiration for writing to later poets, which also influenced in shaping the women characters. The epic Ramayana and Mahabharata women characters have traits that had their unfair moments of subjugation due to their gender. Women were considered less worthy than men and are still objects used for the pleasure of men. The fact is that that these characters were curated and edited to suit the needs of a patriarchal society. While Sita has been hailed for her sacrificing nature, Draupadi has been known for her sharp oratory and comments and has been branded as being the centrifugal force that caused the Mahabharata. Women in Greek Mythology show that women's rights were very limited and not allowed to express much of their freedom. In ancient Greek life role of women was considered to be insignificant compared to that of Greek men. Most of the popular plays in Greek have female characters complex, taking upon the role of not only heroine, but also the role of villain and role of victim. The medieval literature show women adhere to the narrow roles of wives, mothers. It is apparent from medieval literature restrictions placed on women underwent significant changes, As the period went on, women gradually began to express more of her opinions and had equal role in society.

### **II. WOMEN CHARACTERS IN LITERATURE**

The ideal gender indicated that more passive qualities were feminine qualities, that is not to say that they were qualities all women naturally possessed. However, in some circumstances it was acceptable women who possessed more masculine qualities for example, Shakespeare's Kate inspired those around her to shun her. Britomart, Spenser's heroine, though chaste and beautiful, was masculine as represented by her crossdressing as a Knight and her magic spear in her adventure, a strong character who very actively fought as a knight and saved lives. Shakespeare's famous Lady Macbeth is ambitious and driven, convincing her husband to kill the king even after he had convinced himself not to. That she cannot bring herself to do the deed herself is indicative of the weakness that comes with her being a woman-she can instigate the action, Speaking of depiction of women in Indian poetry, Mahadevi Varma, a freedom-fighter, educationist and activist became the mirror of Hindi poetry on women issues. She also wrote on issues of women's emancipation. She drew inspiration for her subjects from traditional Hindu literature, which talked about liberating images. Jai Shankar Prasad, depicted women as strong glorified. He became famous for his strong portrayals of women. A popular verse from one of his most widely read poems, "Nari! tum kewal shraddha ho, Vishwas-rajat-nag-pal-tal mein, Piyush strot si baha karo, Jeevan ki sundar samtal mein, which means, Oh woman! You are honour personified, Under the silver mountain of faith, Flow you, like a river of ambrosia, On this beautiful earth. In Indian regional poetry of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Poetess Amrita Pritam proved to be one of the leading voices. She spoke of the aftermath of the India-Pakistan partition in the region of Punjab and the women oppressed in due course in her Punjabi verses. Kamala Das paved way for a heart-rending style of feminine confessional poetry,

in which a common theme was the exploration of the man-woman relationship. This style was subsequently taken up by other women poets such as Gauri Deshpande and Chitra Narendran.

R.K.Narayan one among greatest Indian novelist. He wrote many novels such as, 'Mr Sampath'(1949), 'The Financial Expert'(1952), 'Waiting for the Mahatma'(1955), 'The Guide'(1958), 'The Vendor of Sweets'(1967), 'The Painter of Signs'(1977) etc. Most of his novels were on contemporary social issues. His novel have women characters not as central characters but are often secondary characters like mother, sister, friends, wife or foreigners. Susila, Rosie, Rukmini, Laxmi etc are his different female characters in different novels, but they are not protesting women. These characters of women have the usual feminine weakness and surrender themselves under the male domination. He portrays female characters who accept marriage as their fate, about which they can do nothing but suffer patiently. These characters are ever shy and demure as traditional Indian women should always be.

