



RESEARCH ARTICLE



ISSN : 2349 - 9753

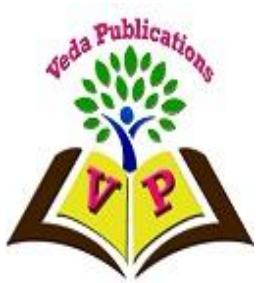
A GLIMPSE ON FEMININE WRITING

Dr.Jeyashree G

I/C Principal, Dr.Ambedkar College,Mumbai

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2022.9110>

ABSTRACT



The paper attempts to explore the nuances and the influence of socio cultural environment on feminine writing. The paper refers to the select literary works unearthing feminine consciousness. The paper also vividly expounds the theory of Masculine and feminine language in Indian and English literature. Women writers are placed in the peripheral position and the feminist critics like Helen Cixous attempts to deconstruct the male centric discourse by motivating women writers to write more of them. Women no more engage in subservient role and the present scenario witness a considerable rise in their status at the professional level. While perusing the history of women literature the theories on feminist writings are discussed. The language flow in women writings is gauged to affirm the power of women in the realm of language and literature amidst social and cultural pressure. Feminine language reflecting the socio cultural situation and the feminist theories that emerged to propel and motivate feminine writings are explored in the paper. Changes are ineluctable that affects the society and the writings of women mirror the culture of the contemporary society. The mind set and language behavior of the people are interrelated that have a major impact on the society. Hence the paper registers the perceptions of male critics on women literature.

Keywords: Language, Communication, Society, Culture, Feminine.



CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Culture is the term pertaining to shared, common practice among the people in a particular society. The most conventional definition of the word culture refers to the beliefs, rituals, and practices of a social group. The tenets of religions play a vital role in the formation of a culture. World is suffused with myriad of religions. There is always a firm link between language and religion as religions are considered to be the parameters of culture by scholars and thinkers. But the term culture cannot be confined only to the paradigm of religion.

During the past decade, language and communication have evolved extensively owing to digitalization. In the past the hierarchical structure of the society is strongly associated with religious tenets. Hence the hierarchical structure of man/woman implicitly reveals the subordination of women. Women in all religions are expected to be subservient to men despite the proliferation of women empowerment in the society. Great thinkers like Dr.Ambedkar states, *I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved.*" The progress of women is measured along with the progress of a society. Despite religious and literary texts promote patriarchy; female writings and feminist literature do progress with vigor affirming the ability of women writers.

Milton's *Paradise Lost* exemplifies literature's share in accentuating hierarchical status of Man/Woman where women are placed in inferior status. Katherine Sanger in her article *Is John Milton a misogynist, a feminist or a Sexist?* has registered different points of view of the critics and among them is Sara Gilbert who sees Milton as a misogynist arguing that Milton's Eve is inferior and inspired by Satan. She also opines that Milton has paved way to the misogynistic tradition.

Anne Ferry in her article *Milton's Creation of Eve* refers to Douglas Anderson who questions if the language of hierarchy used in *Paradise Lost* can be assumed that Milton *simply believed in the sexual subordination.*

Anne Ferry defends Milton claiming that *he was unavoidably compelled to work with or without.....we have to think about what was dictated to Milton by their story in Genesis and its interpretations in the New Testament, how he shaped what he shaped could not change.....*

Pearl Buck in her novel *The Good Earth* lucidly reveals the thoughts of the protagonist on his wife that *she is only a woman;* hence he refrains from communicating freely with her. Thoughts precede language. He never converse with his wife much throughout the novel as he considered that women are not equal to men. Throughout the novel *The Good Earth*, Olan, wife of the protagonist Wang Lung communicates in monosyllables or brief sentences but her unconditional support to her husband in his occupation of agriculture and her strong will power she exercises during crisis illuminates her strong character. Her communication is restrained but does not diminish her skill which is the pillar of strength to her husband. Olan exemplifies the status of women in the society. She is depicted as plain looking but plays a significant role in the novel. The myth that heroines of novels are depicted as beautiful and delicate is disillusioned in the novel *The Good Earth*. Olan is strong and practical minded who handles trials and tribulations of a farmer's life with strong will power.

FEMININE WRITINGS OF THE EAST AND THE WEST

History of feminine communication cannot be dismissed as irrelevant while exploring the nuances of feminine writing. Feminine language is perceived with pauses and gaps replete with emotions in communication. Nevertheless there are references of women orators in Indian history advocating oratory skills in debates which is one of the most powerful platforms of language and communication.

