

Space of Women in Indian Literary Tradition: A Discourse Against Socio-Historical Perspectives

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Abstract: That Indian literary tradition has been shaped and nourished by the sense and sensibility of a woman's space by both, male and female writers is a universally acknowledged fact. But, simultaneously, socio-historical truth of the subservient status forced on women also prevails poignantly across time and space. By exploring the deep recesses of vast domains of Indian literature, the paper as the title suggests, attempts to illustrate the literary responses lent towards the understanding of women as a parallel discourse to the perennial polemics of discrimination leveled against it. The paper, thus, aims to stand in defence of literature suffering almost scandalous charge of favoritism for patriarchal linguistic idiom conjured up to debunk, defame and belittle women and justify them as worthy of their maltreatment in literature.

Keywords: Discourse, Space, Literature, Truth, Ras, Sensitivity

I

The subjugation of women has been an all pervasive truth across time and space. Right from political sphere to domestic affair, the role of a woman has been reeling under the tyranny of patriarchy. The feudal system in particular across the globe fed and nourished by the callous patriarchy had relegated the position of women to the minimum awareness of their being. If at all, this awareness of being on the part of women existed, it was only in terms of their status as an object of consumption and use, trivialization of their self, ridicule of their identity as essentially inferior to men. The status of inequality suffered by women culminated at times in fatal consequences of their life, brutal killing, and public tarnishing of their dignity across all so called rational, educated and civilized societies. Indian society and history is no exception to this stigmatic truth. The atrocious discrimination of women is born of the sadist treatment lent to them by the male society in general. This has led to the emergence of many a literary feminist critic in defence of their cause. Simone de Beauvoir's opinion in this respect is amply suitable when she says:

One is not born but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in the society; it is civilization as whole that produces this creature." (Beauvoir, 457)

While stating a sharp distinction between "sex" and "gender" being biological and cultural/social/psychological construct respectively, Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* observes the repression and subordination of a woman as "a most ingenious form of interior colonization" (25). In as early as 1869, J.S. Mill expressed his critical concern reflecting on the pathetic condition of women in society at large. In his book, *The Subjection of*

Women, Mill writes about the problems of women's inequality in society and stated—"what is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing- the result of forced repression in some directions"(22). But, having accepted all so far, it emerges that the question of discrimination and oppression is a social and historic one. Whether the same is true, partially true or false in literature is the modest endeavour to explore in the paper titled '*The space of Women in Indian Literary Tradition: A Discourse Against Socio-Historical Perspective*'. The paper as the title suggests, attempts to illustrate the literary responses lent towards the understanding of women, as a parallel discourse to the perennial polemics of discrimination leveled against literature.

II

Indian Literary tradition dates back to the ancient texts of Vedas and Upanishadas written in Sanskrit to the vast corpus of Hindi Literature in the present time. The main sources of inter-textual references, therefore, emerge from the native literary tradition Sanskrit in the first place followed only by Hindi. With a history of almost five hundred years of Mughal Empire in India, Persian turned Arabic turned Urdu had occupied a space of national significance in the linguistic list of the nation. Therefore, the paper abounds in illustrations from chaste Persian Literature of Ghalib to the present day Urdu Shayar, Munavvar Rana. The illustrations serve as the glaring evidence of dignity accorded to women down the ages in literature. With almost two hundred years of British reign and contemporary global sensibility of literature in the post-modern creative world, English as a language stands as much as a cultural manifestation of India as of any other country, let alone England. Moreover, English language at the hands of Indian writers has been acknowledged universally and has brought laurels to the country through many an international recognition of their literary efforts including Man Booker Prize, Common Wealth Prize, Man Asian Literary Award, Pulitzer Award, to name a few. Hence, as a point of reference, English literature too comes in the purview of the paper as an accepted Indian language in all respects – common parlance, official, academic or even literary ambit. The paper under discussion attempts to explore the deep recesses of vast domains of Indian literature in order to disclaim the charge of discriminatory character of literature and simultaneously build up a discourse that establishes literature as a democratic platform where women are rendered more equal space than men.

