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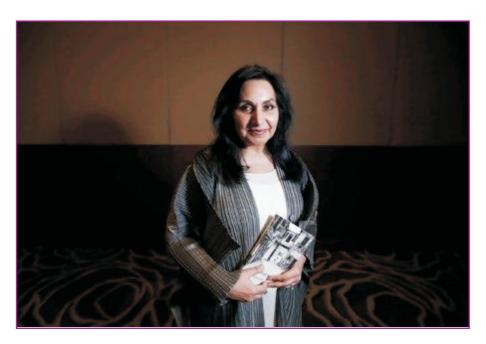
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Golden Research Thoughts



A FEMINIST APPROACH TO IMTIAZ DHARKER'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

eminism is a global and revolutionary ideology that is political because it is concerned with the question of power. A feminist is a one who is a very much conscious about the life of women as well as their problems. So this concept is based on a critical analysis of male privilege and woman's subordination within a society. It opposes woman's subordination in the family and society. The importance is given to woman in the feminist theory. Feminism or feminist theory deals with the themes of patriarchy, sexual objectification and oppression. It studies the inequality of women

because of the social injustice. ImtiazDharker is a poet-painter who deals with women's issues, women's liberation, women's identity etc.

KEYWORDS:Imtiaz Dharker's Poetry, family and society.

INTRODUCTION

The study of Feminist theories begins with the 18th century and continues until the present time. Feminist theories try to identify the existence of women among the readers. Gender difference is the primary concern of inequality between men and women, because of it women suffer by the social injustice. The inequality

between the sexes produces the cultural construction of gender differences. So at the beginning of the 19th century socialism and feminism emphasized the ways in which discrimination against women was manifested.

FEMINISM

The concept or term feminism is nothing but a development and a movement which began in the late 1960's as a force. It began as an attempt to describe and interpret the experience of women's life and problems highlighted in literature especially in the form of novel. It also began as an attack towards male's ideas about women as seen in literature. It rejects the ideas of men about women. Therefore feminism is an attempt to remove the small space of women given by the male writers in the society.so primarily the main purpose of feminism is to highlight the prejudices, misconceptions and false assumptions about women and to erase gender difference from the society and give respect to women in society. Women are a part and parcel of the society. So think about her as a social and rational animal. In a male dominated society woman is always treated as a sub-ordinate and neglected from society. Women were considered inferior to men and were unjustifiably enslaved and dominated by their male counterparts. Women were denied rights and were not given the freedom to live life as per her choice.

ORIGIN OF FEMINISM

Feminism had it origin as early as 1792 when Mary Wollstonecraft wrote 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women'in 1869 and Virginia Woolf's 'A Room of one's own' which came in 1929. The most powerful book that brought into focus the gender bias was Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex" in 1949; which contains her famous utterance: "One is not born a woman; rather, one becomes a woman". In the 1970's Elain Showalter's essay "Towards a Feminist Poetics" distinguishes literature written by women for women for women, about women as they really are, by calling it Gynocriticism.

Although most of the people, critics tried to define Feminism, they did not cover the entire definition of it. In the same way, in Literary Historiography, it means digging at the past a new from the woman's point of view, breaks and continuities of woman's writing in history. Virginia Woolf calls Shakespeare 'A Masculine Mind'and regrets the fact that Lady Winchilsen(1616) who could be equally great a poetic talent was not allowed to grow because of gender – bias of the Elizabethan period. Woolf traces out the history of English literature and maintains that women were deprived of education, economic independence and domestic space. On the other hand in literary theory, it means challenging the patriarchal canons, deconstructing the phallocentric creative and critical discourse, decoding gender as an organizing principle of experience and relating forms of feminine articulation to changing external circumstances and associations. Therefore Pouline de la Barreonce pointed out "All that has been written about woman by men should be suspect, for the men are at once judge and party to the lawsuits" so the above theory studies about the structural inequality of women caused by systematic social injustice.

