

DICHOTOMOUS DILEMMAS AND RESOLUTIONS IN INDIAN ENGLISH AND SOUTH INDIAN WOMEN POETS

DR.M.UMA RAO

Abstract: Women working with poetry, artistic forms and structures have a way of tunneling beneath political and gender equations, and transforming the themes, structures, and language of sexuality. The dynamic variety of poetry written by Indian Women Poets travels far and wide. A woman visualizes herself as a mother, wife, daughter, grand-daughter and lover. Their varied roles constitute special demands with diverse perceptions about the world they live in. Through their poems they delineate the passions, associations, expectations and despondency. They show excellent talent not only in managing their family but also execute their career with dexterity. They make the best of both worlds and are able to express the extensive information they experience locally, nationally and internationally.

Introduction: Indian Women Poetry calls for certain freedom of spirit to think, dream, fantasize. It shows the nuances of sentiments, emotions and feelings which are different from the other forms of literature and the movements, isms, trends and tendencies that crept into modern poetry. It aims to sketch the ambitions, illusions and disillusion of the women poets of the contemporary times in Indian English and Dravidian Languages i.e., Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam.

It shows the challenges of feminism and the consequent sense of alienation and loneliness felt by women as hinted by Kamala Das, Eunice de Souza and others. The 'otherness' of women seems to be the chief concern of Eunice de Souza in "Advice to Women". Kamala Das extends her honesty in exploration of womanhood and love in her poem "An Introduction". She also frames the pain of lost love with ancient Hindu myths in "The Maggots", which depicts Krishna's indifference towards Radha. The account of woman-centered writing attempts to discern the impact of feminism on Indian writing in English. It also seeks to trace the direction in which the newly evolving modern Indian woman is moving. Western feminists claim that literature and literary criticism, like all other field of human endeavour, bear the stamp of male domination. *Elaine Showalter*, a pioneering feminist literary critic decries this fact.

Modern women poets, though speak of their experience and represent the woes and throes of the average woman with an element of fierce independence. Things common to all women are sense of frustration, inner conflict, inner disintegration, sense of fear, pain and silent suffering, mental agony, repressed feelings, suppressed desires, sense of meaninglessness, restlessness and hopelessness in life, identity crises. Women so far have been leading a life of unwilling compromises with the imposed situations and circumstances and

the stage for their poetry becomes a meaningful canon worth reckoning.

New modes of creative idiom with sexual overtones and distressed human concerns are reflected in the writings of poets like MamtaKalia, Eunice de Souza, Melanie Silgado, ImtiazDharker, Sujata Bhatt, Meena Alexander, SmitaAgarwal, Tara Patel and others. Similarly Jayaprabha, Volga, K.Nirmala, Swaroopa Rani, Mahajabeen etc., from Telugu, Kanimozhi, Ilampirai, MalathiMaitri, Sukirtarani, Salma, KuttyRevathi etc., from Tamil, PrathibaNandakumar, Vaidehi, HemaPattanshetty, SarvamangalaMamtaSagar etc., from Kannada and Balamaniamma, SavitriRajeevan, Sugathakumari, Vijayalakshmi, AnithaThampi etc., from Malayalam, are unique in their poetic thought. The dawning of a new feminist consciousness brings in its wake a new found confidence.

Indian English Women Poetry has traversed a long way from Toru Dutt to Sarojini Naidu from Kamala Das to SmitaAgarwal in the last fifty years, absorbing a variety of influences, dealing with a range of themes and generating diverse strategies of poetic expression. Each one has tried to speak in a distinctly personal voice; yet they form a part of a chorus, a collective voice asserting the autonomy of woman.

