

THE HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION OF MUGHAL EMPRESS IN INDU SUNDARESAN'S TAJ TRILOGY

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Abstract

*Historical works will describe and examine the lives of many brave heroes and the many hardships they faced, which we learned through hearing stories and reading them in the books. In the historical stories, we know many strongest heroes than women as our historians, leaders, and the ones who were ready to drop their blood for the country. When history came into the literature, it is a thing that was beyond the imagination. Because history is a true event that was placed before many centuries that informs future generations about the past, literature is an imagination. Over the past few years, the relationship between history and literature has become intertwined, a tumultuous relationship that understands by novelists, and historiographers. The Mughal kingdom has an everlasting impact on the whole concept of the country. Indu Sundaresan is an Indian-born American writer. She is the author of the Taj Trilogy, a historical fiction writer. In Taj Trilogy, there are three books *The Twentieth Wife* (2002), *The Feast of Roses* (2003), and *The Shadow Princess* (2010).*

Keywords: *Self-Reliant, Rational, Psychic, Nurture, History*

Introduction

Indu Sundaresan has penned five historical novels and a collection of short stories set in the present and is not a self-described feminist. Although she does not explicitly use a feminist perspective when writing her novels, a close reading reveals a feminist awareness. The feminist style that permeates her literature is made clear by the fact that all of the main characters and protagonists in her creative works are women, and their perspective is central and dominating. Her female characters appear to match Chaman Nahal's definition of "what a woman should be: A woman should be conscious, self-control, independent, and sensible, believing in the inherent strength of feminism.

Only by becoming liberated inside oneself can a genuine transformation be brought about in her novels.

The fiction of Indu Sundaresan has been researched in bits and pieces, concentrating on a particular area of her work, but an intensive study project on her whole body of work has not yet been performed, which has been confirmed by a record-browsing exercise. In order to better understand Indu Sundaresan's fiction, this research proposes to analyse it from a feminist viewpoint, which permeates all of her writing.

Indu Sundaresan's series of this whole novel is the chronicles of the life and the periods of three Mughal Emperors in India; Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan. The first novel of the series, *The Twentieth Wife* starts with the birth of Ghias Beg's daughter Mehrunnisa and it continues into her entire life, and it also portrays how her life gets tangled with Emperor Akbar's son Prince Jahangir. However, the novel's power comes in the fact that it is more than just a beautiful story; it is set against the backdrop of gripping political intrigue and the exotic secrets of the Emperor's Zenana (Harem). Indu Sundaresan created a tapestry of words that is as rich as the lives she recounts by weaving facts in and out of poetry. It is established right away that Ghias Beg's daughter Mehrunnisa was an ambitious woman living in a world dominated by males, and that over half of the choices she makes in her life are influenced by the men and the culture in which she lives.

Mehrunnisa is wed off to Ali Quli Khan Istajlu when Emperor Akbar orders against Salim's objections, that the delicate daughter of his courtier Mirza Ghias Beg be handed in marriage to the cruel Persian soldier. Only seventeen years later, after Akbar has passed away and Jahangir is the new Emperor, Mehrunnisa's circumstances change, and she ultimately ascends to the position of Empress. Here the first novel comes to an end. After their marriage, Jahangir and Mehrunnisa's narrative is told in *The Feast of Roses*, along with the politics and conquests of the Mughal era at its pinnacle of grandeur. In this novel, all of Mehrunnisa's goals are attained one by one as she inadvertently makes her way into Jahangir's heart, onto his bed, and finally into his court.

The Emperor himself has no ill will against her, and gives in to all of her requests, even if they are shrouded in magic and romance. He even goes so far as to let her appear in court while covered up in front of other men, which is blasphemy considering that at the time, other males could only see Muslim women through the marble latticework of the Zenana screen. There are conflicting accounts about Mehrunnisa's personality; some claim she was ruthless and ambitious, while others claim she was quite attractive and delicate. Here, Indu Sundaresan succeeds in combining all these traits into that of the most powerful Mughal Empress. This love story appears even more alluring and exotic than the Shah Jahan and Mumtaz whether it is because of the energy of this character or anything

else. The mausoleum that Nur Jahan constructed for her father Ghias Beg, also known as Itimaduddaula served as the model for the Taj Mahal. In *The Twentieth Wife*, Meheunissa had a dominating role that completely changed various people's lives in the empire. She fought against male dominance and also, and she fought with female resistance.