However, Feminism is also considered as cultural, economic and political movements that are thought about as the freedom, security and complete equality of women. In Indian writings in English, Feminism has been used for evaluating the real picture of women. The most of the Indian English novelists use oriental approaches of Feminism. In India there are several novelists who handled the concept of Feminism in their novels. In it they depicted the actual, real place as well as status of women in Indian societies. Today's modern women always think about themselves as they are equally competent like the men and they are not dependent on men, they are not helpless. In the past women were totally dependent upon the men. But today's situation is different. They have became direct money earners of any household. Today, all these changes have affected the English novelists and that is also reflected in their writings. Today's most of they contemporary Indian English novelist use the theme of Feminism and it creates the interest among the Indian peoples.

Of course, Feminism does not focusesonly on equality and rights of a woman but it pays attention towards the respect and understanding of women from male's point of view. The main reason of women for dissatisfaction is the superior attitude of the men. Throughout the women have suffered in the male dominated society in silence. So it exactly talks about it. Today's women are conscious about their fundamental rights and realize where they exactly went wrong. So, all these problems are highlighted by Indian English novelists. Frankly Indian women writers explore the feminine subjectivity from childhood to complete womanhood. These women writers by their writings spread the message of what actually feminism is, which actually is a very broad term. These women writers say that feminism means putting an end to all the sufferings of a woman in silence. Only the women novelists of India are capable of conveying the messages of feminism in an Indian way.

FEMINISM IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Considering the concept of feminism, Indian women novelists have played an important role in Indian writing in English literature. They have given a new dimension to the Indian literature. In the past, people used to enjoy the 'desi' versions of English magazines like 'playboy'. But today, the Indian literature has gifted several talented women novelists people enjoy reading novels presented by the new age women writers. Right from the past, women have faced several problems and they have been exploited by the men and the society. So the women have been constantly struggling and in search of the meaningful, respectable position and safe place for

themselves. They were to find their own identity. So today's changing image of women can be seen through their writings.

However, in the galaxy of Indian English the women novelists who have occupied the important place are Kamala Markandaya, ShashiDeshpande and Anita Desai who have chosen the main theme of the writings as feminism. They highlighted the problems and issues of women in the male dominated society. For example, some of the novels of Anita Desia like "Voices in the City" and "Where shall we go this Summer?". She has focused the complexities between a man and woman relationship. She has tried to depict the psychological aspect of the protagonists. So, by the writings of women's problems the women writer try to create awareness among womens. The struggle of an Indian women for her real identity clearly emerges in the Indian English novels. To take another example Rama Mehta's, "Inside the Haveli", NayantaraSahgal's "Reach Like Us", Gita Hariharan's "The Thousand Faces of Night" are the novels that uses the same theme. Feminism highlights the status of women in Indian societies.

In fact, more authors like Gita Mehta, ShamaFutehally and Nisha Da Cunha work on feministic themes and emotional crisis of a women. Some are the examples of female subjectivity oriented English novels in India are Kamala Das, Ruth Jhabvala's, "To whom she will", Santa Rama Rau's "Remember the House". Considering the above writers, we have some other names such as Shobha De, NargisDalal, ShashiDeshpande, Krishna Sobti, Dina Mehta, Indira Goswami, MalatiChendur, Bharati Mukherjee, NamitaGokhale, GauriDeshpande and ManjuKapur etc.. Most of these female novelists are famous for there bold views that are highlighted in their novels. Their main focus is on the undesirable dominance of men over women.

In the same way, among the Indian women novelists, AttiaHossain, Arundhati Roy, Toru Datt, Krupabai, Sathianathan, ShevanthiBaiNikambe, Cornelia Sorabji, Iqbal, Iunnisa are primarily concerned in their novels with the psychological crisis in the lives of Indian women who were physically and psychologically tortured in a male dominated society. They also reveal the keen observation of the life of Indian women and different experiences of her. In this explanation the women novelists focus on the existence of women in the male dominated society governed by rigid traditions and restrictions. The psychological and emotional imbalances, feminine sensibility are the main issues of their writings. Through writings we see, these Indian women novelists playing an important role as a social reformer in a society. Women should be treated respectfully in the society. Women should be given equal status in the society. The exploitation of women should be removed from the society.