When Kamala Das embarked upon her poetic career, Women Liberation Movement had not emerged in India. The society in which Kamala Das was born and brought up was a patriarchal society that had marginalized the Indian matriarchy. Women were subjected to subservience in the family life. They had to abide by a rigid code of conduct. It was considered immoral to speak or write about love and sex. Kamala Das expressed her terrible reaction against this male-dominated society. EuniceDe Souza rebels against her family upbringing. Some of her poem have mainly to do with the conflicts with parents. The sense of pain, loss, and the absence of God are central to Eunice De-Souza's poetry. MamtaKalia speaks with saucy irreverence about many our culture, including

parents, patriotism etc. Sunita Jain sees woman as a prey and man as the predator. Man-woman relationship becomes more critical in her hands. GauriDeshpande and Melanie Silgado takes an unblinkered view of all human relationships; her irony is generally corrosive, when she employs it, and her tone usually blunt. SunitaNamjoshi highlights how women have grappled hard to move out of their homes in search of freedom, yet men have fettered them by displaying their manhood over them. The directness of expression and natural, idiomatic colloquial vigour is more often found in the verse of Das, Kalia, de Souza and Silgado. In addition, women's poetry in Indian English literature has expanded and energized the stylistic aspects of Indian English poetry through the process of the invention of new images, metaphors, similes and myths from women's physiological, emotional and social experiences. The rebellion and revolution enacted by the women poets in Indian English poetry has resulted in the enrichment of Indian English poetry both in its thematic range and stylistic variety.

The dichotomous dilemmas brought out and resolved by the Indian English and South Indian Women Poets, cultivate a pan-Indian ambience in Literary Research of women poets celebrating the cohesion and inner bonding that Indian poetic expression accomplished beyond the variety and diversity of our socio-cultural reality and linguistic repertoire. It is an effort to locate parallel streaks and grains of 'modernist' tone and temper in the poems of Kamala Das, MalathiPattanshetty, Kanomozhi, Sugathakumari and others. The skillful use of standard poetic devices, the semiotic, symbolical and metaphorical properties of language help to emphasize the feminist strategies of interrogation. The fissures and fragments of post-modern life reflected in the highly experimental diction. The problems of sociological vis-à-vis literary politics, of gender inequities of marginalization and sub-humanisation of women, of their social and artistic exclusion and of the dominant need for inclusion and democratization, all contribute towards the distinctive character of this poetry. For the first time, mapping out new terrains the poetry of such Indian women poets bring forth the suppressed desires, lust, sexuality and gestational experiences. This new poetry is new forms of new thematic concerns of contemporary issues has changed the course of human civilization as the country entered the new millennium.

The Emergence of Modern Telugu Women Poetry found a new direction, there began a tendency to represent in creative writing more specific problems of the people and to bring in the importance of the role of different castes and groups in society. The subject matter became more focused and telugu

poetry brought in a certain clarity with its new images and symbols, and presented real-life sequences.

The turning point in this direction was the publication of *NeeliMeghalu*, a collection of feminist poetry. It gave the much-needed range in terms of theme and technique. Many topics, hitherto considered untouchable, became the subject matter of poetry. Women also invented a new language to express their pain, experience and anger. This was extended to the short story. Poetry was written primarily to question male dominance by Revati Devi, Jayaprabha, VasanthaKannabiran, KondepudiNirmala, Volga, GhantasalaNirmala etc., in the first phase, and AnisettyRajita, ChallapalliSwaruparani, Shahjahana, PasupuletiGeeta etc., in the second phase. Even poets like Vimala, with a strong Marxist background, wrote feminist poetry then. Volga gave a new direction to feminist thought in raising the issue of the woman's body. While P. Sathyavathi combined realism with irony, C. Sujata, S.Jaya, Kuppili Padma and other new generation writers brought in the subtleties of contemporary life.

Dominant Trends of Kannada Poetry", deals with the brief study of Kannada Women Poetry. The last quarter of this century has witnessed an upsurge in the Dominant Trends of Kannada Poetry. This development took place in the general milieu of the 'Bandaya' (protest) movement, in which marginalized peoples such as Dalits, Muslims and the rural poor found a voice for their hitherto silenced worlds.

In the early 80s many women poets stormed the predominantly male bastion of Kannada verse with a fresh, daring and adventurous poetry about "what it meant to be a woman". Most of the women writers like PratibhaNandakumar, Videhi, MalatiPattanasetty, B.T.LalitaNayak, SailajaUdachana, ShashikalaVeeraiahswamy, N. V. Bhagyalakshmi, H.S.Muktayakka, VanamalaVasanta, HemaPatanshetty, Usha, Kamala Hemmige, etc., insisted on writing "about life as we saw it: inequality, love, yearning, adultery, motherhood." Sometimes formal and compositional concerns are evident and remain vital to the poets' understanding of their genre.

