

The Feminist Discourse In Contemporary Hindi Literature: An Analysis

Savita Sharma^{1*}, Prof. (Dr.) Nirupama Harshvardhan²

^{1*}Research Scholar, Jayoti Vidhyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur

²Research Supervisor, Jayoti Vidhyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur

Abstract

In traditional society and literature, the physical structure of a woman has been kept at the center of her social status. Physicality is linked to modesty, morality and character. By calling her affectionate, compassionate, tender-bodied and sacrificial, her natural nature and aspirations are snatched away from her. The understanding of Indian culture makes a woman great, but feminist discourse is striving towards making her equal. In a deep sense, feminist discourse is a cultural movement against all the above-mentioned institutions, organizations, ideas and mentality. Feminist discourse has been given its due place in Indian Hindi literature.

Key words: Feminist thinking, patriarchy, Manusmriti, beauty-youth, male-female equality, dignity, oppression-exploitation

In Indian culture, women have been considered a symbol of respect since ancient times. In Hinduism, women have the status of goddess. **Rigvedic** women were learned and philosophical. They were free to practice celibacy and study. In the **Uttarvedic period** too, women used to participate in the **Shiksha Yagyas** in the ashrams. They were proficient in religion and philosophy. It is known from **Shatpath Brahman** that there was equality between men and women in the discharge of duties. In the Upanishad period, women were leading in the field of philosophy. In the **Puranas**, women were entitled to education as much as men. They used to be engrossed in spiritual yoga and penance. Women is that incomparable archa created by God, who is born on earth with her own unique colour and voice. There will be no other creation in the world as sensitive and emotional as her. In Hindi grammar, the words with 'ee' at the end of the word denote feminine gender - women, nature, power and intelligence. These four have proved to be wonderful in explaining women- Women, the embodiment of compassion, is a half part of the universe endowed with an inseparable tendency like nature, the power of creation and discerning intelligence, without which life is not possible. To understand the reality of women's life in the proper sense and to study the following circumstances, it is necessary to throw light on some points which are playing an important role in women's life even today from the literary and social point of view. To understand women's discussion, it is necessary to understand discussion. Meaning of the word discussion- In the Hindi dictionary, the meaning of 'discussion' is - "thought, discussion, test, review, argument."¹ In the current context, **Rohini Agarwal** considers discussion as a "lively debate"². Explanation of the word 'Vimarsh'- "Here the word 'Vimarsh' means the structure of those elements or aspects of expression that have the ability to give a special meaning beyond the sum total."³ Thus, the meaning of Vimarsh is to do a holistic study of various perspectives, mindsets and thoughts related to a problem instead of considering it in a specific direction.

Meaning of Stri Vimarsh- Stri Vimarsh is an ideology, a medium, in which one's point of view is put forward after considering the interests of women. In the words of Rohini Agarwal, "It is a continuous process of considering the condition of women from a human point of view by reviewing society, culture, tradition and history by keeping women at the center."⁴

Thus, it can be clearly said that feminist discourse is not in favour of any one situation. It is in favour of the past of women which she has suffered in the form of exploitation, the present which is women with gender discrimination, the future whose pain will be suffered by the coming generations as well. In this way, feminist discourse presents a new ideology to the society which, keeping in mind the interests of women, gives them the right to equality, the right to freedom and the inspiration to expose their existence to the society. The most important issue in the ideas which are put forward in feminist discourse is that of women's identity. In which it is said that women's existence should be accepted as equal to that of men. Mahadevi Varma says in the series of links on women's identity, "In the continuous flow of ages, great empires were swept away, cultures were lost, castes were eradicated, many impossible changes were made possible in the world, but the invisible script inscribed on the forehead of Indian women by the **Vajralikhani** of destiny could not be washed away."⁵ In this way, when women deprived of women's education started receiving education, they were molded in the form of sanskars, they lacked education to identify their identity. The education of sanskars gave an ideal image to women, but men became their rivals. In this race of competition, instead of improving, society started falling apart and women, their identity, their existence kept falling apart. That existence, whenever a woman wanted to attain it, the society pointed a finger at her and she was defamed by calling her characterless, slutty and slanderous. The fear was created in her that if she stood up for her existence, she would be raped, killed by dowry-murder, female foeticide, pain, exploitation, domestic violence, child marriage, sati-pratha, burnt with acid. That fear was so terrible that the women kept suffering and kept beautifying the world by appearing cool from outside. This is what the story of the existence of women became. The main

objective of women's identity is to end the traditional mentality of the male-dominated society towards women and establish an independent ideology. In which the existence of women is talked about and they can get the right to equality. Women's liberation does not mean establishing one's dominance by sidelining men, but it is freedom from those traditions and customs which are prescribed only for women.

