

International Journal of Reviews, Surveys and Research (IJRSR)

International Refereed and Indexed Journal for Research Scholars and Practitioners

*International Manuscript ID : ISSN23194618-V2I2M9-052013***THE OTHER HALF OF INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH***Monika Choudhry**Tikaram College of Education, Sonipat**Haryana, India***ABSTRACT**

Women the 'other half' has often been accused of mastering the domestic sphere without giving due to her resurrection as a creative writer, poetesses or powerhouse of literary talent, advocate of individual identity. The ambit of Household, Matrimony Child Care has been replaced with outspoken attitude that is shy not to ask for love, sex outside matrimony and break shackles of overriding parochial patriarchal maneuvers that only planned to throttle her freedom, clip her wings, subjugate her :

"You planned to tame her allow to hold her

Also her nature, the urge to fly and the

endless pathways of the sky.

The Old Play House – K. Das

The writings by women writer like Urvashi Butalia, Anita Nair, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Shobha De, Suniti Namjoshi, Kamla Markandya, Sulekh Sanyal, Bharti Mukherjee, Manju

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Kapoor, Mahashweta Devi, Shama Zaidi & Jhumpa Lahiri are an explosion of suppressed desires and pent up feelings that love long been gathered. Women writers have proved that their writings are serious and require attention. V.S. Naipaul's derogatory remarks about women writers a year ago not only led to vehement protests but also served as a reminder to those who think to the contrary, that women writers are a force to reckon with. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrays enduring self sacrifice forwards conflict. A major preoccupation in recent Indian women's writing has been delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships.

INTRODUCTION :

“A women should be aware of self controlled, strong-willed, self-reliant and rational, having faith in the inner strength of Women-hood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense”

(A Married Women, Manju Kapoor)

Women's writing in India has been multi-faceted but often persisting secretly, sometimes in pain and in defiance but the hallowed status is reserved for men as if they are the heir apparent to literary throne though women may excel in literary domain. Women writers have to face Censorship-social, professional and personal, challenges that are sexist and misogynist in nature. One label that is easily attributed to women's work is that they 'only speak about women' and are often perceived as 'feminist' and hence disrupting the established family structure and peace at home. The most unacceptable women writers are those who question social order. The Pillar of community-Marriage, Motherhood, control of sexuality and traditions must be preserved for the interests of preserving the culture.

SOCIAL CENSORSHIP

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Sexist remarks are flung towards women who have ventured to write about women's sexuality and their bodies. Khusboo an Indian actress (Southern region); Madhavi Kutti a Malayali writer; Taslema Nasreen a Bangladeshi writer and even Tista Sitlavad had to face community censorship and social boycott. Himanshi Shelat (Gujrati Writer) had to face death threats for challenging traditions. It is cruel and ironical but true that often community decides what women can wear, who to wed, when to procreate, how to conduct and what to write!

Who to wed? Whom to rever?

Couldn't comprehend the male fear

Why to bow? How to conduct?

At each corner, obstacles erupt.

How to write? When to procreate?

What for the world is most appropriate?

I ask and get no replies

Moments come, Century flies

But the quest of female never dies!

Monika Choudhry's , Poem 'Quest'

THE CHANGE (Answering Back)

The work of Indian women writes has not only question the prominent old patriarchal domination but has left indelible imprint on the leaders of fiction, drama and poetry. Santha Rama Rau's Remember for the House (1956), Ruth Pawar Jhabvala's 'To Whom She Will (1955), Kamal Markandya's 'Two Virgins' (1994), Arundhati Roy's 'The God of small things'

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(1997) have characters searching for identity, social consciousness, delineation of interpersonal bonds, inner life and protest against domestic image. Women's presentation in Indian English writing has become assertive, liberated and articulate as compared to past. The female writers commemorate and canonize potent feminine sensibility raising the male tantrum to social transformation in the society.

The existential predicament of women in a male dictated society, cultural clash (west Vs east), unexplored female psyche, predicament of middle class, passionate love, domestic concerns, global issues, erotica, extra-marital affairs, quest for identity are few of the underlying currents of women writers in Indian writing in English.

THE WORLD OF FICTION

Ruth Pawar Jhabvala : A novelist, screen playwright, she has depicted Indian middle class values, east west clash. Her famous works are *To Whom She Will* (1955), *The Homes Holder* (1960), *Heat and Dust* (1975).

