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**AN EXPLORATION OF FEMININE IDENTITY IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF
ANITA DESAI AND MANJU KAPUR**



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ABSTRACT

Anita Desai and Manju Kapur are prose author of emotion. It is also the focus of human consciousness such as Virginia Woolf and Jane Austen Women's suffering in the complex cultural tensions of Indian society. As new generation emerged, they embraced the changed values in which women had their own voice Suppressed for centuries.

The relationships described by Anita Desai and Manju Kapur are not happy and healthy relationships. The novel exposes her belief that the women themselves are not less responsible than men for the sufferings of women. Thus these two fictionists have been studied from the view point of psychological explorations of Indian women. These two great Indian women novelists handled various themes regarding

women's life and status in male dominated society. For example gender equality, her alienation, anxiety, insecurity, fear her marital familiar and social relation, sufferings and exploitation, struggle for new identity, Through these themes these women novelists have tried to project various images of women.

An attempt has been made in the present study to identify the concept of Domestic Relations in the context of two novels Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965) and two novels *Difficult Daughter* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002) by Manju Kapur's.

KEYWORDS

Woman, Relationship, Marriage, Identity, Exploration, Emerged.

RESEARCH PAPER

Introduction :

The present study is an honest attempt to introduce woman through her rightful place in the society, which till now is second only. This study also presents a picture of the impact of education on women, their new status today. Anita Desai and Manju Kapur mainly explore society and representation of female personality in their novels. The emotional world of women reveals a rare fictional awareness of the various forces at work and A deep understanding of women's sensibilities and psychology speaks against his writings. The misery and helplessness of thousands of married women tormented by existential problems. Anita Desai intends to reveal the inner psyche of the characters in her novels. Especially in modern life. Middle class women, are dissatisfied due to mental stress, unfulfilled aspirations and unsatisfied desires. The domestic and social conditions give rise to a type of neurosis. Diagnosis, Analysis of this mental illness is always evident in the female characters created in her novels.

Anita Desai portrays the inner conflict between her characters and also highlights their personalities and quests. Male and patriarchal forces are responsible for violent and disturbing things for freedom. Anita Desai knows how she is stuck and how she can live a new but, the obstacle is man, Man's entry into her world comes as a disturbing factor. Anita Desai's characters can be classified into two distinct groups - those who fail to adapt to the rigors. Realities of life and those who compromise. In a novel, as in life, there are things that always remain "Outsiders" because they cannot accommodate themselves to the world of reality.

The female characters in Manju Kapoor's novels, especially the main characters, find themselves in conflict. They struggle with the changed reality of their lives, including their domestic and social environment. Acts as an external physical reality, experiencing psychological conflicts of personal origin. At a certain point in their lives. Manju Kapoor is an Indian writer who has five books surprisingly, *Difficult Daughter* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2009) and *Custody* (2011). These novels reflect on the amalgamation of tradition and contemporary sentiments. All the women base their fiction on their own lives and encounters in their lives. Thus knowingly or unknowingly diminishing the field of women's work, Kapoor's works are merely an aimless discussion. Subverting the patriarchal

views that dominate women's lives, she nonetheless offers a profound Understanding the relationship between men and women. Gives a closer look at this. Desai mainly explores the emotional world of women, depicting a rare imaginative layer after layer, revealing the profound understanding of feminine sensibility. In Desai's novels, modern life especially of a middle-class woman is burdened with stress, unfulfilled longings, and unsatisfied emotional needs. The social and domestic set up cause serious disturbance mentally and emotionally. Desai portrays the inner conflict of Maya and reveals the psychological trauma due to her constant conflict between the inner and outer worlds.

Cry, The Peacock by Anita Nair (1963) :

Female identity in Cry, The Peacock is brought under the umbrella of Maya, the female protagonist of *Cry, The Peacock*. Her father's excessive love, care makes her behaving abnormally in her later life.

“women are as capable of choice as men, and thus can choose to elevate themselves.”

--- (*Simone De Beauvoir, The Second Sex*)

Maya is thus an extremely sensitive character, a portrayal of woman who has failed to come to terms with Hegemony and patriarchal order. Though she lives in the male world surrounded by male dominancy, she refuses to identify with it and revolts against it in her own way. As the story unfolds, she seeks her mother in the natural landscapes and gardens, gets solace in it, but her inner feelings and deepest desires would not be rejected. Though Maya is an affluent housewife with all the necessities of a comfortable city life fulfilled, yet she is neither happy nor satisfied, content housewife who compromises with her situation and thus suppressing her self-identity and feminine desire in her heart till she dies.