### **III. MODERN INDIAN WOMEN WRITER PROTRAY OF FEMALE CHARACTERS**

A distinguished novelist Anita Desai novels main theme focused on women's quest for self identity. All her women characters like Maya in 'Cry The Peacock', Uma in 'Fasting Feasting'(1990), Lila in 'The Village By The Sea: An Indian Family Story'(1982), Bimla in 'Clear Light Of Day'(1980) long for freedom and justice for their personality . Desai's women are often found themselves in harsh restless world dominated by men. Her novels presented the image of a suffering woman preoccupied with her inner world, her sulking frustration. Shashi Deshpande novels mostly portray clearly the middle-class Indian society. The heroine in her first novel 'The Dark Holds No Terror' (1980) Sarita play a great role for the unhappiness of her married life

In another novel 'Roots and Shadow' (1983) central character is Indu who has rebel against the orthodox traditions of village life. She prefers city life for it's conventions suitable for the 'smart young set'. She return backs to her village after long gap of 12 years and realizes the resiliencies of the village life. Heroine Jaya in 'That long Silence', is an upper class house wife with two teenaged children. When her husband is suspected of fraud, she was forced to shift into a small flat in a poor locality. Thus she feels her identity became silenced under her silent suffering, so here the tragedy in her life comes due to the conflict of status between inner secure of modernity and her poor and neglected circumstance. The novel is of course, this protagonist Jaya's mental and emotional journey. All the female characters in her novels break out of the shackle of classism and marry as per their wish but can't stand strong for long and finally makes themselves compelled to surrender to the orthodox traditions of patriarchy.

Bharti Mukherjee's women in her novels are caught in the flux of patriarchal norms. They ultimately crave for finding self identity, definition and liberation. The concept of feminism is justified in her novels as it is a process to reform the society in favor of the female. She depicts a liquid society in her novels, ie a society in flux. It is a society of constant flow, the flow of migrants, the flow of machines, flow of criminals, flow of power structures, flow of people and commodities. Shobha De is one of the most feminist group writers who voice in a strong modern and ultra modern way through her novels. Women are portrayed in a quite unconventional and unorthodox way. Her novels deal with Love, romance, hatred and marital relationship, but in an extravagant way. In fact she tries to portray the reality of metropolitan and cosmopolitan society. Her women characters are ultra modern and westernized that they never belief in philosophy not even mythological power distribution. Shobha De's women break all sorts of taboos and feel liberated. Her novels presents the vital reality and creates aware of women miseries and injustices subjected to them by their counterparts in the patriarchal society.

### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Literature has witnessed the roles of women evolving through ages, most of the published writers were men until recent times, therefore the portrayal of women was without doubt biased. Since the time of the first explorers to the present, women's roles and portrayal in literature reflect the changes occurring historically for women. The insignificance and oppression of women prior to the mid-19th century is related by the small roles of females in literature. As women gained equality, the heroine continued to change. By studying these changes, it is observed that not only do the characters embody the female identity, but also the heroines transform into the new figures that women aspire to be.

### **REFERENCES**

- [1]. Arora, Neena. "An Analytical Study of Sisters." *The Fiction of Shobha De*. Ed. Jaydipsinh Dodia. New Delhi: Prestige 2000. 216-219. Print.
- [2]. Barua, Gita. "Rise and Fall of a Star: A Study of Starry Nights." *The Fiction of Shobha De*. Ed. Jaydipsinh Dodia. New Delhi: Prestige. 2000. 174-179. Print.
- [3]. K.K. Ruthven, *Feminist literary studies: an introduction* (Cambridge, 1990).
- [4]. "Revisiting Shakespeare and Gender." Almasy, Rudolph. Daniel, Rebecca. Gerlach, Jeanne. 1996.

- [5]. "Oppressed like Us" The Tribune, 14 November 1987.  
Shirwadkar, Meena, "Indian English Women Novelists," Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English, ed. M.K. Naik, New Delhi : Abhinav Publications, 1985.
- [7]. Thomas, T. K. , "The Hindu Ethos - A Novelist ' s Perspective," Religion and Society, 20 December 1973, pp. 54-71 196/gerlach.html
- [8]. <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=5566>

IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

Tippabhotla Vyomakesisri Presentation of Women in Literature from Past to Present." IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), vol. 22, no. 11, 2017, pp.18-20.