



Quest for feminine identity: Breaking the Silence

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Abstract

The concept of identity is essential, difficult to define, and avoids many standard measurement methods. Erik Erikson, the leading identity researcher of the 20th century, coined the phrase “all-pervasive” but also “vague” and “unfathomable” identity. The irksome inevitability of identification is illustrated in work by renowned social scientist Leon Wieseltier. Identity is important because it influences how people behave. Groups and individuals both have identities. In any event, individuals alter their identities in groups. Due to their need for identification, they may even hunt for it in a subjectively and arbitrarily created group, according to the social identity hypothesis. Feminism has more of a social movement status in India than it does as an “ism”. It has a distinct background that is marked. Women enjoyed a favoured position and prestige throughout the Vedic era that was nearly equal to men. Whatever the case, a global feminine revolution against all constraints placed on women in a patriarchal system took place in the 1960s and 1970s. Conventionally restrained women started to perceive her from a different angle and understood who she was. She has adopted a shape that more closely reflects her true self than the traditional one managed by society. In this article, prominent Indian women feminist writers and their quest for identity were analysed.

Keywords: Identity, prominent women feminist writers, Indian feminism etc.

Introduction

The conflict raised by the opposing forces of modernity and tradition was between sentimental objectives and the reality of life, as well as between the duty to one's family and the gratification of one's desires. The Indian women writers concentrate on the theme in their novels where they are finally seen adapting to the truth; the conflict between emotion and reason becomes unpredictable; the young women are educated with complete knowledge of their futures while simultaneously being torn between the desire and submission to the parental authority. In this way, several female novelists have pre-controlled women's worries with the modification. The skyline of the Indian woman has expanded past the confines of her house and family in the twentieth century with the advent of Western philosophy and education. The educated Indian woman is now conscious of the oppressive and unfair character of the social norms and rules that govern how she lives as a woman due to a wider variety of life experiences. She worries about her socially assigned submissive status and feels suffocated by her role in the family. She detests returning to her usual position after being inspired to reach her potential.

Quest for Identity

Since the 1970s, the phrase identity politics has been used in scholarly and political discourse. Identity becomes dangerous when people who are unqualified to carry out a specific identity are not invited to do so by the people who already possess that identity. Individuals may belong to multiple groups, allowing them to change who they are. These identities could be national, ascriptive, territorial, economic, cultural, political, or social. Identity development is largely complete. Individuals create their identities with varying influence, independence, and weight. Benedict Anderson described countries as “imagined communities” in an often-referenced statement (38). Identity is what we consider ourselves to be; it is what we feel we should be. Aside from parentage, sexual orientation (which people occasionally

change), and age, people are typically free to define their identities however they like, even though they will eventually be unable to live up to those identities. The significance and relevance of the term “identity politics” becomes perhaps the most crucial element. People can acquire their ethnicity and race but can be reimagined or rejected.

In this approach, identity refers to a person's defining personality or character as seen by society. People require something else to define them. Individual groups are convinced that they are better than other groups. Their sense of self-worth rises and falls with the success of the groups they identify with and the extent to which other people are excluded from their group. According to Mercer, ethnocentrism is “the natural conclusion of egocentrism.” People still segregate for their group compared to others, even though it is entirely arbitrary, transient, and inconsequential, as predicted by the social identity hypothesis. Recognition of differences does not lead to rivalry or even hatred. However, even those with a lower psychological need to detest might become involved in activities that create enemies. Separation is required for identity. Comparison, which shows how “our” group differs from “their” group, is necessary for separation. Assessment is thus produced through comparison. Support is prompted by group egotism. “Our” methods are better than “their” methods. Conflicting activities lead to rivalry since people from various groups are engaging in comparing exercises. People from different groups will participate in various exercises to demonstrate their superiority over the opposing group. Rivalry leads to hostility and the expansion of what may have started as a perspective of mild disparities into increasingly stark and fundamental ones. Stereotypes are created, the competitor is condemned, and the “enemy” is transformed into the “other.”