Even after four years of marriage, Maya is childless. There is a place in her life that cares for her as she gets naturally close to her pet dog Tutto, though not for long. Childless women are very fond of their pets. She pours out all her motherhood Love to Tutto. In doing so, she finds a way to escape her depressed husband and his coldness. Tutto's death makes Maya's situation worse. It creates emotionality Chaos arises in her life. She is heartbroken after losing her pet. When Gautama sees

Maya mourns the loss of Tutto, he utters,

You need a cup of tea, he said, I cried, yes, it is his hardness – no, no, not hardness, but the distance he coldly keeps from me. His coldness, his coldness, and incessant talk of cups of tea and philosophy in order not to hear me talk and, talking, reveal myself. It is that – my loneliness in this house

. -- (6) *Novel (Anita Desai)*

Desai portrays Maya's inner conflict mental trauma due to her constant Conflict between inner and outer world. Maya tries to come to terms with her reality but suffers a mental breakdown at the end of the novel Trauma, neurotic anger and fear. Maya is a very emotional and sensitive girl, who is very vulnerable to the harsh realities of life. Her main problem is her father's fixation. She tries to find her father in her husband, she marries Gautama, who is almost twice her age, expecting a father- like marks. As expected from her husband, she suffers emotional pain. Moreover, she is childless and strives for human attention. She realizes in several instances in the novel that she cannot bear the death of her pet dog Toto. Gautama's cold and casual demeanor adds to the trauma. Gautama does not meet emotional and physical needs. He lives her alone even in times of crisis. Thus a unbridgeable gap is created between Vartana Maya and her inner self Maya and Gautama. Her dreams and wishes and reality since her marriage are two different things.

Voices in the city by Anita Nair (1965) :

In this novel, Anita Desai has portrayed feminine psyche mainly through the character of Monisha, although there are other women characters also in the novel. Monisha is similar to Maya in that she is also childless, sensitive and a victim of ill-matched marriage. If Maya is lonely in her family because it is a nuclear family with no one except her husband Monisha's family has too many people, since it is a joint family. The over-crowded house makes her uneasy and even though she has her own room, literally yet metaphorically she hasn't, for the women of the family just never bother that the daughter-in-law may sometime need privacy. Her sisters-in-law always without any hesitation barge into her room making themselves comfortable on the big bed discussing Monisha's sarees and her blocked fallopian tubes. Her plight increases because sterility is a stigma for a married woman. Through Monisha, Anita Desai has portrayed the psyche of a sensitive intellectual woman who is suffocated in uncongenial atmosphere of her in-laws' house. She is happy neither with her husband nor with his family members. She seems to have been transplanted in the wrong soil. Because of her intellectual nature she is not much interested in religion even though she reads the Bhagwad Geeta. Several Shlokas from it, have been quoted. Had she been a believer, her anguish and plight would have been reduced but it is not so as she writes in her diary:

If I had religious faith, I could easily enough renounce all this. But I have no faith, no alternative to my confused despair, there is nothing I can give myself to, and so I must stay. The family here, and their surroundings, tell me such a life cannot be lived - a life dedicated to nothing - that his husk is a protection from death. Ah yes, yes, then it is a choice between death and mean existence, and that, surely, is not a difficult choice. (Desai: 1965, 87).

Voices in the City of Anita Desai, is a novel which discusses the idea of freedom in life. The idea of freedom in life is initiative in the subjective novel, It emerges as the recurrent theme. The novel in stream of consciousness technique delineates the struggle of the people with brutal forces. The novel in discussion also focuses on human relationship and their freedom of life in its real but inner perspective. The people, characters, in the novel seem to be products of the social ethos which get subjective. The movements and patterns both physical as well as mental get self-analytical but introspective. Therefore, the character's individual quest for a personal meaning in life or can be called freedom in life, is the recurrent theme of the novel in discussion it which happens to be unavoidable interest of the novelist, Anita Desai. The investigation, 'how the protagonists in the novel of discussion try to make their lives significant, meaningful and ambitious by struggling with the conflicts'.

