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## **Indian Women Writing: An Overview**

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**Abstract:**

This research paper aims to present how Indian women writers have put great effort in writing in English. Indian English Literature has got an independent status in the realm of world literature. Many different themes are dealt within Indian writing in English. Through the depiction of life, this literature continues to reflect Indian culture, tradition, social values and even Indian history in India. Recently, Indian English fiction has been trying to give expression to the Indian experience of the modern predicaments. Indian writing in English is now gaining ground rapidly. In the realm of fiction, it has heralded a new era and has earned many laurels both at home and abroad. Indian women writers have started questioning the prominent old patriarchal domination. They are no longer puppets in the hands of man. They played vital role in the field of literature.

**Keywords:** Identity crisis, Alienation

**Introduction:**

Now a days, Indian Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring self- sacrificing women, towards conflicts of female characters searching for identity. Most of Indian Women Writers write about inner life of women characters. The works of woman writers such as of Nayantara Sahgal, Kamla Markandaya, Anita Desai, Kamla Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai and Manju Kapur and many more. These novelists have left a great impact on the readers of Indian fiction in English. Indian women novelists have used female subjectivity in order to establish an identity. The theme is from childhood to womanhood-developed society respecting women in general. Some works are notable such as Santha Rama Rau's Remember for the House (1956), Ruth Pravar Jhabvala's first novel To whom she will (1955) and her later novel Heat and Dust (1975), Kamla Markandya's Two Virgins (1994), Rama Mehta's Inside the Haveli (1977), and Geeta Hariharan's The Thousand Faces of Night (1992).



## **Prominent Feminist Women writers in India**

There are some prominent feminist women writers in India. The details of feminist women writers are given below:

### **Shashi Deshpande's writing**

Shashi Deshpande was born on 19 August, 1938. She is the second daughter of the famous Kannada dramatist Shriranga. Her first novel was *The Dark Holds No Terror*. It was published in June 1999. She won the Sahitya Akadami award, for her novel *That long silence* (1989). Her third famous novel is *Roots and Shadows* (1983). She reflects on the problems of the middle class Indian women. Her writings are rooted in the culture in which she lives. Her remarks are sensitive to the common everyday events and experiences. Her feminism is particularly Indian. The women characters are with traditional approaches. They try to tie family and profession to maintain the virtues of Indian culture.

Shashi Deshpande's novel *A Matter of time* (1996) has displayed the themes of gender differences, silence, and familiar relationships into much deeper realms. It is a story encompassing three generations of women coming to terms with their life in and all female worlds.

The theme in Shashi Deshpande's novels is human relationships especially the ones that exist between father and daughter, husband and wife, between mother and daughter. In all relationships, the women occupy the central stage. The narration shifts through her feminine consciousness. In her novels, three types of suffering women characters reoccur with changes. The first type belongs to the protagonist's mother, the traditional woman, who believes that her place is with her husband and family. The second type of woman is bolder more self-reliant and rebellious. She cannot conform to submissive, mythological and surrender vision of womanhood. For example, Sarah's friend Nathan in *The Dark Holds No Terror*. The third, type of women characters, who are in between neither traditional nor radical in their ideas and practice. Indu in *Roots and Shadows*, leaves her husband to seek refuge in her ancestral home. She sympathises with women.



### **Manju Kapur's writings:**

Manju Kapur was born in 1948. Her wrote the first novel Difficult Daughters. It has received the Common Wealth Award for the Eurasian region. She also wrote A married woman. It is a seductive story of a love at a time of political and religious upheaval. It is told with sympathy and intelligence. The novel tells the story of an artist whose canvas challenges the constraints of middle class existence. Through her protagonist (Astha), Manju Kapur describes,

“A woman should be aware of self-controlled, strong willed, self-reliant and rational, having faith in the inner strength of womanhood A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense.”(Kumar 90)

Manju Kapur presents the image of suffering women in Difficult Daughters. In post-colonial era, partition has ever been the most prolific for creative writers. During this period, novels was written on the theme of the destruction. In her writings, Manju Kapur has emphasised on the issues in the context of patriarchy, family bond, inter-religious marriage, family bond, male-female bond. She has also narrated her women protagonists as a victim of gender, domestic violence, and circumstances.

### **Arundhati Roy's Writings**

Arundhati Roy was born on 24 November 1961. She grew up in Kerala. She trained herself as an architect at the Delhi school of Architecture but abandoned it in between. Her novel The God of small things won Britain's premier Booker prize in 1997. She is the first Indian woman, who has won this prize. Her major essays The End of Imagination and The Greater common good are available online. She is between the two Indian writers writing in English who has won the Booker Prize and the other one being Salman Rushdie for his Midnight Children.



Arundhati Roy has never admitted that she is a feminist but *The God of Small Things*, reveals at many places her feminist stance. Her protagonist represents feminine sensibility. Arundhati Roy's mother says,

“Arundhati is a born talker and a born writer. While, she was studying in school, it was a problem to find a teacher, who could cope with her voracious appetite for reading and writing. Most of the time, she educated herself on her own. I can remember our vice-principle Sneha Zaharias resorting to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as a text for the little fourth grade.”(65)

*The God of Small Things* is unique in every aspect. It is a linguistic experiment with the English language. The stylistic writings consist the use of words, phrases and even sentences from vernacular language, use of italics, single word 'sentences,' change of word classes, clustering of word classes and a variety of other techniques. In the novel, she has given prominence to major themes like ecology and subalternity. Her two important articles on the net are *The End of Imagination* and *The Greater Common Good*. In *The End of Imagination*, she criticises nuclear policies of the Government of India. She foretells the harmful consequences of nuclear weapons on human beings.

