

## **Feminism in the novels of Jaishree Misra, Kaveri Nambisan and Manju Kapur**

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### **Abstract:**

Feminism is one of the major themes in the works of all the Indian woman writers in English. This research paper begins with the introduction to feminism and eco-feminism and how this concept is reflected in the novels of three prominent women writers of India. They are Jaishree Misra, Kaveri Nambisan and Manju Kapur. For this study, the researcher has taken the major works of jaishree misra's *Ancient Promises*, Kaveri Nambisan's *The Hills of Angeri* and *Mango Coloured fish* and Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* and *Home*. All these three writers' depiction of feminism through the characters Janu, Maya, Nalli, Virmati is analyzed in this research paper. This paper also compares the ways of interpretation of the feminism concept in their monumental literary works. At the end, it is concluded with the summations of all the points comprehensively.

Key words: Feminism-Eco-feminism-Prominent-Interpretation-Monumental

## **Introduction to feminism**

Feminism is reflected in the various movements led by many women writers in the Indian writing in English. Socio-economic inequalities and suppressing the woman in education, politics leads to the emerging the women's movements in all the countries. Woman in the third wave movement in the world is different from other periods. Woman in the third wave movement begins to fight for their rites in the modern times. They want equal importance in all the fields including the literary world. This kind of awareness is taken by the woman writers like Virginia Woolf through her work a room of one's own and Mary Woolensten croft through vindication of the rites of the woman. These writers are the founders of feministic movement in the world. Later on, it is resumed by the woman from all the corners of the world.

Feminism has many dimensions. It's not only struggle for the existence of women but also to create their own identity by violating the patriarchal notions in the world. Writers; Arundati Roy, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Anita Nair, Bharati Mukarjee and writers for this study Jaishree Misra, Kaveri Nambisan and Manju Kapur explore the feminism in their writings. All these writers depict the conventional woman from the age old times to rebellious woman in the modern times. it is also explained that how the woman has constructed a platform to protect themselves from the domestic violence to empowering socially, politically and financially.

Feminism has come into existence as an idea based on the critical introspection of man's domination over woman over the period of time. Gender bias is the major cause for the inequality between men and women which also leads to the wretched condition of the women. Jaishree Misra, Kaveri Nambisan and Manju Kapur portray the characters in their novels interpreting the notions in their works and described the dependant woman transformation into

independent and illiterate woman to literate, in secured to secure and finally emancipation to empowerment.

Female characters in the works of these writers are courageously opposing the suppression in the name of traditions and customs. They don't want to be subjugated and oppressed for a long time. They want to come out of the clutches of male domination. Yet they don't want be subordinated and they don't want to bow their heads to the male power. Woman protagonists' have realized that what they have to be and how they have to be for which they think that education is an ultimate weapon which can illuminate the lives of women by eliminating darkness. They begin their journey towards knowledge gaining intern empowering themselves. They break the chains and fighting with their enemies. Sometimes, they are succeeded and some other times they remain unsuccessful.

### **Feminism in Indian context:**

Woman in Indian context is different from western part of the world or any other advanced nations in the universe because woman has been suppressed in the name of conventional system of religious principles, caste and creed. One hand woman in India is given respect in the name of culture on the other hand she is exploited. Indian woman is treated like a doll without life. She is overprotected even by not allowing going out. But she loses precious things in her life for the selfish attitude of the men. There is no financial security, no freedom to express even at her home or in the society. Despite her innate wisdom, she has become intellectual handicap. In spite of her physical strength, she becomes physically handicap. Men brand Indian woman is for nothing. Woman becomes scapegoat for the power monger attitude of the men. Man intends to be powerful and wants to have upper hand which is slowly recognized

by the woman how their treasures are looted. Woman writers play vital role to bring this awareness among the woman community with their wonderful writings.

Generally, there is a tendency in Indian family system that man is security in every aspect whereas woman is burden for the parents where the discrimination begins. Ironically, in India, being a woman, mother also doesn't want to be blessed with a daughter. So this notion of exploitation begins from the woman only. There is no support for the woman even from the woman since the birth. Another important point is here discussed that woman is considered to be weak both physically and mentally is another disadvantage in their lives. But in reality men and woman are equally strong enough both spiritually and psychologically. Woman in India suffers a lot with all these out dated formalities and the attitude of man towards woman is not changed and causes for the exploitation of the beautiful life of the woman.

### **Feminism in Jaishree Misra's works**

As far as writings of the Indian woman writers are concerned. Portraying the characters in their novels is the self reflection in most of the cases. Jaishree Misra is one among those prominent writers whose autobiographical elements are reflected in her novel *Ancient Promises* which the novel gets great applause from all the categories of the readers. Misra depicts how she has experienced certain gender issues like sacrificing her love, broken marriage system in her personal life are also incorporated in this novel in the character Janu. Janu alias Janaki in *The Ancient Promises* is nothing but Misra. The story which revolves round Janu is mirroring the semiautobiographical life of Jaishree.

