

Sufferance and Self-identification in Anita Desai's Voices in the City

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Abstract:

Voices in the City, is deals with the conditions of women's life in the family and society. This represents the voice of women's anger, the voice of fear, and the quest for freedom. Anita Desai scrupulously points out the challenges of women in this novel. Desai is known as an explorer of her woman's interior life. She always uses novels to explore the inner psyche of her women characters. She is discussion also focuses on human relationship and their freedom of life in its real but inner perspective. This paper focuses on women's struggle for freedom amidst traditional culture and self-centered society, as portrayed in the characters of Monisha, who suffers within her traditional joint family, and Amla, who seeks to find her self-identification in a challenging and self-centered society.

Keyword: Women, sufferance, self-identification, traditional join family, self-centered society.

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Anita Desai is one of the eminent figures in the area of the writers of feminine. Her novels correctly represent the exact view that women need something more than food, clothes, and accommodation. Anita Desai is a prestigious Indian author known for her wrote the fascinating novel, describes the harmful effects of life upon an Indian family, insightful portrayals of human relationships and the intricacies of Indian society. Desai is one of the Indian writers who tried to change contemporary society with her pen. She is known for her sensitive portrayal of the inner feelings of her female characters. A close study of Anita Desai's works reveals her struggle for female autonomy played out against the backdrop of the patriarchal culture pattern. Feminism refers to the belief that women should have the same rights, power and

opportunity that men have. The demands of feminists are women's control over their own lives. The novels of Anita Desai are basically female oriented. Her female figure appears as a victim in a patriarchal, patrilineal and father dominated Indian family. Anita Desai depicts the Indian woman as a fighter, a victim, a heroine and in later novels ultimately a winner because of her indomitable spirit and attitude of compromise. She has portrayed both kinds of women those who are symbols of growth and change, those who are powerful means of withdrawal, regression, decay, death and distraction.

“Voices in the city” is one of the best novels written by her which comprises different characters with negative prospects. In the novel there is conflict in the psyche of the characters resulting in frustration. Due to sensitiveness their personal relationship becomes worse full and for which they seek neurotic solutions in their problems.”(08). Desai writes about a domestic world with a focus of examine deep into the inside of mind. Anita Desai's *Voices in the city*, she views the two sisters' struggle, trouble, ridiculed, and sorrows face in traditional family and self-centered society. She clearly shows that both are trying to find meaning in their lives and both characters are different way of perspective in their lives.

Analyzes Monisha's characteristics psychologically in 'Voices in the City' to reveal the world of a woman's nature. She reveals the inner psyche of Monisha, which has been recorded in her diary. It is Monisha's personal experience and the collective voice of the Indian Women that reflect Monisha's personal experience. Desai tries to focus on the nature of a delicate woman who tries to escape the oppressive system. The novel presents of marital discord. Monisha is not high educated women, and she marries Jiban and enters a new phase of life. Silence plays an important role in her life. Monish's husband is the prisoner of conventional culture. He believes that a woman's most important roles besides child bearing are cooking, cutting vegetables, serving food and brushing small children's hair under the authority of a step mother-in-law. Monisha feels that her privacy is denied to her. Her husband is busy with his middle rank government job with no time for Monisha and no desire to share her feelings. Her relationship with her husband is characterized only by loneliness and lack of communication. He does not bother to ask his wife, even when he finds some money missing from his pocket. Monisha's ill matched marriage, her loneliness, sterility and stress of living in a joint family with an insensitive husband push her to breaking point. She is in such toughest and pitiable situation

where she longs for a sensible touch from her husband. The verbal silence from her husband also makes her so dull, lonely and frustrated and she finds comfortable only in isolation. "I find on this level that solitude that becomes me most naturally I am willing to accept this status then, and to live here, a little beyond and below everyone else, in exile."(123). When she comes to live with her in-laws, she goes through the experience of having a surreptitious push from Jiban to touch feet after feet of various people. She has to spend time in the tiered balconies, in the room with the bars of windows, black bed and black wardrobe. The entire description makes it clear that the environment creates cold response and threat in her and makes her feel like a prisoner. There is totally lack of dialogue with her husband and she is all the time suffering from an oppressive sense of loneliness. Her husband is essentially mediocre. Monisha has to suffer the slings and arrows of taunts and tortures of the joint family. One day after her husband exit she takes money from her husband's packet. Her uncles and aunts look at her with suspicion. The incidents highlight the Indian women's economic dependence. Her tragic suffering is a classic example of the educated unemployed women in our times. Monisha is frustrated, lonely and lack of communication with her husband make her life is insignificant. The only escape from this state of existence is to accept solitude and to be in exile. She frantically tries to find a real meaning in her life, but feels utterly frustrated. She has a feeling that her life is devoid of any meaning and the only choice for her is between death and the meaning life. She realizes that not only her life but human life as such is an irresolvable mystery. Her last words are: "I am turned into a woman who keeps a diary. I do not like a woman who keeps a diary. Traceless meaningless uninvolved does this not amount to non-existence, please?"(140). Monisha's mean existence leads her to think death is the only alternative to her agonized living, to her confused despair. Monisha failing to cope with her psychic problems commits suicide.

Analyzes Amla, characteristics in 'Voice in the City' she seems to be so different from her siblings. Amla is the youngest who is unable to proof against the infection of the city. She struggles with similar issues as her siblings. Amla is an artist who has come from Bombay after studying commercial art and has come to Calcutta to make her professional career. Calcutta is like a monster for her, she feels that her "brother and sister are gobbled by the city monster."(33) While modelling for Dharma she feels a great change in her life. "Instead of being a commercial artist, she becomes another Amla, a flowering Amla, translucent with joy and overflowing with a sense of love and reward."(94). Amla is excited to be a part of Dharma's cosmopolitan meted out

to his own daughter, Amla grows disillusioned. The death of Monisha shakes her up and forces her to find a new perspective in her life, allowing her to come to terms with her dull job and boredom living in Calcutta. She finds something that satisfies her despite the fact that her uninteresting job at an advertising agency. Despite the city of Calcutta acting as a monster she finds satisfaction in making illustrations for a translation of the *Panchatantra*. Amla's pious self finds expression as she enjoys the spiritual and meaning message conveyed through these ancient Indian fables.

Conclusion:

The novel shows the struggling life of the characters. They struggle with life and finally reach to their destination. The women characters in *Voices in the City* being dissatisfied with their routine existence set out in search of a meaningful life. This individual confronts the problems in their own way. Monisha, in her state of sufferance made the decision to pouring kerosene over herself and burning to death. Amla, finally find her self-identification in self-centered society. The death of Monisha brings them some kind of revelation. Anita Desai has depicted the death of a girl as a sacrifice which brings out the new perception of the world of Nirode and Amla. Desai explores the way people try to search meaning in their lives. Sometimes, her characters succeed, as Amla does, and sometimes they fail, like Monisha. This is brilliant novel, full of light and darkness, life and death.

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