

INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS AND THEIR WORKS POST 2015: AN OVERVIEW

Written by **Rakesh Chandra**

Research Scholar, Lucknow University, Lucknow, U.P., India.

INTRODUCTION

In Indian scenario, the growth of Indian women writers in English has been slow but steady. Historically speaking, the rate of literacy among the womenfolk was almost nominal during the first decade after independence. Simultaneously, the number of girls joining colleges and universities was very low. Higher education was a dream for girls for a long time. However, gradually things began to change and with the growth of educational opportunities and in an encouraging ecosystem, the girls started showing their hidden acumen. They opted for careers in journalism, teaching and writing primarily, but later they flapped their wings fully to measure the length and breadth of the expanding sky.

Writing in English has been an exceptional phenomenon, simply because it was a foreign language which requires a lot of hard work to attain mastery over it. Since the practice of going for higher education caught up with the girls late as compared to boys due to various reasons, we find the women writers in English in rarity in the initial years of post-independence scenario. Though we are familiar with the names of Sarojini Naidu and Miss Toru Dutt especially in this phase, but both of them belonged to the realm of poetry. Undoubtedly, they made their mark in the literary world. However, we rarely find any prose writer worth repute in the said period. But with the growth of educational opportunities, the shackles were removed and the writing in English also became a domain of women in India. Among the early women writers of prose, especially fiction, some names are worth mentioning here. Santha Rama Rau wrote her novel "This is India" in 1953 which was appreciated within the literary world. Technically, she was an Indian-American writer, yet her writing inspired many in India. The next notable writer in this phase was Kamala Markandaya. Her widely known and read novel was "Nectar in a Sieve" written in 1954. Her other novels, "Some inner fury"(1955), "A silence of desire"(1960), "A Handful of Rice"(1966) also belonged to that period. She also wrote other

[Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Review \(AJMRR\)](#)

ISSN 2582 8088

Volume 2 Issue 4 [August - September 2021]

© 2015-2021 All Rights Reserved by [The Law Brigade Publishers](#)

novels afterwards in the decade of 1970s. A significant fillip to the fiction writing by women in India ushered in the decade of 1970s. This period witnessed the emergence of writers like Nayantara Sahgal, Rama Mehta, Bharati Mukherjee, internationally acclaimed Anita Desai and Ruth Praver Jhabvala. Nayantara Sahgal's book "The Day in Shadow" appeared in 1971 and her famous work, "Storm in Chandigarh" was published in 1969. She also wrote "A Situation in New Delhi" came out in 1977. However, her other novels were written and published later. Rama Mehta's acclaimed novel, "Inside the Haveli" was published in 1977. Bharati Mukherjee was an American-Canadian-Indian writer. She penned down her novels, "The Tiger's Daughter" in 1971, "Wife" in 1975 and "Days and Nights in Calcutta" in 1977. Her other novels appeared in the latter decades. Anita Desai wrote "Voices in the City" in 1965, "Cry the Peacock" in 1963, and "Fire on the Mountain" in 1977. She is still active as a writer and has enriched the field of English fiction writing to a great extent. She has been shortlisted thrice for the prestigious Booker Prize and won the Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel, "Fire on the Mountain". Ruth Praver Jhabvala was an American-British-German novelist who had married an Indian and widely wrote on Indian themes. Her novel, "Heat and Dust" was awarded with the Booker Prize in 1975. She lived in India from 1951 to 1975. These writers continued their contribution to English fiction writing in India in the decades of 1980 and onwards. But from 1990 onwards, the growth of Indian women writers in English found the desired momentum and the period since 2000 has witnessed the phenomenal progress in this regard. Some notable writers of this phase (prior to 2000) are Gita Hariharan whose novel, "The Thousand Faces of Night" was awarded with the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1993, Sashi Deshpande who won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990 for her novel, "That Long Silence", Manju Kapur's debut novel, "Difficult Daughters" won her Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1999, Namita Gokhale shot into fame by her first novel, "Park: Dreams of Passion" in 1984, and Gauri Deshpande who largely wrote in Marathi but also penned writings in English. She wrote in 1997, "The Lackadaisical Sweeper: Short Stories", Her novella, "Deliverance" was published after her death in 2010.

The period starting from the year 2000 has proved to be most rewarding as far as women fiction writing is concerned. In this phase, many a young and immensely talented women writers produced their critically- acclaimed novels and collection of short stories which have earned them international recognition. Young writers have covered nearly all the topics and

moved their quill on every burning issue. They have no inhibition and do not feel any qualm in challenging the outdated social mores prevailing in the society. They are using fresh phrases and are minting new idioms. They are regularly experimenting with the language so that their writings could become more meaningful and communicative to the readers. In this context, it is hereby attempted to evaluate some of the women writers whose works have appeared since 2015. The list is understandably not exhaustive as there are myriad stars reflecting their glow on the canvas of Indian English literature written by the women writers.

1. JHUMPA LAHIRI

She has been a winner of the prestigious Pulitzer Prize of USA in 2000 for her collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*. Besides, she has won many international awards and accolades for her impactful writings. Her previous novel, *The Lowland* was longlisted for the Man Booker award in 2006. Her latest novel, "Whereabouts" has come out this year (2021) published by Penguin Random House India. The most significant aspect of this novel is that it has originally been written in the Italian language by the author and she, herself, has translated it in English language.