Gargi Vachaknave is one of the erudite, ancient philosopher and orator in Vedic Literature during 9th to 7th Century BCE. She has also been called as *Brahmavadini*, a person with profound knowledge. She is known for her knowledge and skill in her debates and posing challenging questions on the issues of *atman* (soul) to her opponents thereby



bewildering them. She remained celibate throughout her life and had written hymns is *Rigveda*.

Amidst the domination of male counterparts there were women who had faced the challenges and outshone men during Vedic times in India. So the theory of stifled communication of women is indeed questionable while considering the contribution of women in language and literature.

Auvaiyar the name literally means *Respectable Woman* is extolled as a grand old lady of Tamil poetry who has captivated the readers with her half line verses. Her versus are shorter than the *Thirukkural*, verses composed in short couplets. There are references of three Auvaiyars in Tamil literature. But Auvaiyar II who was the contemporary of Kambar and Ottakoothar during the reign of Chola dynasty in tenth century, is well known for her wit and knowledge. Her poetic expertise is more pronounced when she confronts Kambar who questions the validity of her poetry. There were references over twenty five Vedic poetesses and over twenty five Tamil Sangam poetesses in Tamil literature vouching the knowledge and intelligence of women during Vedic times.

The lines 3.55 – 3.56 in *Manu Smriti* proclaim that *women must be honored and adorned* nevertheless it also states in verses 5.147-5.148 that *a woman must never seek to live independently*. The life of women always depends on the socio cultural and political environment. Hence, there is always impedance in women's progress yet women relentlessly strive to assert their individual skill and competence.

Andal, a remarkable poetess of 7th century has penned *Thiruppavai* effusing her love for Hindu God Lord Vishnu. She is the only female poetess enlisted among 12 *Alwars* who had spread *Vaishnavam* in South India. *Thiruppavai* is a collection of 30 versus that express Andal's unconditional love and devotion for Lord Krishna. Her poetic proficiency that is embedded in romanticism is lucidly revealed through her verses. *Thiruppavai* is even sung today by the devotees in the Tamil month of *Margazhi*, which falls in the month of December. She appeals to Lord Vishnu to marry her and liberate her from the world ties. Andal *Thiruppavai* exemplifies feminine

consciousness and her freedom she enjoys to choose her path.

Hence, there is a question in every scholar's mind while expounding feminist theories of the west and the east. Indian literature lucidly validates the contribution of women in language and literature even during Vedic times. But patriarchal system of India has impeded the growth of women literature and more feminine writings have moved towards the literary genre of prose that paved way to the emergence of woman novelists.

CRITICISM ON FEMININE WRITINGS

Helene Cixous in her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* refers to the French theory of *écriture féminine* that characterizes feminine writing by disruptions in the texts with gaps, silences, puns, rhythms and has been viewed as eccentric, incomprehensible and inconsistent and opines that the women speak the borrowed language to hold their identity, an attempt to be at par with men to affirm their wit and knowledge. The statement of women communication as stifled with pauses and gaps has to be revamped. For example, Emily Dickenson's poems are honest representations of emotional upheavals that women face in the society. Her poems exemplify the theory of *écriture féminine*, an imperfect translation of feminine writings.

Because I could not stop for Death

He gently stopped for me

The Carriage held but just Ourselves

And Immortality.

The above stanza illuminates feminine consciousness of the poet where the hierarchy of Reason/passion is subverted and passion permeates the scenario of the poem and this poem exemplify in the theory of *écriture féminine* as it has been viewed as unstable, lack consistency. But the honest presentation of feelings and passions has stolen many hearts.

DECONSTRUCTION AND FEMINISM

Jacques Derrida through his theory of deconstruction rejects the binary concepts and categorization such



as Reason/passion, Man/woman opining that they are arbitrary and inherently unstable. The deconstruction theory subverts *logocentrism*. Male centric discourses are deconstructed and Helen Cixous theory attempts to acquit women writings from restrictions which had been chained with austere religious tenets and derogatory male centric criticisms.

Jacques Marie Emile Lacan, a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, registers his controversial theories on feminist language. He affirms that language is masculine and reflects male ideology. Julia Kristeva, a French critic refutes the theory and opines that anything that deviates from the prescribed norm is labeled as *different*, a substandard work. Therefore the pronoun 'I' implicitly refers to male voice affirming male dominance. Women voice is muted and every art and literature is perceived through male's vision. While perusing the texts of the past the language refers only to *Man* and every concept is penned through Man's perceptions.

