

# Identity Crisis in the Female Protagonists of Toni Morrison and Anita Desai

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**Abstract – The present paper is an attempt at comparative study of the female protagonists of Toni Morrison and Anita Desai. Both these writers have strong feminine sensibility and both are strongly attached to their culture and milieu. Although the factors that caused identity crisis are different spatially and temporally but the underlying theme that runs in their novels is the constant quest for self in varied conditions of life. Both the writers are not arm-chair drawing-room feminist. They depict not only the social, cultural and psychological factors which led to the identity crisis but also unravels the saga of protagonist's struggle to assert herself. Moreover, they imperceptibly but constantly suggest the ways in which their leading characters can fulfill their quest and come to terms with their society, culture and above all with themselves.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Comparative literature is comparison between two literatures and it is not an independent discipline. It generates from the paradigm that a literature is to be analyzed with reference to other literature within and outside nation. It transcends the narrowness and provinciality of general literatures. Therefore comparative studies broadens the horizon of literature worldwide. The comparative study of two contemporary women novelists Toni Morrison and Anita Desai is of great significance. In spite of the fact that they belong to two unique continents and with various socio-cultural foundations, they share the female space in two ways: first since they are women scholars and also in light of the fact that they expound on women. The elements and conditions which formed their feminine sensibility are very extraordinary yet the female protagonists of both are abused, losing their personality because of social and cultural turmoil finally opposing the acknowledged standards looking for their own identity.

If all of Toni Morrison's work could be summed up with only one citation from one of her characters, it would need to be Pilate's perception in "Song of Solomon", "Life will be life. Precious". In fact Morrison's work floods with the stuff of life – the inspected and unexamined life, the triumphant and shocking life, the little, underestimated life and the flashy, commended life.

Morrison books demonstrate that bigotry, sexism and classism connote the horrible condition under which African-Americans lived in White America. There are frameworks societal and mental limitations that have

basically influenced the lives of Blacks as a rule and African-American women specifically. Right from the day's servitude, the blacks regardless of sex, had understood the brutal reality of prejudice judged from the white man's standard of life and magnificence. Sexism, more severe physically and psychologically, was the reason for grievance to the black women who were sexually abused by both the black and white men. Similarly as blacks as a gathering were consigned to an underclass by righteousness of their race, so were women consigned to a different position by prudence of sex and race.

Defied from all sides by racial and sexual segregation, the dark woman has no companions however just liabilities and duties. In charge of their own and their kids' prosperity and future these women needed to confront every day the truth of their association with white men, with white women or more all with dark men. Be that as it may, inside the different position a standard of lady was outlined as far as class definition. The perfect idea of lady in the general public isn't just racist and sexist yet in addition classist. Also, in light of the fact that black women were by nature of their race, imagined as a lower class, they could scarcely estimated the standard. To be black and female is to experience the ill effects of the twin weaknesses of racial separation and gender bias. It started the account of torment, distress, slaughter, demise and above all the refutation of a whole race.

The books of Toni Morrison are articulation of the disappointed self as well as an investigation of their unbridled interests. They not just enlist the existential quandaries and binds of the imprisoned self yet in

addition deliver the harried encounters of the protagonists in an ethically disturbed world. Other than depicting the injuries and torments of the confiscated self, they additionally dwell into the slashed mind of the dark American women. In any case, the subject which slice through the books of Toni Morrison is that of estrangement combined with most awful type of prejudice and sexism. Here, Morrison portrays the Black-American women as smothered and anguished being urgently searching their self identity. In managing the internal openings of the deserted self, Morrison depicts the development of the protagonist from self-alienation to self identity. In their advance she demonstrates an evaluated walk from the difficulties of neurotism to the inclinations of Pollyannism, from domains of wretchedness to the universe of versatility, from the way of confinement to the condition of identity.

The vast majority of Morrison's women characters like Sula, Jadine, Pauline or Pilate who experience the ill effects of alienation and remain broke down and divided initially, achieve wholeness at last. Here the improvement of the alienated self is moderate yet continuous, agonizing however unequivocal.