In this book, the author has adopted a new technique by making a detour to the traditional form of novel writing. Here, the narrator of the story is unnamed, and the city is also without any name. Moreover, there is no specific storyline and the characters either. The book has been divided into 46 nano chapters covering 157 pages. This book has come out of the eternal quest of the human beings about their identity in this world full of innumerable characters. The narrator, the main protagonist, is in constant search for her exact role in this universe through the prism of mundane affairs connected to ordinary and routine life. She tries to analyse and find answers from every forum available to her in the city she lives in. That is why she has christened the names of chapters as "Street", "Office", "Piazza", "Waiting Room", "Museum", "Hotel", "Ticket Counter", "Pool", "Super Market", "Coffee Bar", "By the sea", "Sidewalk" etc. She has also named the seasons, such as "Spring", "Winter", "August" etc. as chapters of the book. Not only this, her quest continues when she goes to "Bed", "Couch", or "Balcony" of the house. Even "Cash Register" of a medical store is not immune from wide net of her quest which is really existential in nature. This also portrays the disastrous impact of urban solitude

on the psyche of a person living alone in the concrete jungle. The author has successfully captured the nuances of urban life's many disconcerting features which pose a question mark about the identity of an individual who is all alone in the multitude of human races living around him and with many of them he interacts daily. The narrator has herself described her state of mind so aptly in the chapter "Nowhere" by saying that "Is there any place we're not moving through? Disoriented, lost, at sea, at odds, astray, adrift, bewildered, confused, uprooted, turned around. I'm related to these related terms. These words are my abode, my only foothold". This running around from place to place gives birth to more pain and disenchantment. She has quoted the lines of Italo Svevo, who says that "Every time my surroundings change, I feel enormous sadness". In reality, escapism is no solution for the inner unrest. The author has exquisitely narrated the conflict engrossing the mind of the narrator of the story, the main protagonist, between the momentum and being static, and the sense of belonging and the refusal to form lasting ties or relationships. The best part is that the author has not attempted to adopt psychological and philosophical ploys to drive home his point of view among the readers. Rather, he has tried to involve them by focusing on day-to-day happenings of the ordinary life so that they could also identify themselves with the issue as well as with the probing protagonist. Jhumpa Lahiri has once again produced a novel which is a pleasure to read as well as it provides food for thought for them, as this quest is not confined to the main protagonist only. Factually, this is the concern of every human being who is living in the urban agglomerates.

2. JANICE PARIAT

In 2013, Janice Pariat's debut collection of short stories, *Boats on Land: A collection of Short Stories*, won her the prestigious Sahitya Academy Young Writer Award, being first from Meghalaya to receive this for writing in English. Besides, she was given the Crossword Book Award for fiction in 2013. In her present work, *The Nine Chambered Heart* (2017), published by Fourth Estate (Harper Collins), a novel, she has tried to explore the depth or shallowness of her relationship with the specific nine characters who happened to come close in her life and made a lasting impression on her heart. She has rechristened these characters by calling them "The Saint", "The Butcher", "The Caretaker", "The Undertaker", "The Professor", "The Florist", "The Crusader", "The Lighthouse Keeper", and "The Sailor". Obviously, the names of

the characters and the places have been not disclosed. Probably, in her life's topsy-turvy journey, she wanted to focus on the characteristic qualities of the persons whom she loved or they had loved her. In such a backdrop, the real names of persons and places become meaningless.

The protagonist of this novel is a completely liberated woman in the modern sense who has got full control over her life. She can't be dictated by anyone to tow a specific line. Also, she is the master of her own body and senses. She scarcely cares about the societal norms. She drinks, takes drugs, and indulge in sex at her own volition. But at the same time, she is always conscious of her dignity as a woman and a person. She wants to be loved equally as she showers her lovers with abundant love and affection. Throughout her journey of life, she is in constant search of a genuine person who is ready to be loved and reciprocate the same feelings without any preconditions. She personifies the modern woman who is well-educated, open minded and ready to take challenges. The novel is a bioscope through which the reader comes across the nine characters in their various hues. She has attempted through her writing to unravel the mysteries of the heart of her characters in the vignettes form with clarity and incisiveness. It also reflects the shifting perspective of a woman's heart in an ever-changing scenario of her lovers. Written in a lucid and brutally frank style, the author has successfully portrayed the modern woman's aspirations, desires and her astounding capabilities to deal with the tricky situations in life. It is truly a story of the hearts emanating from the writer's heart!

3. AVNI DOSHI

" Girl In White Cotton" (2019), published by Fourth Estate (Harper Collins), is the debut novel by Avni Doshi which had been longlisted for The Booker Prize 2020. She was also awarded the Tibor Jones South Asia Prize in 2013 and a Charles Pick Fellowship in 2014. This novel has also been published internationally under the title "Burnt Sugar". This novel surprises and mesmerizes the reader with its handling of a very unconventional and extremely complex mother-daughter relationship. This makes the novel unique in regard to thematic conceptualization. Since childhood days, the main protagonist of the book, Antara hates her mother. However, when her mother begins to lose her memory, she gradually feels her on mother's side! The journey of her mother is quite strange and not the stereotype which starts

with walking out on her marriage to follow and live with a spiritual guru. But being discontented there, she left the Ashram and started living on the streets like a beggar, instead of going back to her husband's place. Then comes her relationship with an unknown artist rebelling against the societal norms. Antara's life is also torn between her hate of mother's philosophy of life and her own evolution of style of living which sometimes seems to be analogous to her mother's. The author unsettles the reader by the depiction of her main characters in a dark, unexpected and grotesque manner though beautifully. About the book, the opinion of the judges of the Booker Prize, 2000, is worth quoting here which says " Utterly compelling, complex, unflinching realism-sometimes emotionally wrenching but also cathartic, written with poignancy and memorability". That perhaps best summarises the book which shows promise and raises hope of the emergence of a powerful writer of prose on the literary firmament of India and the world in near future.

