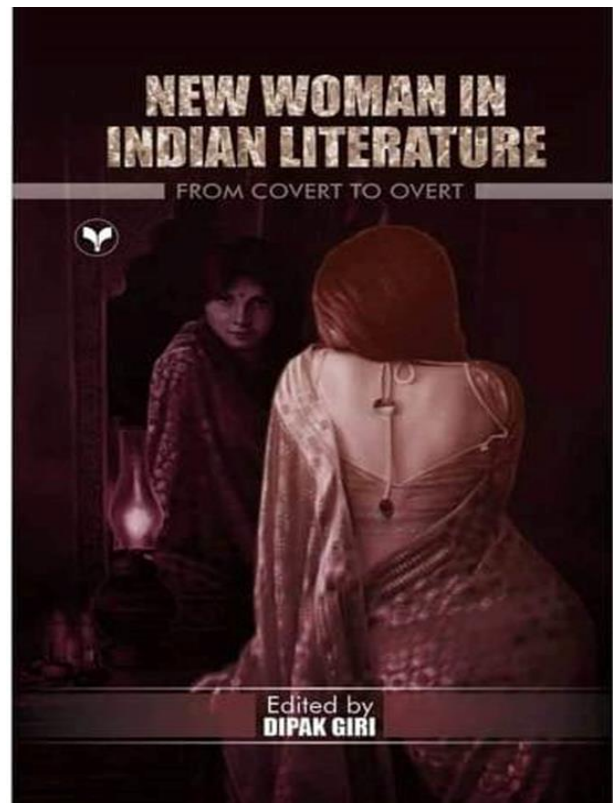


**Dipak Giri's *New Woman in Indian Literature: From Covert to Overt*,  
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During the first wave of feminism, the English feminist writer Sara Grand spearheaded the emergence of the radical idea of the new woman. The concept is basically associated with the independent and fearless identity of womanhood as a celebration of self. The notion of the “new woman” in Indian literature has been introduced by Dipak Giri’s book *New Woman in Indian Literature: From Covert to Overt* which serves as an icebreaker. This book has created a cohesive whole by fusing the many forms of the newly popular trend of femininity in Indian literature. Twenty-six well-researched chapters on this new



writing trend which has been rapidly expanding over the past few decades are included in the book. The writers who have contributed are incredibly thoughtful, real and in-depth in how they express their thoughts and opinions. The book’s authors expect that by focussing on several novel concepts and ideas that haven’t been thoroughly investigated, it can benefit critical thinkers. A chapter titled “Assertive Nature of Modern Women as a Threat to Indian Traditional Practices: A Study of Select Women Protagonists of Manju Kapur” by Prof. D. Amalraj opens the volume. Since ancient times, Indian civilisations have honoured and

adhered to customs with utmost sincerity and seriousness. These social norms serve as guidelines for women in their many responsibilities as daughters, wives, mothers and single people on Earth. Today's women have many options in life and may establish their equality with men thanks to the educational opportunities available to them. However, in real life, women are not supposed to defy their established cultural standards. By taking three female characters from *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman* and *Custody*, Prof. D. Amalraj has critically achieved to elaborate on how even a retaliation from a woman's part is taken as an objectionable attempt in society. The next chapter "Educational Empowerment of Anupama in Sudha Murty's Mahashweta" by Dr. Sindhu V. Jose on Sudha Murty's Mahashweta demonstrates how education can transform a marginalised woman like Anupama who has endured prejudice due to her skin condition, leukoderma, into a fiercely independent woman. Anupama is terrified of other people and extremely obedient at first. She gains the confidence to help others when she realises, she can stand on her own two feet.

Based on the same concept with numerous and new interpretations, this book explores the shattered identity, marital enforcement and systematic foundation of strict gender roles for females through the literary analysis of the texts, *Mango Coloured Fish*, *Socialite Evenings*, *Mistress of Spices*, *Home*, *Rich Like Us*, *Ladies Coupe*, *The God of Small Things*, *In Times of Siege*, *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Sita Betrayed*, *The Palace of Illusions*, *That Long Silence*, a poem "I Am Not That Woman," and select short stories of Ismat Chughtai by many authors.

Talking about womanhood and the new woman in an Indian context, then it is still in its building and developing stage, or maybe it is something that cannot be achieved completely. Here in this book Dipak Giri has left no stone unturned by selecting and forming those chapters which talk about all the possibilities, certainties and manipulated residual scenarios of gender performativity. By reading the chapters, one can find the traces of *écriture féminine*, as most of the texts are written by women herself. The exploitative practices of Shari, Paru, Teji, Yash, and Ruku in their day-to-day lives are examined in the novel *Mango Coloured Fish* by Anmona Bora. Though these characters experience humiliation and failure in real life, they aim to love and happiness in their family lives. The central theme of the narrative is Shari's reflections throughout her marriage to Gautam. Yasmeen Jan and Dr. Shachi Sood have deconstructed Shobhaa De's first novel, *Socialite Evenings*. This novel appropriately interpreted the duplicity of elite class society and their treatment of their housewives which creates and generalises the false image of empowered and new women in Indian society,

which is also asked to be followed by upcoming generations. Through a loveless marriage, a disastrous extramarital affair and courtship by a prominent Indian film director, Karuna, the narrator, manages to escape her dull middle-class life and ascend to the pinnacles of wealth and celebrity. Eventually, she finds pride and success as an advertising copywriter and TV serial creator. To the West, the story of the affluent lady who leaves her husband and her empty existence behind to find herself may sound clichéd, but perhaps not to Indians.

