



## ***Indian Women Novelists in English: Art and Vision* by Dr. Dipak Giri**

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### **Book Review**

The book *Indian Women Novelists in English: Art and Vision* edited by Dr. Dipak Giri is an anthology of twenty five research articles on contemporary Indian women novelists and their works ranging from Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Shobhaa De, Meena Alexander, Githa Hariharan, Arundhati Roy to the younger generation of novelists Anita Nair, Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri along with two less explored novelists Rita Garg and Nayeema Mahjoor. Three regional writers- Sarah Joseph, Qurratulain Hyder and Mahasweta Devi are also part of this volume, though their write-ups are in regional languages, yet their translated works in English have earned wide popularity. The anthology with its diversity of topics is able to instill knowledge into the critical minds by opening many windows of knowledge to be revisited in the field of Indian women novelists and their works.

The book *Indian Women Novelists in English: Art and Vision* was published by Vishwabharati Research Centre in the year 2018. It encompasses the thoughts, ideas, views and opinions of different academics and scholars, drawn from the deep and detailed studies of different renowned female novelists of India. Writers like Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Mahasweta Devi, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divyakaruni form the axis of study in this book. Each paper has different viewpoint and understanding of the theme and the central idea.

The paper of Dr. Shachi Sood and Yasmeena Jan, on Anita Desai's famous novel *Fasting and Feasting*, highlights the gender and identity in Indian and American societies respectively. Anita Desai, in this novel imposes rigid, gender-specific roles that limit personal freedom and self-expression. The novel revolves around Indian household. The novel delves into traditional Indian family where there are separate set of rules for a male and a girl child. The patriarchal pressure even leads women to commit suicide. This brings the statement of French Philosopher and Writer Simone De Beauvoir, in her work *The Second Sex* come true, "She will free herself from her parents' hold; she will open up her future not by active conquests, but by passively and docilely delivering herself into the hands of a new master." (*The Second Sex*, 353)

The paper by Dr. S. Mahalakshmi, on the novel *That Long Silence* written by Shashi Deshpande explores the silences and constraints imposed on the female protagonist Jaya, renamed as Suhasini after marriage - where one name symbolizes victory and the other submission. A slight twist is seen in the patriarchal set up when Jaya's father encourages her to write, her grandma teaches her the conventional form of living after marriage and her husband Mohan dissuades her from writing. Whether in the matters of household or sex, the long silences between her and her husband Mohan, in marriage leads to their separation, only to be reunited at the end. This offers Jaya alias Suhasini, a chance to overcome her silence in the marriage and be more open with her desires, feelings and opinions.



Chithra Mohan's paper on Sarah Joseph's Malayalam novel *Oorukaval*, translated into English *The Vigil*, is a mythological re-telling of the Ramayana. It is re-reading about Rama in the protagonist Angathan - son of Vali and his nation Kishkindam. The novel greatly discusses human and its connection with the nature. It is Angathan, who is a connector between them. Infact he also becomes a mouthpiece for the novelist, when he talks about the war and its negative implications, and establishes a harmonious connection between human and environment. Another important feature of the novel is female characters who too assume earthly resemblances which lend this novel a contemporary touch with a traditional theme.

Dr. T. Sasikanth Reddy in the paper titled "Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music* and *Nampally Road*: A Discourse in Feminine Proximity", highlights about colonialism, crossing borders and ethnic problems. All this makes it a great Diasporic reading. The other novel *Nampally Road* has detailed Indian background. The common connection between both the works is diasporic consciousness. The female characters in both novels fight against generated identities, divided loyalties and fragmented identities. Gender, culture and migration form the core for these two novels, with women in the centre.

The paper on the novel of Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*, discussed by Anmora Bora, justifies the voices and opinions of different female characters and their lives. The journey of different female protagonists, travelling to different destinations, with different set of stories, form the base for the novel and discussion for the paper. Bora has tried to understand and discuss the patriarchal oppression. This novel has been explored in the direction of self-discovery and space for oneself.

Achyut Tilavat's paper "Postcolonial Diasporic Dilemmas Depicted in *Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai" is insightful in the direction of the Diasporic dilemma. Introducing the theme of Postcolonialism and Diaspora, Achyut Tilavat, has well connected the same theme in his paper too. With Sai as the protagonist in the novel, Tilavat's discussion largely moves around her and the cultural conflict experienced by her in the foreign land. He has touched upon the major themes of colonial legacy, identity and cultural conflict, migration and globalization, along with talking about the historical injustices inflicted during the colonial rule.

Samiksha Sharma in her paper "From Alienation to Self-Realization", based on the study of the novel of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, highlights the issues of the immigrants and the loss of the identity felt by Ashima and Ashok, the leading characters in the novel. Sharma has also pointed in her paper towards the constant struggle Ashima and Ashok had been feeling along with the generation gap with their own children. Samiksha Sharma concludes her paper on the note of reconciliation and self- acceptance.

The paper on the novel *The Namesake*, presented by Naseer ud-din Sofi, under the title "Cultural Alienation and Loss of Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's Novel *The Namesake*", echoes the similar idea like Samiksha Sharma's paper. He too like her has discussed about the feeling of being lost in a foreign land, the nostalgia of one's own motherland and eventual reconciliation with the foreign land. Sofi has investigated the experiences and the clash of different cultures and its subsequent effect on inter-personal relationship amongst different characters.

Mohd. Nageen Rather in his paper titled "Terribly Victimised Gender of Kashmir Conflict: A Women-centric Perspective of Nayeema Mahjoor's Novel *Lost in Terror*", gives a spine chilling details of the Kashmiri women who lose everything. The paper revolves around the human rights and its violation, as highlighted in the novel by Nayeema Mahjoor. The chosen background is 1980s. Through the details of the sorrowful incidents, Rather talks



and discusses about the captured agony and anguish of the Muslim Women in Kashmir.

