

Book Review of - India Unravalled: The Representation of Women in Literature and Society

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ABSTRACT

It may seem strange to review a book which is composed by several scholars and authors, that takes up women from different periods of literature within current debate on 'women's empowerment'. My reason for taking up this venture is that each author in fact presents persuasive arguments and on some points their notions converge. The book titled India Unravalled: The Representation of Women in Literature and Society was published on the eve of 75 years of Indian Independence. It has thirty seven literary articles by truly erudite scholars across the country. This book not only provides different shades of experiences an Indian woman undergoes within an institution but also seeks to re conceptualize and re evaluate the existing knowledge on women's obligation. Reading all the chapters will provide an insight of a woman's psyche in the male dominated world.

Foreign theorists as well as native scholars have not only thought about the real position of women in the society but also have tried to look out at his significance and the possibility of transition. I would like to review one of the chapters of this book and discuss in brief the points that highlight sufferings, pain, challenges of a woman's life. Chapter 2, titled "The Fate of a Hindu Wife in Nirmala" by Basavaraj Naikar, talks about a novel Nirmala by Premchand where he highlights the melodramatic picture of victimization of women in the Bengali-Hindu patriarchal society. The reason why B. Naikar chose this novel is its theme and precisely its concluding part. In the novel, there starts a discussion between a couple named Kalyani and her husband Udayabhanulal regarding their daughter Nirmala's marriage. The husband starts speculating the likely expenditure for the marriage where he found that the budget is becoming too high to manage. Here interrupts Kalyani saying not to spend more than five thousand as they have to think about the other children. But Udayabhanulal doesn't allow his dignity and status to decline and thus cannot help spending the money. Also he tells his wife not to comment on his expenditure as it's his hard earned money and so he has all rights to do whatever he wants. It doesn't end there. In return Kalyani retorted back and said, "Then manage your own household too! I have no desire to have anything to do with a house in which I'm treated without respect". Kalyani decides many a time to leave the house but she can't as there stands her inner conflict between her wifehood and motherhood. She chooses her motherhood. But Kalyani's reply made her husband Udayabhanulal's male ego deeply hurt. It was so unendurable that Udayabhanulal decided to leave the house and not to return unless his wife realizes her folly. Finally the supreme male patriarchal figure drapes his silken wrap around his shoulder, takes his walking stick and steps out of the house silently at night, giving Kalyani and her children the space at the centre. All the chapters contributed to the essence of feminism and pointed out some infamous literary piece of art where subversion

of patriarchy has been depicted explicitly. It has got the references of myths from Hindu mythology where the prominent female figures took an upper hand. We can also get to know how the difference between 'bodies' functions as a machinery of oppression. After reading chapter 7 it's natural to hark back to the lines of Maya Angelou, "Does my sexiness upset you? / Does it come as a surprise/ That I dance like I've got diamonds/ At the meeting of my thighs?" This chapter deals with the reasons of marital conflict and abusive use of body at homes particularly in Indian context. To conclude, the book provides a breakthrough in women's empowerment, shattering the patriarchal chains and reconstructing the notion of free will of human beings.

About the editor –

P.V. Laxmiprasad is an eminent academician, an erudite scholar, a literary critic, a resource person and a senior editor. He has so far published 42 books in English literature. Basically his field of research interest is Literary Criticism. Besides, he has to his credit 70 research papers, more than 120 poems, 55 book-reviews and also held few interviews with literary legends. The one who made Laxmiprasad inspired in universal contributions by women is none but a woman of formidable stature, Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. As he stated, "I was fortunate enough to listen to her lecture in Karimnagar in 1976. I drew inspiration from her personality as a school boy. My parents took me all the way to Karimnagar in the hope of getting inspired. That was my first public attendance in the year just when I was seven years old." - Laxmiprasad in the *Preface* of the book. Currently he is teaching in the Department of English, Satavahana University, Karimnagar, Telangana.