4. ANNIE ZAIDI

She is a short-story writer, a playwright, and non-fiction writer whose play "Untitled 1" won her The Hindu Playwright Award in 2018, and her essay "Bread, Cement, Cactus" got her Nine Dots Prize in 2019. Besides, her work "Known Turf: Bantering and Other True Tales" was shortlisted for the Crossword Book Prize (non-fiction). She is the editor of "Unbound: 2000 Years of Indian Women's Writing". Her present work "Prelude to a riot" (2019) published by Aleph Book Company, is a novel which is focussed on the bane of bigotry which is slowly dividing our otherwise cohesive society thriving on the dictum of "vashudhav kutumbakam" or the whole world is one family. Set in a peaceful town of South India amidst lush green spice plantations, this is a story of two families, one Hindu and other Muslim living there from the ancient times. However, the undercurrents of change reflecting the communal overtones are brewing suspicion in the minds of both communities. The bogey of insider versus outsider is renting the peaceful body fabric of the society where people are mainly concerned about their daily meals, the upkeep of their children and enjoying the festivals jointly. The author has narrated the story mainly through a high school teacher who tries to teach history with a different perspective which is not merely a calendar of dates and events. This classroom approach of storytelling is a fresh and novel approach in the realm of fiction writing. However,

the teacher is ultimately sacked by the college management on flimsy grounds. In this new social milieu, the author has successfully portrayed the searing loneliness and the disenchantment prevailing amongst the womenfolk which is clearly visible. They are invariably the main sufferers of the incumbent catastrophic tragedies. Though narrated in a lucid and powerful style, the author has exercised restraint in describing the current schism and its possible impacts. The fluidity of the language using the local usages is another significant aspect of this novel. The author has drawn attention of the readers towards a modern malaise that is intruding the very fabric of our assimilative society in a beautiful and captivating manner.

5. ARUNDHATI ROY

The present work, “The Ministry of Utmost Happiness”, (2017) published by Penguin Books, is the second novel of the noted author who won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her book, *The God of Small Things*. Though she has written a lot of non-fiction after her first novel, this has come out after a gap of twenty years. Starting from the life of an ordinary family boy living in old Delhi, the author has narrated the tale of that boy's future journey as a eunuch through the biological phenomenon and not by any worldly compulsion. The boy later on moves to a secluded house where only eunuchs reside in old Delhi. Tracing the journey of her journey starting from that house till the end, she has shifted the focus to Kashmir since 1990s which has been in constant turmoil wallowing in its ramifications not only the Kashmiri people but the whole India, and to some extent the existing world powers including the United Nations. As everybody knows the Kashmir problem is yet to be resolved fully, though the efforts are on for the last seventy odd years. The story once again ends at Delhi in the small but compact world of eunuchs, ordinary people and the main protagonists having different backgrounds but enjoying similar wavelengths.

The story has been narrated in racy, gripping and compelling style which is colourful and shocking at the same time. The author has interspersed her narrative with a tinge of humour also appropriately. The author seems to have done her homework with great care and diligence. Whether it be the world of eunuchs or the state of insurgency in Kashmir, she has successfully depicted the events and situations in minutest details and with proper nuances. She has also

enriched the text with appropriate poetical interludes of Urdu and English poetry of famous poets. That definitely adds beauty to her serious prosaic landscape. Though apparently it looks like a political novel, the beautiful narration of prevailing social and cultural mores and traditions makes it a complete compendium of modern India.

The author's command over the English language is astounding. Sometimes, it appears that she is playing with words on her own volition. For every thematic conceptualization, she has either a ready word or has coined a word or phrase in most appropriate manner. Her novel presents before the reader an insight of the eunuchs' world as well as of Insurgency in Kashmir which may be different from our accumulated perceptions. But it weaves magic which shocks and amazes the reader. This novel is an evocative and vibrant account of one of the most tumultuous phases of Indian history old in a tragi-comical style which is the hallmark of her genius.

6. SUMANA ROY

"Missing" (2018) published by Aleph Book Company, is the first novel of the author. Before that she was shortlisted for her first book, a non-fiction, "How I Became a Tree" in 2017. She also won the Tata Literature Live! First Book Award (Non-fiction) for the same book in 2017. This novel vividly portrays the lives of a blind husband and the household menial staff along with a carpenter and his granddaughter temporarily working in his house. The wife, a social worker is missing for a few days leaving her husband all alone to fend for himself in the company of those people who can't be substituted for her knowing that her husband is an aged and blind person. The author has described the mental condition of the husband for about seven days in the backdrop of ethnic riots in the lower Assam involving the Bodos and the foreign infiltrators. The wife of the main protagonist, Nayan, leaves her house in search of a girl molested in Guwahati and never returns. The blind husband tries to find her whereabouts with the help of reading of newspaper headlines for which he had employed the granddaughter of the carpenter working in his house. Every day starts with the reading of newspaper headlines and ends with no results. In between, the blind husband who had been totally dependent on his wife for everything, tries hard to come to terms with this new situation where he is forced to deal with servants for even small things. So much so that he ultimately concedes the demand

of the carpenter to visit a Shiv temple nearby to beg for the return of his wife. He does so although he has had no faith in such things. The author has described the whole situation with empathy and compassion. She has interspersed the narrative with humour in daily life not to make the scenario unbearable. She has successfully made use of the newspaper clippings to push the story further. The entire narration proceeds simultaneously along with the volatile situation prevailing in the lower Assam in the tumultuous years of the decade of 1980s.