The modern Tamil women poets writing today whether naturalist, realist, feminist or modernist and have better access to publishing and get noticed in the popular media. Critics too are sympathetic towards women poets. These factors seem to have encouraged the new boom in women's poetry in Tamil. Any anthologist of women's poetry would be surprised at the number of women writing poetry in Tamil today. Kanimozhi, Salma, MalathiMythri, Ilampirai etc., are some of the prominent names in

this list of young women poets who have made a mark are anti-male in their attitudes and manifestos. Some Tamil women poets like LathaRamakrishnan and Perundevi fight against patriarchy, for all the cultural institutions are patriarchal or phalocentric. KuttiRevathi went to the extent of naming her book of poems as 'Breasts.' Her poems deal more with their inconveniences than with the pain of being a woman in a male-centred society. Not all of them are obsessed with the body. Most of them are obviously more involved with the psyche than the body. Poets like Renganayaki, ThilakaBama, VaigaiSelvi and Madhumitha do not bother whether they are members of any group at all. They seem to belong to the category that fulfills 'traditional female functions in a traditional way'.

These women actually tell the man through their poems that a woman need not always welcome his advances; and that he is often harsh, indifferent and selfish. Their poems talk about a woman's loneliness and anger due to the selfish behavior of men.

In Malayalam the emerging generation of modernist women poets are more vibrant and occupy a dominant position in the literary scene. Their poems represent deep abiding values associated with Indian womanhood like the instinctive sense of responsibility through domesticity. They also depict a deep capacity for suffering, a material vision of life that accepts the well being of children and an undying spirit of sacrifice for the ones whom they love. Semblance of an alert socio-political sensibility is at work in the emerging feminist consciousness in the writings of some of the younger women writers in Malayalam poetry.

Balamaniamma's 'Matruhrudayam' depicts innocent love and a mother's concern towards her child. Sugathakumari's 'Ambalamani' is a master-piece which decries on the negligence of precious and rare archeological and monumental structures. In poets like Vijayalakshmi, patriarchal nature of the family as an institution is laid bare, wherein woman is the victim. Vijayalakshmi's 'Animal Trainer' and SavithriRajeevan's 'Pratishta' bristle with rare critical insights. The poems of Amruta, Nandita, Anita Thampi, Rose Mary and others, depict human concern, delight, love for nature, philosophy, romance, feminism, patriarchal traumas, Societal

problems, victimization, child abuse harassment and other concerns.

Women's social unrest in respect of education and career, sexual desire and frustration of the body, suffocation of a caged loveless marriage, numerous affairs, the futility of lust, the shame and sorrow of not finding love after repeated attempts, the loneliness and neurosis that stalks women especially and such other things which were not spoken of candidly are powerfully dealt with for the first time in their poetry.

When one puts all the threads together one sees a very sensitive mind receiving various impressions, reacting to them openly and interpreting the whole experience very maturely and consciously. One rare dimension added to Indian English Poetry is objective correlative, it helps a poet to connect and establish a meaningful rapport with the world around. It is a journey on the experimental level, through the thick and thin of life, through shadows of despondency, dullness and fatigue but eventually blessed with fortitude. The rising woman with promising vistas ahead encounters life in a multi-prolonged, subtle, restrained and matured manner, with a cultivated idiom, making her more impressive and readable.

Kamala Das, Eunice de Souza, Jayaprabha, Volga, Vaidehi, PrathibaNandakumar, Kanimozhi, Sugathakumari and other modern women poets write poetry imbued with the capability of producing inner tremors. These tremors can be made sense in various ways. To minds seeking liberation, they could connote the joy of freedom. Minds suffering under oppression could perceive them as fantasies about the space they have yearned to traverse. Other than the skillful use of standard poetic devices, the semiotic, symbolical and metaphorical properties of language help to emphasize the feminist strategies of interrogation. The fissures and fragments of post-modern life are questioned and reflected in the highly experimental diction. The problems of sociological vis-à-vis literary politics, of gender inequities of marginalization and sub-humanization of women, of their social and artistic exclusion and of the dominant need for inclusion and democratization, all contribute towards the distinctive character of this poetry. For the first time, delving into new areas the poetry of such Indian women poets bring forth the suppressed desires, lust, sexuality and gestational experiences. This new poetry in new forms of new thematic concerns of contemporary issues has changed the course of human civilization as the country entered the new millennium.