III

Literary truth is different from the historical truth. That gender discrimination attracts and claims the space of literary works of art, emerges as a stereotypical mendacious notion of the character of literature. Hence, the perception requires revision and modification. And to say that this discrimination is despondently observable in diminutive and derogatory treatment of women community in literature would be no less than blasphemous since literature is regarded as the didactic and reformatory medium of communication across time and space. Indian literatures in this respect stand apart even more, in so far it strives to inculcate the core values of humanity the source of which are both men and women alike. And so far as historical truth is concerned, literature has

its own ways of reproducing them. Hence, literary truth stands different from the historical and social truth. While on the one hand, historical truth is likely to be adulterated by the political aspiration, though in the pretension of national good or concern, the literary truth on the other hand is qualified by both the honest and sensitive cognizance of the social truth and the aesthetic treatment of the same. Consequently, the holistic acknowledgement of truth steeped in literary flavour not only generates avid readership but also falsifies at times, the coated reality of time and space. An instance of the fate of truth at the hands of politicians can be illustrated from Salman Rushdie's exemplary critical essay, *Imaginary Homelands* wherein he corroborates the distinction between creative and literary treatment of truth juxtaposed against historico - political truth with reference to a political incident in the following words: The 'State truth' about the war in Bangladesh, for instance, is that no atrocities were committed by the Pakistani army in what was then the East Wing. This version is sanctified by many persons who would describe themselves as intellectuals. And the official version of the Emergency in India was well expressed by Mrs Gandhi in a recent BBC interview. She said that there were some people around who claimed that bad things had happened during the Emergency, forced sterilizations, things like that but, she stated, this was all false. Nothing of this type had ever occurred. The interviewer, Mr Robert Kee, did not probe this statement at all. Instead he told Mrs Gandhi and the *Panorama* audience that she had proved, many times over, her right to be called a democrat. So literature can, and perhaps must, give the lie to official facts. But is this a proper function of those of us who write from outside India? Or are we just dilettantes in such affairs, because we are not involved in their day-to-day unfolding, because by speaking out we take no risks, because our personal safety is not threatened? What right do we have to speak at all? My answer is very simple. Literature is self-validating. That is to say, a book is not justified by its author's worthiness to write it, but by the quality of what has been written. There are terrible books that arise directly out of experience, and extraordinary imaginative feats dealing with themes which the author has been obliged to approach from the outside.

Literature is not in the business of copyrighting certain themes for certain groups. And as for risk: the real risks of any artist are taken in the work, in pushing the work to the limits of what is possible, in the attempt to increase the sum of what it is possible to think. Books become good when they go to this edge and risk falling over it - when they endanger the artist by reason of what he has, or has not, *artistically* dared. (20-21)

The plethora of examples of literary endeavour in international tradition in general and Indian tradition in particular identifying the dignity of woman disproves the indictment to which literature most often is subjected. And this is particularly the thesis of this paper to explore a trajectory of literature which builds up a discourse for woman, based on their merits and virtues at all places- physical, emotional, mundane, religious and spiritual. Thus, the paper also at the same time disclaims the charge of accommodation of discrimination for women in literature and absolves it thereby from the charge of its segregational attitude. The myth that male writers debunk the female space in literature and that they stink

of their snobbery and smugness in treatment of woman down the ages has also been taken critically in this paper. The exposition of the inherent binaries for all the variables identified qualifies the self definitive thesis of the title. The paper, thus, aims to stand in defence of literature suffering almost scandalous charge of favoritism for patriarchal linguistic idiom conjured up to debunk, defame and belittle women and justify them as worthy of their maltreatment in literature.

IV

Indian literature since the beginning has acknowledged the significance of woman in all her capacities and roles. Right from the Vedic era to the present time, Indian literature or rather indigenous literatures in all Indian languages such as Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu or Arabic, have given commendable space to women. Women were placed at the highest pedestal and were regarded as parallel with or the incarnation of Goddess. The Sanskrit sukti- यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः। यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वस्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः। (Hindu View on Women, 3.56) speaks volume of the divine recognition of women in our classical scriptures. The women are not merely understood in terms of what has always been quoted in the rhetorical question 'Was this the face that launched thousand?' (Dr. Faustus 5.1). Even in the twenty first century gripped with crass materialism, people irrespective of their cognitive position, invoke Goddesses for all kinds of bliss, mundane or spiritual. Whether they dream to possess wealth, power/strength or knowledge or wisdom, their rock solid faith in the Goddesses comes out as they offer their prayer to the respective Goddesses. For instance, a man or woman pursuing knowledge or wisdom invokes the Goddess in the following shloka: या देवी सर्वभूतेषु बुद्धिरूपेण संस्थिता, नमस्तस्यै, नमस्तस्यै, नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः। (Shri Durga Saptshati, 112) Similarly, the human beings desiring power and strength chant the following shloka for the goddess:

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता,
नमस्तस्यै, नमस्तस्यै, नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः। (112)

And those aspiring for wealth offer yet another shloka:

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु लक्ष्मीरूपेण संस्थिता,
नमस्तस्यै, नमस्तस्यै, नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः। (113)

So far as knowledge is concerned, Goddess Saraswati is universally acknowledged as what we call *Vidya ki adhishtatri devi* who is capable of bestowing the bliss of knowledge on us. Several shlokas have been created to invoke the goddess Saraswati for obtaining knowledge or wisdom. The following couple of shlokas from amongst many celebrated ones best acknowledge the supreme power of the Goddess Saraswati empowering the mankind with Her ever salvaging blessings of knowledge:

या कुन्देन्दुतुषारहारधवला या शुभ्रवस्त्रावृता
या वीणावरण्डमण्डितकरा या श्वेतपद्मासना।
या ब्रह्माच्युत शंकरप्रभृतिभिरदेवैः सदा वन्दिता
सा मां पातु सरस्वती भगवती निःशेषजाड्यापहा॥
(Stotra Ratnawali, 75) and
शुक्लां ब्रह्मविचार सार परमामाद्यां जगद्व्यापिनी

वीणा-पुस्तक-धारिणीमभयदां जाड्यान्धकारापहाम्।
हस्ते स्फटिकमालिकां विदधती पद्मासने संस्थिताम्
वन्दे तां परमेश्वरी भगवती वृद्धिपूरां शारदाम्॥ (77)

The concentrated meaning of the shlokas spells out the power of Goddess Saraswati to the extent of liberating mankind from the darkness of ignorance and imbecility. The implication gels with the comprehensive dissemination of universal requirement as sought in the invocation, '*Tamaso maa jyotirgamaya*'. (*Brhadaranyaka Upanishad-I.iii.28*). Marching from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge is the singular requirement for mankind achieving which all the bliss of the world follows unbidden. 'Knowledge is power' is a popular dictum loaded with all pervasive truth and value for which the goddess Saraswati alone is offered devotion and prayers. The Greek literature includes abundance of such positions accorded to the goddesses in its mythology. Right from love to procreation to sea to agriculture to mother earth, Greek mythology is replete with the names of goddesses commonly illustrated metaphorically in other literatures and expressions. For instance, *Aphrodite Artemis, Athēnā, Dēmētēr, Nyx, Gaia*,¹ a few to name, are the revered goddesses amply occupying literary and spiritual spaces in Greek culture. While Aphrodite is the goddess of love, beauty and desire, Artemis is worshipped as the goddess of hunting, wilderness, animals and childbirth. Similarly, Athena is the goddess of wisdom, skill, warfare and tactics whereas Demeter is the goddess of farming, the harvest and fertility. Nyx and Gaia are worshipped as the goddesses of night and mother earth respectively. A celebrated Chayawadi (romantic) Hindi poet⁴, Jayshankar Prasad has expressed equally sacred feelings for a woman when he says:

नारी! तुम केवल श्रद्धा हो | विश्वास-रजत-नग पगतल में,
पीयूष-स्रोत-सी बहा करो | जीवन के सुंदर समतल में। (46)

So a woman is always worthy of adoration and is always wished as nectar (*amrit*) for one's beautiful life. And, human life in Hindu tradition comprises four stages, namely *Brahmcharya, Grihastha, Vanprastha* and *Sanyasa*² divided into twenty five years each for the fulfilment of varied objectives under the sun. A person is supposed to achieve the goals of *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha* to have lived a complete holistic life in this world. And these objectives are not possible to be fulfilled without the presence of woman in life who is an essential counterpart of all affairs and wishes to be lived. A man without a woman is only a half truth without any moisture of beauty therein. Hence, the all pervasive wisdom of 'सत्यं शिवम् सुंदरम्' or what the celebrated romantic poet, John Keats 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty',- that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know/(359) would remain unimaginable without the presence of woman therein, since life itself is incomplete without women, let alone truth or beauty associated therewith. It is with this egalitarian spirit of beauty and truth that a woman in her marital capacity is considered '*ardhangini*'³ in Hindu cultural and religious customs. Thus, for one's life to be a journey of