Mohd. Ishaq Bhat's paper titled "Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night: A Study of Women's Quest for Freedom*", brings to light three females Devi, Sita and Mayamma. Ishaq portrays the patriarchal society with the insightful characteristic of these three women. He has discussed about their inner strength and also highlighted the three different generations as narrated by Githa Hariharan. Though Githa Hariharan has deliberated in this novel about their resilience, Md. Ishaq's discussion has taken it a step closer to understand their struggle and fight for freedom for their identity.

"The Subterranean Ridges of Sibling Relationship in Chitra Banerjee Divyakaruni's Novels", as interpreted by Arunita Samaddar, highlights the importance and significance of the ties between the siblings as talked and narrated by Chitra Banerjee Divyakaruni in her novels *Sister of My Herat*, *The Vine of Desire* and *The Palace of Illusions*. What is truly important to understand in Samaddar's discussed paper is the fact that she is quite observant to read, understand and talk about the unconditional love and bond between the siblings - whether in the era of Mahabharata or the contemporary times, the bond and understanding remains the same.

In the twelfth chapter "From Self-alienation to Self-discovery: A Woman's Journey in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*" the focus is on the inner struggle of a woman as narrated in the novel. Dr. Vishali Sharma, through her observation, is able to delve into the deep psychological pain felt by the main protagonist Jaya in the novel. Dr. Sharma tires to interpret the reason, causes and determination of Jaya to overcome the obstacles of the patriarchal society represented by her father and husband. It is a paper talking about identifying oneself and valuing herself towards the end.

Suchitra Singh has worked on the novel *River of Fire* written by Qurratulain Hyder and her paper titled "Enquiring the Disputed History: Reading Qurratulain Hyder's *River of Fire* through Lenses of Time and Definitive Courses of Indian Subcontinent", is truly a different experiment. This paper is unique because it has covered the entire spectrum in history, related to the condition of the women. Various time, various culture, religion and civilization with its influence on the woman forms the backbone for this novel.

Santanu Panda's paper "Idea of Feminism and Untouchability: A Close Study of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" interprets the theme of feminism and untouchability. Panda has sensitively assessed the women's plight in this paper.

Jayasree Jayagopal's paper on Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* explores the theme of rootlessness and relocation in a different land. Like other contributors, she too has discussed the dilemma and problems faced by Ashima – the protagonist of the novel and her final reconciliation with the time and place.

Ragini Kapoor in the paper titled "Unfolding Existentialism in the Works of Jhumpa Lahiri", though similar to other writers also walks on the same track, however, with slightly difference as she deals Jhumpa Lahiri with a twist of existentialism which is a modern and much talked concept in the modern literature. It covers the feeling of nothingness and the loss of identity in reference to Ashok, Ashima, Gogol and Nikhil in Jhumpa Lahiri's novels.

Ankita Jha works on the novels of Anita Desai, highlighting the theme of alienation and loneliness. Nirode, Dev, Baba, Maya, Sita – their feelings are well understood and interpreted by Ankita in the paper titled- "Cross-bordered Narratives: Sense of Alienation in Selected Novels of Anita Desai".

Dr. Joydeep Pal, too in his paper on the writings of Anita Desai, explores and discusses the interpersonal relationships, dislocations etc. like other contributors on the same



theme.

Indrani Choudhury's paper on the works of Mahasweta Devi comes as breath of fresh air. Different from other contributors' pick, this paper delves into the socio-political conditions of the post-colonial India. The paper analyzes exploitation, oppression and injustice in the post-colonial India .

Saurabh Debnath's paper on the novel *The God of Small Things*, on the pattern of aforementioned contributors takes into consideration the theme of exploitation, stigma and its effect on the various characters. Debnath talks about the themes in the light of the characters like Margaret, Velutha etc.

"Reconstructing the Social Position of Woman as Human: A Study of Manju Kapur's Select Novels" is the title of the paper of Tinku Das. The novels *Difficult Daughters*, *Married Woman* and *Home* constitute the base for the research paper of Tinku Das.

"Queer Relationships in the Novels of Shobhaa De: A Comparative Study between *Strange Obsession* and *Starry Nights*" by Rabindra Sutradhar is again like few contributors a different theme explored.

Shyamal Kumar Saha's paper "A Postcolonial Study of Diasporic Sensibility in Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant* Resulting Dislocation and Cultural Conflict" resembles in theme and idea with that of Tinku Das's. Both contributors have tried to explain and express the same ideology and thoughts about the plight and fight of women protagonists, with the difference that Saha has also tried to explore the theme of diaspora.

Dr. Pinki Arora has taken a different author- Rita Garg and her work *An Abbreviated Child*. Though the idea of suffering, oppression and a battle with oneself about one's identity rules the novel, yet the novelist and the work is unique and different.

Triangle theory of love as propounded by Psychologist Robert Sternberg becomes the key element in the research paper of Dr. Dipak Giri. He also assesses Rita Garg's *An Abbreviated Child* like Dr. Pinki Arora. Dr. Giri has elaborated various principles and ideas of love in connection to Heterosexual love vs. Lesbian Romantic Love.

The book *Indian Women Novelists in English: Art and Vision* edited by Dr. Dipak Giri hardly misses any major Indian woman novelist. The essays have been well organised by Dr. Giri. Moreover, the way the book glorifies the Indian women novelists is an achievement in itself and the credit goes entirely to Dr. Giri's efforts and the valuable contributions of the authors across India toward making the book unique.

### Book Details

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