



## WOMEN-WRITERS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of the American Dream suggests that individuals, regardless of their background, can improve their circumstances through hard work. While this holds true for men, women encounter numerous challenges in realizing this dream. Women play vital roles in society and face obstacles globally in what is often perceived as a male-dominated world. In India, women have been revered as goddesses since ancient times, yet they are not always treated as such in reality. Merely regarding women as divine figures is insufficient; genuine women's empowerment requires sustained, cooperative efforts from both men and women. Initially, women were confined to household duties and restricted to domestic spaces. Over time, there has been an increase in female literacy rates, leading to some advancements. Throughout history, women have utilized writing to express a wide range of emotions and experiences, not only in English but also in other languages. This paper aims to explore various genres of women's literature globally to gain insight into women's lives and their portrayal in literary works. Additionally, it seeks to compare the writings of women in India with those of other countries, both historically and presently, to assess progress in achieving women's empowerment.

**Key words :** Women empowerment, literature, Legislations, challenges, transitions, achievements.

**INTRODUCTION:** Women play significant roles in society from birth to death. Despite excelling in various roles, they are often perceived as weak due to the prevailing notion of men as the stronger gender. Despite government initiatives and awareness programs, women's lives remain more complex than men's. They juggle multiple responsibilities as daughters, sisters, daughters-in-law, wives, mothers, and more, yet many still manage to pursue careers for the betterment of themselves, their families, and their country, albeit with great effort. Women's literature, traditionally defined as writing by women, is a field that has garnered increasing interest,



challenging simplistic definitions imposed by publishers. Historically, women's writing has been overlooked due to their subordinate status in male-dominated societies, leading to their underrepresentation in literary studies and anthologies. The purpose of women's literature is to provide a platform for marginalized voices, allowing for exploration of their unique sociopolitical experiences and contributions to culture.

**LITERATURE REVIEW:** In the early stages of literary history, women were pioneers in expressing their lives and emotions through writing, with a predominantly female audience. Several writers made significant contributions to women's literature, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, whose "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" paved the way for other women to publish their works and engage in discussions on women's issues in literature. While some men also supported women's writing, early catalogs acknowledging women's literary contributions were often authored by men, like John Duncombe's "Feminead" and George Ballard's "Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain." However, the primary audience for women's writing remained women themselves. Notable examples include Mary Scott's poem "The Female Advocate," which praised contemporary women writers. Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" is recognized as a catalyst for the women's literary movement, advocating for space and resources for women's literature. This inspired the creation of literary journals like *Room*, dedicated to promoting female writers. In recent years, there has been a focus on intersectionality, exploring the interplay of race, gender, religion, and class in literature, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging marginalized groups. These efforts demonstrate the necessity of inclusion and activism, benefiting both women and the literary tradition as a whole.

**DISCUSSION AND RESULTS:** Feminist scholars argue that women's writing has historically been undervalued within literary culture, often struggling to gain recognition and facing dismissal as frivolous, even when popular during their lifetime. Great Writers Inspire features a collection on Feminist Approaches to Literature, which provides a starting point for exploring gender in literature. Additionally, the site introduces various women writers and offers resources to highlight their significance.

Aphra Behn is highlighted as a noteworthy figure, described as a woman navigating a male-dominated world, a staunch Royalist, a spy, and a writer unafraid to challenge societal norms. Virginia Woolf, in her seminal work "A Room of One's Own," also recognizes Behn's importance, underscoring her pioneering role as England's first self-identified professional female writer.



Woolf's own text, "A Room of One's Own," discusses the necessity of both literal and metaphorical space for women's writing. While Woolf initially mentions several prominent women writers like Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, the Brontës, and George Eliot, she ultimately delves into broader themes of women's creative freedom and empowerment.

In essence, the discussion underscores the importance of recognizing and promoting women's contributions to literature, as well as the need for space and support for their creative endeavors.

**CONCLUSION:** During the Progressive Era from 1890 to 1920, women sought to redefine womanhood significantly. They fought for the right to vote, to dress in modern attire, to liberate themselves from restrictive clothing like corsets, to pursue employment outside the home, and to have a role in society beyond domestic duties. By 1900, the concept of the "new woman" had emerged. These modern women were engaging in higher education, entering the workforce, advocating for suffrage, challenging traditional gender roles, confidently asserting themselves in public, and becoming prominent figures in popular culture and literature.

Women writers of the time, particularly through the genres of regionalism and realism, focused on the intricacies of women's lives within the domestic sphere to explore the complex relationship between women's development and the societal norms that shaped them. In regionalism, women writers depicted a harmonious, and sometimes idealized, connection between women and the land, reflecting their thoughts, emotions, and struggles through the natural environment. Realist novels often portrayed female protagonists navigating urban landscapes, their destinies intertwined with the forces of capitalism and patriarchal dominance.

These writers frequently employed romantic and domestic storylines to not only delve into women's roles within the home but also to examine their broader societal position. They aimed to depict life objectively, emphasizing everyday details. At the turn of the century, society produced a generation of women who were sheltered and isolated, disconnected from the world beyond their familiar surroundings. Many writers criticized society for reducing women to decorative ornaments while simultaneously portraying them as complicit in perpetuating this image by accepting society's narrow definition of femininity.



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