The author has one more interesting point of view which is related to the epic of Ramayana where Sita was abandoned by her husband, Lord Rama. This seems to be a reversal of old times in the changed circumstances and a new value system. However, the notable feature is that here the husband is missing his wife in no uncertain terms. This is also a reflection of our strong belief in the institution of marriage which, ostensibly, is showing signs of fissures of late. It also raises questions about his wife's duty towards her blind husband. The novel is thought provoking and an interesting read.

"My Mother's Lover and Other Stories" is her collection of stories which came out in 2020 published by Bloomsbury India. This is a collection of fourteen stories about people from all walks of life. Incidents are commonplace which we encounter often in our daily lives. These stories offer surprise elements sometimes. But the book binds the reader till the end.

7. MEGHA MAJUMDAR

She has been mentioned by none other than Amitav Ghosh, the renowned novelist in regard to her novel, "A Burning" as "The best debut novel I have come across in a long time". Published by Penguin Random House India in the year 2020, this novel presents a fictional account of modern India in its socio-political dimensions. It is a scathing commentary on the present Indian scenario, especially focussed on the political, judicial and the social conditions which raise apprehension for those who are sitting at the lowest rung of the societal hierarchy. There are fissures in the old value system and the materialistic approach of the people is holding sway. The story revolves around three main characters who happens to have their origins in the lower strata of the society. But taking advantage of the opportunistic ladder, one primary school P.T. teacher attains the ministerial berth in the cabinet, while the other character, a hijra or the

eunuch is successful in grabbing the work and the limelight in the world of cinema and advertising. Incidentally, a poor girl from the slums falls prey to a judicial system which acts sometimes blind to the stark realities existing on the ground level. The main protagonist, a Muslim girl of the most humble origin, is falsely implicated in a case related to terrorism and finally succumbs to death penalty, simply because she could not afford better lawyers. Also, she became a pawn in the hands of politicians who are adept in playing games. This is most ironic that both the other central characters, the PT teacher and the hijra were well acquainted with her but they chose not to help her in her dire need. The novel raises some moral questions also. Is our society moving in a direction where sensitivity, feelings of compassion and empathy and other good values mean nothing ? This is pointer that materialistic approach is not going to serve the cause of humanity.

The author has written this novel in a racy style and it is not easy for the reader to put down the book without finishing it. In her debut novel, the writer has been successful in making an impact on the readers' minds. At the same time, it also provides the fodder to our mind's thought process. The author holds promise for future Indian writing in English, especially in the field of fiction.

8. MADHURI VIJAY

"The Far Field" (2019) is her debut novel published by Fourth Estate, an imprint of Harper Collins, India. She has won the JCB Prize for Literature in 2019. This novel both in size and volume can be termed as epic written down by a master storyteller at a very young age. The central plot of the story revolves around a young girl from Bangalore, a cosmopolitan city, whose childhood and the further growing up is torn between the continuing disintegration of her family bonding leaving her alone in the midst of myriad questions relating to her own identity as a young person. This process is further accelerated by the entry of a Kashmiri cloth vendor for whom both she as a kid and her mother develops special interest. She finds herself not very keen to study further in a distant college. Her mother falls victim to a psychiatric disorder and commits suicide. A restless and naive as she is, she goes off to meet that vendor's family in Kashmir without having any address or any acquaintance of any kind. She leaves her house without taking into confidence her father. Thereafter, her destination Kashmir starts

which sometimes looks bizarre and chilling too in the backdrop of militancy and how the Indian army tackled the situation. She has painted the grim picture of the people living in those areas under the Army's tutelage. She has described the physical terrain and the prevailing social and political norms as an outsider, but somehow it looks real, as though she is narrating the story from there only! The author has told her story in a facile and lucid manner which successfully binds the reader till the end. By and large, the novel uncovers the hard and difficult life of the people of Kashmir living dangerously for a long time. However, it also mirrors the restlessness of youth whose vision of the society is understandably different. It also reflects the repercussions of a broken or not-so-well-knit families on their progenies. Such families are well off materialistically but lack in filial sense. This novel is a living monograph of our prevailing social system which has been written down by a woman protagonist trying to explore the new world through her own eyes. A riveting and thought-provoking novel, indeed from a debutant that richly deserves appreciation.

9. JAHNAVI BARUA

She is a critically acclaimed fiction writer whose first book, "Next Door", a collection of short fiction was published by Penguin India in 2008. Her second book, a novel, "Rebirth" was published in 2010 and shortlisted for the Man Asian Literary Prize and the Commonwealth Book Prize. "Undertow" is her third book published by Penguin Viking in 2020. This novel is set in the backdrop of Insurgency in Assam after the Assam Accord took place in 1985. Even after this accord, the peace did not return to Assam for a long time and culminated in taking its toll in the form of death of a young girl, the main protagonist of this story. However, the author has successfully highlighted the prevailing caste and religion-based divisions in the general psyche of the people. Even the lead male character, the grandfather of the young girl who happened to be a retired Indian Civil Service officer and his erudite wife could not dissociate themselves from the shackles of religion at the time their daughter chose a Christian husband. They did not accept this marriage and ousted their daughter from the family album. She had to live in a distant city far away from her native place in the north-east. When her husband divorced her later, she and her young daughter had to spend their lives all alone and totally cut off from their family roots. The story also encapsulates the trauma of rootlessness strongly felt

by the young girl, a third-generation progeny, which gave rise to sense of unrest and several existential questions within her heart. She also feels about the travails of her mother who had to face social ostracization not from the society but from her own parents! The other important pointer raised by the author here is the consistent lack of dialogue between the two generations which has resulted in deepening the chasm already existing. Though the problem of generation gap is not new, it can be resolved through constant dialogue between the old and new generation representatives. The young girl made a forced entry into her grandfather's house and was able to break the ice almost fully. The grandfather has taken recourse to the history of Assamese people and their golden past to drive his point home. However, the new generation belongs to whole India and see the things in Pan-Indian vision. It is heartening that in the end the latter approach wins the day for the family. The author has put up her narrative in elegant and simple prose which is capable of grabbing the readers' mind.