FEMINISM IN THE BRITISH LITERATURE

Secondly, after making a brief survey of all these Indian women novelists with feminism, we can look back to English novels by British women novelists in which women characters depict the psychological insight and feminist objective. First of all, Jane Austen was the pioneer who expressed the theme of feminism in her novels. Secondly, Bronte Sisters presented in their novels a sketch of women characters from the women's point of view. The characters Jane Eyre, Shirley and Agnes are the fine examples of the plight of women. Thirdly, the Victorian women novelists Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell explores the inner mind of women in her masterpiece "Cranford". Later Goerge Eliot's "Adam Bede", "Mill on the Floss" and "Silas Mariner" are the novels from the feminist point of view. Another name worth mentioning is Dorothy Richardson. In her novel "Pointed Roofs", she presents the subjective and objective biography of a young woman Miriam Henderson. Another woman novelist who was preoccupied with the psychological exploration of the mind of woman is Virginia Woolf. She depicted woman characters with the profound feminist perspective. She highlighted the relation of women with women and women with men.

Therefore, the comparative and contrastive study of the novels by Indian and British women writers brings to fore the basic differences in the portrayal of women characters. We find the differences between them in the sociological, psychological and cultural areas that greatly influence their writings. So, we can say that, Indian women novelists occupy a unique place in Indian English literature, highlighting the work of feminist.

FEMININE SENSIBILITY INIMTIAZDHARKER'S POETRY:

In the last decade of the twentieth century, there are many women poets who have enriched the Indian English literature. Among them a notable poet is ImtiazDharker. ImtiazDharker is different from the rest of the contemporary women poets in treating sensitive feminine issues. Contemporary poets also have talked about

women and their problems but ImtiazDharker has talked about the same without any hesitation and fear about the society. The phrase, feminine sensibility, originally refers to a derogatory meaning in the coterie of masculine literary world. Men writers who possess a high level of sensibility are even charged of effeminacy; they are vulnerable because they share much with women. The debate over the proportions of reason, the force for intellectual responsiveness, and feeling, the stimuli for emotional responsiveness has been operating for generations in the history of sensibility. The feminine sensibility means "the other" of masculine sensibility which is objective and rational. In other words, feminine sensibility is underestimated as emotional responsiveness lacking in the rational perceptiveness.

In the hegemonistic traditions of patriarchy, levelling and generalizing tenets of an objective perception is held high whereas the qualities of feelings, sentiments and emotions are treated as base and feminine. In this structural patriarchy, women are treated as being unable to respond rationally to impressions, experiences and the surrounding. The characteristic responses of women are thus generalized as emotional and sentimental. The phrase in question has the connotation of emotional responsiveness that by virtue of their roles, women relate themselves with the surrounding emotionally.

Women's world is a limited world under the system of patriarchy. In addition to this, women's body and experiences are different from that of men. The difference resists against the levelling of patriarchal perspective and the resistance is reflected in the women's sensibility. With the emergence of feminist ideas after the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex in 1949, the concept of feminine sensibility has been redefined. Further, the emergence of women writing questioning the masculine doses of writing by emphasizing what woman is and what writing about woman is and foregrounding the importance of women's body and feminine mode of responsiveness to the senses, experiences and the surrounding in a subversive manner has increased the momentum of feminine sensibility in a new paradigm. In history, feminine sensibility in literature begins with women writers writing about their own stories by adopting the tradition of men authors but confining their stories to the world of women-the world of domestic life as mothers, wives, sisters, beloveds and widows. However, the concepts of feminine sensibility has expanded into other areas such as exposing the woes and worries of women in the confinement of domestic life, the anxieties and depression they undergo, the suppression, exploitation, discrimination and marginalization they meet in the structural manipulation of colonial repressive apparatuses of patriarchy. Women of the 1960s in the European continent, the New World and other Post-colonial countries such as India and Canada have started exhibiting the expanded concept of feminine sensibility in the manner of redefining it. The word "sensibility" has an evolutionary history in the world of literature. Thus, feminine sensibility is the matter of soft and pure emotions of a woman's heart. The feelings which she stores in her heart and had capacity to overwhelm her surroundings. The sensibility has the depths of sea and heights of sky.

ImtiazDharker looks at the world from different angle. Her feminine sensibility is different from her contemporaries in the treatment of socio-political issues. Marginalisation of women is the major concern; moreover contemporary socio-political issues which brought endless suffering to women in particular and humanity in general are dealt with. Being a modern woman poet, she depicted the injustice in the society in a totally different way.

