

ROLE OF LITERATURE IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract: The present paper is an attempt to analyze the status of women empowerment in India. The study reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. Self-discovery is a phase, where search for self was the main motive of the writers to project in their writings, as they experienced freedom from self-dependency.

Keywords: Empowerment, Status, Access, Dominant, Feminist.

It has been observed that the status of women in India has been exposed to varieties of changes over the past few years. From equal status with men in the prehistoric times through the less equality which was prevalent in the medieval period. The campaign of women's rights had been booked up by many reformers in India in order to upgrade their position. In the contemporary times, women have been at high position in the nation like India that includes the post of President, Prime Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha and Leader of opposition party respectively. Women have also done outstandingly well in different spheres of life, like teaching, academics, media, entrepreneur or defense etc.

In Ancient India, most of the scriptures had written about the status of the women, where she enjoyed equal status as that of men. Not only in the field of rights but also in the sphere of education, women were given the equal opportunities. Vedas like Rigveda and Upanishads, wrote about the women seers and sages, Gargi and Matreyi. After the medieval period the status of the women got worsened and ill practices like Sati, ban on widow remarriage, child marriage became a part of society in India. The invasion of India by the Muslims brought in society the

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practices like Jauhar and purdah. The situations were challenging and severe for Indian women, and few women shined in the field of politics, literature education and religion. Some women who excelled in different field , Durgavati, the Gond Queen, Chand Bibi fought against Mughal forces of Akbar and defended Ahmednagar, Razia Sultan who ruled over Delhi, Nur Jahan was a real force behind the Mughal throne who established imperial power . Mirabai a important Bhakti movement figure was a female saint. Many reformers worked for the upliftment of the women during the British rule, and some of the freedom fighters included women in forefront like Dr Annie Besant, Bhikaji Cama , Rani Laxmibai , Kasturbha Gandhi and Vijaylakshmi Padit.

If we define women empowerment, it simply means giving the women crucial authority. It has been proved since time immemorial that women are more responsible when tackling a situation, so delegating authority with confidence is the first step towards women empowerment. Women should have rights and power to face the challenges of life. When we analyze empowering women, it focusses on the confidence and courage to break the barriers of patterns of society and the religious conventions that kept usually women suppressed.

In India, Women Empowerment was a thought-provoking task and one needs to admit that gender discrimination was prevalent for many years. This social malice cannot be removed without strict laws and their implementation, as these policies should be implemented in actual terms. The growth of women was stunted in the society as the powerful forces of the society never tried to uplift the position of women at different levels . In India, women are marginalized at every level of the society whether in social, economic, political participation and gender disparity also exists.

Feminism has grown from Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, R.P. Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal to pave way for Shobha De, Shashi Deshpande, Nina Sibal , Bharati Mukherjee and others. These newer female voices have highlighted the interior landscape of the emancipated women sensibility and her psychological pragmatism. This changing scenario in Indian fiction in English has witnessed change in temperament, thought-content and tone as a

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result of the novelist's newly developed maturity and conviction Indian modern woman has now acquired an unconventional character and substance and has paved way for a new dimension of the Indian novel in English. When we talk about Indian women novelists, a substantial contribution to Indian fiction in English has come from women. Women are to be considered as born storytellers. Their fiction can be the expression of a different approach of looking at the world. The work of novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal and Shashi Seshpande has been widely acclaimed and noticed. But the recent emergence of women writers like Shobha De, Manju Kapur, Kusum Sawhney and Arundhati Roy forces one to consider whether our prize-winning or best-selling authors are really the best. In Indian literature, there has been writing in several languages that had spanned from ancient to the contemporary times, which included the women writers. The writings of the women specially focused on the issues and problems related to the women.

When we look at different genres in Indian English literature, the representation of women has been written with importance. The aim behind portraying women was to empower the position of women, particularly women in India. Toru Dutt was the first Indian woman poet who wrote in English. Her poems painted archetypes of Indian womanhood, such as Sita and Savitri, displaying suffering of the women, reinforcing conventional myths and self-sacrificing roles in a patriotic manner. Another famous poet, Kamla Das who wrote a poignant and vigorous feminine confessional poetry, in which she explored the man-woman relationship as a major theme. Her poems were constructed on woman's suppression by the men in the society, through the string of relationship. *Life of Single Women*, was depicted in such a manner, that brought out a sympathetic attitude in the reader, and thus generated pathos in her poems.

When we talk about short stories and novels, many Indian women writers have portrayed the female subjectivity in order to establish the female identity in the male dominated society. The theme of growing up from woman childhood to womanhood. For instance writers like Nayantara Sahgal explores the search, quest of female identity in her novels and tries to untangle, break the complicated notions, beliefs about the society, thus bringing out root cause

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of the female suppression, exploitation in the Indian society. After Independence, the women writings gained momentum and was marked by an impressive feel for the language, and reliable presentation of contemporary India, with all its regional disparities. Writers like Arundhati Roy, Anita Nair, Suan Viswanathan had written about the urban middle class, thus showing the struggle of modern women to cope up with the rules of the male dogmatic society at different levels.

Many Indian women who were settled abroad, Like Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherje too shared the common concern for carrying out the problem of female suppression, exploitation and give a new place and identity to the modern women. In their novel, the theme of self discovery and multiculturalism was prominent. Anita Desai in her novels, particularly psychological novels, depicted the image of a suffering woman engrossed with her inner world, her sulking frustration and the storm within. Through such characters, and she differentiates between male-centered and female - centered narrative. In her novel, she explored the diasporic sensibility that dealt with the fortune of immigrants .The concept of home and migration is very much embedded in Bharati Mukherjee *Desirable Daughters*. It is the sense of migration which brings about a change to the identity of Padma, who has finally made New York her home, her land of choice. But her absolute attachment to her home makes her the preserver and sustainer of Bengali custom in America. The foreign culture thus fails to disrupt her traditional identity. Mukherjee in *Desirable Daughters* portrays a vibrant picture of her cast. A close drawn attention to social class, castes, and the clash between old and new India is presented. Tara's search for answers moves her to New York, where she's exposed to her sister's Indian world. Tara's re-emerging and self awareness is what makes this story shine.

Conclusion

It is important to change the observation of the society, and then only the emancipation of women can be a success at different levels. The people in the society need to admit the truth that there is a discrepancy in the ideology and the practical implication of the same. To emphasize on the upliftment in the position of the women, the laws need to be strict and also implemented in

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judicious manner. Women Empowerment can only be possible if the women come together and decide to self-empower themselves. A movement for women emancipation needs to gain momentum which makes a woman a strong being instead of being the Others.

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