10. TISHANI DOSHI

She is an award-winning writer of prose and poetry. Her debut novel, "The Pleasure Seekers", was shortlisted for the Hindu Literary Prize and longlisted for the Orange Prize and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. Her present work, a novel, "Small Days And Nights", was published in 2019 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. The theme of the novel is well set in the opening quote of James Salter, A Sport and a Pastime, which says "It's in the little towns that one discovers a country". The story mainly revolves around a small place, Kodai near the Madras city but adjacent to the seashore and a stereotype village where a dream residence was built by the mother of the protagonist of this story. Her mother, a Tamilian had married an Italian working in the company office of an international enterprise. The marriage doesn't click and then starts a self-exploratory journey raising existential questions. Her mother tries to find solace in the calm and quiet of the natural surroundings of her new residence. But she dies after giving birth to two daughters, one special and the other normal to fend for themselves without the umbrella of relatives and friends. The daughter, not satisfied from her heart, with her three liaisons, starts living in her mother's house. She manages to find the custody of her special sister from the Sisters of an Institution and keeps her special sister with her. Living alone without having any male member in her house and in the vicinity of almost

empty residence, life becomes tougher slowly but steadily. She, in the meantime travels to Italy and other places but ultimately finds the attraction of her own house in the remote area irresistible. In the end she once again regains the custody of her sisters from the Sisters and starts living with more resolve and courage of conviction. She realises her role as a mother for her special sister. This poignant tale of familial relationships once again raises the oft-repeated questions, like the relevance of marriage system in the present context, especially where both the spouses belong to different countries. In such marriages, it has to be negotiated by both the parties regarding the place of living together and in contended manner. Also, in the present societal set up, how far it is safe and conducive for the single woman to live and survive, particularly in India. Is a single woman living with her special sister not eligible for peaceful and undisturbed living in a far-off place away from the din and bustle of the maddening cities? Her narration has also encapsulated the political life of the villages which affects all around at the time of panchayat elections. She has also highlighted some ecological faultiness existing in the basic though process of our political masters. All said and done, the author has successfully put her foot down in the favour of family obligations despite the prevailing odds which is in consonance with our cultural ethos. She has very well portrayed the mental state of the young protagonist who is uninhibited in the modern sense in all respects yet does not feel shy of clinging to existing social norms which are beneficial to the cause of humanity. The novel is written with intensity and full clarity of thoughts. Readers will enjoy reading it.

SOME OTHER STARS IN THE GALAXY: A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

11. ANUJA CHAUHAN

She is an author, advertiser and screenwriter. She, as a writer, is widely known for The Zoya Factor, Battle For Bittora, Those Pricey Thakur Girls etc. Her novel, "The House That BJ Built", was published in 2015 by Westland. This is a sequel to her bestselling novel, Those Pricey Thakur Girls. In this new novel, the author is at her best in being witty, observant and extremely funny. Her next novel, "Club You to Death" came out in 2021 by Harper Collins. This is a mystery novel which is centred around the death by asphyxiation of a personal trainer working in an overloaded barbel at the posh Delhi Turf Club. The death takes place on the eve of club elections. Appearing at first sight as a freak accident, it turns out to be a matter of

poisoning so much so, his protein shake was mixed with a lethal dose of a popular party drug. Any insider might be the killer of the trainer.

12. ANURADHA ROY

"Sleeping on Jupiter" is a novel by the celebrated author published in 2015 by Hachette Book Publishing. This novel was longlisted for the 2015 Man Booker Prize and shortlisted for the 2015 The Hindu Literary Prize. She won the 2016 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. This story depicts the saga of a young girl who is uprooted from her family and relocated in an ashram being run under the custodial realm of a charismatic guru.

Her another novel, "All The Lives We Never Lived", was published in 2018 by Hachette UK. This novel is set in the backdrop of the tumultuous history of the 20th century during World War II and the present day. It is about a son's quest to explore the truth about his mother. It presents an enchanting story of how families fall apart and what remains afterwards.

13. ANITA NAIR

She has penned three novels between 2015 and 2018. Her novel, "Alphabet Soup for Lovers" was published in 2015 by Harper Collins. This is a simple tale of how the protagonist of this novel finds her love. The central story is interwoven with the thoughts of cook who is learning the alphabet in English with reference to the names of vegetables and dishes, and the two lovers. Her next novel, "Chain of Custody" was published in 2016 by Bitten Lemon Press, London. This belongs to mystery category and second in the series of Inspector Gowda novel. The story is conceived in the background of child trafficking in India. Inspector Gowda is the central character of this novel who is on a mission to search a 13-year-old girl. He lands himself in a child-sex trafficking racket running in Bengaluru. "Eating Wasps" is her third novel during this period which was published in 2018 by Westland. This is a series of stories linked to a common character which is a woman ghost. Her skeletal index finger is her only leftover. The story begins with the death of the main protagonist, the woman who narrates the story for the most part of the book.

