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A Study of Early Indian Female English Novelists

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ABSTRACT: The Indian English book emerged very recently. Prose, which includes letters, translations, and religious, social, political, and cultural topics, is generally regarded to be the first form of Indian writing in English. Novels as a kind of creative fiction that provides artistic expression of the interaction between man and society did not emerge until much later in Indian literature. The British were instrumental in bringing the novel to India. There has never been anything like it before in Indian writing. Novels are vibrant and nuanced fantasies of self and subjects. Self-improvement and societal-level change, notably of sexism and racism, are essential to these pioneering efforts. This study examines the works of Toru Dutt, KrupabaiSaththianadhan, RokeyaSakhawat Hossain, and SwarnaKumari Devi Ghosal, focusing on the common threads across their books. In these books, women's claims to the public sphere as a result of their education, economic independence, and romantic interests serve as the focal point of change.

KEYWORDS: *Autobiographical, colonialism, feminist, melodrama, patriarchy, polemical, racism, reform, Romance, Utopia.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian English book emerged very recently. Prose letters, translations, and religious, social, political, and cultural tracks were the first forms of Indian English writing. The lack of the novel as a significant genre of creative fiction was a significant factor in the late emergence of the novel in Indian literature. The British were responsible for bringing the novel to India. Previously unseen in Indian writing, this was an entirely new subgenre. The early Indian English book is a slavish imitation of English examples. Those who wrote novels in the early modern era hardly seem to have tried to be original. What has always set apart the Indian English book is its social consciousness, its realism, and its unwavering interest in man. This primary guideline of novel writing has always been adhered to by Indian English novelists. From the "founder of the Indian novel" Bankim Chandra Chatterjee through modern masters such as Arun Joshi and Salman Rushdie, all have faithfully adhered to this maxim. The novels of Toru Dutt, KrupabaiSaththianadhan, RokeyaSakhawat Hossain, and SwarnaKumari Devi Ghosal are what I want to go into for my paper/article. Each of these actors, situated somewhere between the public and private spheres, contributed to the late-19th-century Indian society's massive multifaceted reform of gender relations and other issues. Their books often include reform with an emphasis on women's rights to education, economic independence, and public space. In addition, their works provide challenges to patriarchy via their exploration of issues of emotion, romantic satisfaction in marriage, and other forms of intimate relationships. The history of Indian women who have written novels in English began with Toru. Dutt, whose works *Bianca* and *Le Journal de Medemoiselle d' Arvers* deal with the personal projections of the authors. Cornelia Sorabji is yet another illustrious personage associated with the world of literature. In her works, she depicts women in a variety of states of mind and attire as they walk in under the 'purdah,' which is the ecstasy, tragedy, and comedy of women's lot in a society that is mostly male.

After the end of the Second World War, the history of Indian women's fiction written in English embarked on a new path and gained a new perspective. During this time period, Kamala Markandaya and Ruth PraverJhabvala stand out as the most notable individuals. Then, NayantaraSahgal and Anita Desai arrive on the scene, ushering in a whole



new age in the field of psychological representation of female characters. Other significant women authors who have left an indelible influence on the area of English literature include Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Manju Kapoor, Bharti Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy, Rama Mehta, and Jhumpa Lahiri. They are being honoured with accolades not just on the national level but also on the international level. In the majority of their publications, they have endeavoured, to the best of their abilities, to liberate female thought from the centuries-old grasp of male dominance. The tension that exists between modernity and tradition is given a central role in the depiction of female characters written by female authors. In the works of female authors, we often come across characters who are unusual in their behaviour and contemporary in their appearance. These women either return to a regular way of life after a short experiment or suffer greatly in their fruitless hunt for a traditional partner. In these stories, there are also female characters who saw modernity as a free pass to indulge in licentious behaviour. The majority of male authors, who are mostly responsible for writing, have ignored the stresses and worries that come along with living in a modern world have focused the majority of their emphasis on the overarching social characteristics that manifest themselves throughout the process of the slow transformation of the established order. However, the majority of the female authors focus their work on the existential dilemmas faced by the individual woman. They portray this issue via incompatible couples, women who are very sensitive, and husbands who are obedient but insensitive and unable to grasp their wives' feelings.

Their fictitious setting is an India that is now through a period of change, during which its cultural and ethical norms are being reshaped. One may get a feeling of the author's desire for a way of life that would answer to the deepest, most fundamental aspirations of the Indian lady for self-emancipation and self-dignity by reading their works and seeing how they yearned for such a way of life themselves. These English women authors have made an effort to comprehend on a deep level the situation that their female protagonists find themselves in. They are exemplary of the much-appreciated "creative liberation of the feminine sensibility" that started to surface in the decades after the end of World War II. Their young ladies have a strong desire for independence. They are aggravated by the pampered, overprotected existence that has been set apart for them, as well as the condescending, discriminatory attitude that has been taken not only by society, but even by the family, towards them. They have a sense of suffocation inside the confines of patriarchy.