The section, *Postcards from God* isparticularly striking one. ImtiazDharker looks at the world from different angle. She is unique in her treatment of socio-political issues. Marginalization of women is the major concern; however the contemporary socio-political issues which brought endless suffering to women and society are also taken into consideration. In the poem *Postcards from God I* the poet speaks through the voice of every human alienated from God who becomes a perfect vehicle for her exploration of the human condition. In *Postcards from God I*, God is introduced as an entity, a tourist, a visitor who is wandering through battered streets, and he is looking for the promised past. God says that he has lost trust in his 'interpreters' who can be none other than Sadhus, Priests or Maulavis. She says that what these so called interpreters speak is nothing but the meaningless babble. The poet is in a dialogue with God and herself. There is life's passage to death and death accompanies you in the form of bloodless cruelty. The poet says that in the Postcard from God, that there is the need to write to you. She is asking God to be in witness box, writing him and his answers to her. Actually speaking, she herself feels like a visitor and tourist in this world and tries to establish a dialogue between God as a supreme

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entity and herself.

The poet speaks through the voice of every human alienated god who becomes a perfect vehicle for her exploration of the human condition *Postcards from God I* introduces this God as an entity forced to wonder like a tourist through streets that have lost their promise. The desire to communicate is still there. Thus God writes postcards, though it is not clear to whom. Their purpose is touchingly.

Proof that I was here (75)

The symbol of the eye appears on one of these postcards:

Between Video walls and my face

Is the eye,

Made in the inverted image

Of the unfinished sky,

A slit where the unexplained

Looks through

Rippled with power, pricked with light

These are the images. I will send to you (76)

The eye is the poet's watchfulness. The poet comments on the modern world of human suffering. Dharker expresses her anger against the ruthless world which lacks humanity. She cannot tolerate the suffering of people who have become the victims of selfish society. The God is also contemplating with dismay in such a world. His creation of mankind now appears to him as a whim; and indeed as we hear, his postcard size impressions as he journeys through his creation, it is impossible not to identify with his sense of failure and disappointment and above all, frustration. As Dharker, God is also frustrated with the existing situation of human beings, who have lost all the values in doing material progress. She cannot remain silent on all this and expresses her anger against all this in an unconventional way. God did not think that the world he created can be in such a chaos and disorder. Dharker courageously protest against the social, religious chaos which she feels around her. It is one of the disturbing pictures that will send out, along with the prophetic.

Faces that will belong to you
Years from now,
Waiting to be lived in, lined. (76)

From this sequence it is clear that inhabits the modern world, the world of tradition, and a timeless world of human suffering and possibility. ImtiazDharker has expressed her anger to such world which has lost humanity. Her feminine sensibility can't tolerate the sufferings of people who have become the victims of selfish society. So she says god is also contemplating with dismay to such a world. The impoverished, rickety dwelling becomes for Dharker, a symbol for human struggle. This symbolism is also found in the colonial and postcolonial novel.

The god sends postcards as

Proof that I was here (75)

And as a way of trying to

Keep channels open (76)

And the reader begins to feel sorry for him. The poem,

Here in Taking the Count she is using the material image of 'dhobi' to comment religious and spiritual existence. Taking the count is what a life is going to be. She is in the habit of looking at things in a different perspective. All activities in daily life which we consider to be mechanical activities, these all activities have some connotations which we normally do not understand. We are bound by certain domestic duties, but if we look at them in a different angle, we come to know that there is a message in all these things from our life. Washed clothes are considered to be the souls washed clean. She is in the habit of getting rid of certain malice, when you

wash the clothes they look as if they are new. She tries to take off that burden. In one poem he compares himself to a dhobi separating out dirty laundry:

I separate the dusters from the streets, I beat and rinse and squeeze and pound Till each one is ready to be thrown free, Laid across the ground Under the white hot critical eye

Rows of souls washed clean, All accounted for, Spread out to dry.

(77)

His creation of mankind now appears to him as a whim, and indeed as we hear, his postcard size impressions as he journeys through his creation, it is impossible not to identify with his sense of failure and disappointment and above all, frustration. As the God is frustrated with the existing situation of human being who lost all values in pursuing the material things, in the same way.