14. ANJUM HASAN

She is a story writer, poet, and an editor from Shillong, Meghalaya. Her earlier novels, "Difficult Pleasures" and "Lunatic in my Head" were shortlisted for The Hindu Literary Prize and the Crossword Book Award respectively. Her novel, "The Cosmopolitans" was published in 2015 by Penguin UK. This is a novel that questions assumptions and celebrates woman outside the periphery of her home. It questions the place of art in modern life. The author portrays the woman who is at odds with the world. An insightful writing by one of the most exciting novelists of our times.

15. NISHA SUSAN

She is an editor and columnist, and a social activist. "The Women Who Forgot to Invent Facebook and Other Stories" is her debut work as a writer. This is a short story collection published in 2020 by Context. These stories are set in the tightly webbed social nexuses of Bengaluru pubs and small-town Kerala and other parts of the country. In the overlaps between the internet and IRL, these stories tap into love, violence, intimacy and strangeness and turns out to be hilarious and insightful simultaneously. This presents an interesting study of the effect of modern technology into the lives of people, especially from the urban India.

16. DEEPA ANAPPARA

She has worked as a journalist in Mumbai and Delhi reporting on the effects of poverty and religious violence on children. "The Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line" is her debut novel which was published in 2020 by Random House (US). It was named as one of the best books of the year by The New York Times, The Washington Post, Time and NPR. It has also been awarded with the Edgar Award for Best Novel, and was longlisted for Women's Prize for Fiction 2020, and shortlisted for the JCB Prize for Indian Literature. She was also awarded with the Lucy Cavendish College Fiction Prize, and Deborah Rogers Foundation Writers Award. Besides, she has also won several awards on her incisive writing as a journalist.

This is a story of a nine-year-old boy who watches a number of reality crime patrol shows and starts thinking that he is smarter than his close friends. Meanwhile, a boy at school goes

missing, the boy decides to use crime-solving skills gathered from his constantly watching the Police Patrol shows. As a consequence, he ventures into some of the most dangerous places of the city endangering his and his close friends' lives. The missing boy remains untraceable but the boys are answerable yet to all including the police and the parents of the missing boys. An exciting and readable story penned by the debutant author.

17. IPSHITA NATH

She teaches English literature at Delhi University. "The Rickshaw Reveries: Stories" is her first book published in 2020 by Simon and Schuster. This book is a result of her wanderlust which has culminated in intensive traveling in the city which she likes very much-Delhi. This book is a handbook of her experiences of walking in Delhi. All kind of persons, delinquents, drug peddlers, rickshaw wallas, and Khan Market diplomats, find themselves at home in Delhi.

18. CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI

She is an award-winning and bestselling author, poet, activist and teacher. "The Last Queen" is her latest novel which is historical in content. Published in 2021 by Harper Collins, this novel deals with life of Rani Kundan Kaur, the youngest and last queen of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab. She became regent when her son Dalip Singh, barely six year old, unexpectedly inherited the throne of Punjab. She distrusted the British and fought tooth and nail to protect her son's heritage. She dared to defy the traditions by coming out openly to conduct day to day business of the administration for the public. The novel successfully brings alive the character of queen Jindan Kaur who was one of the most fearless woman of the nineteenth century.

19. AVINOI KIRE

She is a young writer from Nagaland, in India's northeast. Her collection of stories, "The Power to Forgive And Other Stories" was published in 2015 by Zubban. Her next book, "People Stories: Volume One" was published in 2016 by Penthril Publication House. Her latest collection of stories, " The Last Light of Glory Days, stories from Nagaland" has come out in 2021 by Speaking Tiger. The stories of this collection are laced with folklore. She portrays the lives of her people in the picturesque towns and villages, the mustard fields and fragrant forests.

She also narrates the trauma and travails of her people to which they were subjected for long. Her voice carries a tinge of freshness in her writings.

20. INDU MENON

She is a novelist, short story writer, screenwriter and sociologist from Kerala. She is known for her liberal, progressive writing. She uses raw images and bold language that tends to shock the readers. Her characters imbibe an avenging spirit which spares none. Her new collection of stories, "The Lesbian Cow and other stories", is published in 2021 by Eka. This is her first book in English. She has been hailed as one of the Best Young Writers by India Today in 2015. She has won ten awards for her writing, including the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award for young writers. In her writings, she focuses on the inveterate spirit of women who will not go down without a fight. For her grit and raw fierceness, she has carved her niche as contemporary literature's most electric writers.

21. MEGHNA PANT

She is an author, journalist and speaker. For her contribution to Literature, journalism and gender issues, she has won many awards including the Frank O'Connor International Award and the Commonwealth Short Story Prize. Her recent book, "The Terrible, Horrible, Very bad Good news" has been published in 2021 by Penguin Random House India. This novel is primarily a woman-centric comedy which encapsulates relevant social issues written in a witty and extremely funny style. The story revolves around the theme of fertility and motherhood.

22. DIKSHA BASU

She is an Indian American writer and actor. Her novel, "The Windfall" has earned critical acclaim and is under adaptation for a television series. This novel has been published in 2017 by Bloomsbury. This is full of sparkling comedy of manners about social climbing, social rivalry and social anxiety. Her latest novel, "Destination Wedding" was published in 2020 by Ballantine Books. This is an insider's look at Indian wedding which is full of extravaganza, celebrities-laden, and fun-filled weeklong ceremonies in the company of friends and relatives.

This proves to be a new and exciting experience for a girl who returned to India after 30 years to attend this marriage.