Anita Desai : The most hallowed position in Indian Fiction in English is enjoyed by three time nominated for Man Booker and Sahitya Akademi Awardee Anita Desai. She has to her credit more than ten novel of which *Clear Light of Day*, *Voices in The City* and *Cry a Peacock* are most famous. Her works reveal mental states hidden motives, existential pursuits and her female protagonist are mostly single women. Her themes are women based with issues of tradition and modernity, marriage, career.

Mahashweta Devi : A social activist, acclaimed Bengali writer, winner of Jhanapith (1996) and the Raman Magsaysay Award (1997) She has to her credit the successful adaption to her works in form of cinematic presentations namely *Rudaali* and *Hazaar Chaurasi Ki Maa*. She combines women's cause to political movements, tribal issues to development and regional lingua to universal idiom.

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Nayantara Sehgal : Related to famous political family of Nehru, she infuses her fiction with elite India's response to the crises engendered by political upheavels. Her main works are 'This Time of Morning' (1965), 'Storm in Chandigarh' (1969), 'The Days in Shadow' (1971), 'Rich like us' (1988), and 'Lesser breeds' (2003).

Kamala Markandya: Having the neutrality of a detached observer she differs from other Indian English novelists. She has explored hunger, degradation, east-west encounter the individual consciousness, social conflicts, politics rootlessness projecting the images of cultural change in her novels.

Shashi Deshpande : A Padma Shri awardee (2009) and winner of Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990, Deshpande trained as a journalist and her work focuses on the reality and truth of the lives of Indian women. Her prose projects geo-centric vision, feminine sensitivities, gender differences, predicament of Indian women placed between contradictory identities.

Manju Kapoor : Manju Kapoor's first novel 'Difficult Daughters' received Common Wealth Award for the Eurasian region. In her writings she has emphasized on the issues in the context of patriarchy, inter-religious marriage, family bond, male-female bond, co-existence of past and present. She has narrated her women protagonists as victims of biology, gender domestic violence, and circumstances, Kapoor thinks that,

"There is a man within every woman and a woman in every man. When, manhood is questioned womanhood is fragmented."

Bharti Mukherjee : Based in U.S.A. this professor has earned laurels for her works : The Tiger's Daughter (1972), Middle Man (1988), Jasmine (1989), The Holder of The World (1993), focus on diasporic concerns, racism, discrimination, immigration, displacement, exile, return, identity and assimilation. She is a modern interpreter of the interaction between contemporary India and the west.

Chaya Dattar : She focuses on tribal women's individuality, interdependence of women as a binding force to rebel against confinement of objectification, collective solidarity of women and active marginality.

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Arundhati Roy : Arundhati Roy is an ardent advocate of social and economic justice for the country's oppressed minorities. She became first women in India to win a Man Booker for her Debut Novel 'The God of Small Things' (1997). She has to her credit various essays on varied subjects like subalternity, ecology, social unrest, urbanization, industrialization, Kashmir issue etc. Her stylistic writing includes use of vernacular phrases, use of italics, faulty spellings, topicalisation, deviation from normal word order, single word 'sentences'. Roy has built her reputation as an activist writer and has articulated her concern on many issues like displacement of people due to construction of dam proposed over Narmada River and the repercussions of mounting nuclear weapons.

Kiran Desai : Daughter of acclaimed novelist Anita Desai, Kiran has literary talent in her very DNA. She won Man Booker prize in 2006 for her second novel 'The Inheritance of Loss'. She won rave reviews for her debut novel, 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard' (1998). She has focused on tumult of 21st Century, migration, globalization, effect of progress on all social classes.

Shobha De : The 'Maharani of Muck', India's 'Jackier Collins' are some of the epithets this outspoken columnist, novelist and blogger has earned for herself for her bare treatment of sexuality. Her novel Socialite Evenings has been famous for feminine sensuality. She uses Hindi idioms, four letter words, Vernacular for spicing her literary dishes.

Ashapura Devi : Ashapura Devi, advocates a revision of traditional community, reformed traditional womanhood, women's right to a more humane status. In her trilogy Pratham Pratishruti, Subarnalata and Bakul Katha traces the progression of the feminist movement form colonial to post colonial periods in India.