Mrinal Pandey, while revealing the reality of women's liberation, says - "Feminism has been countering not men but those false masks that reduce their humanity. Which is nothing but deep ego and oppressive tendency in the name of manhood?"⁶ It is clear that women do not wish to be free from men by fighting with them, but the real desire in the form of that freedom is from the narrow ideology of the male-dominated society. If we consider women's liberation in this way, then women's liberation is weighed today on the scale of self-reliance, in which urban women consider not getting married and living on their own. Rural women consider women's liberation as women's liberation by getting love from their husband and living a good married life, dressing well, eating and drinking well and living a good family life.

But is this concept of women's liberation correct? For this reason, the thinking of women's liberation has gone in the wrong direction. Not getting married, living a good married life, self-reliance, is this women's liberation? Will this bring freedom from the mentality of a male-dominated society? No. Just as iron cuts iron and poison cuts poison, similarly freedom from the mentality of a male-dominated society can be achieved by living with the same mentality. Women's consciousness means the consciousness established in women or the power to be aware. Many efforts were made for women's empowerment since independence. Due to which new footprints of women's consciousness started appearing in every field. 'Today's women is aware of all the problems related to her identity. Only a women can identify the points related to women in detail and with sharpness. Women's discussion does not mean the race of men and women for selfishness; it is also a women's criticism of herself.'⁷

Women became aware and women's writing has had a great impact in spreading this awareness. A large number of women writers entered literature with a bright personality and self-awareness. The women characters of these writers are conscious about their existence and are struggling with traditional values and the evil beliefs of the male-dominated society.

In the words of **Maitrayee Pushpa**, "Feminism is women's discussion. Discussion about the real condition of women is Stri Vimarsh (women's discussion)."⁸ Stri Vimarsh is the search for the existence of women and the purpose of women's identity is to make women conscious by making their existence the basis and to create individual freedom. All these thoughts have arisen in the contemporary environment due to a different situation in which women do not want to go ahead by competing with men, but want to adopt equality. From the above discussion it is known that Stri Vimarsh, women's liberation, women's consciousness, women's identity and feminism are the basis of thinking, but these thoughts are not born out of imagination. This is not the thinking which can be read and heard to formulate only principles; rather this thinking is based on reality, which can actually awaken the society.

Meaning of 'Feminism' "A belief or principle that women should have equal rights and opportunities as men."⁹ Feminist concepts in it refute the dominance of men in the society and slavery of women. In Indian ideology, feminism is the result of various reactions as a result of women's movements.

Mahadevi Verma- "What should be the outline of Indian society in future? What should be the status of women in it? What should be the limits of their rights? The solution of such problems depends on today's awakened and educated women.... If they consider opposition as the ultimate goal and consider the question of compromise with men as synonymous with defeat, then the system of life will become uncertain and the process of development will slow down."¹⁰

Mahadevi Verma wants to highlight the condition of women when what to talk about other rights for women? When they were deprived of the right to live.

In the words of Ramdhari Singh Dinkar- "Man has remained ignorant of the real nature of women due to his ego, and till date if man understands women then all the inequalities of the society will be automatically resolved, the need is to understand and feel it."¹¹

Dinkar considers false manliness of man to be only dominating over women, his manliness lies only in making women dependent and having authority over her.

According to Maitreyi Pushpa- "Feminism is feminist discourse. Discussing about the real condition of women is feminist discourse."¹²

Maitreyi Pushpa considers feminism and feminist discourse as a dimension of thinking and connects this thinking related to women with reality.

According to Prabha Khetan "Feminism is neither Marxism nor capitalism. Women are everywhere in every ideology in the spread but even today on the wide canvas of culture. she is a victim of objectification. This traditional process of objectification needs to be seen and understood from a women's point of view and not from a man's point of view."¹³

Prabha Khetan believes that women themselves are responsible for the present condition of women. Indian thinkers are trying to bridge the gap between men and women through feminism. Therefore, women will now have to fight their own battle, abandon the questioning of the body and create their identity with the mind. Because the body has made women an

object of exhibition and enjoyment. Along with this torture of objectification, women will also have to remove their male-dominated mentality from within, only then will they be able to reach their original goal.

