
ANITHA DESAI'S ANALYSATION OF WOMEN CHARECTERS

DR. M. SURESH KUMAR, Y. SUMITHRA

Abstract: A novelist of considerable merit, Anita Desai has enriched the tradition of the Indian novel in English by her persistent concern with the themes of anxiety, anguish and psychological adaptation. She is an artist of a high order and her concern for human lot has imparted profound appeal to her novels. She has delineated in her novels the problems and plights of alienated individuals caught in the crises of a changing society. She excels in highlighting the miserable position of highly sensitive and emotional women, tortured by a humiliating sense of neglect, of loneliness and of desperation.

A close study of her novels reveals her zest in tackling the themes of psychological crisis of her protagonists. Many of her characters find the real world too harsh, difficult, unpleasant and too complex. Desai has explicitly shown in her novels how young men are always ready to work against tradition and their own families, whereas the younger women of the new generation lead them in the sufferance of unspeakable agonies. They have no faith in conventional religion and joint family and not following any conspicuous ideal, meet nothing but disaster in their lives. Eventually they meet with their unnatural death or lose their mental equilibrium. Maya in *Cry The Peacock* loses her mental balance to get rid of her suffocating environmental. Manisha in *Voices in the City* seeks refuge in suicide. Her novels are existential in tone, for they deal with contradictions the and predicaments faced by the individuals in the struggle of life. Anita Desai belongs to that graph of Indo-English writers.

Keywords : anxiety, anguish, psychological adaptation, sensitivity, Loneliness, desperation.

Introduction: Anita Desai has explore women charecters in her novels. She has an independent approach to women's problems in Indian social life as well as life in general. She does not accept the social tradition emphasized through religious mottoes and economic needs that a woman's body and soul are similar to a male-dominated family. She does not believe in the realization that:

"Marriage is a farce as all human relationships are."

Mrs. Desai has a definite idea of a happy conjugal life. Some of

Her young immature, romantic heroines seem to have this idea of a blissful, happy conjugal life; but the idea seems to remain only a rainbow dream. The concept of marriage which is related to a delicate union of two different minds has not been properly realized in most of the Indian male-dominated families. Woman's individual identity has not been positively and open- mindedly realized in Indian social life. Woman has never been accepted as a full-human being. She is taken for granted on number of fronts. This casual attitude causes her consistent suffering and miserable life.

Desai novels are an exploration of individuals their passions and emotions. They focus on humanities at the individual level, of private relationships in their immediate socio-psychic surroundings and of the inner dynamics of the incarcerated self grappling for self-identification.

In dealing with the interior landscape and the psyche or deal of the abandoned self, Desai has delineated the growth of the protagonist from self-alienation to self-identification J.P. Tripathy discover "a pattern of positive growth,"¹

in her novels. Thus, the hysterical and saturnine abnormality in *Cry the Peacock* gives way to a jovial, delectable and diurnal life view in *Clear Light of Day* and *In Custody*.

In Desai, the psychic travails of the estranged self-identification a measured and graded movement from self-desertion to self assertion. Their progress is a march from neurotic phobias and diseases to normalcy; from unreason to reason; from disorder to order. While Maya and Monisha spell their own doom by self-denial and self-annihilation, by their reluctance to succumb to the trivial and mundane realities of life, Deven and Bim realize that willing submission to and acceptance of existence will lead to fulfillment through positive self-alienation and not destructive self-abnegation.

In almost all her novels, the images of isolation which come pouring in the beginning gradually lead to images of affirmation. The self ultimately asserts itself through the abnormal and the unnatural. The rational manifests in the irrational. A scrutiny of Annita Desai's art.

"writes Usha Bande,"shows that the novelist is growth-oriented. The development from her first heroine, Maya, to her latest creations, Deven and Hugo, is the story of a steady ascent towards self-realization."²

Most of Desai's characters who remain disintegrated and fragmented in the beginning attain integration and a harmonious wholeness towards the end. Maya, in *cry, the Peacock* is torn between the inner ' and outer reality, Matrimonial silence and temperamental schisms bring about her despair. Smitten with the

pangs of isolation, she retreats in her mythical world of fables and fantasies. Her initial absorption in death, desolation and violence symbolized by the dance image, the image of the Albino and the dead to alienate her from life. Estranged, she begins to identify herself with caged birds, monkeys or bears, or, in a disturbed and agitated state, with the tempestuous dust-storm. But they soon fade away with her startling discovery that she loves life. It is her overwhelming desire to live, her spiritual identification with life that shifts the death sentence on to Gautama, and urges her to kill him. The Nataraja glimpsed at the end becomes a symbol of liberation and identification. She lives but only a fractured and a ramshackle of her

former self, in insanity and penitence the alienation of the individual

leading to the annihilation of the self in its identification with death and violence. In the process of her individuation, Maya steps out of her isolated death dungeon and moves towards self-affirmation.

All the three major characters in *Voices in the City* are alienated from society like their mother. Nirode is a visionary a rootless nihilist, a psychic outlaw. He opts for a life of shadows. The habit of withdrawal had become so strong with him that he becomes more and more weary of contact and companionship. He remains alienated from his mother whom he calls, "that old she cannibal" 3

A "broken bird in the aviary" 4

he loathes the world as well as himself.. Unable to elicit any response or dialogue from the members of the family, he feels castaway and forlorn.