Indian Feminism

The 1960s and 1970s saw a strong influx of Indian feminism, which aids in estimating a woman's speech. Feminism is

reformist from its very foundation. According to well-known history professor Linda Gordon, feminism examines women's subjugation to determine how to end it. The difficulties in women's lives gave rise to the feminist literary convention. The underlying reality of a woman's daily situation and how it is messed with may be the cause of women's local affection for fiction writing. More so than many categories of poetry and theatre, fiction writing has drawn the attention of feminist authors. Feminism works to correct this dehumanised image of a woman whose cries for equality and opportunity have gone unanswered in patriarchal societal structures and continue to do so. Kamala Das creates music:

- I don't know politics.
- But I know the names.
- Of those in power
- And can repeat them like
- Days of weeks or names of months.

Famous Indian poetess Kamala Das has maintained a relationship with several poetry collections, including *Summer in Calcutta*, *The Descendants*, *The Old Playhouse*, and other poems. Along with other female poets like Gauri Deshpande, Mamata Kalia, de Souza, and others, she has drawn attention on a global scale for her vivid, unrestrained expression of feminine sensibility. Her autobiography, *My Story*, has her wretched declaration of autonomy. She is the offspring of an outdated social structure geared toward destroying the feminine personality. Love and sex are undoubtedly the central themes of her poems, but the depth of her suffering seems to have left a persistent sting in her spirit, imbuing her identity with a specific tincture of anguish. Love is destroyed in sex, and sex continually debases itself; K.R.S. Iyengar observes the subject of her poems. M.K. Naik portrays a comparable person. The most striking aspect of Kamala Das' poetry is the unabashed honesty with which she talks about sex, making emotionless references to the warm shock of monthly blood, the odour of perspiration between the bosoms, and even my pubis. Through her poems, I try to clarify the feminine journey and identity. Mrs Das envisaged another device to release the woman from her servile tie in a male-dominated society.

The novels by Shashi Deshpande explore women's search for identity, a study of feminine psychology, and focus on the mysteries of life and the protagonists' roles within it. After *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *If Die Today*, which both highlight the underlying desire of women for themselves, her debut book, *Roots and Shadows*, was published. In her later book, *Long Silence*, a similar search is continued. Mrs Deshpande clarifies that all her main characters are linked to themselves. The women under Mrs Deshpande are tolerant, submissive, and compliant. Whatever the case, a feminist uprising and arousal constantly impact people's emotions and leadership. The development of Nayantara Sahgal as a novelist is evidence that she has been moving toward a particular feminist state. As a result, the female inclinations aren't just informational. Still, they are also written in such a way as to pullulate awareness and evaluate society with its unfair gender roles and power dynamics. Our goal is to analyse the situation of women in her books *Rich Like Us* and *The Day in Shadow* from a female point of view.

With the release of *Socialite Evenings* in 1988, followed by *Starry Nights*, Shobha De became widely popular. *Sisters*, an *Odd Obsession*, *Hot Days*, and *Moments in Time*. Mrs De has spoken out against patriarchal rule, female abuse, and exploitation. Her books inspire unfavourable polls. Her debut

book *Socialite Evenings* is derided as a bland, clichéd high society blend filled with blowout parties and Voyeuristic servings of souped-up, four-wheel-drive sex in every direction. Her second book, *Starry Nights*, blatantly depict sex and exploitation and advances the last book's portrayal of the author as a man-eater. Once, Mrs De said. I write with a lot of compassion for women. With no feminist flag in tow. I strongly feel about the woman's situation all over. Kamala Markandaya wrote *Possession* while the feminist movement gained ground in France, Europe, and the United States. In some of her novels, the author portrays the brave Lady Caroline Bell as exceptional to other ladies. The protagonist of *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani, is so modest, kind, and devout to her husband that neither her illicit relationship with another man nor the deaths of her boys elicit a hostile response from her. She is presented as a competent Indian Hindu assistant. While her mother, Jayemba is, to some extent, triumphing over her mouse-like husband, Nalini is also passive and compliant in *A Handful of Rice*, demonstrating the flighty oddities, impractical dreams, and inadvertent bursts of Ravi's fierceness. As Kate Millett points out in *Sexual Politics*, a patriarchal culture views women as second-class citizens or treats them like average men. The women in the book are similar to black people in the US and the working class elsewhere, who are mistreated and tortured. One thing to remember is that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Afro-American civilisation, the Whites bought the black people as enslaved people and treated them like property.