smooth passages, the company of a woman, as opined by the poet, Jay Shankar Prasad, is but inevitable; as inevitable as nectar (peeyoosh). This woman is the source of all nectar –like bliss for man. Hence, the most cherished one by mankind. It is, however, necessary to maintain here that the period of Hindi Chhayavad is not the same as that of English Romanticism. English romantic period prevailed in the nineteenth century while Hindi Chhayavad continued till later half of 1930s. It means that the modernist sensibility also identifies woman as the most beatific presence for this world. Simultaneously, it disclaims the rampant clamour that the treatment of women as a marginalised, oppressed entity alone surfaces literature across time and space. This is particularly true for Indian literatures as identified in the preceding section of the paper. This is one image of women portrayed in our literature.

But, the image of women as an idol of reverence is not the complete treatment of their significance. Since a woman is the source of all joys in this world, she stands beyond her unitary recognition of divine identity. They are human beings brimming with emotions and feelings. The perception of women as living character full of love and life also prevails in abundance in Indian literature. Woman has been the centre of love, love that transcends all evils and complexities of life. However, this memory of love has not been evoked by the reference to romanticism made in the preceding passage. This rather falsifies stereotypical conception of love readily associated with the literature of the romantic period as its prime prerogative. Love cannot be confined to a particular time and its literature in any language. Rather, it is timeless, it transcends time and so does literature celebrating it. Here the great question is: *whom can a man love if not a woman?* If we exclude the post- modern or rather post postmodern possibilities of love as the one advocated today through theoretical perspective of LGBT⁵, the only absolute and natural character of love is the eternal heterosexual one existing between a man and a woman only. It is this love which is instrumental in the making of what we call Shringar Ras⁶ in Sanskrit and Hindi poetics. The proposition stated above brings forth another serious question of aesthetic significance: Can any writer of any place in the world evoke the sense of poetic elegance or in the words of Matthew Arnold, 'poetic beauty'⁷ in his treatment of love and romance between two male or two female persons following a queer⁸ relationship? And, if at all, would the evocative profundity of such writing be great enough to be measured in terms of what Arnold, again, calls 'poetic truth'? Indubitably, a truth would be there, whether poetic or not. But, in any case, the composition of Shringar Ras as the singularly enjoyable character of romantic plot would remain impossibility with the audacious endeavour of creating a parallel love- literature in the post modern spirit of LGBT. Thus, to keep alive the spirit of literature in general and romantic literature in particular, the space of woman would always remain non-negotiable. Woman as the source of all bliss has been acknowledged quite loudly by one of the most noted Hindi poets, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar. His epic poetic creation, *Urvashi*, is fraught with references illustrating the multifariously magnanimous and dynamic character of a woman. The following excerpt from the text spoken by Pururava, the male protagonist, signifies the glory of a woman and her

inevitability in the life of a semi-divine king, let alone the ordinary human beings. The passage is as much significant in communicating the truth of essentiality of a woman in one's life as in disseminating the flavour of '*shringar ras*', and '*veerras*' all strewn into one:

मर्त्य मानव की विजय का तूर्य हूँ मैं,
 उर्वशी! अपने समय का सूर्य हूँ मैं.
 अंध तम के भाल पर पावक जलाता हूँ,
 बादलों के सीस पर स्यंदन चलाता हूँ
 पर, न जानें, बात क्या है!
 इन्द्र का आयुध पुरुष जो झेल सकता है,
 सहि से बाँहें मिलाकर खेल सकता है,
 फूल के आगे वही असहाय हो जाता,
 शक्ति के रहते हुए निरुपाय हो जाता.
 विद्ध हो जाता सहज बंकिम नयन के बाण से
 जीत लेती रूपसी नारी उसे मुस्कान से.
 मैं तुम्हारे बाण का बीधा हुआ खग
 वक्ष पर धर शीश मरना चाहता हूँ.
 मैं तुम्हारे हाथ का लीला कमल हूँ
 प्राण के सर में उतरना चाहता हूँ. (61)

