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Making the difference: women and identity in contemporary South Asian English Fiction

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Abstract

This article focus on the modification of identity of women in contemporary south Asian English literature. Women are trapped in historical, cultural and ideological circumstances of societies. Do women become victims of hopelessness, dejection as they feel the people around them asking them, ‘Who are you? What is the position they hold? The confusion of the protagonists affected by the dualistic opposition of choosing a path, making choices, results in an identity crisis. Identity is concerned with the self-image and self-perception of an individual. It is a gender, a communal, a class, a battle or sex or imaginary which deals with the existence and role of who we are. What position we hold in society. south Asian women novelist span multiple forms of violence against women, including child sexual abuse, rape in the war, sexual assault and domestic violence. Although the authors are described separately for their contributions. Though it is recognized that the collective contributions of all that the progress of eliminating violence against women rests. They recognize the power differentials between men and women cross-culturally and internationally and the necessity of acknowledging the social and political contexts in which violence against women occurs. They value and validate the experiences of women by presenting their findings in the voices of those who would be silenced. Over the centuries and in many different countries, women have spoken out for their community and voiced their complaints, their needs, and hopes as it was believed that women were inferior, untaught and insulted, oppressed from birth. Most women unavoidably grow up ignorant. Girls learn how to be women when they are hardly more than babies, as they grow older, they exploit this femininity. The self/ identity is never stable but it continues to change in a given situation. They rise from falling and fall to rise. Sometimes women seem passive than responding to the problem. They are constantly on the quest for herself when an outer situation occurs. The self never flexible at one point but it juxtaposes with other. “Other” defines women as, passive, immanent, an outsider, weak, inessentially other. When people inconsiderately accepts the dominant norms that lead to contradicting subjection and objectification of a class, race or sex, breaking free becomes impossible. Any misrepresentation in the custom or social norm is considered as a threat that must be suppressed through violence, force or constant conditioning that leads to internalization of the notions inescapable in the society.

Key words: south Asian English literature, identity, women, feminism



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Modification in identity of women by contemporary south Asian women writers

Contemporary South Asian women writers write from almost anywhere in the world; from all parts of Asia, from Africa, Australia, Canada, Europe, and USA. Many of these women writers choose to focus their writings on their experiences of life as South Asian women. The broad area of the article is Feminism. It connects to the gender theory with the concept of woman's identity. Feminism has cut across and drawn on multiple contradictory traditions while presenting different issues of women. Feminism started as an enlightenment discourse of modernity, human rights, liberty, autonomous, and rationality. The article is hovering around selected novels written by selected south Asian female writers. The writers belong to the different nationalities and written about woman's issues, conflict, the quest for identity, survival in the context of the situation but all women are somehow finding identity crisis, causes of the problem, responses to the difficulties. Feminism aims for woman's rights and their struggles for liberty, independence, equality, irrespective of gender biased. Feminism itself looking for the place of autonomous for women through providing issues of a woman over clashes between society and self. Human nature is believed to be genderless which integrate characteristics of both sexes. The argument is given by most feminist that, women and men should not be judged by their sex but as an individual, as a person. Socially constructed identities can be reconstructed or even destroyed, modified, reconstructed and transformed. By doing this, it draws attention to the process through which women had been threatened, and consequently, oppressed. South Asian women writers may differ in their national identity but they present the story of women who are in the quest for identity throughout their journey of life. However, an ultimate aim of women is to recognize their true self, the realization of the self by interrogating struggles in everyday chorus within the different forms of patriarchy. The base of the study is to research the struggle of women to pursue their self-identity. Moreover, the aim of this thesis is to discover, study and analyze women's quest for self/identity and how women responds with the situation, recovered, liberate, redefine, through breaking boundaries and border of stereotype image of women which is oppositional to the ones that are forced upon them by the society. South Asian women have inspired the world lived through domestic and social violence, war, trauma, and they are labelled as victim. In this situation, women are surviving and at the same time, taking brave and challenging steps to excel and create room of their own. The social identity, cultural identity, domestic world, and devastating circumstances and violence in man-made war imposed women to live accordingly, but with this situation, how they survive and simultaneously try to recognize their potential through dealing with various issues. Women's identity and its ups and downs, modification, transformation are being explored in the present study.