Janaki alias Janu is the replica to Misra who is the protagonist in the ancient promises, as Jaishree. born and brought up in Delhi, Janu is also born and raised by the Malayali family

settled in Delhi. Being a woman, the first hurdle which Janu faces in her life is to discontinue her studies very early due to her immature love affair with Arjun Mehta, a Panjabi boy who is her classmate with handsome look with interest in sports. When Janu's parents have come to know about this affair, they search for matches to Janu to marry at the earliest possible. Finally, they find suitable groom from traditional Marrar family in Kerala in that way, Janu gets married at early age of eighteen. Being a woman she has no freedom to choose the boy whom she likes most which is the indication of suppression of her life is one of the most important elements in the feminism of Jaishree.

After getting Janu's marriage fixed with Suresh Maraar, she has left for her native land where she has received a letter from Arjun that he is leaving for London for higher studies and stated that he will be with his mother in London. This is another death blow in her life which makes Janu confused and startled whether Arjun does it intentionally to escape or not. However, the relationship of Janu with Arjun is disconnected. Fragmented relationships are highlighted in the novels of Jaishree as a feministic writer. Janus marital life is miserable because her husband Suresh has no concern over her. He is loyal son for her parents and abide by the conditions of his parents, he never cross the words of the parents. Suresh never shows any kind of love and affection towards Janu except enjoying her for his physical needs. He wanders different places on account of business which has detached his family. He never sits with Janu to discuss anything which is the reflection of patriarchal attitude in the feminism.

Displacing is usually occurring in every girls life which has also happened in the life of Janu in ancient promises. Displacement is nightmare in her life. The first change displacement brings in her life is to quit her studies and her in-laws accept for continuing her studies even after marriage. But she is not allowed and she is suggested to do it on distance mode. She loses her

freedom in the name of marriage. She has to more concern over the household things rather than her career. Home should be everything for her; she doesn't need to go out for any reason because of the male headed family which is part and parcel of feministic writings. Janu is not even respected at her laws home for expressing in the language which she wants to use. Once she happens to use thank you and sorry while the family members converse in English. She is humiliated for using English in Malayali family where they speak in Malayalam. As lack freedom of expression in the feministic writings, Janu too has missed it.

This discrimination has aggravated when she is blessed with a daughter born crippled. No reconciliation even with Riya. Her birth adds more misery in the life of Janu. Janu's birth with disability has brought tremendous change in the life if Janu. Janu intends to be more liberal because of her brought up in Delhi in the multicultural world. She is not just disappointed with Riya. it is the treatment of her family has depressed a lot. However, she doesn't lose her will power she admits her daughter in a special education school where Janu finds her daughter is struggling a lot. She strongly determines her daughter to be considered as all the normal children and she wants to see her to learn everything that is learn by other children.

For the beautiful life of Riya, she decides to go abroad to pursue a course in special education. She thinks this is the only way to make her free from all the clutches. Moreover she has burning desire to continue her studies still remain with her. Since masters degree is the minimum qualification for the abroad studies. Despite all her difficulties she has completed her masters with English literature specializations. Janu has started applying for the scholarship to pursue in foreign universities. to get the scholarship, she attends an interview in Delhi where she happens to meet her former boyfriend Arjun unexpectedly which makes them very close physically, this incident is great twist in the life Janu which makes her to reunite with Arjun. The

incidents which she face in her life in the due course of time makes her stubborn and strongly determined to do whatever she wants to be. It takes her to take divorce from her husband Suresh. In the name of her education, she has left her daughter Riya with her parents and starts her new journey in her post marital life. Woman is pictured as psychologically very strong which is highlighted in this novel.

At the end, Janu comes back to take her daughter to London along with her to start new life with Arjun. She has forced Suresh for divorce, in the process she is assaulted and harassed domestically. Domestic violence which is the characteristics of feministic writings can be found through Janu in the ancient promises. Janu breaks the family bond with both the sides amid great regret from her mother and grandmother. Janu has accomplished finally in taking the divorce from Suresh but it remains bad remark on the life of Janu and the fame of Janu's inherited image. This makes her antagonist for the readers in the novel. Finally Janu is successful in her life, despite many regrets from many people. Jaishree describes the woman from lack of confidence to create independent world with self esteem, social cultural identity through the characters Janu in ancient promises.

### **Eco-feminism in Kaveri Nambisan**

Francoise d eacbonne is the person behind introducing the term eco feminism to the literary world in 1974. As the world shifting from rural life to urbanization in the globalization, people living in the remote part of the villages migrate from green fields to concrete jungles in search of prospective lives. Due to this, environment is getting polluted and destroyed for the selfish nature of human being. Environment is getting damaged for the destructive nature of human beings to fulfill their needs. The connection between the environment and the literature

has come into the existence.eco critic has come into the existence before the entry of eco feminism. Eco-feminism is nothing but green studies. It talks about the connection between ecology and literature. Eco-feminism is one of the branches of eco criticism.