Earlier also in Urvashi, Dinkar sings the glory of a woman with reference to the character of Urvashi, the female protagonist. The excerpt quoted below speaks volume of the charismatic character of a woman with her beauty exuberant enough to stun even gods, let alone human beings under the sun:

इसीलिये तो सखी उर्वशी, उषा नन्दनवन की
 सुरपुर की कौमुदी, कलित कामना इन्द्र के मन की
 सिद्ध विरागी की समाधि में राग जगाने वाली
 देवों के शोणित में मधुमय आग लगाने वाली (27)

Now it is evident that the treatment of woman in Indian literature has always been done seriously and therefore the emergence of so called feminists calling the very character of literature in question is simply ironic and unfortunate. The above quoted examples from many existing works in Indian literature strongly confront the allegations that literatures too stand prejudiced when it comes to the space of women. The only argument put across by these feminists is that literature has been invaded by male writers across time and space. The notion is also thoroughly falsified by the glaring examples in abundance from Indian literature as all the writers quoted in the paper are male chosen deliberately in order to demythify the hackneyed wrangle of the feminist critics. One of the earliest and greatest Urdu poets, Mirja Ghalib has amply employed the female beauty in his verses and couplets to depict the colossal canvas of life and realities thereof. He has also appreciated the character of women associating her with divinity at times. The spiritual finding in consonance with the mundane with reference to women and her blissful company not only suggests his supreme poetic ability but also reflects how women have been regarded in Urdu literature in general and Ghalib's in particular. While the first two excerpts lend divine grandeur to the being of women,

the last one excels in communication of the lofty sense of appreciation for a woman against all the social and political truths down the ages:

सुनते हैं जो बहिश्त की तारीफ़ सब दुरुस्त
लेकिन खुदा करे वो तेरा जलवा-गाह हो
(Mahakavi Ghalib ki Shayari, 83)
जब वो जमाल-ए-दलिफ़रोज़ सूरते-मेहरे-नीमरोज़
आप ही हो नज़ारा-सोज़, पर्दे में मुँह छिपाये क्यों (45)
नींद उसकी है, दिमाग़ उसका है, रातें उसकी हैं
तेरी जुल्फ़ें जिसके बाजू पर परीशां हो गई (42)

Nida Fazli, one of the most reputed poets of modern Urdu poetry, has also expressed his sensitivity to the dignity of women in his works with adequate generosity. The couplets below are evocative enough in so far as they invent a new idiom to define the greatest of human relationship, i.e. mother:

बीबी, बेटी, बहन, पड़ोसन | थोड़ी थोड़ी सी सब में
बाँट के अपना चेहरा, माथा, | आँखें जाने कहाँ गई
फटे पुराने इक़ अलबम में | चंचल लड़की जैसी माँ (38-39)

Urdu literature in general has prolifically accorded the space due to women. Infact, much of Urdu poetics is nourished by the incorporation of feminine sensibility into it. And, appreciation of women and their holistic treatment from varied angles has been the strength of Urdu literature across time and space. Urdu being one of the richest languages of India, as stated earlier too, retained its choices and prerogative in disseminating literary responses to women at large. What emerges from the thesis is that woman across Indian literatures has not only surfaced graciously but has also influenced the richness of literatures to a considerable extent. Dr. Bashir Badra, another distinguished poet of Urdu literature, has immensely spoken of women's virtues and their roles in one's life, emerging from different dimensions of their character. The following couplet is observable from its aesthetic, imaginative and cognitive point of view:

चाँद चेहरा, जुल्फ़ दरिया, बात खुशबू, दिल चमन
इक़ तुम्हें देकर खुदा ने दे दिया क्या-क्या मुझे (Kavita Kosh)

The multiplicity of evidences from many a literary icon of the language only reasserts the truth that women's oppression may necessarily be a painful truth to recollect in political and socio-historical context of the country but the same is thoroughly false to allege in literature, hence blasphemous too as literature is considered to be a divine derivative¹⁰. That postmodern literature pays equally dignified attention towards women can be illustrated from a number of sensitive poets in Urdu literature of the period. Munavvar Rana, a versatile post modern shayar, has elaborately written of women in general and mothers and sisters in particular which amply reinforces the idea that woman has not only been included in literature but has been placed in central position. A couple of examples from his works would serve to illustrate the point that literature has always held women in high esteem deserved by them with their motherly capacity in particular:

मुझे खबर नहीं जन्मत बड़ी कि माँ लेकिन | लोग कहते हैं कि जन्मत बशर के नीचे है

(Maa,48) | बाप का रुत्वा भी कुछ कम नहीं होता लेकिन | जितनी माँ हैं
फ़रिश्तों की तरह होती हैं (57)

English too, as one of the languages of Indian literature, calls for critical inquiry in its treatment of women particularly against the prevailing truth of suffering and perpetration of atrocities on them in their socio-political life. Indian English literature abounds in prolific writers, both male and female. What is unanimously agreeable for these writers is their focused attention in treatment of women in their works. Here, again, in order to counter the point that male writers have typically cynical perspective in delineating women characters in their writings, a select celebrated poets have been included wherein reverential treatment of women could be easily perceptible. The Nobel laureate, Rabindra Nath Tagore's portrayal of women is loud enough in assertion of their sense and sensibility of their own self as exemplified from the statement "... for we women are not only the deities of the household fire, but the flame of the soul itself." (84). Even more profound depiction of women is observable in one of his rather small but greatly evocative poems as follows:

O woman, you are not merely the | handiwork of God, but also of
men; | these are ever endowing you with | beauty from their hearts.
Poets are weaving for you a web | with threads of golden imagery; |
painters are giving your form ever | new immortality. | The sea gives
its pearls, the mines | their gold, the summer gardens their | flowers
to deck you, to cover you, to | make you more precious. | The desire
of men's hearts has shed | its glory over your youth. | You are one
half woman and one | half dream. (The Gardener)

Woman as mother has been portrayed with almost equal sensitivity by the poets of the world. The following excerpts from one of Nissim Ezekiel's much popular poems are not only an accolade for the greatest position of a mother in one's life but are also a critique of patriarchal intellectual pretensions juxtaposed against the singularly unique sacrificial character of a woman.

My mother twisted through and through, | groaning on a mat. | My
father, sceptic, rationalist, | trying every curse and blessing, |
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid. | My mother only said | Thank
God the scorpion picked on me | and spared my children. (Night of
the Scorpion)

Assertive voices for women are typically distinctive character of women writers across the globe. However, when a prolific writer like Amrita Pritam addresses the cause, it transcends all stereotypical parochial debate of feminism since it then emerges as the concern of a *great writer* rather than of a *female writer* driven by her extreme consciousness of being. The poem, *I am the Daughter of the Land of Dravida* is worthy of illustration in so far as it redefines the identity of a woman in Indian context. The very title of the poem is powerful in its use of evocative terms loaded with poignant implications. The subversion of image through the process of demythification could be easily figured out throughout the poem including the title itself:

I am kama- kanya, the daughter of love. | I am kal-kanya, the daughter
of death. | Wearing this body, I have come. | I am the daughter of the
land of Dravida. (89)

The multilayered excerpt ostensibly spells out three points of significance: a) assertion of women's position, b) dynamically comprehensive character of women that excludes almost no space and c) the endeavour of redefining the history as earlier written and perceived by men. That Indian literary tradition has been shaped and nourished by the sense and sensibility of a woman's space by both, male and female writers is now no longer a debatable issue. The paper has endeavoured to incorporate abundant illustrations to corroborate, strengthen and justify the claims of Indian English authors for their sensitive responses to women's position in life and literature. Simultaneously, certain cynical and preposterous observations with regard to prejudiced approaches of male writers for women have been thoroughly disclaimed through the examples of plethora of textual references from the male English writers of India. The cliché reference to subjugation of women is acceptable in terms of social and historical truth. But literature in general and Indian English Literature in particular rules out the allegation by acknowledging the contribution of women in dual ways, firstly, by being the inescapable part of literature produced even by male writers, and secondly, by themselves creating the literature of the world class, rather than litterateurs obliging them with any space in literary domain.

