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MAN WOMEN RELATIONSHIP IN ANITHA DESAI NOVEL

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Man Women Relationship in Anitha Desai Novel

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Abstract – Anita Desai is one of the most powerful contemporary Indian Novelists in English. Her interpretation of man-woman relationship is influenced and conditioned by complex social milieu. Mostly woman are culturally as well as emotionally dependent on man and any disruption in relationship proves to be a loss of self. In this paper we present about man women relationship in Anitha Desai novel.

Keywords: Relationship, Women, Life, Novel

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INTRODUCTION

Anita Desai, one of the most distinguished among the younger set of Indo-English writers, does not like to separate art from life and always sees them as a part of one pattern drawing upon each other for their existence. In every circumstance and in each and every walk of life she presents powerful characters with full enthusiasm and encouragement. Sensitiveness is the main characteristic in all her famous novels. Anita Desai excels in depicting the pathetic pictures of a lovely married Indian woman who aspires to triumph over the chaos and suffering of her unusual existence. She writes that the life of women in India is slow and empty but on the other hand, in the West it is hurried, busy and crowded. Hence in her sense, both types of life in the East and West cannot give full satisfaction to the heart of the woman.

In her first novel *Cry, the Peacock* Desai discovers the turbulent emotional world of the neurotic protagonist. Maya looks smart even under an acute alienation stemming from marital discord, and verges on a curious insanity. She pictures the story of Maya who is haunted by a childhood prophecy of a fatal disaster. She is the daughter of a rich advocate in Luck now. Being alone in the family, her mother being dead and brother having gone in America for his own independent destiny, she gets the most of her father's affection. Having lived a carefree life under the indulgent attention of her loving father, she desires to have similar attention from her husband, Gautama. Herein lies, the innocent heart of Maya with a pathetic cry for the company of Gautama who fails to afford a key to her marital harmony.

Anita Desai takes the theme of the encounter between the East and the West, both on the level of people and on the level of ideas. She is essentially Indian in her sensibility and thought. She tries to harmonize the East and the West through her pen. In the third novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, a materialistic London life to provide peace of mind and inner contentment to Adit who knows that passion is man's eternal enemy. *The Gita Proclaims, that passion is man's eternal enemy. It takes various shapes and like fire feeding on itself, is insatiable, check it at the outset.*

Where Shall We Go This Summer?- this is a powerful novel where Anita Desai points a real and pathetic picture of a lovely married woman who aspires to get victory over the chaos and suffering of her father's unusual existence. Sita, in her sensitive and emotional mind, is placed in a conflict between the desire to leave the boredom, hypocrisy of middle class and showy comfortable life, on the one hand, and the question asked by Raman, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* On the other, she has become tired of and fully hostile to the hustle and bustle of human life which is replete with passion, dishonesty and hypocrisy. There seems to be an inner fury in her mind. Such a problem of loneliness in married life is also seen in Arun Joshi's novel *The Foreigner* where Sindhi says, that Marriage would not help June. We are alone both you and I. That is the problem of our loneliness must be resolved from within. You cannot send two persons through a ceremony and expect that their aloofness will disappear. This delusion protects them from the lonely meaninglessness of their lives. In this way, most of Desai's female characters are sensitive and solitary to the point of being neurotic. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, Monisha in *Voices in the City*, Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Nanda Kaul in

Fire on the Mountain and Bim in *Clear Light of the Day* come in this category.

The man-woman relationship becomes more important due to rapid industrialization, growing awareness among women of their rights and individualities and the westernization of attitudes and lives of the people.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anita Desai is one of the most prominent contemporary Indian novelists writing in English. Born and educated in India, she has many published works like novels, children's books and short stories to her credit. Her novels: *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody* (1984) and *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) were short-listed for the Booker Prize and *The Village by the Sea* won the Guardian Award for Children's fiction in 1982. *In Custody* was recently filmed by Merchant Ivory Production.

Anita Desai uses a number of themes persistently and recurrently in her novels. These are, namely, human relations, particularly, those of men and women and the complexity of such relationships. Cry the Peacock deals with the strained relationship of Maya and Gautam. In *Voices in the City*, Nirode is obsessed with the relationship of his mother with Major Chadha and incompatible marriage of Monisha and Jiban. *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* deals with incompatible relation of Sita and Raman. In *Clear Light of Day*, the man woman relation assumes a different form and *The Village by the Sea* also is a study of the relationship of Hari's father and mother. Another theme frequently occurring in her novels is that of loneliness, isolation and withdrawal. Almost all her characters suffer due to it. Clash of the East & West culture is seen in *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*, violence and death from another aspect of her novels. *Cry, the Peacock* begins with the death of pet dog Toto and ends with death of Gautam and Maya's insanity. Violence and death are basically due to the city of Calcutta in *Voices in the City*. In *Bye, Bye Blackbird*, violence is shown among Indian and English characters. In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Sita does not like violence of any type, whether in nature, society, domestic life or in personal life.

Anita Desai tries seriously to probe the "inner crisis" of the characters, particularly, women in all her novels, as she asserts:

To make a report on some general events is not of so much consequence. There are other elements, which remain basic in our lives. I mean the human condition itself. It is only superficially affected by the day-to-day changes. We continue to live in the same way as we have in the past centuries with the same tragedies and the same comedies. And that is why it interests me [1].

As a writer, Mrs. Desai is interested in rather peculiar and freakish characters, whose problems are not

concerned with the basic necessities of life, like food, clothing and shelter. The novelist observes:

I am interested in characters who are not average but have retreated or been driven into some extremity of despair and so turned against or made a stand against the general current, it makes no demand, it costs no effort. But those who cannot follow it, whose heart cries out, 'the great no' who fight the current and struggle against it, they know what the demands are and what it costs to meet them [2].