Early Indian Women novelists (1860-2019)

1. Nayantara Sahgal, (1954-2019)

She has introduced a fresh perspective into the world of literature, one that belittles a storied past that is infused with significant western influences. A woman is an individual in her own right, correct, and Sahgal is certain that she will adapt herself physically and emotionally to the meaning of this freedom." Sahgal has been able to mature as a result of the pain and isolation that she has endured, and she has turned these experiences into understanding and compassion. She has released eight books so far, and in each one, she delves profoundly into the mind of a woman. She investigates the origins and repercussions of women's trauma in each of her books, one after the other. The feminist perspective that Sahgal presents in her novels has been the subject of a great deal of discussion. This, on the other hand, is not the militant feminism advocated by the Western European authors. Sahgal is of the opinion that women's full potential is not being fully realised in today's society. Her outlook and thoughts are comparable to those of authors such as Simone de Beauvoir, yet they are far less similar to those of authors such as Betty Freidan, Kate Millet, and Germaine Greer. Her female protagonists are strong, independent people who are able to do so despite the constraints of the culture into which they were born. She is of the opinion that women should make an effort to comprehend and recognise themselves as human beings, and not only as an appendage to the lives of men. Sahgal has a very unique conception of virtue and the virtuous woman, one that is distinct from the stereotypical picture of the self-effacing and self-sacrificing virtuous woman that is prevalent in India. However, the ladies in her books exhibit a wide variety of admirable qualities. They don't suffer, but they stand up for what's right. In point of fact, she is a representation of the new morality, which holds that a woman should not be seen as just a toy, an object of passion and fleeting pleasure,



but rather as an equal partner to a man. It is possible for the give and take of married life to operate. She wants to get rid of the deadwood of old beliefs that have been supported by the decadent and rapidly collapsing bourgeois society. Sahgal, who has a contemporary and liberal worldview, is a proponent of the new morality, which asserts that a woman should not be seen as a "sex object and glamour girl, fed on phoney fantasies of perpetual youth, lulled into a passive position that demands no individuality." ¹ The primary focus of Nayantara Sahgal's writing is on the vindication of the rights of women to be liberated from the conventional chains and breaking bad of tradition, as well as the portrayal of women breaking traditional taboos in order to accept modern values. In addition, the novels centre on the depiction of women who break conventional taboos in order to embrace modern values. The evolution from the past into the present is a theme that runs across all of her books.

Anita Desai (1963-2011) Anita Desai is a writer whose obsession with woman's inner life, her sensibility, brooding dissatisfaction, and storm raging within her head, bring her closer to the author arguing for the new morality. Anita Desai's novels focus on the woman's inner world and her sensibility. The existential plight of the lady as a person serves as the books' primary focus throughout the narratives. She illustrates this issue by pairing people who are fundamentally mismatched, such as women who are very sensitive and husbands who are obedient but lack understanding and sensitivity. Her works of fiction are set in a fictitious version of India, which is now going through a period of profound cultural and ethical change. One could feel the author's desire for a way of life in each of her books, a way of life that would answer to the deepest yearnings of both the Indian woman for self-emancipation and self-dignity. This longing was there in each of her books. In Anita Desai's works, the protest against the limitation of freedom, as well as against outmoded societal views and the conventional treatment of women, becomes increasingly acute and penetrating. Anita Desai argues that the main characters in her stories are novel and unconventional, saying, "I am interested in persons who are not ordinary but have withdrawn or been pushed into some extreme of despair and thus turned against... the general tide." ¹ They see it as a challenge to enhance the quality of their lives. The characters of Anita Desai's stories have been brought up to be timid, submissive, and quiet in the face of exploitation; nonetheless, they are very sensitive and clever, and they are anxious to find an outlet for their sorrows.