Aloneness was his natural condition. He moves from self-alienation to self-idealization which he hardly achieves and is reduced to the identity of a

"shrunk, etiolated, wasted thing," 5

dedicated to nothing. To be or not to be was Hamlet's dilemma. Nirode's was to move or not to move:

"I would never go David. I never shall. I pack my bags. I arrive at the station and when I have one foot in the train, I hesitate." 6

Monisha's death brings about a drastic change in Nirode. A searing realization dawns upon him. He comes to the conclusion that wisdom lies not in avoiding the expense but in making the journey worth the expense. Having realized this, he takes matters into his hands and begins to identify with the sufferings of others. When Monisha was alive, he watched her suffering with indifference but when she died, he insisted on taking her away, so that she could have before total annihilation a little respite of peace and solitude:

"At that moment Nirode's silence broke and fell away.

In a brief

flash of comprehension, he realized what he must do.

He must take Monisha away." 7

Bye-Bye, Blackbird points to the self-discovery of the educated Indian immigrants, who wobble between self-alienation and self-identification. Sarah's marriage to Adit alienates her from her own culture and even from her individual self. She is doubly alienated. By marrying Adit, she had shed her identity:

"Cut loose from her moorings, she begins to drift round and round heavily and giddily, as though caught in a slow whirlpool of dark, deep water." 11

Her main problem is to discover her identity and attain self-actualization, but unlike Dev and Adit, she fails. For both Saiah and Adit, identification with reality occurs at schizophrenic planes, the two planes of the two cultural traditions and the fusion comes off only with Adit's decision to return to India.

Sita, the protagonist of Desai's fourth novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* suffers from a gnawing sense of aching void. As a housewife, the most vital link the mother is missing in her life. Her desperate need to belong and her shocking isolation makes her revolt, against her vegetable existence, and in the process, she undergoes a split in her personality. Throttling and choking sensations cripple her island life. She feels alienated not only from her husband but from the children too:

"They had betrayed her." 12

She prefers to

"withdraw into the protective chrysalis of childhood." 13

13

Feelings of hollowness and waste, futility and nothingness grow upon her. She is yet to attain consummation as a human being. By escaping to the island, she begins to shed her inhibitions and see that part of her self she had not realized before, In fact, the escape suggests an attempt at self-identification. She finally reconciles with life, accepts it and allows herself to drift with the current of life. Her final identification is not with death but with life. Sita identifies her quest for undifferentiated life in the jelly fish and with this identification; she realizes that all reality is existence, that there is no reality beyond the one that one lives. Though neurotic at the outset, Sita compromises with life. The world she abhorred so much brings to her awareness and an epiphany. She realizes the strange new knocking of life at her side and is able to see beyond despair, to connect and identify with the wholeness of her being.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, we see Nanda Kaul living like a recluse in the sprawling house, Carignano. In this lonely house, she has been living all these years, all alone,

"with no one and nothing else." 14

Doubly alienated from her over busy and hedonistic husband and also from the children, she revels in her life's

"bareness, its emptiness." 15

Raka to her is an
"outsider" 16

but Raka does not feel alienated. She is basically a child of solitude. She identifies herself with the desolation and bareness of Carignano. Both Nanda and Raka take recourse to self-destructive isolation as an escape from their self-contradictory conflicts. The claustrophobic milieu in which they live not only shuts them out from the 'Outside world but also isolates them from their own selves. Abandoned by her husband and wallowing in self-pity and bitterness, Nanda withdraws from the agitating and calcifying milieu into her cocooned self, but here, too, she meets with disgust and despair. A harrowing sense of failure pulls her apart to the extremes of self-

hate and self-despair. Raka's self-alienation is more profound and majestic than Nanda's withdrawal.

Nanda's final revelation of tenderness and love for Raka is an emotional identification with her juvenile self of bygone days. She is the fragment of what Raka is a complete whole.

In *Clear Light of Day*, the sole concern of the novelist is with the discovery of an identity that emerges out of the seemingly rootless and meaningless life in a small Hindu family. "In this ability to see meaning in an apparently absurd existence," observes R.S. Sharma,

A detailed study of Anita Desai's novels reveal to us that they deal with the existential problem of alienation of the emancipated, modern women passed through disharmony in marriage.

References:

1. J. P. Thipathy, *The Mind and Art of Anita Desai* (Bareilly Prakash, 1986), p. 157.
2. Mirunalini.P, Dr. N. Ramani, *Categories of Orthographic Errors Committed At initial, Medial and Final Positions By Primary Level Pupils*; *English Studies International Research Journal : Volume 3 Spl Issue (2015) ISSN 2347-3479*, Pg 65-67
3. Usha Bande, *The Novels of Anita Desai: A Study in Character and Conflict*(New Delhi: Prestige, 1988), pp. 169-70.
4. M. Lalitha Sridevi, *The Cassava's Voice: the Sense of 'Otherness' in Nwapa's Poems*; *English Studies International Research Journal : Volume 3 Spl Issue (2015) ISSN 2347-3479*, Pg 68-69
5. Anita Desai, *Voices in the City*(New Delhi: Orient, 1982), p. 103.
6. Anita Desai, *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*(New Delhi: Orient, 1985), p. 170.
7. Dr. J.K. Shah, E. L. Doctorow: A Writer of Historical Fiction; *English Studies International Research Journal : Volume 3 Spl Issue (2015) ISSN 2347-3479*, Pg 74-76
8. Anita Desai, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*(New Delhi: Orient, 1982), p. .
9. Anita Desai, *Fire on the Mountain*(New Delhi: Allied, 1977), p. 3.
10. Ummu Abubakar, *A Reflection of Hausa Moral Conduct in their Proverbs*; *English Studies International Research Journal : Volume 3 Spl Issue (2015) ISSN 2347-3479*, Pg 77-79
11. Anita Desai, *Clear Light of Day* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1981), p. 182.

Dr. M. Suresh Kumar

Associate Professor, Department of English, Acharya Nagarjuna University
Y. Sumithra

Research Scholar, department of English, Acharya Nagarjuna University,
Nagarjuna Nagar-522510, Andhra Pradesh.