Indian Hindi Literature and Women's Discourse

Therigatha of the Vedic period consists of 522 stories written in Pali. Therigatha is one of the 15 texts of **Khuddaka Nikaya**, in which Buddhist nuns have expressed their experiences and state of mind. The women who took the vows of renunciation were called Theris and the poems in which the condition of women of that time was expressed through their life experiences in a lyrical style through self-expression were called Gathas. Thus, these Gathas are famous as Theri Gathas. These Theris expressed their heartfelt sentiments in the form of optimistic outlook free thoughts and free speech. "These nuns were the initial speakers of women's freedom."¹⁴

In the same sequence, the stream of devotion which was carried forward by the Alvar saints from the south in the eighth century, among those 12 Alvar saints, the only women saint was **Andal**. Who worked to lead the women towards spiritual devotion?

In the twelfth century, Kannada poetess **Akka Mahadevi** of Karnataka raised her voice against male dominance and moved towards **Shiva Bhakti**. She protested against the atrocities committed by her husband and rebelled against the servitude of women and sought their existence. She wrote 430 verses in Kannada poetry, which hold a special place in Kannada literature. Marathi saint **Muktabai** was a knower of Advaita and Yoga Marg. She had a high level of knowledge and devotion. She considered the feeling of women-man and individuality as worldly and rejected this difference between knowledge and devotion. Her Ulatbaasis are prominent in Marathi literature. **Janabai** was a devotee poetess of Shudra caste, who's Bani is called **Abhang**. In these Abhangas, we can see the voice of removing the neglected image of women and self-realization. In the sixteenth century, **Mirabai** broke the shackles of traditions of the male-dominated society and remained immersed in devotion and love for God. In the fight for women's freedom and existence, Mira stood alone against the narrow-minded disorder of the then society and male power. In 1882, **Tarabai Shinde** raised her voice against male power by writing '**Stri Purush Tulana**' in Marathi. At the same time, **Pandita Ramabai** wrote **Stri Dharma Niti** to make women neutral so that they remain conscious and also tried to know the reality of women's life.

In 1882, the book '**Simanti Updesh**' was published. which gave voice to women's consciousness and put forth its views on women's freedom. Since there was no author's name on it. it was edited by **Dharamvir Bharati** in 1984 and the author's name was considered to be '**Agyaat Hindu Aurat**'. Women's dependence, exploitation and suffering have been presented in this book on the basis of reality and experiences. Divided into 29 chapters. this book is written in an aggressive style. In which burning and controversial problems of women's life that nourish the roots of fanaticism and create leaves of evils have been raised in a fearless manner. This book, while representing feminism in the then circumstances was enough to shake the building of superficial traditions of the hollow society.

For women empowerment and women's awakening .she tells women - "Unless you have mercy on yourself. it is not possible that Indians will have mercy on you. You have always been and will always be imprisoned in this. Even if God takes pity on you and comes to free you. he will never be able to do so unless you treat your body with respect."¹⁵ After 1882 there was a long silence in Indian Hindi literature till 1942. In 1942 breaking this silence **Mahadevi Verma's** book '**Shrnkhala Ki Kadiyan**' came out which can be called the introduction of feminist discourse. In this book Mahadevi Verma wishes for women's liberation in such a way that they neither follow men nor try to become men. Mahadevi Verma has tried to free women from the justice of equality, the search for existence and traditional bondages in '**Shrnkhala Ki Kadiyan**'. Mahadevi ji has written all her works on the basis of her self-experiences. For this reason, it is normal for her expressions of the female mind to be reflected in literature. She has woven the story of a struggling women through her sketches. She does not accept the freedom of men and the dependence of women and her pen starts a silent struggle for the women standing on the margins of society. From **Seemantani Updesh** to **Shrnkhala Ki Kadiyan** .no other book is found that presents a concrete expression of women's discourse. Meanwhile, **Subhadra Kumari Chauhan's** poetry filled with feminine vigour came into literature. Her three story collections were published in **Bikhre Moti (1932)**, **Unmadini (1934)** and **Seedhe-Sade Chitra (1947)**, most of whose stories were based on women's discourse.

Conclusion

Hindi literature has honestly depicted many aspects of women's life. Writers have given place to women's life in their works with its changing consciousness in the changing environment. Contemporary women writers have very honestly exposed the complexities of the female psyche and have shown that they have now awakened and they will not under any circumstances stay back from their rights. From Mirabai to Mahadevi Verma everyone has made an invaluable contribution to contemporary Hindi literature. Due to which literature focused on Hindi discourse is being written today.

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