### **Anita Desai's Writings**

Anita Desai was born on 24 June 1937. She is a great novelist of the Indian English fiction. She holds a unique place among the contemporary women novelists of India. She has published ten novels. Her women characters in her novels rebel against patriarchal community in order to explore their own potential. Her women characters want freedom within the community of men and women. Her married women characters become depressed, self-destructive like Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, Monisha in *Voices in the City*, Nanda in *Fire in the Mountain*, and Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*. They lose their sanity. At the end, they kill others or they kill themselves.



Anita Desai's protagonists are portrayed as single women. She does not neglect the institution of marriage. In *Cry, the Peacock*, Maya is a main protagonist. The story of the novel revolves around her. She wants love from her husband and wants to live free life. On another side, we find the character named Gautam, who is very much busy in his life. His coldness disappoints her and ultimately she becomes insane. Everytime she thinks about the prophecy of albino astrologer. It creates fear in Maya's mind.

The astrologer, that creeping sly magician of my hallucinations, no of course they were not hallucinations. Arjun had proved them to me and yet said they be real? Had never said anything to suggest that it was I who has to die, unnatural and violently for years after my marriage, nothing to suggest that he even thought that. (CP 137-138)

### **Bharti Mukherjee's writings**

Bharti Mukherjee was born on July 27, 1940 at Calcutta. Her works focus on alienation often experienced by Indian women. Her own struggle with identity first as an immigrant from India then an Indian expatriate in Canada and finally as an immigrant in the United States. Her other important works are *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) and *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977). *The Tiger's Daughter* is a story about a young girl named 'Tara' who comes back to India after many years of being away to return to poverty and turmoil.

Bharti Mukherjee's other works are *Wife* (1975), *An invisible woman* (Essay), *The Sorrow and the Terror* (1987). In *Wife* (1975), she writes about a woman named Simple who has been suppressed by man. She attempts to be the ideal Bengali wife. She murders her husband and eventually commits suicide.

Bharti Mukherjee wrote another novel *Leave it to me* (1997). In this, she tells the story of a young woman named Debby Di Martino. She seeks revenge on parents who abandoned her. The story reveals her ungrateful interaction with kind adoptive parents. She searches for her real parents. The novel also looks at the conflict between eastern and western worlds and at mother- daughter relationships.





### **Kamala Markandya's writings**

Kamala Markandaya is a novelist who was born in 1924. She writes about cultural clashes between Indian urban and rural societies. Her first novel was Nectar in a Sieve (1955). It is considered a notable book by the American library Association. Her other works are such as A Silence of Desire (1961), Possession (1963), Some Inner Fun (1965), A handful of Rice (1966), The nowhere man (1972), The Rising (1973), The Golden Honey Comb (1977) and Pleasure City (1982).

Kamala Markandya's Nectar in a Sieve is about Rukmani. When she narrates her story, the readers are involved in her pain. Rukmani loses her sons. She also sees that her daughter became a prostitute. But she still stands strong. She is the main character of the novel. Her daughter Ira suffers through the novel. She works hard. She is devoted to her gentle husband. She has faced poverty, famine, and divorce of her barren daughter, and lastly the death of her husband.

### **Kiran Desai's writings**

Kiran Desai, Indian novelist was born in 1971. Her novel The Inheritance of Loss won the Booker prize in 2006 and the National Book Critics Circle fiction award. Her first novel 'Hullabaloo in guava Orchard' was published in 1998. It won 'Betty Trask Award', a prize given by the society of Authors for the new novels by citizens of the Commonwealth of nations under the age of 35.

Her second novel The Inheritance of Loss won the Booker prize in 2006 and the National Book Critics Circle fiction award. The novel opens with a teenage Indian girl, an orphan called Sai. She lives with her Cambridge educated Anglophile grandfather, a retired judge, in the town of Kalimpong on the Indian side of the Himalayas. She is romantically involved with her maths tutor, Gyan, the descendant of a Nepali Gurkha mercenary.

In her second novel The Inheritance of Loss, Kiran Desai has handled several major issues of modern civilisation. The concept of globalisation is multisided. It has economic,



political, social, cultural and educational aspects. Because of Globalisation, situations have changed, new concepts have emerged. Dr. Shubha Mukherjee remarks,

Kiran Desai's 'The Inheritance of Loss' presents the picture of globalised India. The characters like Jamubhai Patel, Mrs and Mr Mistry, Sai, Biju Nonita and Lolita are affected by Globalisation. As intelligent writer and careful observer of human behaviour, Kiran Desai fulfils the responsibility of writing about current sensational issues. (37)

### **Nayantara Sahgal's writings**

Nayantara Sahgal was born 10 May, 1927. She is an Indian writer in English. She is a member of the Nehru–Gandhi family. She is the second of the three daughters born to Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit.

Her fiction deals with India's elite responding to the crises engendered by political change. She was the first female Indo-Asian writer to receive wide recognition. Her main works are: Prison and chocolate cake (memoir) (1954), This time of morning (1965), Storm in Chandigarh (1969), The day in shadow (1971), Rich like us (1988), Lesser breeds (2003) She was awarded the 1986 Sahitya Akademi Award for her English novel Rich Like Us (1985).

### **Conclusion**

Thus women writers have gone up from difficult to tribal and rural areas too, but all of them have expressed their concern for women and their problems. The variety of subjects, they have touched upon is a great contribution in creating awareness for the modern women all over the globe. The variety of subjects handled by them considering Indian environment needs an appreciation. Some of the writers have not claimed that they belong to feminist's





movement yet their writings suggest that their inner spirit and feelings are for the welfare of the women only.

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