



## **‘Women’s Question’ and Socio-Political Scenario: Re-reading the Three Generations in Ashapura Devi’s Satyabati Trilogy**

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### Abstract

The paper is a study of Ashapura Devi’s *Satyabati Trilogy* in English translation to locate the women’s question of nineteenth century Bengal. The polemics of the paper has been divided into sub-sections to highlight the thematic conflict as well as to focus on the concerns of the time which ranged from women’s education, relationship women shared with each other to the reforms that were carried out from the domestic quarters by the women to foster their emancipation as well as that of the nation’s. Interrogations regarding the child-bride form a rich section as the colonial Hindu system had wittingly or unwittingly entrusted her with the burden of maintaining of the native patriarchal structure. Among the middle class household the *sishu-kanya* (girl child) occupied a major concern as she must become a *bhadramahila* (gentle woman) in future and adhere to the customs of maintaining respectable and orderly demeanour and decorum. Perusal of relationship between mother and the daughter would bring the paper to a resolution and in this respect the works of Adrienne Rich have been looked into.

The narrative revolves around the rebellion that was started by the grandmother, Satyabati to reform the dilapidated condition of women in home and at society and is carried on by the granddaughter, Bakul in the fashion of carrying forward the matrilineal inheritance. Throughout the saga the glorification of motherhood and the burden of being dutiful daughter and wife has been demolished to bring forth the individual role, of which being a daughter, wife and mother was only a part to the woman’s identity. A section is dedicated towards the minor female characters of the novels to portray their life struggles and how they nurtured deep bonds of diverse female relations. That harmony could reign between co-wives and sister-in-laws was unthinkable to the patriarchy as a result of which these relations were portrayed as ones fraught with jealousy and strife. However, diverse examples lace the novels which show how co-wives have resided in harmony and have nurtured profound friendship so that together they could endure and resist the oppressions of patriarchy.





The paper would conclude by looking at the reforms that were generated from the domestic quarters against the hegemony, which not only initiated change in the private space but also led on to create impact on the public domain. Through these acts of transgression the public and the private bifurcation of space erased to make it a homogeneous ground for the female where she must create her own space. The trilogy is not a story of the three protagonists alone but also of those women whose conscience awakened for liberation as well as those who unfortunately failed to see the light of emancipation. Lucidly enumerating, Ashapura Devi showed the transcendence of women from deadlock conditions at cultural spaces to personhood whereby, they confront the oddities of patriarchal society and become autonomous self.

**Keywords:** L'écriture Feminine, Antahpur, bhadramahila, Child widow, Nationalism.