Morrison in her first novel *The Bluest Eye* investigates what she accepts to be a standout amongst the most harming parts of sexist and bigot abuse of the black women: the propagation by the bigger society of a physical Anglo-Saxon gauge of female magnificence as an estimation of self-esteem. The solution that Morrison proposes is an appreciation of black women beauty by everybody in the society. In *Sula* Morrison's concentration movements to the black woman as an individual, battling towards liberty and selfhood. It portrays the mission of female protagonist Sula, for asserting her own self and grappling with her way of life as a black woman. *Song of Solomon* shows the impact of white-class values and standards on black families and also investigation of African-American societies and myths that delineate the applied idea of the ethnic experience. In *Tar Baby*, Morrison builds up her most convincing connection amongst class and race. *Beloved* contains Morrison's most uncommon and entrancing womanist recognition of things past. On socio-psychological level it is the account of mission for social freedom and mental wholeness. *Jazz* is the account of African women that Morrison is most on edge to show since it is just they who encounter the triple mistreatment of sex, race and class. She takes a present issue confronting African individuals, relates it to issue African women went up against in the 1920's and demonstrates that the solutions at that point and now continues to be the same. In *Paradise* Morrison sets up her female protagonist to experience issues about race and gender simultaneously.

All through Morrison's work identity is the result of psychic battle. Categorization and self-labeling, which are recognized as a component of the procedure by

which personalities are produced, are seen essentially as operators of control, limitation and hindrance. They are not seen as pre-given, programmed and settled, but rather socially composed, unforeseen, variable and social.

Morrison's books spin around the topic of seclusion and identity. Stories of the seized and baffled female dark voice, they depict the self's battle for the right to speak freely and articulation in detaining milieu. Her pronunciation is on the assorted variety of dark sensibilities, abhorrence of subjection, methods of articulation and free thinking.

Morrison's advancement of the women characters in her novels parallels the manner by which most black women consolidate their anxiety for women's liberation and ethnicity. She uncovered that sexist persecution, both inside and outside of the ethnic gathering, has had on black women. She doesn't enable these negatives to portray the entirety of their experience. She doesn't advocate as an answer for their mistreatment as existential, political women's liberation that estranges black women from their ethnic gathering. She is more interested in commending the kind feminine esteems that black women have created regardless of and due to their persecution. As ethnic cultural women's activist, she urges loyalty to instead of distance from ethnic group that she at last needs to accomplish.

Women's compositions which sprang from the new idea of Indian womanhood is voluminous and it delineates in their periods of new development, the changing idea of woman's subjectivity. The investigation of Anita Desai's books would unfurl a prospect of accomplishing a feminine consensus where every novel voices her story. The energy of Desai's books lie in her taking up the task of uncovering the female psyche. Her books are immersing study in the movement of women from feminine to female as stipulated by Elaine Showalter. Her women characters are delicately depicted and along these lines refreshing in their mental profundities. Her woman's rights isn't the same as abhorring man or deserting families and connections or taking part in lesbianism and so on. As a women's writer she needs women to be acknowledged as responsible people.

The books of Anita Desai are essentially female situated. She dwells in their issues, be it of a little girl, sister, mother or spouse. Her female figure show up as a casualty in a man centric and patriarchal Indian family. She delineates Indian woman as a fighter, a casualty, a courageous woman and in several books eventually a victor on account of her dauntless soul and adjustment. She has depicted both sort of women – the individuals who develop and change and the individuals who withdraws, relapse and rot.

She plans the investigation of the alienated mind of the Indian lady laying emphasis on the components of alienation and estrangement. Notwithstanding, Desai's women don't surrender so easily. Desai centers around the gender role of women seen through the viewpoint of female exercises, encounters, objectives, values, foundations, connections and methods of correspondence. Her commitment in the field of woman's rights does not just include revalidating the French theories or the Western model. She displays in her work, the portrait of women as living creature in flesh and blood, with their very own unmistakable personality. Her characters are not any more wooden stuff, subject to concealment and male mastery as it were. The transformative energy of Desai's books lies in her taking up the task of uncovering the process of self-awareness at work in female psyche.