VIDHYAYANA

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Feminists have been concerned about the growing disparities of wealth; the greater marginalization of poor, tribal, or minority women; and their growing vulnerability to violence. South Asia is less a static place and more a dynamic crossroads of various regional national, and global forces. South Asian English literature is an umbrella term. South Asian English literature includes writers who were either born in South Asia or who identify themselves with that region. The geographic areas are the nations of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. In the Worldwide marketplace of literature, South Asian writing in English has recently received extraordinary attention.

The concept of feminism has been controversial in India and other developing nations for a number of reasons. On the one hand, traditionalists argue that it alienates women from their culture, religion and family responsibilities; while some on the left see it as a diversion from the more important class struggle or the struggle against Western cultural and economic imperialism. The movement started from ancient times, in male-dominated society women struggle to create their own identity through transgressing problems, shackle and stereotype notion. Feminism is neither a trend nor a logical extension of the civil rights movement. Feminists are against the inequalities in legal, economic, and social restrictions on the basic rights of women which have been throughout history and in all societies. Moreover, this chapter also includes various aspects of feminism, like, liberal, radical, cultural and socialist feminism to study women's role in different parameters. It leads to defining brief biography of selected women writers and their work.

Simon de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter's approach of feminism. There is also other feminist theorist's approach applied when it is relevant such as been Gayatri Spivak's only view on feminism critical theory, Toril Moi, Judith Butler etc.; to study nature of oppression on women. And how women struggle to find subjectivity, self-identity, liberty for maintaining one's own existence and comfortability to reconstructing the self from being labeled as 'other'. There is not only one factor determines quest for identity but there are various factors determine one's identity. Such as psychological identity, social identity, cultural identity, dreams and desire, Psychological identity, Situational, Ethnicity, Relational, Subjectivity, Expression, resistance, Economic visibility, Space and identity, Violence and trauma. These all factor will determine women's quest for identity. There has been a normal preparation amongst researchers and academicians to analyze literary characters through the prism of feminist literary theory but there has not been any such collocation of four writers from around the globe to be considered through theories of feminism and identity study. These literary theories will help the researcher to analyze characters in a particular way.

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tribal, or minority women; and their growing vulnerability to violence. South Asia is less a static place and more a dynamic crossroads of various regional national, and global forces. South Asian English literature is an umbrella term. South Asian English literature includes writers who were either born in South Asia or who identify themselves with that region. The geographic areas that this volume focuses on are the nations of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. In the Worldwide marketplace of literature, South Asian writing in English has recently received extraordinary attention. The book of Salman Rushdie's seminal novel, *Midnight's Children* in 1981 as well as the admiration of his succeeding works, *The English Patient* in 1992 by Michael Ondaatje's, Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize for *The God of Small Things* in 1997, Jhumpa Lahiri's Pulitzer Prize for *Interpreter of Maladies* in 2000, and V S. Naipaul's Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003, are just a few of the distinguished climaxes that have secured a position for South Asian writing in English on the global literary scene. While the novel, and to a lesser extent, the short story, are the two genres that are widely extended and it is important to note that there is a considerable amount of writing in English in other genres as well: poetry, drama, autobiography, and travelogues also intensely condense the South Asian imagination. Anticipating the scope and limitations of each genre allows a richer, more inclusive approach to the study of South Asian literature in English.