Feminist Women Writers in India

The most recent multi-decade has seen the rise of unmistakable feminists in Indian Literature regardless of Shashi Deshpande.

Shashi Deshpande's writing

Shashi Deshpande is a well-known Kannada playwright in Karnataka and Sanskrit scholar Shriranga's second daughter. After earning her journalism degree at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan in Mumbai, she spent a few months as a journalist for "On Looker." Her debut book, *The Dark Holds No Terror*, was published in June 1999. She won the Sahitya Akademi award for "That Long Silence," her novel. Her third well-known book is called "Roots and Shadows." She has equally foreseen the appearance of another girl with geocentric encounters and abstract interactions. She considers the problems and concerns those Indian women in white-collar jobs face. Her writings are grounded in the lifestyle that she leads. Her remarks are sensitive to regular events and interactions, expressing something simple and every day. Her feminism is mainly Indian since it stems from the predicament that Indian women face while trying to balance competing identities. The female characters adhere to conventional methods to cling to family and uphold Indian cultural beliefs. The book "A Matter of Time" by Shashi Deshpande continues her research on the various aspects of female involvement in writing. She has explored a variety of other subjects in this book, including underlying anguish, gender disparities, and ordinary connections. Three different ages of women are featured in the novel as they navigate life in the world of all women. The female characters' interactions with their male counterparts are marred by silence, absence, or disinterest. Aru feels the pain of the family's disintegration and sets out to make things right by taking responsibility for her father's actions. The

characters become more aware of their life in this oppressive setting.

Fury and predetermination are the fundamental elements around which Deshpande structures her narrative. When Deshpande says, "I thought of Puradars's statement, the hour strikes, and I was afraid," she eloquently expresses the duty of rage. I abruptly lost faith in my life; it seemed unbelievable, and I knew I could not continue. Deshpande's simple yet brilliant explanation reads like a grandmother's tale that pierces the profound into the heart and settles. The omniscient narration pokes the reader at one point since the speaker forces events but won't reveal them until time and narrative unfold them. Fury by Salman Rushdie and A Matter of Time by Deshpande revolved around existential rage. Deshpande transitions Rushdie's novel from a sombre New York City to a calm and interceding Karnataka, filling in any gaps the reader may have had unmet expectations. Human ties, notably between mother and daughter, husband and wife, and father and daughter, are the main subject of Shashi Deshpande's novels. In every link, a woman takes centre stage, and the storey is told from her perspective as a woman. With subtle modifications, three distinct types of persistent female characters recur in her books. The conventional woman figure or the mother of the hero, who believes that her place is with her husband and family, is the basic sort of woman. The second type of woman is more independent, braver, more insubordinate. She cannot support the storied, accommodative, and giving vision of women. For instance, Nathan, Sarah's companion in "Dark Holds No Terror," expressed radical feminist ideas.

The third female character category is the lady who is neither traditional nor radical in her beliefs or behaviour. For instance, Indu leaves her spouse in "Roots and Shadows" to seek safety in her tribal home because she empathises with women because she is a woman herself. Suppose anyone detects any feminist content in my writings. In that case, I must emphasise that it was not done so knowingly, as Shashi Deshpande clarifies in one of the discussions about feminist techniques in her writing. The reason is that I am reflecting on how the world is for women.