Eco-feminism, eco means study of environment; feminism means study about woman for the women. There is direct relationship between ecology and the woman. It symbolizes woman is sensitive as the environment. The destruction of woman causes the destruction of the livelihood of human beings. it elates the man that the way environment is protected, woman should also be. Both are important for the sustenance of the world. Human beings have upper hand over the nature over the period of time as man has upper hand over the woman. Human being thinks that nature belongs to him as man thins that woman is his property that can be used like anything. Man is dominating the nature as if he dominates the woman. With selfish nature, environment is destroyed as woman is suppressed, finally it causes for the destruction of the life of woman and the environment.

Eco-feminism is a trending concept is incorporated in the literary works of many writers in the contemporary world. Kaveri Nambisan who is an Indian woman writer is born in Koorg district in Karnataka state. She is renowned writer who incorporates the nature into her writings. Kaveri is very famous for her writings like *The Hills of Angeri*, *The Mango Coloured Fish*, *On Wings of Butterflies*, the story that must not be told and *The Scent of Pepper*. Kaveri explores the feministic elements in her writings besides connecting life of woman with eco system in her works *The Hills of Angeri* and *The Scent of Pepper*. Since Kaveri is born and brought up in rural setting, she understands well the life of woman in rural background has close association with the nature because a rural woman works in the fields' along with men.



Eco-feminism concept is clearly visible to any reader in *Kaveri's The Hills of Angeri* through Nalinakshi alias Nalli in the novel. Nalli who is born in remote place has strong bond with the natural setting of the countries with the beautiful meadows, serene streams and lush green hills. Nalli loves the nature and fascinated by the beautiful hills since her childhood. But her dream to become a doctor has disconnected with the ecology of the country side. However, after her studies, she has regained it and started to live with her clinic in the village. The relationship between woman and nature is really strong which is visible through the character Nalli in this novel.

### **Feminism in Manju kapur's novels**

Manju Kapur, a well known writer in feministic point of view in her writings. Her popular works *difficult daughters* and the *home* are the apt examples for the expression of feminism in the Indian context. Feminism in Indian context comprises the socio historical established norms. Subjugation of woman in India is not just determined by the patriarchal system but also by the socio-historical defects like lack of education and lack of equal property rites despite all the rites provided by the law and governments.

In the works of Manju Kapur, the concept of feminism is explained in various stages of feminism. Right from the subjugation stage to marginalization stage, right from becoming aware of their self and getting empowered in their lives. Feminism in her novels talks about the woman from three generations in her novel *home*. Feminism has various dimensions in her literary works. Woman as oppressed, woman as dependant, and the transformation stage like getting secured with education and establishing the strong financial platform by doing productive work. Kapur shows the reader that the woman struggle for identity in order to get identity of her own in

the male dominated world. Manju also explains that it is not just the male domination; it is the woman who doesn't utilize the opportunity to come from the marginalized world which is beautifully described in her works.

The greatest significance of Manju Kapur novels is to elucidate the idea of education empowers woman. It brings transformation in the life of woman from wretched and miserable condition to the most successful paradigm in the plethora of feministic world. Education is the ultimate source which makes the woman knowledgeable and understands a better way of their lives. Woman can be self reliant in the process of self discovery which also brings self esteem to the woman. Finally through the characters, she explains woman has shifted from nothing to something and something to everything.

Virmati is the protagonist in difficult daughters is the clear reflection of Indian feminism. Virmati has led miserable childhood without any childhood joys. She is one among the eleven children for her parents. She is the eldest daughter so that she carries the second motherly responsibilities to the other siblings. She is least bothered daughter for her mother Kasturi. Kasturi doesn't want Virmati to study because if she goes for studies then no one is there to help her. Virmati is not encouraged in that view only. She has no freedom at all in her life at any stage with her elderly responsibilities.

In the second stage of her life, Virmati is shown as young woman who seeks higher education. She doesn't quit the studies after passing FA, she wants to go for BA and subsequently MA because she observes the successful life of Shakuntala masters in science is the great inspiration to Virmati to go ahead. Virmati wants to come out of the clutches of this patriarchal system of the world. As she is stubborn and strong woman, she has done her masters

and takes the charge of patriarchal which brings some sort of identity. She even gets married with an educated man is another identity in her life is also the feminism and its reflection in the novels of Manju Kapur.

### **Conclusion**

Feminism is a predominant concept in the works of Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, Kaveri Nambisan's *The Hills of Angeri* and Jaishree Misra's *Ancient Promises*. With the analysis of the feministic elements in this paper, it is understood that woman protagonists of all these three writers are projected in different angles through the characters Nalli, Janu, and Virmati. All these women become self-reliant and independent and emancipated from the male domination which is the common feature of feminism is studied in this research paper.

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