The South Asian experience fictional in English practices many salient features. Many works call consideration to the knowledge of Territory and interrogate the colonial moments of the history of the subcontinent. The fight for Independence, the quarrelsome account of the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, the mass migration of Hindus and Muslims on both sides of the newly formed borders, and the subsequent violence, have found perplexing appearance in the literature of India and Pakistan. The ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka, the long-lasting battle between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tiger rebels that demanded more than 60,000 lives and displaced more than 1.5 million people from their homes have created a voice in Sri Lankan literature. A cruel war battled for independence from Pakistan has estimated in the Bangladeshi literary imagination. Ideas of nationalism and attempts to define the new nations have also been important concerns. In some works, societal and governmental matters and measures are summons large, presented on a striking scale in generational sagas; in other words, they are diminished, refined into images that depict the mundane business of everyday living.

There are Considerable writing focuses on the concern of identity, often contrasting concepts of communal and private, cooperative and separate, or local and foreign, in an effort to expose the facts of the impact that mark the exegesis of hybrid structures. South Asian writers text in English probable to indulge a sacrilegious humanist perspective; when religious orthodoxy is rutted beside the changing social conditions



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

of a progressively globalizing world, we see the arrival of a new type of identity—a self that is constructed on tolerance, disbelieving of excessive past veneration, and exemplified in the perspectives of a progressive humanism. The concept of identity is an imperative attention in the poetry of the country. In the work of women poets, especially, there is a variety of exceedingly impulsive sensitive expression that effort to define women's questions in the socio-political structure of the country. In the consequent difficulty of some of their unit, we see the level to which character is concerned in ethnic-, class-, and gender-based conflicts. There are many writers mainly those who have gone from their homelands for them the act of writing becomes a way to get back their native country, and the idea of recall figures conspicuously in such stories. The immigrant's story has, in fact, proved to be a fecund subject, and much like the Irish, Jewish, Chinese, and Polish writers, South Asian, too, have attempted to record the dilemma of displacement, questioning the act of bestriding two cultures and surviving with new worlds. These histories are not simply a conventional comic portrayal of migrants, but somewhat accurate echoes of characters who are like defective, everyday people, and whose individual judgments and achievements shows the complexity of the immigrant situation.

Indian women novelists in English deal with the pathetic plight of forsaken women who are fated to suffer from birth to death. Women are presented by Indian women author, are a silent sufferer and is given secondary status both in the family and society. In immemorial, women writers have attempted to redefine the identity of women in relation to man as wife, mother, daughter, sister, but most threaten reason of woman's inferior identity is the social tradition and culture of the particular country. She lives with the status of subjugation entrust to them and rules assigned to them.

There has been a distinguished rise of English writing in Bangladesh during the last couple of decades. The situation was rather different immediately after the liberation of the country in 1971. The use of English in public life was restricted to Bangla being declared the only official language and medium of education at all levels. English is no more the patrimony of the Anglo Saxons. It is now a universal public property and also used as a medium of creative writing has English been deliberately taken up by writers of the formerly colonized countries. The number is multiplying with the rise of Postcolonial / Diaspora consciousness. English was reduced to the status of a foreign language, and English-medium schools were discouraged. Linguistic nationalism had emulated inspiration from the examples of Bengali lyricists such as Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73) who eventually became a greater poet when writing in his native language instead of in English. Writers were not encouraged to publish in English since there were only a handful of specialists within the country. And internationally, the interest in new literature in English was yet to receive the momentum it has now reached. These are some of the reasons for the lagging of English writing in