Manju Kapur's writings

Manju Kapur, an English instructor at Delhi's Miranda House, is the other well-known novelist up for review. Her debut novel, *Troublesome Daughters*, won the Commonwealth Award for the Eurasian region. With empathy and understanding, she tells the exciting tale of love in a time of political and religious transition in her book "A married lady." The storey of an artisan who struggles to maintain the standards of white-collar class presence is told in the book *A Married Woman*. A woman should be aware of being self-controlled, strong-willed, independent, and reasonable, having faith in the inherent strength of women, as Manju Kapur shows through her hero (Astha). A genuine transformation can be brought about only by becoming free in the deepest psychic sense from the inside.

Hemant and his masculine domination are in peril since Astha enjoys eschewing dependence on others and maintaining full human status. Whatever the case, she finds herself imprisoned by both the burdens of contemporary creating society and the restraints of outdated predispositions. She starts looking for a more meaningful existence in her lesbian relationship. She elevates the male wrath fit social change by consecrating and honouring her aggrieved feminine sensitivity. Manju Kapur paints a vision of strong women in "Difficult Daughters." The

area has consistently been the most fruitful and noticeable for creative writers in the post-pioneer era. During this time, various novels on the topic of pulverisation were written. It describes the circumstance and offers a tragically instructive discourse on the degeneration of human traits. Manju Kapur has emphasised in her writings the problems with a patriarchal society, religious marriage, familial ties, male-female ties, and concurrence at various points. Her female protagonists are portrayed as victims of conditions, gender, domestic violence, and biology. Kapur feels that "There is a man within every woman and a woman in every man. When manhood is questioned, womanhood is fragmented."

The depiction of inner life and casual relationships is a special focus among late Indian women writers. The primary interest in women working from home is in a culture where independence and challenge have always been foreign ideas and marital bliss. It's fascinating to observe the emergence of an essential Indian sensibility and a declaration of cultural concern.

Arundhati Roy's Writings

Arundhati Roy, a different renowned and well-known novelist who was born in Bengal in 1961, is the subject of the test. Arundhati grew up in Kerala; she trained at the Delhi School of Architecture to be a modeller but gave it up in the midst. She believes in the statement, "A feminist is a woman who bargains herself into a position of choice."

With her debut work, *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy established herself as a craftswoman in the eyes of the International People group. The Booker McConnell, Britain's top Booker Prize, was awarded to "The God of tiny things" in 1997. Roy is the first Indian novelist not in exile and the only significant Indian woman to receive this award. Online readers can access Roy's two most important works, "The End of Imagination" and "The Greater Common Good." She is one of the two Indian authors of English-language works who have received the Booker Prize, the other being Salman Rushdie for "Midnight Children." Although Arundhati has never acknowledged being a feminist, "The God of Small Things" frequently reveals her feminist viewpoint, and her hero appeals to feminine sensibilities.

"Arundhati is a born talker and a natural writer," claims Arundhati Roy's mother. Finding a teacher who could keep up with her great hunger for reading and writing was a challenge when she was in school. She learned most of the time on her own. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was the material that our vice principal, Sneha Zaharias, chose for the young fourth grade.

In "The God of Small Things", Roy is a rebel. The novel is unique because of the expressive innovations that reflect the story's necessity and richness. The book is fantastic from every viewpoint, making many phonetic attempts to use English. The elaborate texts include various stylistic devices, including italics, subject-less sentences, misspelt words, topicalisation, deviating from standard word requests, single-word "sentences," changing word classes, grouping word classes, and various other systems. She has identified the book's main topics of subalternity and conspicuousness to the environment. Roy's close-by senses and the instant viewpoints that shaped her creative abilities may be seen in her various works. Her two key online articles are *The End of Imagination* and *The Greater Common Good*. Roy criticises the Indian government's atomic policies in *The End of Imagination*. By the *End of Imagination*, Arundhati Roy

foresees dangerous effects of nuclear weapons on nature and living things:

"Days will pass while our towns, forests, farms, and villages burn. The rivers will become poisonous. Fire will erupt from the air. When all that can burn has burned, and the fires have died, the wind will spread the flames. Smoke will ascend and block the sun. There will be an endless night and no day. Far below-freezing temperatures will occur, and nuclear winter will begin. Water will freeze into poisonous snow. The ground will absorb radioactive fallout, contaminating the water below. Most living things, including plants, animals, fish, and birds, will disappear. Only rats and cockroaches will procreate, multiply, finish with forging, and survive on the meagre food supply.