Gita Hariharan : Gita won the Common Wealth writers' prize for her first book, The Ghosts of Vasu Master (1994). Her other works are The Art of Dying (1993), When Dreams Travels (1999) and The Thousand Faces of The Night (1982). Her sentences are controlled, her fiction full of subtleties, human, tenderness and distilled brevity.

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Anjana Appanchana : A recipient of O-Henry festival prize and creative writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the arts in the US, her first novel 'Listening Now' (1997) speaks about love, brutal effects of marriage, hypocrisy of traditional roles, tragic relationships, inept officialdom. Her first work Incantations and Other Stories (1991) and debut Novel Listening Now (1998) are unflinching portrayals of battered Matrimonial ties.

Padma Hejmadi : A trained classical dancer she has to her credit several collections of stories : Birthday Death day (1995), her autobiography Room to fly: A trans cultural memoir (1999) depict the personal spaces of transformation that lie hidden in the narrative of times and places.

Jhumpa Lahiri : Jhumpa Lahiri is an American author of Bengali Indian descent. Lahiri's debut short story collection, Interpreter of Maladies (1999) won 2000 Pulitzer prize for fiction and her first novel "The Namesake' (2003) has been adapted for film production. Her writing characterizes plain language, struggles, anxieties and biases of immigrant psychology and behaviour.

Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni : Chitra's work encapsulates the personal problems of Indian Immigrant community, their transformation and bonds with native land. Her works include Arranged Marriage (1966), Sister of My Heart (1999), The View of Desire (2002), The Unknown Errors of Our lives (2002).

POETIC IDIOM

Most the poetry by modern poets in India especially women reveals a tension resulting from their acute self-awareness and the restraint imposed upon them by the hostile environment and becomes a private quest for valves and an effort to peer into the dark abysmal contents of the poet's own mind. In the hands of Kamla Das and Sunita Jain, the poetry of protest is largely personal and confessional, in the case of Mamta Kalia and Eunice De Souza, it becomes ironical as well.

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With regards to the new trends and techniques in women's poetry there is a remarkable movement connecting the domestic with the public spheres of work. Increased metropolitan activities, sophisticated life styles, globalization, urbanized influences of pop, disco and cafe culture, Anglo-Americanization and the public and convent education of the present generation of women poets have made their poetic language, chiseled, sharp, pithy and effortless. The deconstructive strategies of narrative and conceptual frames, along with the simultaneous assimilation of pan-Indian elements have made their poetry a formidable area of study and research. Other than the skillful use of standard poetic devices, the semiotic, symbolical and metaphorical properties of language help to emphasize the feminist strategies of interrogation. The fissures and fragments of post-modern life are questioned and reflected in the highly experimental diction. The problems of sociological vis-à-vis literary politics, of gender inequities of marginalization and sub-humanization of women, of their social and artistic exclusion and of the dominant need for inclusion and democratization, all contribute towards the distinctive character of this poetry. For the first time, mapping out new terrains the poetry of such Indian women poets bring forth the suppressed desires, lust, sexuality and gestational experiences.

As such, it does not remain isolated from the global trends and can be corroborated by the fact that it has incorporated itself the manifestations of the feminist movements that swept through Europe, America, Canada, and Australia since 1960s. At the same time in India appeared the poetry of Kamla Das, Eunice de Souza, Mamta Kalia, Tara Patel, Imtiaz Kalia, Gauri Deshpande, Suniti Namjoshi, Gauri Pant, Lakshmi Kannan, Vimla Rao, Meena Alexander, Margaret Chatterjee, Charmayne D'Souza, Mamta Kalia, Sujata Bhatt etc.

Menka Shivadasni's poetry hold together a private world of chaotic emotions through its logical development and its strikingly imaginative icons. Her *Nirvana at Ten Rupees* (1990) is a careful selection spanning twelve year's work. Shivdasni, a well-travelled journalist who worked for a year in Honkong, was one of the founding members of the Bombay Poetry Circle in 1986. In her poetry, she had anticipated many of the new characteristics of Bombay poetry as it would develop during the 1990s. Her poems can be broadly categorized under three types of skeptical attitudes which reveal the writer's preoccupation with pessimism. The first category deals with the relationship between man

