

ABSTRACT

Towards a feminist perspective : the emergence
of the woman - female presentation with
a comparison of male and female
novelists in Indian Literature.

Fazila Mohammed

The contemporary Indian woman is caught between old strictures and new possibilities. She is well aware of her historical role and, therefore, struggles to establish a consistent, reliable identity as a member of a world which has not yet incorporated her as an integral part. This reality of the woman's situation is presented in the novels of R.K. Narayan (The Guide and The Painter of Signs), Raja Rao (The Serpent and the Rope) and Anita Desai (Fire on the Mountain). In these novels the woman rebels against her oppressive forces and realizes that to be a model of female emancipation she has to possess moral strength and energy. In her rebellion she emerges a radical as she forges an innovative path for the new woman of India.

In India, it is natural that economic, sexual and moral oppression of women is accentuated by the backwardness of the society. The woman suffers, she is a mere tool, object or instrument. These aspects of the woman can be evidenced in R. P. Jhabvala's fiction, for example, Gulab (Esmond in India) and Etta and Clarissa (A Backward Place). R.K. Narayan treats Savitri (The Dark Room) in the same manner. The woman is used for the reproductive purposes of society, or is a sex object used to satisfy the wants and desires of men.

However, from an examination of the aforementioned novels, it can be seen that the Indian woman is becoming more bold and outspoken in her criticism of the injustices and oppression to which she has been exposed. She has gained a new courage in facing her society and the problems that beset her life. For she knows that with liberation she stands to lose nothing else but her chains. For a woman to be able to regain her personality, her

humanity, her intrinsic and real self is much more worthwhile than all the approbation of a male-dominated society.

In the final analysis, the Indian woman demonstrates strength and perseverance as she relies on her inner power to help her live in an exploitative society. The Indian woman is thus a source of inspiration as she sets the pace for the future Indian females.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Mr. Vishnu Singh, for his expertise, suggestions, advice and sage guidance as he challenged me to new heights.

I am especially grateful for the opportunity to thank Mr. Zamroor Mohammod, my mentor, and the source of my inspiration. Thank you for your unstinting patience and understanding, invaluable insights and advice, encouragement and assistance.

I owe special thanks to my family whose unwavering support and enthusiasm kept me going.