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

Bangladesh as compared to other South Asian countries. However, the recent change in the public attitude toward English has immensely improved the readership and practice of English in the country. Colleges and universities now offer English as a course of study, and English-medium schools have become more prevalent.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Bangladeshi novels dealt with contemporary issues of an independent nation. Rushdie's novel, *The Unadjusted Tune* (1977) is a translation of his own Bangla novel. Niaz Zaman, originally a Punjabi married to a Bangladeshi, wrote a novel entitled *The Crooked Neem Tree* (1982) during her exile in the liberation war. It is a novel of diaspora tradition that relates him with writers such as Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh. Farhana Haque Rahman, in her novel *The Eye of the Heart* (1998), procreates a detailed experience of a newly appointed Bangladesh ambassador to Washington with an exceptional eye for detailed narrative skill. Razia Khan Amin published an English novel, *Draupadi*, which she had translated from her own novel in Bangla (1998). The novel is a jovial representation of a triangular relationship between three protagonists juxtaposed by the underlying anxieties of the liberation war looming in the foreground. Sayema T. Hasan's novella *Ava* (1998) recreates the world of the Zamindars of the former days of Bengal. *The Storyteller* (2000) by Abid Khan similar to Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Early prominent Bengali writers in English included Begum Rokeya and Rabindranath Tagore. Modern Bangladeshi writers include Tahmima Anam, Kaiser Haq, K. Anis Ahmed, Razia Khan, Neamat Imam, Monica Ali and Zia Haider Rahman. One of the prominent female writers in Bangladesh English literature is Taslima Nasreen, who is known for her misogynistic writing, freedom of thoughts and human rights, one of her notable and controversial novel, *Lajja* wrote about Hindu family story presented by Muslim family. She has been awarded Simone De Beauvoir prize. She particularly writes about women's rights. She teaches women to understand their needs. They should learn the reasons for being oppressed. She also tells women to work on the oppression of women for freedom and independent life. Some Creative writing in English in Bangladesh is more focused on poetry than on other forms of writing. While the older generation of poets has dwelt more on local issues, the younger generation of poets is shifting their view toward more global and universal matters. The poetic course of Bangladesh is changing rapidly toward a subgenre and is thus challenged with a wider audience that is perhaps still to come. Bangladeshi literature in English is largely a corpus of translated works, and creative writing in English is still sparse in the country because unlike other South Asian countries, Bangladesh is largely a monolingual country. Although books by several writers have been translated from Bangla and have received international recognition, the trajectory of literature in English from Bangladesh is still developing in. Those who write originally in



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

English, however, are more inclined to writing poetry than fiction, although in recent years the practice of fiction writing is increasing and has begun to receive considerable attention.

Sri Lankan writing in English came of an age only in the 1980s. There were a number of reasons for this phenomenon, which marks a qualitatively different experience from that of other countries in the Commonwealth. It was particularly unusual too, inasmuch as English is still a very foremost language in Sri Lanka, and it has achieved this status long before independence in 1948. However, for a long time it was seen as noticeably a language of the elite group, and thus, the experiences defined by writing in English were considered to be outside the native experiences considered characteristic of the country. The innovative work has been the achievement of that book manifests the suitability of Sri Lanka as a subject, while events in the country added to its fascination in this respect. It was considerably easier in the years that followed for writers, even if settled abroad, to deal with current Sri Lankan experience, since the histrionic political developments in the country loaned themselves to the exposition of ethnicity and violence which is considered to be worldwide issues. Most noticeable amongst these expatriates were Shyam Selvadurai and Romesh Guneseckera who have explored in *Funny Boy*, the racial tensions that established over a decade and culminated in the riots of 1983. He depicted this in juxtaposition with the growing self-awareness of a homosexual in a society that demands conformity. The intertwining of themes that deal critically with questions of tolerance and individuality was brilliantly done for a first novel. Selvadurai's second, *Cinnamon Gardens*, which explores similar themes in a less fraught colonial period, had a quieter reception but also shows involvement with what seems still his home country. Moreover, some woman writers, namely, Seni Seneviratne, Arany Uthayakumar, Pireeni Sundaralingam Dharini Abeyseker origin Srilankan, but settled in different countries have written about different subjects. Romesh Guneseckera, on the other hand, clearly sees himself as a British writer and deals mainly with immigrant perceptions. His work has been less well received amongst Sri Lankan critics who see it as fractured land. Though what he describes, both in *Reef* and his very strange second novel *Neloufer de Mel* writes that, "her account of the gendered history of Sri Lankan nationalism was impelled by contemporary "ethnonationalism [that] has produced one of the harshest ethnic wars of South Asia in which thousands of lives have been lost, property destroyed, welfare, education, and health programs have been neglected and a culture of violence taken root." (Loomba 5)