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and God, the second, with the human predicament and the third with the women's condition. Her horrors and temptations of living alone in a small flat, the anxieties of a single life which get complicated by being a woman, the sordid world of sex, drugs, broken relationship and the aftermath are portrayed in stark reality. She traces her own transition from a believer to an atheist in the very first poem of the collection, 'The Atheist's Confession.' The poem starts with nostalgia of rosy faith in the "earth god" when she "ate Prasad only after a bath" is contrasted with a later stage when "gods no longer smiled when I prayed" because she had framed her cold logic that "They couldn't...They were of stone" (Shields 121) and eventually comes the final word that "God didn't exist." The writer's uncertainty regarding the existence of God is further evidenced in the poems 'Are You Three' and 'Somewhere on the Streets.' The tedious nature, the sheer monotony of the modern mechanized existence is described in 'Destination' where the daily commuter's journey in the second class railway compartment is between Church gate and insanity. "Geography taught her the vastness of space, history not to live in the past and English Literature "That I belong nowhere. Physics, Einstein and his theory of relativity taught her to hate everything including herself. So mere acquisition of knowledge is fruitless without its moderation through contact with wisdom, seems to be the leit motif of many of Shivdasni's poems.

Moving between countries and cultures, **Bhatt** is concerned with the construction of the self and its relationship with memory, history and identity. While honouring the importance of her heritage, she also seems to be striving to discover who she is; she fosters both the values of her birthplace and her Western self-confidence, but at the same time she reveals her sense of alienation in the environment of the country of her domicile. The poems, therefore, in general are marked by the twin metaphors of loss and recovery. While the loss is real in terms of spatial and temporal distance from the motherland, the recovery can only be imaginary – or at best aesthetic. It is indeed remarkable that Sujata Bhatt has not only the right idiom at her command but also a native mode to express a new consciousness. **Meena Alexander's** 'A House of a Thousand Doors' for instance is an Indian woman living in United States. She often hears voices of the village women she left behind. During her birthing pains in New York these women come in dream to deliver her. In a moment of this primeval pain, all barriers collapse and women come together in mutual sympathy,

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understanding and concern. **Suniti Namjoshi** directly addresses the need to legitimize lesbianism and argues that a woman's love for a woman is both natural and quite ancient. She complains that books, stories and society all collude in propagating the myths of compulsory heterosexuality and in all these versions men love women and women love men, and men ride off and have all sorts of adventures while women stay at home. In a number of poems included in her collections *Jackass* and *the Lady and Blue Donkey* Fables Namjoshi celebrates lesbian eroticism.

Thus, Indian English Poetry that in beginning had a different doubt, with the attempts of poets like Meherji, A.F. Khabardar, N.B. Thadhani, Nizam Jung, Harendra Nath Chattopadhyaya, Kamla Das, Eunice de Souza, Mamta Kalia, Tara Patel, Imtiaz Kalia, Gauri Deshpande, Suniti Namjoshi, Gauri Pant, Lakshmi Kannan, Vimla Rao, Meena Alexander, Margaret Chatterjee, Charmayne D'Souza, Mamta Kalia, Sujata Bhatt and Ananda Acharya, now it has gripped tightly the foundation of India and has become potent medium of expression as well as flourished, nourished and advanced with Indian society and culture and lastly succeeded in vocalizing the pains, pleasures and protest of Indian mind and heart in verse-form. Now Indian English Poetry come to the stage where they can take it as a medium for bringing awareness among world society and feel proud of what they have in the form of Indian English poets.

In short, their poetry exhibits three concentric circles of the self in relation to society, self in relation to history with family as the core unit, and self in relation to itself, its own self propelled emotions and feelings. These poets display a different open attitude. The subjects which were taboo earlier now are openly expressed in their lines. They do not emulate, they express their thoughts, their feelings, their fears and insecurities. The reflections and deliberations come from within and they are the end product of how life has treated them, their trials, tribulations, struggles and ultimate victories.

While **Sarojini Naidu** exposes her personal experience, Kamala Das is a thorough investigator of the intensely personal experience. Under the influence of the English Romantics, Naidu traces her identity in Nature, writing about its beautiful forms. **Kamala**

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Das attempts to explore the quest for self and identity, the stark realities within and around her.

It is with extreme sincerity that she yearns for her quest for identity. It appears in the songs of a heart that longs for sexual satisfaction in the recollections of the purity and playfulness of the childhood, in the broken womanhood, in the love of the grandmother, in the cruelty and hypocrisy of men, in the painful realization of failing youth and approaching old age and in the despair of old age itself.