References:

1. Alexander. Meena, "Blood Line", *Illiterate Heart*, Evanston IL - Tri- quarterly Books, Northwestern University Press, May 2002.
2. Amur, G.S. *Essays on Modern Kannada Literature*, Bangalore: Karnataka SahityaAcademi, 2001.
3. Balamaniamma, "Matruhridayam", (A Mother's Heart) (Malayalam), Sahitya Academy, No.224, Vol.XLVIII, No.6, Dec, 2004.
4. Bhatt Sujata, "A Story for Pearse", *Monkey Shadows*, Penguin Books, 1993.
5. Chakravarthy. Joya, *Indian Writing in English*, Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2003.
6. Chaya Devi. Abburi, "Vinnara", (Have You Heard), *NiliMeghalu, A collection of Feminist Poetry*, Hyderabad: Charita Graphics, 1996.
7. Cixous. Helen, "Castration or Decapitation", tr. Annette Kuhn, *Feminism: Contemporary Literary Criticism; Literary and Cultural Studies*, Robert Con Davis and RonaltSchliefer (Ed.), New York: Longman, 1989.
8. Das. Kamala, *Collected Poems, Volume-1*, Trivandrum: The Nava Kerala Printers, 1984.
9. Deshpande. Gauri (Ed.), *An Anthology of Indo-English Poetry*, New Delhi:Pocket Hind Books, 1974.
10. Elampirai, "ThottiChedi" (A Potted Plant), *MudhalManusi*, Chennai: Tamil Nenjam, 2003
11. Hema. Pattansetty, "Ankura" (Sprouting Love), *Satamanada Kavya, (An Anthology of 20th Century Poetry in Kannada)*, Dr.H.SVenkateshamurthy (Ed.), Bangalore:KarnatakaSahitya Academy, 2001.
12. Iyengar. K.R.S. *Indian Writing in English*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1984.
13. Jaya S. "SagamPrapancham" (Half World), *20th century Anthology of Telugu Women Writers' works*, AbburiChayadevi (Ed.), Bangalore: Sahitya Academy, 2002, p.89.
14. Kalpana. R.J. "Feminist Issues in Indian Literature" *Feminism and SexualPoetics*, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2005.
15. Kalpana. R.J. "Feminist Issues in Indian Literature" *Feminism and SexualPoetics*, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2005.
16. Kanimozhi, "Aram" (Righteousness), *In the home (Tamil)*, Nagercoil: KalachuvaduPathippagam, 2003.
17. Kumari. Sugatha, "Ambalamani" (Temple Bell) (Malayalam), *Ambalamani*, Kottayam: D.C.Books, 2007.
18. Meenakshi, "Devi Bhavnani", *Poetry India: Emerging Voices*, Hind Pocket Books, 1992.
19. Naik. M.K. "The Fair Voice: Modern Women Poets", *Indian English Poetry - from the beginnings upto 2000*, New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2006.
20. Revathi. Kutty, "The Crucible", *Tamil New Poetry, Twentieth Century Tamil Poets*, Katha Poets Café, 2005.
21. Rosemary, "Venalilorupuzha" (River in Summer), *River in summer*, Kottayam: Current Books, 2003.
22. Savithri. Rajeevan "Prathista", E.V.Ramakrishnan, *Colonial, Patriarchy and Malayalam Poetic Discourse*, Indian Poetry, *Modernism and After*, K.Satchidanandan(Ed.),SahityaAcademi, New Delhi, 2001.
23. Showlater. Elaine, "Feminist Criticism", *Feminism-Contemporary Literary Criticism Literary and Cultural Studies*, second edition, Robert ConDavis and RonaltSchliefer (Ed.), New York: Longman, 1989.
24. Tirupati. Rao B. Bhasha-Bhashanam (Language and Discourse), Vijayawada: SandhyaBhashaViri Volumes, 1999.
25. Wollstonecraft. Mary, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, M.Brody (Ed.),Harmondworth: Penguin, 1992.
26. Zide. Arlene, *In their Own Voices*, Delhi: Penguin Books 1993.

Dr.(Mrs).M.UmaRao/Associate Professor/Department of English/ K.L.University
VADESWARAM/ Guntur