In *The Feast of Roses*, Mehrunissa is Jahangir's favourite wife. When Mahabat taken away Empire Jahangir, Mehrunissa never lost her courage to secure her husband Jahangir. She took the decision to fight with Mahabat who took away her husband and his mass. She guided all the men in her mass for the battle and she led those masses to rescue her husband, Emperor Jahangir. When she started fighting with Mahabat and his soldiers she seemed like a courageous soldier to all. All her soldiers saw her as a wounded lion who can do anything to save her loved one. In this battle, she showed all the superiority and excellence of a strong and brave fighter, and also all the other soldiers believed that she was the backbone of Emperor Jahangir. Mehrunissa is the woman who is not only herself in the position of Emperor's Wife and Queen of Jahangir but she secured a notable place for her in Indian History.

The construction of the Taj Mahal for Shah Jahan's most cherished wife, Mumtaz, is covered in more detail in *The Shadow Princess*. It is focused on the strong princess Jahanhara, Shahjahan's favorite daughter, and the power struggle among the four Princes that lastly results in Aurangzeb's ascension to the throne, the house imprisonment of Emperor Shahjahan, and the latter's death. Emperor Shah Jahan is devastated when his daughter Jahanara gives birth to his fourteenth child and dies in childbirth. He forbids her from marrying anyone because he cannot bear to be separated from her. Jahanara is, therefore, unable to wed Mirza Najabat Khan, despite her love for him, even though they had a child together. Additionally, it witnesses the youthful Aurangzeb prancing around the palace while displaying oddly human traits and already possessing a touch of fanaticism and ruthlessness.

The Mughal era is linked with richness, an exotic aspect, haughty monarchs and beautiful queens, enormous palaces, and enthralling love stories. Without ever crossing any artistic lines, the author skilfully incorporates all of these into her novel, making for a delightful read. The absence of explicit portrayals of needless violence or sex is a huge bonus. The fact that the author opens each chapter of this trilogy with a passage from the Akbarnama, or another source shows that the author did an extensive study before writing the novel.

In Indu Sundaresan's *Taj Trilogy*, she wonderfully portrays all the queens who appear as responsible representatives of self-reliant and brave women who can destroy all the rules and constrictions of the male-dominated society which narrowed the woman's

traditional restriction of the sheltered corner in the house. Indu Sundaresan also described the potential that women can attain through their own knowledge. With talent and interest in history, the author Sundaresan weaves a tale that explores the lives of Indian women, their fights for power, and its effects by fusing reality and fiction. In the *Taj Trilogy*, Indu Sundaresan paints a vision of powerful women who share administrative responsibilities and influence the nation's destiny in a society where males rule.

The Empress is kept in the center of the action, and the viewpoint of women is also highlighted in the writing of the story. The novel has a number of aspects that immediately catch the reader's attention. Being Indian, the author has exquisitely portrayed the buildings that belong under the category. The fighting scenes have been described in the smallest details and provide insight into the king's tactics at the time. The Mughal law of accession has been spelled out quite plainly.

In her *Taj Trilogy*, Indu completely misrepresents the Mughal harem and its brash, energetic queens and princess. The lives of Mehrunissa, better known as Nur Jahan, and Jahanara, the daughter of Shah Jahan, were based on *The Twentieth Wife*, *The Feast of Roses*, and *Shadow Princess*, respectively. In all these books, Sundaresan carefully crafts the enthralling story of Nur Jahan and Jahanara. To illustrate the lives of Nur Jahan and Jahanara, Sundaresan cleverly combined reality and fantasy. Her desire to explore India's past had a key role in developing the intriguing story of Nur Jahan, one of the most divisive women in Indian history. Mehrunissa transformed into Nur Jahan, the brightness of the world after she married Jahangir. This historical fiction requires a reasonable balance between truth and fiction and offers the author a great deal of creative freedom to fill in the blanks of the past with inventive retelling.

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