In **Gauris** poems, one finds relationship between men and women described in so many ways: love that men and women are subjected to, sensibility characteristic of the feminine world, inner quest or self search and identity, memories and experience of loneliness, loss and the pain consequent to it, etc. Unlike its stylized images as a bringer of new life, the rain in Gauri Deshpandes poetry is often a reminder of loss and a witness to alienation, as in In absentia: The rain that here falls on my home There hisses on your huddled head. In this poem, we find an assertive strength. The strength lies within the bones of poems when the poet writes with quiet rage and sincerity.

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

Women dramatists have tried to enrich the soil of Indian drama by projecting the inner world of feminine psyche in the theatre. Women's theatre coalesces with Street Theatre movement, using the same technique in performance and production. It can be attributed as a 'Theatre Of Protest' because women writers expressed their resentment against the politics of exploitation on the basis of gender discrimination. They also revived the traditional myths of Sita and Savitri and tried to reinterpret the epics from women's point of view. The dramatic work of **Usha Ganguli** and Mahasweta Devi can be placed in their category. **Mahashweta Devi** emerged as a dramatist having a quest to explore something challenging and new. Her five plays are Mother of 1084, Aajer Urvashi O' Johny, Byen and Water. The play Mother of 1084, is a moving account of the anguish of an apolitical mother who had

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witnessed the horrors of Naxalite Movement. In Aajir, Mahasweta Devi deals with the issue of the fast deterioration of values and their effects on society, particularly on illiterate people. Urvashi O' Johnny is a play written for emergency through the love affair of Johnny with Urvashi, a talking doll. The play Bayen presents a moving account of harsh reality of a woman's life in rural India. The play Water, is the story of a professional water-diviner, Maghai Done who is an untouchable boy. Her plays represent a profound concern for human predicament and sincere hope for the better future of mankind.

The foremost among these women playwrights is **Bharati Sarabhai** who has, to her credit, two plays: *The Well of the People* and *Two Women*. In both the plays the author tries to give a new meaning to age-old beliefs and customs. The Vedantic concept that God is within, is presented in them in different ways; and the two plays seem to be complementary in presenting the types of Indian womanhood. While symbolism and poetry are the specialties of the former, there is realism in the later and it is in prose.

In the play *The Well of the People*, Sarabhai projects a picture of synthesis of religion and social service. Moved by a story appeared in *Harijan*, she wrote the play, according to which, an old woman fails to achieve her ambition of going on pilgrimage to Kashi and Haridwar, and decides to please God by building a well for "the untouchables" in her village with her savings. It is evident that the story is symbolically charged with Gandhiji's socio-political ideologies; and as Dr. Prema Nandakumar says, it is "a bold attempt on the part of Bharati Sarabhai to have taken up the challenge to present a spiritual problem in terms of physical action".² A voice calls the individual soul to turn inward:

Why do you go to Haridwar, to Kashi,

O my Soul, when I am within?

Pilgrim, pilgrim, why, what is it you seek outside?

The same concept is presented in *Two Women* in another way. The westernised Kanakaraya faces conflicts and temporarily compromises with his wife Anuradha who is very

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much inclined to go to the Himalayas in her quest for spiritual peace. At last, Kanakaraya gives up his rigid stand, and coincidentally enough, Anuradha does not find any meaning in her desire as she could see the Himalayas everywhere. But the sudden death of Kanakaraya renders the new-found realisation useless for the couple. Thus Sarabhai breathes a new meaning into our old beliefs and customs, and thereby tries to view the modern problems with a cultural background of the ancient Indian womanhood.