The Book of the City of Ladies is one the most noteworthy book penned by Christine de Pizan who attempts to give a befitting response to the poem *La Roman de la Rose* (The Romance of the Rose), a misogynistic presentation of a famous French poet Jeun de Meun in around 1405. Saddened by the depiction of women in the society, Christine endeavors to create a metaphorical city and three personified women of virtues- Reason, Rectitude and Justice are presented to demonstrate the accomplishments of women. Her inclination to validate the virtues of women in the society contradicting the misogynist literary works where women are projected as products is lucidly revealed. The allegorical city is ruled by the virtues of women. The book deals with the female perspective and voices the issues pertaining to women. The motif of the book is to propel women to communicate and engage in intellectual dialogues.

CONCLUSION

In the past while referring to human the term *Man* is used, for instance, the proverbs like *Man* is superior animal, Practice makes *Man* perfect lucidly reveal the

fact that women were not considered as an individual.

The impact of religion and literature on human psyche is vividly established in the literary texts affirming male supremacy. Milton's *Paradise Lost* incites mixed responses from the critics debating if he is a mysigynist and the critics like Anna K Junke subtly agree that *This is not to say that Milton reject patriarchy.*(Anna, 50). Yet, women language and literature manage to develop asserting their independent style. But feminine writing is assumed to confine under the paradigm of domesticity and the language used by the women authors are always viewed under the lens of masculinity. Women who have successful careers are often projected as over bearing and tough. The male psychology is molded by religious and cultural tenets placing him in a higher status. In the social hierarchy man is considered to be superior to women. Men who are seasoned with dominancy over the centuries find difficult to accept women as boss. Even today despite the promotion of women empowerment all over the world, the scholars and thinkers of women studies are dubious if the society has deconstructed the male centric discourse by converging feminine representations to the focus. The news paper daily from India, *The Indian Express* has published the notable quotes of 2020-21 contributed by the famous personalities on 3rd Jan.2022. The news paper has published 21 quotes where only one quote of a woman celebrity Ms.Veena George is published. This raises doubts in the readers' mind regarding the contribution of women's voice in the social development. There are two reasons for the poor women representations. Firstly, women celebrities lack social consciousness and secondly, the voice of the women are stifled and not given importance. Whatsoever the contribution of women to the literary field has to be taken cognizance for further promotion of women empowerment.

REFERENCES

1. *Language and Culture.*
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/language/Language-and-culture>



2. Pearl Buck. *The Good Earth*, , London: John Day Publishers, 1931
3. Gargi Vachaknavi.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gargi_Vachaknavi
4. *Representations of women in Tamil medieval literature.*
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/ifemistudreli.35.1.05>
5. *Tamil and Vedas.*
<https://tamilandvedas.com/2013/08/07/most-intelligent-woman-in-the-ancient-world/>
6. *Remnants of Misogyny in "Paradise Lost"*, Anna K. Juhnke
Milton Quarterly, Vol. 22, No. 2 (MAY 1988), pp. 50-58 (9 pages) Published By: Wiley
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24464584>
7. *Is John Milton a Misogynist, a Feminist, or a Sexist?*
KATHERINE SANGER. APR 6, 2017.
<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Milton-Misogynist-Feminist-or-Sexist>
8. Anne Ferry. *Milton's Creation of Eve*, Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 Vol. 28, No. 1, The English Renaissance (Winter, 1988), pp. 113-132 (20 pages), Published By: Rice Universit
<https://doi.org/10.2307/450718>
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/450718>
9. *Manusmriti*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manusmriti>.
10. Women writers.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_writers
11. Christine de Pizan.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christine_de_Pizan.
12. *What is Man.*
<https://www.eng.auburn.edu/~sireeves/cm/man.html>
13. Emily Dickinson. *Because I could not stop for Death,*
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47652/because-i-could-not-stop-for-death-479>
14. Patricia Waugh. *Literary Theory and Criticism*, An Oxford Guide, Delhi: Oxford University Press, New 2006.
15. Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* (*La Cité des Dames*) is one of the texts written during the 'Querelle du Roman de la Rose' (the debate over *The Romance of the Rose*).
16. Helene Cixous. *The laugh of Medusa*, translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976), pp. 875-893 Published by: The University of Chicago Press Stable URL:
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239>
17. *Ecriture feminine* by NasrullahMambrol on May 14, 2016
<https://literariness.org/2016/05/14/ecriture-feminine/>
18. *IDEA EXCHANGE*, illustrations: Suvajit Dey, The Indian Express, 2021 In Quotes, P no.7, Monday, Jan.3, 2022.