Anila Chandran has chosen to delve her critical study in the classic cult magical realism novel of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni titled, *Mistress of Spices*. The protagonist not only sells Indian spices but also uses her enchanted ability to read the minds of the immigrants who frequent her store to assist them in solving their issues by matching them with the exact spice they want. Divakaruni even personifies the spices in the book. Because of its legendary origins, every spice has a unique mythological reputation for treating both physical and mental illnesses. Dr. Romina Rashid took her pen straight for the new woman concept without beating about the bush, which is fascinating and inquisitive to read. The fast-paced and captivating story of three generations of a business family led by Banwarilal is told in the novel *Home*. He moved to Karol Bagh, Delhi, following the partition, and now operates a sari company there. As we all know, Ismat Chughtai's short stories always give awe-stricken goose bumps with every reading of the same texts. Due to her relatability from the past, present and possible future, Dr. Prachi Priyanka has not failed to show that in her chapter, titled "Language of Desire and Expression of Female Sexuality in the Stories of Ismat Chughtai."

Nayantara Sahgal invests her writing in an incredible novel that runs through the backdrop of historic political turmoil, as mostly political discussion is expected and done by men, but here in this novel her narrators are women themselves. *Rich Like Us* tells the tale of how the democratic principles upon which this nation was built were destroyed during the Emergency of 1975. The lives of two women—the young, intelligent, outspoken Sonali and the Cockney Memsahib Rose—tell the narrative. They loved learning about living in the emergency of Indira Gandhi. Not only in households, but women must also be empowered and independent in all aspects of human race. Keeping this thing in mind, Shazia Qadri beautifully describes the new woman concept with the analysis of Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* in the ninth chapter of this book. In order to read women's writings today with awareness, one must first deconstruct men's writing from the perspective of women. For example, analysing Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* will reveal the hidden desires of women that are authentically expressed in a story written by a woman, enhancing gender consciousness and highlighting

the obstacles that stand in the way of a true representation of women and their goals. Dipak Giri has undoubtedly made a good decision of including this text in his tenth chapter analysed by Ragini Kapoor.

Every researcher and professor has contributed the best part of her or his knowledge and research potential in each chapter. Bringing authenticity and originality into thoughts is something that is considered difficult to do, but Dipak Giri has not failed in doing this, not just collecting and selecting the best for this book, which justifies the title, but also giving his touch of editing and knowledge, be it a cover page, introduction and citation of each chapter. From the selection of words to the selection of literary appropriateness to fulfil the need, he absolutely wins each part. In the rest of the chapters, researchers like Mohd Ishaq Bhatt have touched on Githa Hariharan's concept of a new woman. Dr. Vishali Sharma has depicted *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman* by Manju Kapur under the same canon of a new woman with a slight touch of the writer's perspective also. Ankita Dutta has taken Indian Urdu writer Qurratulain Hyder's novella *Sita Betrayed* and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*. Like any other Urdu writer, she also did not fail to bring boldness to her tone, hitting the same place where it affected the minds of the readers. Other contributors such as Meera S. Menon, Rosu Jojo, Alik Jha, Indrani Choudhuri, Samar Sutradhar, Priyabrata Dey Sarkar, Anindita Datta, Amrita Datta, Tinku Das, Saurabh Debnath, Shyamal Kumar Saha, Rabindra Sutradhar and Dipak Giri, the editor himself, have collected the best Indian literature to make the concept clearer and more relatable with all the possibilities of intertextuality and theories.

Dipak Giri's systematic, critical and literary evaluation of the new woman concept profoundly unveils the attempts of numerous Indian writers and justifies the title of the book "From Covert to Overt". Many Indian writers have tried their best with their literary power to introduce new women in their works, but Dipak Giri has taken one step ahead by analysing and collecting different perspectives on this foreign concept. Indian classical novelists such as Premchand's female characters, Dhania from *Godan*, Suman from *Sevasadan*, Gangi in "*Bade Ghar ki Beti*," Nirmala in *Nirmala*, Sukhda, Sakina, and Munni in *Karmabhoomi* explore this concept through the lens of literature from the beginning, but a much smaller number of researchers and writers has shown their interest in this concept by analysing Indian literature. Dipak Giri's initiative undoubtedly takes this concept from covert to overt with precision and hard work that is possibly visible in the chapters.