Mrs. Swarnakumari Devi Ghosal resorts to allegory to illustrate the eternal universal truths in the guise of a story of the demoralised India of the pre-Independence period. In the play, a distinct contrast is drawn between two sets of allegorical characters, one representing the good (Kalyani, the king, Hashi, the jester, etc.) and the other (the queen, Matangini, etc.) the evil in the world. Apart from the network of too many characters, Mrs. Ghosal employs allegory with a considerable success in dramatising the universal conflict between the good and the evil forces, the temporary triumph of the evil over the good and the need for sacrifice to conquer the evil. The Freedom Movement in our country draws the attention of Mrinalini Sarabhai a celebrated dancer and choreographer, and her work *Captive Soil* is a powerful verse-play in two acts with a Prologue and an Epilogue, presenting the actions and reactions found among different sections of our country during the movement. The life of the mystic princess Mira forms the theme of *The Beggar Princess* a play in five acts written by Indira Devi in collaboration with Dilip Kumar Roy. While handling historical-hagio-logical theme, the playwrights develop their plot around the significant title *The Beggar Princess*, which appearing a bit paradoxical, blends in the heroine both the beggar and the princess—from the material as well as the spiritual points of view. The conflict is there between the limited power of man and the infinite Grace of the Lord as can be seen in the lives of saints “who defy the weights and measures of the human superbazaar Drawing from the history of the Rajputs, S. Janaki conceives some pictures of their fight with the Mughals, and her three-act play *The Siege of Chitor* (a *Bhavan's Journal* Prize-winner) deals with Akbar's final successful bid to conquer the formidable Chitor fort. In handling the theme, it appears that the playwright has a faint design of lessening the Indians' apathy towards the foreign rule (here, that of Muslim) and hence tries to ennoble the character of

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Akbar even beyond the extent to which he is generally portrayed by historians. The fact can often be noticed in his talk: for example, here are his instructions to his General before leaving Chitor. "Temper authoritIn a compendium of human knowledge and experience like *The Mahabharata*, **Mrs. K. B. Thakur's** motherly heart is attracted towards the inseparable bondage between a mother and her son, and in the three-act play. *Mother and Child* (a *Bhavan's Journal* Prize-winner), she deals with a few important events of Karna's tragic life **Shanta Rama Rau** sets an example in converting a novel into a play, and her work *A Passage to India* is a dramatised version of E. M. Forster's novel bearing the same title. The play presents a picture of mistrust and unjust treatment shown to Indians by the British during their regime in India. The playwright seems to have judiciously selected four scenes of dramatic and narrative interest, and distributed them in her three-act structure as follows: I. Tea-party at Mr. Fieldings; II. (i) Picnic, Marabar Caves (ii) English Club of Chandra pore and III. Magistrate's Court. In this land of variety in many aspects of life like customs and languages, occasional outbursts of fissiparous tendencies often necessitated a serious thinking by cool-headed patriots about national integration; which forms the theme of some plays. In her play *My Sons*, **Mrs. J. M. Billimoria** thinks of such a situation of five students of Bombay University who, in spite of sharp differences in their religion and language, live like real brothers sharing both joys and sorrows of their life; and the group consists of two Hindus, a Muslim, a Parsee and an Anglo-Indian. **Kamala Subramanian's** *Gandharee and Kaikeyee* is an example of a dramatic dialogue wherein the author extends her imagination and brings together two queens (probably in heaven) belonging to two different *yugas* (ages). Each explains to the other her standpoint about the peculiar situation which caused some mistaken notions among the people.

Dina Mehta, a leading and prominent creative writer, is industrious as playwright in India. The play *Mythmakers* (1967) is about rising communalism in Mumbai against the backdrop of the Bombay film industry. Her most acclaimed play which won the first prize in a worldwide competition sponsored by BBC is *Brides are Not for Burning* (1993) which raised the curtain as it were on domestic violence that women suffer daily. Resisting the ill-effects of the dowry, the play portrays the terrible malaise of bride burning that haunts the Indian society till today. Young bride Laxmi burns to death and her sister Malini is determined that

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the culprits, Laxmi's parents in law and husband, will not go unpunished. In fighting for justice, Malini confronts the society at large that tolerates such crime. Mehta's fourth play, *Getting Away with Murder* appears in the anthology *Body Blows: Women, Violence and Survival* is a tense and multi-layered text which explores the many dimensions and experiences of women's lives. Each character reveals a secret sorrow and the most shocking revelation of all is the trauma of child abuse within families which is never exposed. **Manjula Padmanabhan** was born in Delhi in 1953, the daughter of a diplomat, and her childhood was spent in Sweden, Pakistan and Thailand. Her primary education has been in Kodaikanal, Tamilnadu and college in Mumbai. She now lives in New Delhi. She is also a skilled, talented and a multi-faceted personality, as she is a playwright, a cartoonist, a novelist and an artist. She is known internationally only after her play *Harvest* was selected from around 1500 entries from about 75 countries to win the first prize in the Alexander S. Onassis Award for Theatre, at Athens, in September 1997.