Anita Desai's Writings

In 1937, Anita Desai, another outstanding novelist of Indian English literature, was born. Unquestionably one of the well-known Indian-English fiction writers is Anita Desai. Among modern Indian women novelists, she occupies a unique position. She has an astonishingly large quantity of creative works and a rapidly expanding global readership. She has published ten novels in addition to numerous other important creative works. The female characters in Anita Desai's works rebel against the patriarchal system to explore their potential or live alone, giving little thought to the possible consequences of such a rebellion on their lives.

For these women, the self-selected retreat takes on the structure as a weapon for survival in a patriarchal network. They use the condition of untouchables to oppose and criticise those cultural belief systems that stand in their way of becoming free individuals. As a result, Desai's women require opportunities within the network of men and women because this is the only strategy that will successfully fulfil them. In the book *Clear Light of Day*, Desai used Bimala, an unmarried lady, as her model for an empowered woman. Maya in *Cry, a Peacock*, Monisha in *The City*, Nanda in *Fire in the Mountain*, and Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer* are some of her married women characters. Become resentful, violent, or self-destructive.

They either lose their capacity for reason, murder others put themselves to death, or both. These women's nemesis, albeit undoubtedly not private, results from the bizarre social milieu, the intimate familial situations, and the ties with their males. Several of Desai's main characters are portrayed as single women. Desai does not undermine social integration or undermine the foundation of marriage. Some of her female characters find fulfilment in their marriages, like Tara in "*Clear Light of Day*."

Instead, Desai emphasises female empowerment through Bimala, which opens and awakens women to various potential outcomes rather than confining them to their traditional roles. Their existence gives them confidence and frees them from relying on men. Through her chance, Bimala personifies how Simon De Beauvoir portrayed an independent woman in her novel. When she says in *The Second Sex* that she "Ceases to be a parasite, the system built on her reliance crumble, there is no longer any need for a masculine intermediary between her and the world," she is making a statement.

As Anita Desai puts it, I don't think anyone's exile from society can fix any problems. Instead of experiencing a loss of society and belonging, I believe the issue is how to exist in society while maintaining one's individualism. The psychiatric problems of Maya, the protagonist of Anita Desai's debut book, "*Cry, The Peacock*," are a concern. Maya

longs to love and live like a young, frail lady. She is the mental equivalent of her considerably more experienced father, Gautama. Maya finds her husband's pragmatic approach to life's problems consistently unsettling. Maya intensely loves Gautama and desires to be loved in return, but she is perplexed by his icy nature. The astrologer, that creeping sly magician of my hallucinations, not, of course, they were not hallucinations, is the basis of the entire narrative, according to the prediction of the pale-skinned character known as crystal gazer. Arjun had shown them to me and yet maintained their veracity. For years after my marriage, he had never said anything to imply that I had to die violently and unnaturally, and there was nothing to indicate that he even thought so.

This prophecy ultimately causes her unconscious personality problems. Anita Desai investigates the many mental conditions, precognitive perceptions, internal goals, and existential search of man. She entirely shatters the taboo against her fictional workmanship among her contemporaries while handling man's plight and social and moral difficulties. Desai unfolds the existential characteristics of man in society, much like Kafka. She conducts an in-person inquiry into a man to learn more about the hidden motivations beneath his outward appearance of intelligence.

