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**COLONIZATION AND AFTER: FEMINISM AND EMERGENCE OF SOUTH ASIAN  
WOMEN WRITERS**

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Abstract

Newly emerging literature in English in South Asia are the products of complex determinants. The colonial encounter is a predominant factor and foremost determinant for emerging literature in English in India and the subcontinent. Colonization almost came to an end in the late 1940s and 50s, once it came to an end, the literature of different countries gained prominence. Moving away from the traditional literature of the UK and the USA, literature from other parts of the world, rapidly began capturing the imagination of the readers. Imitation which spurred a whole range of literature, quickly gave way to literatures of protest or resistance, marking the beginnings of the development of an indigenous literature, adapting and appropriating the language of the coloniser as Ashcraft points out “to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own”. Women’s writing has contested its marginal position to emerge as central to literature. One of the factors which rendered this a reality was the spread of feminist ideologies and the social and political movements seeking to define, establish and achieve political, economic, personal and social equality of sexes. It is clear that the South Asian women writers have taken to the task of forging a space for themselves, a platform where they can assert their individual identity and creating a national time/space in order to live inside / outside with a difference. They are talking about sex, men and expressing their feelings in no uncertain terms. Women have become more emphatic and forceful, breaking free and discussing themes that were taboo until just a few years ago. Unlike women of yesteryears today's women are a medley of professionals, housewives, and mothers, short story writers, authors, chroniclers - these women writers are blazing a new trail -making them a force to be reckoned with.

Keywords: *emerging literature, indigenous literature, feminist ideologies, .etc*

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Women have been unofficial storytellers to generations of readers but in documenting the literature men historically dominated the role of authors. However today it is a different literary scenario. The opening of Indian officers by foreign publishers like Penguin and Harper Collins provided South Asian women writers an opportunity and a platform for publication of their works. With international awards and recognitions starting with Booker Prize to Arundhati Roy’s *A God Of Small Things*, the Onassis International Competition Prize to Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Harvest* Pulitzer Prize to Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter Of Maladies*, women writers creativity has unleashed many a novel, their writings moved beyond the hearth and home to focus on international issues and themes such as cultural adaptation and synthesis, search for unity in face of diversity, religion, and power, importance of socio-cultural institutions and economic independence and empowerment.

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Numerous women writers came under its sway though many declined the impact. However, the intensity of the sweep of feminism cannot be understated, as it has affected social and cultural mores in a variety of ways. Women strove to write on different topics but mainly their concern has been the mistreatment or ill-treatment of the women in society, street and workplace harassment, campus sexual assault and the intensifying rape culture, scandals involving the harassment, abuse, and murder of women and girls. They have also written novels on taboo topics such as widow marriages, child marriages, love studies, sexual content, and certain family issues.

South Asian literature refers to the literary works of writers from the Indian Subcontinent and its surrounding areas: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Maldives, Burma, Bhutan, Afghanistan, and Iran. South Asian Countries maybe in the late League of Nations joining the bandwagon of national and global literature but they are beginning to find a footing and the emerging trends reveal a staggering rise of women authors writing on a multitude of themes in diverse genres and languages. Women writers have with ease and flexibility adapted for themselves a multiple identity, a pluralistic diversity which is heterogeneous and integrated, for example Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni identifies herself as a writer, an American writer, an Asian American writer, a South Asian writer and also a 'Bengali' writer writing in the United States and each of these she claims is true to her identity.

A study of five select novels by South Asian women writers reveals the nature of themes engaged on by them; popular themes such as trauma, despair, injustice, resistance, place, space, language, diaspora experience, identity and sexual invasion by the patriarchy, a sense of exile, dislocation or teleology of return.

Chitra Divakaruni is best known for '*Palace Of Illusions*' a retelling of the Mahabharata narrated by Draupadi. She is part of the Indian diaspora in the U.S. Her novel is her latest offering. Based in West Bengal, it is the story of a poor woman who cannot afford to go to college. The book explores the effect of her choices on her daughter and granddaughter and the different kinds of love that bind us.

Stained by Abda Khan

This is a debut novel about Selina, a Pakistani British girl who has recently lost her father and is now suffering from the trauma of being sexually abused by a trusted family friend and publicly respected individual. She struggles to deal with the assault and tries to keep it a secret to protect her family's honor which is a recurring theme in the novel. The book also addresses victim blaming of women within the Muslim community. It shows how the harmful ideas related to tradition the conservative nature ingrained in a large part of the South Asian Community and the gender dynamics affect victims of sexual abuse. Contextually the title of the book may throw you off, it addresses how women are considered stained or impure when they are sexually abused.

One half from the East - Nadia Hashimi

Nadia Hashimi is an American of Afghan origin and this is her 1st book for young readers. It is a story of Obayda, a young girl whose family needs some good fortune after her father loses a leg in the bomb-blast forcing the family to relocate to a small village. They can climb trees and play sports - things they were never able to do like girls.

What lies between us by Nayo Muna Weera

Nayo Muna Weera is a Sri Lankan American author and winner of the Commonwealth book prize for Asia. Her novel starts with an unnamed woman who is in prison for committing a terrible crime, raising many questions where, why, who, etc. The book is narrated in the first person, but the narrator remains unnamed until the end of the story.

The marriage of a thousand lies by S. J. Sindhu

This is a debut novel of a Sri Lankan writer. The LGBTQ community is a topic that has remained largely unexplored by the South Asian writers. In this book, the author discusses the reluctance of many South Asian families to discuss sexual orientation and gender which eventually leads to many children facing mental illnesses and body dysmorphia from a young age. It is a book that tries to start a conversation.

The book is a poignant, heartwarming love story - coincidentally it is also the type of story that we like the most.

Top women writers including Mirdula Garg, Shobha De, Manju Kapur and Urvashi Butalia - director of Kali for women, a women-specific publishing house - agreed that the age of the women writer has indeed arrived. Authors like Manju Kapur, Jaishree Mishra, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Arundhati Roy and many more are fast destroying the boundaries drawn by men that they were ignored, sidelined or silenced. (Khosla, 2002, p 2).

It is clear that the South Asian women writers have taken to the task of forging a space for themselves, a platform where they can assert their individual identity and creating a national time/space in order to live inside / outside with a difference. They are talking about sex, men and expressing their feelings in no uncertain terms. Women have become more emphatic and forceful, breaking free and discussing themes that were taboo until just a few years ago. Unlike women of yesteryears today's women are a medley of professionals, housewives, and mothers, short story writers, authors, chroniclers - these women writers are blazing a new trail -making them a force to be reckoned with.

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