Postcards from God are the first section of this volume. This first section contains some of the poems throwing light on the feminine sensibility. In Signals, Dharker has given picture of such a woman who has lost her existence. Her existence is totally thrown away. A woman has to suffer a lot when she is going to give birth to a child. But after this, she is totally ignored. She loses her identity. Men folk want to destroy her image that she was living. It is easy for the patriarchal society to deny her existence. But they forget the importance of her in the life of men. The speaker in this poem says:

It's too easy for you
To tear me up, throw me away,
Take my picture and pull it apart,
Sharpen the blade,
Cut me out of your heart;
Further she says:
Was it an accident that I made you?
Do you know what pain it takes?
To shake existence out of million leaves Of creation.
Every face a pang of birth,
A signal to your spiral brain (81)

So we wonder how easily this patriarchal society can forget the pains and sufferings she tolerated to give birth to a child.

The next poem The Doorarises the question about the future of a girl child. This child after entering into this world she will have to face the life, where there is no fixity about the life of a girl. The Door becomes a symbol of an 'uncertainty' in the life of a girl. At the end of the poem Dharker says:

What will she have to show?
For this life, waiting to be lived?
I wish I did not have to know (86)

So this clearly shows the future of a girl child but she does not want to say this.

Frame this poem again throws light on feminine views. ImtiazDharker wants to give the clear picture of subjugation of women. By giving suitable drawing of Goddess who is put in frame, she has hinted at the exploitation of women. From the ages, women were considered as Goddess. But these women were not given

that type of importance. Under the name of God, these women were exploited. Frame is the image of a trapped woman, who is put in 'Frame', who can't go outside. She says here:

They have put me in a frame
And left me here
Trapped behind glass,
Among the hanging clothes
And the smell yesterday's sweat
To deal with all the demands
That wash up against me. (90)

Through above lines, it is clear that the 'Frame' of a Goddess has been kept in such a place where it is impossible to go there, where there are the hanging clothes. There is sweat; so how can we put the goddess in such a place? At the end, it is stated that

Can't they see my hands? are tied? (90)

So the poet here wants to create the picture of a restricted woman.

The poem In my Image depicts a different aspect of a woman's personality. She has created a different picture of a woman. First of all, Dharker has described her as how she moves in her cluttered room. She describes her as:

I watch the woman.

She moves about the cluttered room
Her clothes coiled around her,
Hissing against her limbs.
Her bangles make small, sharp,
Falling sounds. (117)

By using very simple language, Dharker has made a woman a very live in our eyes. In the further part of the poem, she praised her by saying that:

She is the running stream.
She is the deep well,
The unquiet sea,
The resurrected shore. (117)

By using these different images of 'running stream', 'deep well', 'unquiet sea' and 'resurrected shore', Dharker has revealed different dimensions of her personality.

It is true that in our society woman has to perform different roles. She is the mother, she is the wife. So she has to accomplish many duties and she carries her duties without any complaint. She is only trying to give happiness to others by suppressing her desires. No one can understand her feelings. She suffers a lot but remains very quiet. The patriarchal society never thinks about her feelings.

Making List is also a very suggestive poem. It shows the quality of 'neatness' of women. If a woman is very particular, if she does everything according to making list of things, then it will be very easy for her to remember everything, and everything will be given an allotted place. By using a very simple language, she has shown the particular characteristics of a woman's character. She says:

The best way to put
Things in order is
To make a list.
The result of this
Efficiency is that everything
Is named, and given
An allotted place.

(115)

Only this can be done only by a woman. It is only a woman who can place everything at a particular place and make her house very attractive.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Dharker has shown frustration with the world. Her feminine concern does not let her to be silent. She becomes violent, expresses her anger in an unconventional way.

Postcards from God take up the ideas of religion and culture to gain and enforce power and how violence against women or those of other religion is central to society. Dharker examines the wider social problems in her poetry She records her feminine concern for the socio-political climate in the country as the prevailing situation losing its light of humanity speedily. According to her, the politicians have produced a situation of disorder; disharmony and violence God could not have planned such type of world when He created it. As a woman poet, she can't tolerate the situation of chaos. As a woman poet, she has the courage to criticize & protest.

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