Ashapura Devi's writings

Let's now talk about Ashapura Devi, another well-known female author. She has focused on restoring a more idealised version of classic femininity to satisfy women's self-expression needs. She agrees with Desai and Bhandari that women's education is paramount. She acts this way because she believes women, not just males, are responsible for female exploitation. She, therefore, holds women to a higher standard than males since she believes that women might be easily overpowered by more seasoned, needy women like moms and mothers-in-law. Subarnalata, Bakul Katha, and Pratham Pratishruti are three of her trilogies. Ashapura Devi charts the development of the feminist movement in India from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial eras. She discovers that modern, educated, financially independent women, like Bakul in *Bakul Katha*, the third and final piece in her series of three, have proven to be more self-focused than the ladies of earlier eras, like Satyavati and Subarnalata in *Pratham Pratishruti* and *Subarnalata* separately.

Additionally, and incidentally, Ashapura Devi discovers their opportunity has not made them friendlier with other women. Ashapura Devi promotes a reimagining of the traditional network in which relationships between men and women, as well as between older and younger women, are not predicated on the subordination of one to the other, but rather in which women recognise that they share the same rights and advantages as men in the affirmation of human values. Ashapura Devi wants women to remove the barriers holding them back psychologically to achieve harmony at home. Ashapura Devi believed that the people should transform into an organisation that would liberate women by providing them with a firm foundation. She explains how the person, or the lesser self, finds release from suffering and loneliness.

Kiran Desai's writings

Indian author Kiran Desai was born in India in 1971 but now resides permanently in the United States. Her book "*The Inheritance of Misfortune*" earned the National Book Critics Circle Fiction award and the 2006 Booker Prize. The "*Betty Trask Award*," presented by the Society of Authors for the

best new novel by a resident of the Common Wealth of Nations under age 35, was given to her for her debut book, *Turmoil*, published in 1998. In the opening scene of "The Inheritance of Loss," an adolescent Indian girl named Sai, a vagabond, lives with her Cambridge-educated Anglophile judge grandpa in Kalimpong on the Indian side of the Himalayas. Gyan, Sai's math teacher and the descendant of a hired Nepali Ghurkha, is emotionally involved with her. Still, in the end, he turns on her for her obvious advantage and joins a group of radical ethnic Nepalese. In her second book, Kiran Desai addresses several significant contemporary development issues. The concept of globalisation has several facets. It focuses on the economy, politics, society, culture, and education. Due to globalisation, conditions have changed, fresh ideas have emerged, and people have stepped outside their comfort zones in search of organisation and competence among their partners. This may be an opportunity or a risk.

According to Dr Shubha Mukherjee, "Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*" paints a picture of India in the global economy. Globalisation impacts personalities like Jamubhai Patel, Mrs and Mr Mistry, Sai, Biju Nonita, and Lolita. Kiran Desai is up to the task of writing on hot-button themes since she is an educated writer and meticulous observer of human behaviour.

At times like these, Desai comes across as being very different from authors like Zadie Smith and Hari Kudzu, whose fiction generally adopts an ideological viewpoint on what Salman Rushdie has called "Hybridity, impurity, intermingling," or "the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, and songs."

Conclusion

Indian women who are genuinely moved by feminist awareness should understand that the women's space includes their current circumstances and something that has come before them in the Indian family, which contains both spiritual and physical judgement. From this point forward, these female novelists present the concept of freed women, which is appropriate for the Indian milieu. Since the new feminism aspires to develop to the point where it creates a native convention for itself. Since fiction is the preferred medium for all writers, it reveals social development, shifting attitudes on women's employment, and varied perspectives on the possibility of achieving equality. In a broad sense, these authors must argue that gender identity is never isolated but rather enmeshed in a patriarchal society that has just reclaimed its original form. Modern female novelists speak out for feminine sensibility, which is in some ways different from the standard way that other writers compose. After their relentless pursuit of individual identity, women's circumstances are changing due to their wrath directed against the demeaning performances of men throughout history. Anita Desai examines a contradiction between two sets of values, namely the individual's development and the social order's unparalleled quality. It occasionally settles on two topics: duty to one's family and personal fulfilment. A person's goal in Western culture is to achieve personal satisfaction. However, in traditional Indian settings, it is unacceptable to prioritise one's own needs over family responsibilities. The female protagonists in Indian books are portrayed as being analogous to the self-sacrificing and suffering of Sita and Savitri.

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