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EDITORIAL

The search for identity is a post-colonial perception in this era of increased opportunities, education, social reforms and above all the urbanization. From time immemorial, Indian women, the embodiment of love and affection, hope and patience, have been showing their worth in each and every discipline of knowledge. Gargi and Anusuiya in scriptures, Rajia Begum and Noorjahan in history and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, and Mahasweta Devi and many more in fictions have left their indelible imprint on the pages of history— an imprint which is suffused with such a powerful and beautiful colour which cannot be erased and darkened by Time. They are, to quote Ben Jonson, ‘not for an age but for all times’. Anees Jung in her book *Unveiling India* rightly observes, “In this complex pantheon of diversities the Indian woman remains the point of unity, unveiling through each single experience a collective consciousness prized by a society that is locked in mortal combat with the power and weakness of age and time. She remains the still centre, like the centre in a potter’s wheel, circling to create new forms, unfolding the continuity of a racial life which in turn has encircled and helped her acquire a quality of concentration”. Manu, the Hindu law giver, too, in one of his laws observes, “To be mothers, women were created and to be fathers, men. The teacher is ten times more venerable than sub teacher, the father a hundred times more than the teacher but a mother a thousand times more than a father”.

Feminism emerged as a worldwide movement to secure women’s rights on the one hand love, respect, sympathy and understanding from males on the other. It focused on women’s struggle for recognition and survival and made them realise that the time has come when they should stop suffering silently in helplessness. In other words, it is an ideology which seeks not only to understand the world but to change it to the advantage of women. The feminist movement aims at overthrowing social practices that lead to the oppression and victimisation of women. Indeed, modern women yearn for self- expression, individuality and self- identity. She tries to free herself of the dependence syndrome, as observes Chaman Nahal in “Feminism in Indian English Fiction”, “I define Feminism as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome. There is a dependence syndrome, whether it is the husband or the father or the country or whether it is a religious group, ethnic group. When women free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materializes”.

Indian women novelists in English and in other vernaculars try their best to deal with, apart from many other things, the pathetic plight of forsaken women who are fated to suffer from birth to death. In Hindu religion, the social stature of women is not certain, sometimes upgraded and sometimes degraded. In post-colonial period they have mainly concentrated upon the psyche of those women, who are in a conflicting state - they desire independence but at the same time they dread their traditional role. Thus they have to redefine their status. Women writers have caught the Indian women in this flux and have portrayed them realistically both psychologically as well as physically in their novels.

The present issue of the Journal comprises thirty one papers altogether ranging from the dramatic world of Shakespeare to the poetic world of H.L.V. Derozio, T.S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats; from the world of Dalit writers - Mulk Raj Anand, Arundhati Roy, Omprakash Valmiki to the world of feminist writers like Simone de Beauvoir and Doris Lessing and from the world of diaspora writers - Bharati Mukherjee, Manju Kapur, V. S. Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri to that of the women writers like Anita Desai, Kamala Das, Shobha De. It also includes papers on Amitav Ghosh and Chetan Bhagat. Obviously enough the wide range of themes discussed by the scholars in their papers, it is feminism and Dalit writing which provide immense possibilities of research in recent times. The scholars in their papers on feminism have expressed their views unanimously that women play a major supportive role in the family and the society without neglecting their conventionally attributed domestic responsibilities. Even then the phallocentric society fails to appreciate their creative and positive contribution to the community. Under the influence of the western feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and Kate Millet, the modern women writers delve deep into the psyche of their characters and herald a new concept of morality. However, it is a universally accepted fact that 'glass ceiling' for women is still persistent. It is an undefined emotional factor that hinders progress of women beyond men. The Dalit writers have painted the grim realities in their works. Omprakash Valmiki has narrated his own experiences whereas Anand has tried to present the caste-ridden and hypocritical society of the pre-independence period. Arundhati Roy in her magnum opus *The God of Small Things* has sought to restructure the power centre by giving right to women to live their lives in their own way.

The challenging task of publishing the present issue of the Journal has been possible only because of the constant encouragement of my mother, Dr.V. R. Agrawal, former Professor of Sanskrit, Post- Graduate Centre, Gaya College, Gaya (Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya) who shaped my personality and raised me to the height where I am. I invoke her grace

for any good that I may do in this life. I feel obliged to the members of the Advisory Board and also to the panel of reviewers but for whose continuous support and encouragement this Journal would not have seen the light of the day. I thank all the contributors, especially the research scholars for their papers. I also thank my departmental colleagues, friends, well wishers and all associates who rendered support to me in one way or the other.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not record my thanks to my wife, Shalini Agrawal (M.Sc., Botany) whose active and ungrudging help proved fruitful in completing the work requiring sustained and patient labour, undivided attention and pointed concentration. I also bless my sons Arush Agrawal (Std. X, Nazareth Academy) and Ansal Agrawal (Std.V, D.A.V. Public School) for relieving me of the monotony of research.

Sri Ajay Kumar, Proprietor, Shivam Computer Press, too deserves thanks who designed and printed the fourth issue of the Journal.

Finally, I invite the active co-operation from readers in the endeavour to promote a proper understanding of literature as an aid to make living really worthwhile. Constructive criticism and suggestions from scholars are earnestly solicited for the improvement of the Journal in future issues.

1st July, 2015

Neeraj Kumar