

Introduction

This volume was planned about one year into the pandemic—the Corona Virus Disease of 2019 (CoVid 19)—when it became obvious that the lockdowns and the practice of working from home were having the greatest brunt on women. Homemakers or career women: upon them fell the onus of running the house, caring for the family and in some cases being subject to violence by members of their own families. This volume highlights the voices of women, specifically of the Twentieth Century. Originally conceived as being based only on autobiography and memoir, it has been expanded to include fiction as well, considering such creative work also as distinctively expressive of the voice of women.

The papers in this volume begin with the experiences of women in India, and move through Bangladesh, Japan, Botswana and the United States of America. The final paper brings in the experiences of immigrants from Mexico, Rwanda, Vietnam and Iran. Some of the papers explore disturbing aspects of the violence women have to face within the home as in Rohit Prasad's paper on Dressler, and in the public sphere as in the works of Mahasweta Devi as examined by Ananya Ghosh.

A variety of genres has been addressed in this volume. We begin with travelogues recording the cultural exposure experienced by Indian women travelling in England in Sarbajaya Bhattacharya's paper and the memoirs of two outspoken Indian writers in the paper contributed by our current final year students Ananya Sarkar and Debapriya Sarkar. Julie Banerjee Mehta takes up Gita Mehta's treatment of myths in her book *A River Sutra*. Short stories by writers from two continents are examined by Ananya Ghosh. The focus of the paper by Jasmine A. Chowdhury is Tahmina Anam's narrative set in the time of the birth of Bangladesh and the way in which

life histories of women are intertwined in the history of a nation. Atisha Rai's paper explores how the condition of the atomic bomb survivors of Japan, particularly the women, tends to get reframed to diminish the horror of their experience. Graphic novels are taken up by two contributors: Rohit Prasad suggests that this is, perhaps, the best medium to take up and validate the experience of survivors of domestic violence; also, the Vietnamese Thi Bui, one of the four immigrants in Udita Chakraborty's paper, presents her experiences in the form of a graphic memoir.

The diversity of places, cultures and genres only tends to highlight the essential similarity of the situations and experiences of women living in patriarchal societies. It is in their creative writing that their voices can be heard.

MANGALA GAURI CHAKRABORTY

December 2021