A Difficult Daughter by Manju Kapur (1998) :

Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) is composed against the foundation of India's parcel. The tale is the account of Virmati seen through the eyes of her little girl Ida, the storyteller and a divorced person, from whom her mom's past has dependably been stayed quiet. Virmati's desire for instruction had hints of her having an autonomous wish. She needed to have her own space, her own character. Virmati, who winds up in a bind in view of her exhausting family obligations and the craving to think about, is made up for lost time in the snare of an unlawful undertaking which from one perspective, satisfies her scholarly thirst while on the other, traps her into a whirlpool of miseries. It is her inclination to set up herself as a person that captures her in the terrible methods for this world. Virmati battles and sets up her will to have advanced education. She doesn't have faith in organized marriage especially early marriage which she feels is huge obstacle to instruction, in this way she gets ready to remove the framework and what might be its results. She is mislead by conditions. However, she thinks about her enduring as destiny.

Virmati's wants to change her destiny from being a simple spouse and mother in a customary family, yet her adoration with a Professor makes her select the demonstration of coming back to a relationship that has just brought her only untold misery. Virmati's anguish portrays her as a sincerely starved being. The Professor's affection fulfils her passionate needs and it makes her rebel against her proposition to be engaged, with the goal that she could concentrate further.

Married woman by Manju Kapur (2002) :

In 'A Married Woman' Manju Kapur brings forth those hard facts that will go a long way in demystifying marriage. The novel discussed the tragic tale of the middle class working women with Astha as the main heroine and Peepilika as the titular one. Astha imbibes middle class values and latter suffers from a sense of incompleteness in her married life. Through the personal private lives of these characters Manju Kapur exposes the existing tension and the oscillation of the self between the two state of mind. She gives her readers valuable insights into the feminine consciousness through her protagonists. The urge to lead their own lives and the impulse to galvanize them drive them ultimately to disappointment. This is a beautiful, honest and seductive story of love and deep attachment, set at a time of political and religious turmoil in India. The story is really about how Astha changes from a unsure, college girl who has dreams of a mills and boons-type hero swooping in and carrying her away to a mature ,middle-aged woman who feels a little alienated in her marriage as time passes. This paper depicts how Astha has lost her identity and how until the end she was unable to find herself.

Manju Kapur present in her novel the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self sacrificing women towards self assured assertive and ambitious women making society aware of their demands and in this way providing a medium for self expression. We see the emergence of new women in Manju Kapur's heroines, who do not want to be rubber dolls for others to move as they will. Defying patriarchal notions that enforce women towards domesticity, they assert their individuality and aspire self reliance through education. They nurture the desire of being independent and leading lives of their own. They want to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond their husband and children. They are not silent rebels, but are bold, outspoken, determined and action oriented. All protagonists know they cannot depend on others to sort out the domestic situation and proceed to tackle on their own. In spite of getting education and freedom the women protagonists of Manju Kapur's novels does not blossom into new women in the real sense. Though they dare to cross one patriarchal threshold, they are caught into another, where their free spirits are curbed and all they do is 'Adjust, Compromise and Adapt'. through

Astha, the central character in 'A Married Woman', Kapur has revealed women have always been less important individuals.

Conclusion :

The relationship described by Anita Desai and Manju Kapur is not a happy and healthy one. What are the reasons behind this unhappy relationship? Why the characters of his novels could not be found. From this study you get an idea of the healthy development of their personality. Most of the main characters have a neurotic quality. That they are constantly disturbed by family relations which make them uncomfortable and cannot do because of these family relations. They note the existence of two trends simultaneously. A long tradition of worship prevalent in Indian society since Puranic times and Goddesses, as well as the tradition of denying human status to women. Again women are not treated equally. In a family under one roof, the mother figure can be all-powerful while her female counterpart is oppressed and humiliated. Such close observation of reality allowed Manju Kapur to develop an unbiased view.

Manju Kapur's novel reveals her belief that women themselves are responsible than men. The suffering of women. Both men and women in India must first broaden their consciousness. Criticizes their own feelings and attitudes to give equal status to women. Thus, we can say that A friendly, open and understanding husband-wife relationship depends on social balance. They are now showing better marriage lives and even follow the traditional as well as modern roles in their lives. The writers The current case study on Anita Desai has performed a significant function of instilling a positive "Feminine" identity rather than a female identity, role mo del women who deters the dependence on men. She has raised voice for the India women. Almost in all novels of the Anita Desai, she has always tried to convey the inner urges of her female protagonists through her writing and depiction of situation in a proper way that has echoed to all. These things have helped her to peep into the inner world of the women and delineated their reality in totality. She has always acted in her own way and attempted to express the feminism in her own way. She has contributed to the India with the feminist concern; the most important thing about her is the way of expression. Her all novels revolve around men and women of exception, incompatible couples and have always tried to explore the feminism in varied ways She has always covered the women of all age group and all types like children, old, intellectual, dull etc. in her writings which has made her one of the great feminist of the times.

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