Anita Desai is not philosophical or social bent of a persona, but the character, his motivation, his conscience and the consciousness of his tensions. Anita Desai, being a sensitive woman novelist, creates a galaxy of characters, both male and female, though dominated by the female ones. B. Ramachandra Rao feels that in her novels, environment only adds to presenting "each individual as an unsolved mystery. [3]"

Anita Desai uses variegated images and symbols, particularly, those of animals and birds, besides landscapes and myth, for her characterization. Gautam is compared to a horse, Maya to a cat and a cobra, Sita to a jelly-fish, Nanda Kaul to lizard and a worm, and Bim to a mare. The images have been used to evince their association with animals and not to portray some traits of characters. Anita Desai evokes the necessary mood and elicits the right emotion "from the reader through a series of objective descriptions. [4]" Desai singles out women characters who, live detached into a life of retreat and solitariness. Wealth and servants cater to their material needs, but their emotional needs remain unsatisfied. They seem to live in a closed, sequestered limbo of their private suffering. Their suffering is different from that of the rural female characters of Markandaya's earlier novels, or the marital discord and suffering of the female protagonists in Nayantara Sehgal's novel.

Desai does not refuse to the presence of autobiographical element in her novels. She finds it inevitable because the quality of one's experiences shows through one's work. But she is always aware of keeping her material, which is drawn from real life, away from that which is taken from imagination. She avers:

In countless small ways the scenes and settings certainly belong to my life. Many of the minor characters and incidents are also based on real life. But the major characters and the major events are either entirely imaginative or an amalgamation of several characters and happenings [5].

The man-woman relationship is gaining importance in literature due to a number of reasons like feminist approaches to literature, industrialization, woman rights and westernization of our lives. R.K. Narayan, in *The Dark Room* and *The Guide*, takes up the

incompatible man-woman relationship; Raja Rao takes up this very issue in *The Serpent and the Rope*, Mulk Raj Anand in *Gauri*, Arun Joshi in *The Foreigner* and Naipaul in *Strange Case of Billy Biswas*. In the novels of Anita Desai, this theme pre-dominates all others. In *Cry, the Peacock*, Maya and Gautam have incompatible temperaments and so their relation is always strained. Both are poles apart from each other in every way. The bonds of marriage were always weak between the two; "neither true nor lasting but broken repeatedly and repeatedly the pieces were picked up and put together again. [6]" The climax reaches when Maya goes mad after killing Gautam. In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Sita and Raman are also totally different from each other temperamentally. While Sita does not intend to give birth to her fifth child and goes to Manori, her husband Raman is against this abortive idea in *Clear Light of Day* the man-woman relationship assumes a different form where Raja, the brother, is rational, materialistic, worldly wise and pragmatic, while Bim is romantic, always clinging to her childhood dreams and the images of her brother.

Relationship quandary in Anita Desai's novels

The most common themes in Anita Desai's novels are human relationship particularly the man-woman relationship. Nowadays this theme is becomes more important due to rapid industrialization, growing awareness among women of their rights and individualism and the westernization of attitudes and lives of the people. D.H. Lawrence points out: The great relationship for humanity will always be the relationship between man and woman. The relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child will always be subsidiary [7].

Twentieth century novelists treat this subject in a different manner from that of earlier novelists. They portray the relationship between man and woman as it is, whereas earlier novelists concentrated on as it should be. The modern writer is concerned with the quality of life and people, with world and value. His investigation of a number of unsatisfying lives has to its basis in the deep conviction that it is man's sacred duty to fight for a life that will express the inherent dignity and worth that, he is capable of. He is aware of that pain, pathos, and failure but sure of the values of the struggle towards fulfillment and perfection. (Harrison Christopher 82-85) Indo-English writer is constantly concerned with the problem of interaction between man and woman, between the individuals and the social world. Her main concern is to depict the psychic states of her protagonists at some crucial juncture of their lives. Therefore, the most recurrent themes in her novels are "The hazards and complexities of man-woman relationships, the founding of individuality and the establishing of individualism of her characters". (Raji Narsimhan 23) the most common themes in her novels is the

complexity of human relationships, particularly the man-woman relationship. She writes mostly about the miserable plight of women suffering under their insensitive and inconsiderate husbands, fathers and brothers, so man-woman relationship brings characters into alienation, withdrawal, loneliness, isolation and lack of communication that frequently occurs in her novels. Most of her novel's protagonists are alienated from the world, from society, from families, from parents and even from their own selves because they are not average people but individuals. When these characters have to face alienation, they become rebels. Tension, worries, depression, disappointment, anxiety and fear become their lot and they lose their sense of sanity and mental poise, for example Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, Sita in *Where shall we go this summer* and Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain*. Some characters like Monisha and Nanda Kaul are unable to reconcile to alienation and meet with a tragic end.

CONCLUSION:

In this paper we found that, Anita Desai presents to reader her opinion about complexity of human relationships as a big modern problem and human condition. So, she analyses this problem due to shows changing human relationships in her novels. She is a modern writer because she considers new themes and knows how to deal with them. Anita Desai takes up important contemporary issues as the subject matter of her fiction while remaining rooted in the tradition at the same time. She explores the anguish of persons living in modern society. Desai deals with complexity of human relationships as one of her major theme, which is a universal issue, as it attracts worldwide readers to her novels. She strives to show this difficulty lacking any interferes. In other hand, she allows to her readers who have their finding about her novel characters and action.

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