Toru Dutt (1856 – 77): Toru Dutt was a cosmopolitan transnational writer whose reputation spanned India, Great Britain, France, and the United States. Born into a great literary family, Toru's father, Govind, supported his daughter's extraordinary skills. Toru's fame reached India, Great Britain, France, and the United States. She did publish some of her poetry and gained a name for it throughout her short life, but she did not manage to have her book published at that period. Her father published her English book "BIANCA" or "The Young Spanish Maiden" in a Bengal journal after her death from tuberculosis. BIANCA was the protagonist of the story. Given that it was written by a young girl, it is more of a creation of the author's imagination than of her actual life experiences. This book is filled with foreboding from the very beginning to the very last page. Death, tragedy, and sorrow are its constant companions. Bianca, a young lady who is half Spanish and half British, is the protagonist of this story. The author Toru Dutt begins the book by describing the profound grief that Bianca and her Spanish father, Alonzo Garcia, experience upon learning of the death of Bianca's older sister, Intez. Bianca and her father are still hiding out in England after fleeing their own country. Then, Toru Dutt explains the romance between Bianca and Lord Henry Montague Moore, in which Bianca's mother plays a malevolent role and plots to disrupt the relationship between her daughter and her future husband with the assistance of Owen. As Bianca's fiance travels closer to the front lines in the Crimean war, she is left all by herself. After Bianca's sickness brings her to the brink of death, her father gives his approval for her to get engaged to Lord Moore.

This book has a symmetrical format throughout its whole. It is clear that the well-known love story "The Bride of Lammermoor" by Sir Walter Scott had an impact on this work. Bianca and Lord Moore are two characters that have a love relationship. The French book "Le journal de Mlle D'Arvers" written by Toru is dominated by the themes of sadness, tragedy, insanity, and death. In addition to that, it tells the narrative of a passionate love. In terms of physical description, sensitivity, and intellect, the protagonist of this French book has a striking similarity to Toru herself. Toru's novels, which are heroine-cultural, comprise a distinctive and unique component of the greater line of fictitious



works by Indian women from the 19th century that detail the maturation and progression of female characters.

RokeyaSakhawat Hossain (1880 -1932): RokeyaSakhawat Hossain was a feminist, essayist, and educator in addition to being a creative writer. She established a school for young women in Kolkata in 1911, and it is still operating to this day. The English translation of her feminist utopian story "Sultana's Dream," which she wrote in 1905, is a masterpiece. In the narrative, the concept of women's education serves as the primary impetus for the development of the successful utopian feminist nation of Land lady. In particular, Hossain places an emphasis on the intellectual education of women and opposes the militarization of males. The story "Sultana's Dream" is told in the form of a fable, which requires a condensed narrative. The queen of Land lady believes that all girls should go to school and that marriage between minors should be illegal. As a result, the ladies of Land lady are hard at work improving their mental capacities. In the two institutions that were established only for the education of women, pioneering plans are being developed. One of these plans enables water to be collected straight from clouds, while the other makes it possible to collect and store heat from the sun. When the country is faced with defeat in a battle by a rival nation, The Lady – principals of the colleges step into the gap. As a prior condition for agreeing to save the country, they demand that all males withdraw from the 'mardana.' The adversary is vanquished as a result of missile attacks that are fashioned from concentrated heat that was generated by the women's institutions. Since the males are now secure in the 'Mardana,' the women continue to rule the nation, which is now referred to as Lady Land, and they are working to create a paradise in which morality, technology, and scientific advancement all work together in harmony.

SwarnaKumari Devi Ghosal (1855—1932): Ghosal was involved in social change much as Sathianadhan and Hossain. She started a charity for poor and widowed women called sakhisamiti. By the end of the 19th century, she had already established herself as a major figure in Bengali literature. She was the older sibling of the poet and writer Ravindranath Tagore. The original Bengali versions of several of her writings were translated and published in English. She served as an off-and-on editor for the Bengali literary periodical "Bharathi" from 1884 until 1928. Kahaki, which she first wrote in Japanese and then translated into English and published in London as The Unfinished Song in 1898, is her masterpiece (1913). As she navigates the artificial, English translation Bengali dining rooms of early 20th-century Calcutta, Moni, a sensitive and intellectual young lady, searches for love in this tale of manners and nuanced love story. Moni initially falls for Romanth, but he betrays her. After some time, she started dating a young doctor and the two eventually fell in love. Ghosal spoke out against colonialism and the prejudice it bred.

II. CONCLUSION

Nowadays in India's literary scene, it's the English-language female authors from India who are telling the truth about life in India. They have a lot of weight to carry in the literary world. They carry out their roles as anthropologists, sociologists, novelists, essayists, travel writers, educators, and diplomats with elegance. On global literary standards established by postcolonial and postmodern authors. This means that the emergence of the first novelists represents a significant turning point for the Indian English Novel. Feminist literature was mostly written by women and focused on issues affecting women in society. From the first woman authors in India, the tradition of fiction by women writers has continued. Arundathi Roy, AnithaDeasi, Manju Kapoor, Sumitra Gupta, Shashi Deshpande, and dozens of other contemporary authors were among those we read. The early nineteenth century saw the birth pangs of the Indian English novel, but it wasn't until the late nineteenth century when trends and narratives and genres like the social novel, realistic novel, historical novel, etc. emerged.



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