Writers in Sri Lanka, the most prominent now, apart from Wi-jenaike, are Carl Muller and Jean Arasanayagam. The former writes about the Burgher community in a manner that has irritated its more socially prominent members. The Burghers saw themselves as descendants of Europeans, and therefore, more



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

civilized than Sinhalese or Tamils, but Muller presents a working-class element that has absorbed all aspects of Sri Lankan culture with great gusto. He also deals with sexuality in a very direct but also very humorous manner that has appealed to many readers. In the last decade, several young writers have begun to deal in English with a range of Sri Lankan experiences with a confidence that the earlier generation could not command.

Vasuki Nesiiah says in her paper,

“The long history of impunity regarding sexual violence in the Lankan needs attention. However, the exclusive focus on women’s experience of armed conflict within the framework of victimhood raises several issues. First, from women cadres in the LTTE to female heads of state in the government of Sri Lanka, women have played a key role in the war” (Loomba 153).

It would seem then that Sri Lankan writing in English will develop over the next few years to achieve a similar status to that which such writing has in other former colonies. The relative paucity of critical attention, however, and the shrinking readership, in a context in which English medium education was banned for several decades, may countermand the results of what are essentially individual efforts by several writers. The researcher has taken the writer from Srilankan origin, Nayomi Munaweera who lives in the USA. She has been listed in different categories of writers. She is known as Srilankan diasporic writer, Sri Lankan writer. She is also known as an Asian American female writer. Thus she is known differently geographically. The subject Munaweera chooses is based on the Srilankan civil war and its aftermath. She is interested in writing about the human nature. Especially, about the situation and circumstances of women in the war and outside the war zone. Her debut novel, *Island of a thousand mirrors* is basically about the outcome of the war-torn individual and its fragmented, fracture, split identities.

In the *Beginning theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory*, Peter Berry writes

“The women’s movement of the 1960s was not, of course, the start of feminism. Rather, it was a renewal of an old tradition of thought and action already possessing its classic books which had diagnosed the problem of women’s inequality in society” (Berry 84-85).

South Asian women writers divided by different countries in South Asia, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Srilanka. These countries are bound together by a common South Asian identity. This identity expresses itself both in the linkages with each other in the struggles involved in within the women’s movement in respective countries. This link has strengthened individuality and led to a growing sense of regional



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

solidarity.in the context of the contemporary socio-political environment, it is imperative to develop strength for south Asian perspective for women's liberation in the region. According to Dr. Bhaskar Shukla,

“As women, our lives e subject to control through predominately patriarchal structures and family laws and institution often justified on the basis of religion” (212).

Feminism as a movement in South Asia has asserted the principle of autonomous organization for women, while the principle of autonomous organization for women linking with broader movement at the same time. It has opened up to look at the way to alternative ways of living, building relationships, of an alternative decentralized economy and polity. It has struggled for dignity and for the humanization and democratization of the 'family'. Feminism is the expression of women in struggle and therefore, a political movement and consciousness which develop in practice as more and more women begin to join together the structures which oppress and exploit them. Linking together in concrete actions, formulating and campaigning for a joint charter of women's rights, sharing visions and developing alternatives to existing development models in south Asian level from a feminist perspective would be an important contribution towards the overcoming of the tensions, distrust, and political, economic, social and cultural crisis affecting South Asian countries. This would lead to link broader social movement, progressive individuals who share the vision of the transformation of the political and economic structures and relationships between people. Human relationships are the interaction of external and internal mindset. The androgyny presides male and female equally predominates with each other. Virginia,

Androgyny “in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating” (679)

