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REVIEW ARTICLE

ESCAPISM IN ANITA DESAI'S "VOICES IN THE CITY"

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Escapism in Anita Desai's "Voices in the City"

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Anita Desai is undoubtedly one of the most powerful contemporary Indian novelists. A thorough study of the works of Anita Desai reveals that the main concern of her fiction is the exploration of human psyche. She believes in portrayal of inner reality. Anita Desai's fiction art is different from that of other women novelist of India. Born of German mother and Bengali Father, She takes up characters from the upper middle class families in her fiction in a confident manner whether Nayan Tara Sehgal and Kamal Markandya concern themselves primarily with the external political and social circumstances of their characters, Desai concentrates in their inner life of her characters she herself said once that written for her meant "plugging into the depths of the mind of my characters".

In *Voices in the City*, Anita Desai reveals the inner realities of all the characters of the novel in a skilful way almost all characters of the novel are marked for the quality of introspection.

They are introverts and are largely eccentric and abnormal in their mental makeup. They do not conform to the prevalent social codes. They think for themselves and charter the course of their own life. Each character in the novels is an unresolved mystery. The novelist portrays clearly the abnormalities of her characters, each of whom chooses to lead life in his or her own way.

Voices in the City shows the destructive effect of the urban values on the life of an Indian family caught in the vortex of the changing social values while Monisha leads the life of servile hardness within the rigid confines of a traditional extended Hindu Family Nirode is absorbed in the unconventional life of the metropolis. Their younger sister also reaches Calcutta after completing her school from Bombay. She gets emotionally involved with an aged artist. Disillusionment and despair are their lot in the city. Their elder's brother, Arun, however, escapes to England and settles down there.

Though parents Child relationship seems to be the chief theme of the novels yet some other human relationships have been described by the author. Nirode who may be called the chief character of the Novel is a young man who has been brought up in an

atmosphere of comfort and luxury by an over indulgent mother He decides to lead a free life in he city of Calcutta. We observe that the Theme of alienation has been treated in this novel. The disharmony which existed between husband and wife has affected the life of the children who do not get emotional support from their parents.

Nirode has developed such a strong antipathy towards his mother that he does not want to read even her letters. He goes to the extent of using filthy and even vituperative language against her and describes her as the cannibal. Nirode suspects that after her husband's death, she has developed a clandestine affair with major Chaddha. When Nirode starts the publication of a new paper; he gets seriously involved in financial difficulties. He can get out of these difficulties if his mother gives him financial help. But a very thought of taking her help appears repugnant to him. As the time passes Nirode's attitude toward his mother hardens. At the end of the novel Nirode identifies his mother with Kali 'the goddess of death'. He thinks that his alienation from her is pushing him towards death.

The abnormal behavior of his mother has shocked Nirode so much that his own behavior towards the other member of the family becomes badly affected. He is irked at the fact that his mother has proved untrue to his father by developing affection for major Chaddha. He even begins to hate the institution of marriage. His analysis of married couples is not positive. So he becomes hostile toward the members of the family and towards his friends.

The novelists as presented a moving account of marital discord in the character of Monisha. She is married to Jiban and is daughter-in-law of joint family. She is incapable of producing children, so she is taunted and jarred by the women members of the family. The elderly female members of the family examine her undergarments and saris in vulgar manner she suffers from an oppressive sense of loneliness because she has no communication with her husband. The Following statements about Jiban sums up her predicament in clear manner "Jiban

remains sitting with us, but jiban is never with us at all"

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What hurts Monisha deeply is the fact that she is incapable of bearing children. The remark about her sterility hurt her deeply. She has a library of her own which consists of classics of different languages. But she has neither time nor privacy to read these books. She thinks that not only her life but human life is also an unsolvable mystery. Monisha suffers from a terrible sense of alienation. Monisha feels that her life has no meaning and she commits suicide in the end.

Life of other characters in the novel is devoid of love. Amla experiences feelings of love for dharma. Who is a talented painter and is a friend of Nirode. The mother of these three characters in the novel is also a shadowy figure. Thus Anita Desai has admirably documented the city of Calcutta, its cultural, social and economic atmosphere in the voices in the city. She shows the loneliness, separation, escapism and dejection of her characters. She is a feminist who brings out the true mental state of characters in the novel. All the Chief characters of the novel lead their life according to their instinct. In the end we can say that the novelist successfully shows the complicated and chaotic mental life of all characters in this novel.

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