23. MRIDULA KOSHI

She is an author who has written award-winning short stories and novels. Her collection of short stories, "If It Sweet", won the Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize in 2009 and was shortlisted for the 2009 Vodafone Crossword Book Prize. Her next book, "Not Only the Things That Have Happened", a novel, was shortlisted for the Vodafone Crossword Book Prize in 2013. Her book, "Bicycle Dreaming" was published in 2016 by Speaking Tiger. These stories are about the lives of marginalized people living around us, but they don't arouse within us the feeling of pity. Rather, they come out as living beings full of joys and longings. There are 27 stories in this collection.

24. SHUBHANGI SWARUP

She is a writer and educator and journalist. "Latitude of Longing" is her debut novel which is a bestseller. It has been published by Harper Collins in 2018. It has been shortlisted for The Hindu Prize for Fiction. She was also shortlisted for the JCB Prize for Literature 2018 and is the winner of the Tata Literature Live! First Book Award (Fiction) 2018. This novel contains four intersecting stories. She creates narratives on the cusp between life and death, between urban civilization and unexplored islands, and between loneliness and reprieve. The author injects the notion that "anything is possible, because everything is". The author has penned the novel in an interesting manner that makes it as fascinating read.

25. RHEEA MUKHERJEE

She is an author and co-founder of Bangalore Writers Workshop. "The Body Myth" is her debut novel published by Unknown Press and Penguin Random House India in 2018. This was shortlisted for the 2019 Tata Literature Live! First Book (Fiction). This novel is a tender love story filled with sweet and sour moments and interspersed with worldly wisdom. It explores the peripheral depth of socially acceptable romantic love in her debut novel. It is also a moving, intense and unexpected modern love story.

26. ANUSHKA JASRAJ

She is a fiction writer and educator. She has twice been selected as Asia Regional Winner for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize in 2012 and 2017. "Principles of Prediction" is her debut collection of short stories published by Context in 2020. The connecting thread in all the 13 stories of this collection is the innate despair characterised by melancholia, volatility and dysfunctional realities. Unhappy marriages, bereavements, disappearances and abandonments shape their sentiments and personalities. This collection is interspersed with sparkling observations on human kinship, emotion and personality. Two of the stories, "Drawing Lessons" and "Radio Story" were Asia regional winners of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize. Her stories grip and baffle the readers in equal measure.

27. MEENAKSHI REDDY MADHAVAN

She is a blogger and writer. She is better known for reinterpretation of the epic Mahabharata. In her book, "The One Who Swam With the Fishes" she narrates the story of Matsyagandha, who from a stinky fisher-girl grows into one of the most prominent characters of the epic Mahabharata. Madhavan's Satyawati is a bit like the urban woman in a distinct scenario. The novel is retelling of the epic and nice to read. The book was published in 2017 by Harper Collins. Her other book on the epic is "The One Who Had Two Lives". This is second in Madhavan's The Girls of the Mahabharata series. In this novel, she has retold the story of Amba and her two sisters which is one of the most interesting ones in Mahabharata. The book is written in lucid and evocative language which makes it appealing to the reader. The book was published in 2018 by Harper Collins.

28. NIKITA LALWANI

She is a novelist whose first book, "Gifted" was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize and shortlisted for the Costa First Novel Award. Her new novel, "You People" was published in 2020 by Viking. This is a moving and humane narration which authentically raises fundamental questions relating to "being kind" in an "unkind world". However, ostensibly the purpose of this novel is to comment on the arbitrariness of immigration laws, especially the inequity of treating human beings as numbers. The novel goes beyond that by exploring the ethical

considerations of this aspect. Her writing is insightful and rich in metaphor. The stories told in the novel are relevant for our times.

29. KALPANA SWAMINATHAN

She is a writer by choice and surgeon by profession. She won the 2009 Vodafone Crossword Book Award for her collection of stories, " Venus Crossing: Twelve Stories of Transit". Her latest book is a crime fiction, "Murder In Seven Acts: Lalli Mysteries", published by Speaking Tiger in 2018. This book is a set of short stories, each one is dedicated to a different person. Detective Lalli, often compared to Agatha Christie's Miss Maple, has to cope with many-sided thorny issues on her way, yet being a smart detective she efficiently cracks the cases with a determined and focussed approach. The book captures the imagination of the readers to the maximum.

30. GITA HARIHARAN

She is an accomplished writer whose first novel fetched her the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1993. Her latest novel, "I Have Become The Tide" was published in 2019 by Simon and Schuster. In this novel, she reminds the world that caste still exists in India despite the contrary views held by her compatriots. She endeavours to counter violence with poetry to enable the non-Indians understand India better and in alternate way. The book contains poetic joy and political frustration, all expressed in the captivating rhythm of a storyteller.

CONCLUSION

From the above study it is obvious that since 2015, the Indian women writers in English writing novels and short stories hold much promise for future. There are certain characteristics of such writings which need to be mentioned here. To begin with, these writers leave an impression on the readers that they are not the women of yore who were considered to be second sex. They are educated, aware and liberated women who are at par with men and can't be subjected to any kind of mental and physical slavery. Most of their central characters are women who don't believe in the necessity of getting married. They seem to enjoy their single

status. They want to marry a groom of their choice only. Also, they are courageous and are ready to face challenges against all odds. In short, they are a far cry from the prototype of women who the readers are familiar with. Being highly educated and intelligent, their confidence level is high. The interesting thing is that their writings don't make a noise about the jargons like feminism or women's liberation, but they collectively symbolise those underlying traits.