Tahmima Anam and Nayomi Munaweera particularly, defines themselves globally rather than post colonially because their fiction needs to be seen in the context of the move away from national paradigms and borders towards a focus on interrelated nation-states and as part of the current debate on whether there is a role for national canons in a globalized transnational era. Paul Jay identifies 'an apparent shift from a post-colonial to a global perspective' in the field of postcolonial studies and beyond'. (qtd in. Ranasinha 14) Sara Suleri says, 'The concept of 'lived experience' to justify the use of personal narrative attempts to make the subjective experience into some sort of objective truth. (qtd in. Ranasinha 20). The varied cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds of these south Asian writers, alongside the variety, breadth and



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

wide-ranging perspectives that inform and illuminate their fiction which makes clear the limits of this regional category. South Asian women writers construct generation, gender, sexuality, race and class fissure any category of location and identity.

The Changing Nature of Feminist Theory in Women's Studies shows a modification in feminism which brings universal issues of women and their oppression by patriarchy. For many critics, the term 'feminist theory' is associated, in particular, with the analysis and explanation of women's secondary social situation. It was customary to categorize different ways of doing this in terms of three major perspectives, each with their own historical tradition and legacy. The first of these, liberal feminism, is depicted as focusing on individual rights and on the concepts of equality, justice, and equal opportunities; women are presented as being prevented from achieving equality with men by certain social barriers.

Namita Gokhale in her thesis. Gokhale states,

“Women should find out their 'swadharna'. In dharma, being a woman, what may sound to the world very wrong, in your instinct it might be the right thing. You have to have the strength to do it” (Jain, Vinita).

It is argued, therefore, those specific legal and social policy changes are the necessary tools for resolving women's inferior position. The second position Marxist feminism is known by a concern with women's oppression as it is tangled to forms of capitalist exploitation of labor, where women's paid and unpaid work are each analyzed in relation to their function within the capitalist economy. Thirdly, racial feminism is 'radical' because it avoids existing theoretical frameworks and attempts to formulate new ways of theorizing women's relationship to men. In particular, men's social control of women through various mechanisms of patriarchy is emphasized especially through violence, heterosexuality, and reproduction, where men as a group are seen as responsible for maintaining women's oppression.

De Beauvoir formed the image of a woman in modern form. “This woman, she imagined, would be the equal of men; she would think and work and act like a man, and instead of bemoaning her inferiority to men, she would declare herself their equal”. (Tandon 24).

The question of self and identity has become a part of the existential problem for the modern women and since the time of feminism movement. It is an endless search for true selves for presenting a vivid vision of self. It has tried different procedures for a major problem within feminism obscures the development of recouping women's selfhood. The assertion that women are analytically subordinated and this subservience



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

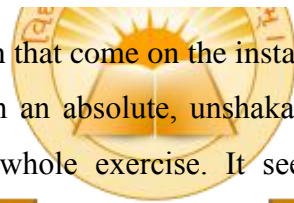
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An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

has a significant influence on women's lives is essential to feminism. However, this crucial awareness seems to be examined the right for women's selfhood was ignored. There is a necessity to study self and other to understand transformed stereotypes identity and selfhood into the manner of liberating selfhood and through reasserting the identity of women. They redefine the female role to crush and defeat the patriarchal mindset and pursue to achieve the central position of the woman as a human being.

The stereotyped south Asian image of women progressing towards liberating through the stage of conflicting and survival. Feminist writers from East or west have debated on traditional image of women's suffering in South Asia. From Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Tahmima Anam to Nayomi Munaweera have written about the image of women of the different nationalities, culture, ethnic, society but all are in conflict at some stage of their life and they are in the constant quest and do the things accordingly. Though, they have a different problem, situation, and circumstance. But overall, all are found in the similar path of in the quest for finding their own identity, subject, self. The present study has tried to look towards their different conflict and problem occurs in marriage life, relational problems, making choices, all these effects in pursuing one's true self.