Harvest, immensely significant and dynamic play, presents a dystopia where the rich of the developed world purchase healthy organs from the poor of the third world. Controlled by technology, the contact between the two segments of the world is not physical but of the virtual kind, the only way that the developed world can remain distant from the third world squalor. With pervasive black humour Padmanabhan emphasizes the business of 'organ harvesting' or the way human body becomes commodified – a tradable, saleable thing, and how it can be controlled, and literally owned by means of technology, and exploited. Actually, this no longer remains a distant concept with illegal organ sale, surrogate motherhood and the hiring out of wombs having become grim realities. The powerful play inspired Govind Nihalani's film *Deham* in 2001.

Lights Out is Manjula's first play and it was written and first performed in 1986 at Prithvi Theatre in Mumbai. It was published in a collection called *Body Blows – Women, Violence and Survival – Three Plays* in 2000. The play also appears in another book called *City Plays* published by Seagull Books Kolkata. *Lights out* is a drama of intense human feelings in which the dialogues among the characters in an apartment reveal a gang rape at the end. Every night horrifying screams are heard from an unseen and unknown woman

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being raped and tortured in the near by flat.. Another contemporary woman dramatist **Poile (Ambika) Sengupta** is one of India's foremost playwrights in English. She has written many plays and all her plays have been performed every now and then in Bangalore., *Mangalam*, was written in 1993 and produced the next year. Her other plays include *Inner Laws*,(1994), *A Pretty Business* (1995), *Keats was a Tuber* (1996), *Collages* (1998), *Alipha* and *Thus Spake Shoorpanakha*, *So Said Shakuni* (2001) and *Samara's Song*(2007). *Mangalam* was published by Seagull in *Body Blows* (2000). An anthology of her plays is awaited. Her first play *Mangalam* won The Hindu-Madras Players Play-scripts Competition in 1993. This play revolves around a dead person. It shows how abuse and violence continue in every generation and how men and women get carried away in the modern society with their instinctive behaviour.

The themes of the plays written by women mostly deal with the issues related to women, at the same time they also depict children's world and the issues related to men. The women playwrights are conscious of contemporary issues blended with troubling past memories, expectation of better and blissful future attempt to present balanced views on both society and family. Their multifarious themes can be compressed under four broad categories of plays. The Plays of Relationships include themes like motherhood, intricate baffling relationship of men and women, incest and adultery. The Plays of Violence focus on various types of violence as physical, emotional, psychological, and the exploitation of women at home and in profession. The Plays of Resistance present the themes of, voicing against rape, injustice and inequality, poverty illiteracy and gender discrimination. The Plays of Revolution suggests the themes of voice of the voiceless, political issues, religious and superstitious practices conservative values and traditional restrictions.

The Indian women playwrights considering drama a more serious tool of expression and representation have dealt with certain issues which the men playwrights have failed to do. They have adopted the genre as a more practical means to present serious familial, social cultural and political issues, the heinous crimes and practices of the society in satirical way. Their aim is to bring awareness of certain harsh realities, to protect every individual's basic rights, to live freely, and to respect every individual irrespective of different gender caste or

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creed. The above mentioned four types of plays can be again compressed into one umbrella term as 'The Plays of Change' a new trend that perhaps goes hand in hand with the theatre of women.

Conclusion :

The hardest challenge for most women writers came from within their families and often from themselves too! Women who write are anomalies in society, years of subjugation and reinforced stereotypes paralyze their tongue. Often successful writer try to downplay their achievements for fear of destroying family harmony, to let males in family feel the superiority edge and this humility is treated as sign of surrender.

But now the "guarded tongue" has found the potent venom of self expression. It has started relishing the taste of success, honor, acknowledgement and recognition. The constraints of societal pressure may try to silent her but she has no fear / terror of dark for she has learnt the idiom well and mastered it! She has recognized the vast store house English has for her emotional nuances and various shades of feelings. For her choice of English language of impregnated with potentialities as it is her 'humane' medium:

"Why not speak in

Any language I like? The language I speak

Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness

.....

It is as human as I am human"

The other half of India writing in English has realized the value this unique idiom has for her conscientization, for critiquing social disparities, for self expression and exploration.

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