

PREFACE

We should write as we dream; we should even try and write, we should all do it for ourselves, it's very healthy, because it's the only place where we never lie. At night we don't lie. Now if we think that our whole lives are built on lying-they are strange buildings - we should try and write as our dreams teach us; shamelessly, fearlessly, and by facing what is inside very human being-sheer violence, disgust, terror, shit, invention, poetry. In our dreams we are criminals; we kill, and we kill with a lot of enjoyment. But we are also the happiest people on earth; we make love as we never make love in life.

Hélène Cixous

Historically women were treated as subjects and considered inferior to men. They suffered merely because they are women. The cause of their suffering is the patriarchal nature of society. Feminism, known as women's movement, stands for women's struggle against their existence under male domination in patriarchal society. The term 'feminism' represents the revolt of women against norms of patriarchal society. Feminism is a women's movement to secure complete equality of women with men regarding religious, social, political, educational, and legal rights. Feminist writers also have an important role in the movement of women's liberation such as Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*, 1949), Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique*, 1963), Kate Millett (*Sexual Politics*, 1969) and Germaine Greer (*The Female Eunuch*, 1970), and many others.

Many issues related to women are raised by women academicians. As woman is a "subaltern" as well as "victim" in the male-dominant society, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes on the importance of who is speaking, how she is

speaking, and to whom she is speaking. In the literary world, many female writers have attempted to explore and disclose the reality of women's lives such as their feelings, their thoughts, their desires, and their voices. These works on women has made the woman's voice audible in the society.

The images of women are brought up to broaden gender aspect by female writers in their literary works. As a writer, woman is separated from that of a member of male-dominant tradition and culture in writing. When women began to write, they never had any tradition behind them. They had written from their own experience, their own view, and their own desire as what they had to suffer or what they had seen with women's oppression from male or what they want to say but nobody hear them. So, women's writing resists the naturally female erasure in the subtle male's language because they want anyplace to stand in their real status.

Elaine Showalter divides women's writing into three major phases Western Feminism in her work *A Literature of Their Own*. First, the 'Feminine Phase' began from 1792, with the publication of *Vindication of the Rights of Women* to 1880. These writers in this time imitated the contemporary male writers and tried to write like male writer such as Bronte Sisters, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. Secondly, the 'Feminist Phase' (1880-1920) came under feminist movement. These women were writers who protested against patriarchal norms, and also advocated women's rights and values. The 'Female Phase' is the third period from 1920s. This was a phase of self-discovery of the woman as herself and her own experiences from her feelings as a female observer. The women writers in this period stopped both imitation and protest against unequal depiction of women in male writing and created their own

writing. These include writers such as Rebecca West, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf.

There are some marked important differences between writings of a man and a woman that are portrayed through their characters, topics, themes, and techniques in the narrative itself. The male writers give space to the feminine, but through an embedded patriarchal construction of their masculinity.

In Indian writing in English, contemporary writing began with Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Later, a number of Indian writers writing in English have explored much more Indian reality such as Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Khushwant Singh, Amitav Ghosh, and so on. Women's writing in English has added a new dimension to Indian literature in English or in English translation.

Kamala Markandaya is one of the most significant Indian women writing in English. She was born in 1924 into a Brahmin family of South India in the erstwhile state of Madras. After working as a journalist in India, she migrated to England in 1948. Later, she married an English journalist Bertrand Taylor and she settled in London as a writer. As an Indian diaspora writer, Kamala Markandaya is preoccupied with the theme of East-West encounter. This theme is one of the major themes of Indian writing in English during the post-colonial era.

Within the encounter between two differences, East and West, Kamala Markandaya has represented the conflict between indigenous population and new comers, rural and urban, tradition and modernity, spirituality and rationality, superstition and scientific outlook. All of these contrasts refer to a cultural conflict

between East-West. She has depicted the clash of rooted values of Indian culture and tradition in most of her novels in various forms. Especially, she has portrayed her female characters dealing with these contrasts in terms of hybridity within the social restrictions of the post-colonial context. Simultaneously, her novels have been remarkable for the variety of women's experience through the portrayal of women by her own perspective as a woman.

In Thailand, women also had come to bear the burden of signifying Thainess both, within the country and globally. In general, women had to battle against their sufferings and oppressions, and make their voices heard. The women's movement had also affected Thai literary works. As a woman novelist, K. Surangkanang has broadly explored several women's issues such as search for identity, misunderstanding between husband and wife, arranged marriage, suffering in motherhood, frustrating with child-rearing and child-caring, feeling of alienation, etc. In her writing she has highlighted the suffering of Thai women in a male-dominant society. She has emphasized the importance of women and the recognition of women's consciousness through her female characters. Her perspective has come from her personal experiences and opinions as a woman towards the various real events in the society.

As a modern Thai woman, K. Surangkanang dares to bring up the dark side of Thai society through her writings. She has taken woman as her subject to emphasize how they are, in many ways, more important than men. At the same time, she has portrayed women characters undergoing suffering. Her female characters have been presented in terms of searching for their real identity and status in the male world. Particularly, she has vividly addressed her women in the flux of moral and ethic at

all. So, her novels are the achievement of those Thai women novelists who have successfully presented all the real aspects and different shades of women's lives.

To the best of my knowledge no comparative study of these two women novelists Kamala Markandaya and K. Surangkanang has been done so far. All these two novelists have written on the issue of women's oppression and suppression by male-dominant society. They have exposed women's sufferings through the perspective of their own experiences. However, each one of them is looking at the oppression and suppression of women in a male-dominating society. Kamala Markandaya has presented from her Indian woman's perspective and K. Surangkanang from a Thai woman's view.

The purpose of my research is to explore Asian women's experiences as depicted by women novelists belonging to different nations, regions, languages, cultures and social milieus. This study will mainly focus on women novelist of two different nations and cultures, India and Thailand. This study will help to research and analyze women's continuing subalterneity in a world that has given so much political freedom to women.