Further, they never feel shy of discussing the current political issues in an honest and candid manner. In their writings, they have mentioned in detail the Naxalites movement, the Gorkhaland movement of Darjeeling (West Bengal), the Bodoland Insurgency and the post-Assam Accord unrest in different areas of Assam or the nagging Kashmir problem, especially the role of army etc. These writers have spared no words to describe the situation on ground with brutal dose of truthfulness. It may be that the readers or any particular class of readers do not subscribe to the writer's views, but a certain level of honesty is reflected in their writings. It appears that while describing the aforementioned situations, they are reporting from the ground.

Most of them have good command over the English language. They have portrayed the places, events, Indian festivals, and the customary practices with appropriate usage of words. Sometimes, it appears that they are playing with the words for their own convenience. More often, they have coined new phrases and idioms to suit the indigenous conditions. Not only this, but they are also not averse to using slangs, expletives and the commonplace abuses where needed. This, indeed, is a significant departure from the writings of the sixties and seventies of the past century.

This is an age of globalisation. Many enterprising people have their feet grounded in more than one country. They are conveniently referred to as migrants. Their mental status and inner feelings have been minutely narrated in their writings by these authors. Some of them also belong to this category of migrants. It is very difficult to decipher exactly what dominates the mind of a migrant when he is away from his original home and his friends and relatives. But the expectations of better prospects lead his steps to far off unknown places. These writers have narrated their tales with empathy and compassion.

One other interesting aspect of their writings is that there are only a few characters in their plots. There is no crowd of miscellaneous characters. Sometimes, the whole story revolves

around only two to three characters. In such plots, the writers have successfully made use of psychological analysis of the mindset and the challenging situations in elaborate manner. This is a clear departure from the past where the writers used to narrate several stories in succession to complete the novel.

Finally, it can be said that the writers under study have armed themselves with all the necessary tools which can pitchfork them to the high pedestal of international fame. The only requirement is consistency and the never-ending desire to improve themselves. Almost all the books mentioned above are worth reading by the aware readers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Jhumpa Lahiri**, Whereabouts, Penguin Random House India, 2021.
- **Janice Pariat**, The Nine Chambered Heart, Fourth Estate (Harper Collins), 2017.
- **Avni Doshi**, Girl In White Cotton, Fourth Estate (Harper Collins), 2019.
- **Annie Zaidi**, Prelude to a riot, published by Aleph Book Company, 2019.
- **Arundhati Roy**, The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, published by Penguin Books, 2017.
- **Sumana Roy**, Missing, published by Aleph Book Company, 2018.
- **Sumana Roy**, My Mother's Lover and Other Stories, published by Bloomsbury India, 2020.
- **Megha Majumdar**, A Burning, published by Penguin Random House India, 2020.
- **Madhuri Vijay**, The Far Field, published by Fourth Estate (Harper Collins), 2019.
- **Jahnvi Barua**, Undertow, published by Penguin Viking, 2020.
- **Tishani Doshi**, Small Days And Nights, published by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019.
- **Anuja Chauhan**, The House That BJ Built, published by Westland, 2015.
- **Anuradha Roy**, Sleeping on Jupiter, published by Hachette Book Publishing, 2015.
- **Anuradha Roy**, All The Lives We Never Lived, published by Hachette Book Publishing, 2018.
- **Anita Nair**, Alphabet Soup for Lovers, published by Harper Collins, 2015.
- **Anita Nair**, Chain of Custody, published by Bitten Lemon Press, London, 2016.

- **Anita Nair**, Eating Wasps, published by Westland, 2018.
- **Anjum Hasan**, The Cosmopolitans" was published by Penguin UK, 2015.
- **Nisha Susan**, The Women Who Forgot to Invent Facebook and Other Stories, published by Context, 2020.
- **Deepa Anappara**, The Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line, published by Random House (US), 2020.
- **Ipshita Nath**, The Rickshaw Reveries: Stories, published by Simon and Schuster, 2020.
- **Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni**, The Last Queen published by Harper Collins, 2021.
- **Avinoi Kire**, The Power to Forgive And Other Stories, published by Zubban, 2015.
- **Avinoi Kire**, People Stories: Volume One, published by Penthril Publication House, 2016.
- **Avinoi Kire**, The Last Light of Glory Days, stories from Nagaland" published by Speaking Tiger, 2021.
- **Indu Menon**, The Lesbian Cow and other stories, published by Eka, 2021.
- **Meghna Pant**, the Terrible, Horrible, Very bad Good news, published by Penguin Random House India, 2021.
- **Diksha Basu**, The Windfall, published by Bloomsbury, 2017.
- **Diksha Basu**, Destination Wedding, published by Ballantine Books, 2020.
- **Mridula Koshi**, Bicycle Dreaming, published by Speaking Tiger, 2016.
- **Shubhangi Swarup**, Latitude of Longing, published by Harper Collins, 2018.
- **Rheea Mukherjee**, The Body Myth, published by Unknown Press and Penguin Random House India, 2018.
- **Anushka Jasraj**, Principles of Prediction, published by Context, 2020.
- **Meenakshi Reddy Madhavan**, The One Who Swam With the Fishes, published by Harper Collins, 2017.
- **Meenakshi Reddy Madhavan**, The One Who Had Two Lives, published by Harper Collins, 2018.
- **Nikita Lalwani**, You People, published by Viking, 2020.
- **Kalpana Swaminathan**, Murder In Seven Acts: Lalli Mysteries, published by Speaking Tiger, 2018.

- **Gita Hariharan**, I Have Become The Tide, published by Simon and Schuster, 2019.



[Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Review \(AJMRR\)](#)

ISSN 2582 8088

Volume 2 Issue 4 [August - September 2021]

© 2015-2021 All Rights Reserved by [The Law Brigade Publishers](#)