“It was one of that moment of truth that come on the instant of waking. No, not just one truth, but the whole of it came to her than with an absolute, unshakable certainty... And what struck her most forcibly was the futility of the whole exercise. It seemed idiotic, moronic, and meaningless” (Deshpande 173).



VIDHYAYANA

In the development of South Asian women's writing from around the world. Women's traditional and present situation of suffering can be debated by east and west countries to understand the today's image and identities of a woman. South Asian women writers have tried evaporated traditional way of the suffering of women instead they have shown women are crossing the thresholds in their particular situation. There is diversity shown in the image and role of women as well as within the self of women. Thus modern south Asian women writers are capturing women's potential reflection in a different way of expression rather than keeping limitation in the lives of women. The internal mindset of characters interacts with the external world as well as the reality of human relationships with one another is frequently depicted in the research. The question of identity presupposes an awareness of one's own existence as a person having positive self-image and the ability to think. When the question of identity is raised with reference to women, the question acquires many new dimension. Empowerment becomes an important issue because women lack power but they try to build up power through overcoming the situation in the different form of oppression.



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

South Asian women writers' portrayal of female characters and the development of female individuality through diverse tropes. The importance of female protagonists' individual characteristics is particularly relevant to the writing of Contemporary women writers from South Asia. The distinctiveness of this research work is that the selection of authors appears to be uncooperative at the first glimpse, but by the thorough and extensive study, this work has tried to attempt in getting them on the same platform to analyze varying identity of women's in different modes of oppression and their response towards the circumstances. Applying elements of feminism as a theoretical base and Gender as an approach, the researcher has been able to appeal a route of similarities and dissimilarities amongst the four writers from a different background. Feminists are re-thinking on subjects like mothering, nurturing, taking on the responsibility for the self and reaching autonomy. She emphasized the significance of the family as the source of women's power. According to her, women are now standing up as 'women' and recognizing their bodies and their identity as the female self. Friedan insisted that each woman must at least 'ask' what she truly wants.

As Beauvoir asserts,

“Even the woman who has emancipated herself economically from man is still not in a moral, social, or psychological situation identical to his. Her commitment to and focus on her profession depend on the context of her life as a whole. And, when she starts her adult life, she does not have the same past as a boy; society does not see her with the same eyes; she has a different perspective on the universe. Being a woman poses unique problems to an autonomous human being today” (815).

This paper exposes the different way of identities of women being portrayed through dealing with the situations because Indian women portrayed by Indian women writer, Bangladeshi women portrayed by Bangladeshi woman writer and, Srilankan women portrayed by Srilankan – American woman writer, have some similar issues. Such as marriage, relationships, career, choices, violence inside the house and outside the house. In short, there are various forms of oppression being imposed upon women by patriarchy, in which, women are striving for their own meaning of life, learning to be independent in every situation. Every character is trying to find the true sense of existence than worrying about the uncertainty of outcomes. Women are continuously playing their own role. Though, they are not given equal freedom, equal opportunity, and equal choices to live their life to their own terms. Feminist writers has deconstructed androcentric male ideology in order to put their gynocentric ideology for better future, fortune and prospect. Through Gynocritics, there are chances to learn something Solid, continuing and real about the relation of



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

women to literary culture. In short, feministic icons like Simone de Beauvoir and Eliane Showalter and other famous feminist theorists argue that women must work both inside and outside the male tradition at once. According to her, the most productive approach to future feminist theory and criticism emphasis on cultivating a new feminine cultural perspective within a feminist tradition that at the same time exists within the male tradition but on which it is not dependent and to which it is not answerable. Therefore it is relevant to the research as Gynocritics evaluate woman an individual and reject the assignment of roles based on gender. They discard negative cultural images of women and trying to sustain their strength, capacities and intelligence. The next point is observed that Displacement of females starts at home and the females through their feminine self-generate a long list of identities or rather plural identities. In Indian society a female has to abide by certain norms set by the family and society. She has to become an obedient daughter and wife. She cannot impose ideas she has to only adhere to the ideology set by the family and society. Therefore, Indian culture is very different from the west. Sri Lankan society is not widely different from Indian society. Women are treated secondary. They have to be quiet and composed and listen to their counterparts. Feminism will be at the background and females as individuals dealing with their identity crisis and they continue to survive in all society.