Endnotes:

1. <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0197622.html>. *Greek and Roman Mythology*. Accessed on 14 January, 2014 at 8.00 p.m.
2. According to Manu Smriti and other classical Sanskrit texts, Human life consists of four stages in Hinduism called *Ashrams*. Under the Ashram system, the human life was divided into four periods. Among the four stages of one's life, Grihastha Ashram is the one where the role of a woman becomes indispensable since it requires one to achieve family status, discharge the familial and social duties, and contribute to the responsibilities of other three ashrams through procreations and upbringing etc. for posterior generations to come. Kama, the physical consummation for sustenance of creation, one of the four objectives of holistic life, is meant to be achieved in the Grihastha Ashram alone.
3. Ardhangini consists of Ardh and Angini which means half and possessing part of body respectively. Thus, a man in his marital capacity is incomplete without his wife since she occupies half of his *being* in all senses, i.e. literal, metaphorical etc. of the word. Even in spiritual and religious contexts, not only an equal share of significance is lent to female deities but they occupy the prior place to their male deities. All religious rituals start with worship of "Gauri" and "Ganesh". If Lord Shiva is the supreme God, worship of "Shakti" signifies the acknowledgment of parallel divine power of the Goddess, Durga.
4. The major Hindi Chhayavadi poets were Sumitra Nandan Pant, Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, Mahadevi Verma and Jayshankar Prasad. The period from 1918 to 1937 is considered as the one of Hindi Chhayavad yug.
5. LGBT stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. Often the initialism professes the possibility of non-heterosexual relationship among human beings while simultaneously assuming the political and theoretical positions of such relationships as well. The term is in use since the 1990s.
6. Shringar Ras is one of the most pervasive and interesting rasas of native

literature. The prominence of love and beauty and their aesthetic treatment characterise the concerned literature as one replete with shringar ras. Shringar ras evokes the mood and emotions of pleasure and romantic feelings in the readers. Ras philosophy is the unique characteristics of Indian dramatics and poetics. The appropriate English equivalent for Ras is still an impossibility since 'juice' or 'flavour' sounds generic as well as inadequate in communication of the meaning of ras with reference to literary and artistic aesthetics. Ras theory was propounded by Bharat Muni in his *Natyasastra*, an ancient work of dramatic theory, written during the period between 200 BC and 200 AD. Each rasa, according to *Nāṭyaśāstra*, has a presiding deity and a specific colour. Abhinavagupta suggested a ninth rasa when only eight were accepted and it had to undergo a good deal of struggle between the sixth and the tenth centuries, before it could be accepted by the majority of the Alankarikas, and the expression Navarasa (the nine rasas), could come into vogue. The universally accepted rasas, nine in all, are shringar (love), Hasya (joy), Adbhut (wonder), Shanta (peace), Raudra (anger), Vēra (courage), Karuna (sadness), Bhayanka (fear) and Vibhatsa (disgust). ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rasa_\(aesthetics\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rasa_(aesthetics))) Accessed on 14 January, 2014 at 8.10 p.m.

7. One of the greatest Victorian critics, Matthew Arnold in his critical essay titled, *Study of Poetry* illustrates the significance of what he says, 'poetic beauty' along with 'poetic truth' as the governing or prerequisite condition for any literature to sustain and 'stay'. He considers poetry as the criticism of life which cannot be possible without its element of 'poetic truth' and 'poetic beauty' in it.
8. Queer relationship has been formalised and lent serious treatment leading to the theorization of the practice called. *Queer theory is a field of post-structuralist critical theory that emerged in the early 1990s out of the fields of queer studies and women's studies. Queer focuses on "mismatches" between sex, gender and desire. Queer has been associated most prominently with bisexual, lesbian and gay subjects, but analytic framework also includes such topics as cross-dressing, intersexuality, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. Queer theory's attempted debunking of stable (and correlated) sexes, genders and sexualities develops out of the specifically lesbian and gay reworking of the post-structuralist figuring of identity as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions. Queer theory examines the constitutive discourses of homosexuality developed in the last century in order to place "queer" in its historical context, and surveys contemporary arguments both for and against this latest terminology.* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queer_theory) Accessed on 14 January, 2014 at 8.20 p.m.
9. *Veer ras is one of the nine rasas fundamental to different forms of Indian art as stated earlier. It evokes chivalric mood in the readers with its elements of courage and bravery in prominence.*
10. That the goddess of all learning is Saraswati is an adequate evidence to assert that no literature is possible without Her very presence in that. Hence, to allege literature for discrimination against women community is simply unfair and unjustifiable, particularly with abundance of efficacious illustrations in this paper from various sources of great Indian literary tradition.

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