Desai makes a plunge in the inward working of the heroines and bring the concealed profundities of human mind. Her anecdotal world is much the same as an iceberg, for the most part covered up and halfway noticeable; it is clouded by fog and mist, half uncovered and half disguised. The internal voyage of the characters in her novels is significantly affected by Virginia Woolf. She splendidly uncovered the crushing suppression of women in India.

In her novels, it is always 'Sitas' who questions their male controlled societies. The depictions of men are unclear and their mental complexities are not considered. She investigates the issue of gender from Indian social point of view. Be that as it may, where comes the topic of marking her as a women's activist, as other women novelists, Desai too considers the expression "woman writer" as disdainful as it takes away her imaginative self and she comes in the category of gender.

In books where Desai depicts a female protagonist, the struggle against the oppression takes the form of rebel against patriarchal domination in one form or other, uncovering her feminine sensibilities. She gives more importance to the individual, in contrast with plot, with an astonishing knowledge of inner working of her mind. Not ready to amalgamate themselves into the society around, her characters attempt internal voyage to discover their own self. The most critical social issue that Desai centers around is the organization of marriage. At the point when woman is gotten in the trap of marriage, she has just a single way left, that is to mull in wretchedness. Each endeavor the lady makes to reinvent herself unavoidably winds up in non-communication. This leads to the theme of alienation. Every novel of Desai is continued search for self for an elevated female existence. Her treatment of subject starts as a straightforward individual story of an individual lady step by step forming into a more extensive clash for her personality and winds up investigating potential outcomes of

change in the convention bound Indian culture living in metropolitan environment. She finds the existential hypotheses good to her subjects. Her characters like Maya, Sita and Nanda Kaul are forlorn, on edge and experience the ill effects of ennui. Their offense originates from an absence of fellowship with which they could feel secure. Desai investigates the inward working of her hero's mind unfurling the internal breaks and uncovering the key human condition by putting the people in the circumstance of outrageous strain. She in this way presents the psychological vein and dissociation of sensibility which are not by any stretch of the imagination Indo-Anglican.

In her depiction of her different characters search for self and identity, Desai has held up typical recognitions and qualities for examination and uncovered the imperative commitment of irrational and intuitive drives in a non-Freudian manner by connecting the contortions of identity to social, emotional, intellectual and passionate causes. Her fiction disassembles the doctrine self and the closed text. The numerous dissonant parts of the self and the obvious open-endedness of many clashes with no ends are her lasting topics. Her humanistic orientation is uncovered by the way that however not very many of her characters achieve to the coveted objective of self, the vast majority of them uncover a positive self-intelligent propensity before the end of the story. The idea of journeys must be changed inside the parameters of genuine human presence. Desai's books unfurl the nobility of individual awareness and affirmation at the end of the day confirms the unquestionable oddity that self satisfaction must be accomplished by leaving self and building up bonds outside the self.

## CONCLUSION

Morrison tone and tenor is clearly political. At the same time she rests her art on solid aesthetic foundation and maintains the purest art form. On the other hand Desai feels that literature should be truthful and beyond that it has no responsibility to the society. It should deal with more serious matters than politics. Morrison comes out more as a cultural feminist who lay stress on ethnic values and inner strength of black women. Desai abhors the title of feminist and contends that education and self sufficiency are the ways ahead for women emancipation. For her Indian feminism is expedient then ideological. Morrison deals with the issues of sex, race and class which are the tools of exploitation of black women whereas Desai dwells in the inherent factors in the patriarchal structure of Indian society which led to the suppression of women. She also dwells deep into female psyche to bring forth inner turmoil. For both the writers violence is psychic then

physical and it emanates from different socio-historical factors.

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