Tahmima Anam's portrayal of women in her work to illuminate the struggle and survival of being a woman and the process of finding their true self through struggle and they are fighting back rather than suppressed. In one of the situation in novel *A Golden Age*, She does not like others to see her as a poor and sad widow who only carries a a stressful and passive life. While she actually strong, confident, and active woman. She told to Major,

“I'm a nurse and not just a poor widow” (Anam 156).

Woman's quest for identity shows to the response towards the situation and either they accept and suppressed with the situation or revolt against it, and how they protest themselves not only verbally but through taking a transcendent step through performing bravely. This shows women are rising from falling.

“Woman stands before man not as a subject but as an object paradoxically endowed with subjectivity; she takes herself simultaneously as self and as other, a contradiction that entails baffling consequences.” (qtd in Hall 99)

Anam portrays this glorification of motherhood through Rehana underlines the power of women's love. Thus, the element of 'I' or Identity is crucial in taking experience from the outer world. Subjectivity of an



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An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

individual is resolute by the fact of her being conscious and unconscious of the forces influencing one's self. The crisis of the self is felt by the natives in the process of nation formation and simultaneously, with the formation of new nations, there is a conflict of devotions, fears, confidences, dreams as there is a warlike and aggressive situation.

Island of a Thousand Mirrors is her debut novel. It explores the lives of three women, Yasodhara, Lanka and Saraswathi, and the destructive effects of civil war upon their lives, which affects them both within and without Sri Lanka. Yasodhara lives with her family where she gets rich love and lives comfortable. But her family believes in their subtly made idea of social hierarchy and ambition of parents are shown at the top. While saraswathi's journey quite different than Yasodhara because escaping from the war and living outside the war zone gives differ life strategy. Some Characters are forced to live such condition. Their lives and ideology made through the event happens in the lives of the character. Nayomi Munaweera has not written in one-sided affected character caused by the war but she has focused also on the character who lives in the active war zone. Saraswathi among many women lived in the war zone is depicted in the novel. The below quotes is a prime example of seeing oneself through others. But most importantly she does not care about what others will think about her pregnant body,

"I turn to my reflection and see what others will see, a young woman, and eight months pregnant, green plastic bangles at her wrists, bright orange cloth hugging her belly. She is a ghost from a different time and place. Useless to me" (Munaweera 201).

Her innocent nature, future dreams, and hope is transformed and vanished after she becomes a victim and drawn herself in the conflict of the war. The journey of a two woman character from very different families and their individual ideology is shown. Sri Lankan writing in English has been greatly influenced by the ethnic conflict, especially when it comes to works by srilankan- American writers these writers, who come from varying ethnic backgrounds, unite in the respect of being Sri Lankan writers, who deal with similar issues, from different perspectives. The novel will be analyzed with reference to theories such as Beauvoir's becoming woman, existentialism in terms of using causes of terrorism and relocation. Adapting it or rejecting is depend on the character's choice. As gender critics focus on constructing the identity of a woman rather than identify female gender through nature. Frederick Gilbert says in Gender criticism in his book Encyclopaedia of Literary criticism,

"Constructionism view that most of the differences between men and women are characteristics not of the male and female sex (nature) but rather of the masculine and feminine genders (nurture)" (Gilbert 536).



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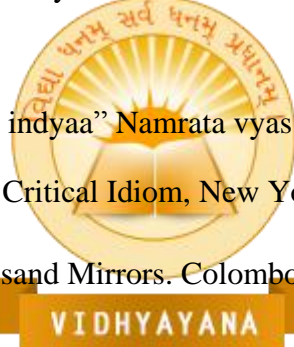
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