



## MONISHA, A WOMAN CHARACTER IN VOICES IN THE CITY BY ANITA DESAI

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### **Abstract:**

*One of the most notable areas of the world literature is Indian writing in English. It was the verse form with which it started its journey and got deep rooted into various other genres of literature. It claimed its dominance with the involvement of prominent writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R K Narayan and so on. At this juncture, it's should be a mention about the equal amount of contribution from the women novelists to this sphere, which made the IWE, a great area in literature. The thought about women literature, immediately allows anyone to remind of Anita Desai, as she left her own mark with a touch of reality. She as a woman, was able to understand the agony of a woman, and also the psyche better than any male writer. This paper is an analysis of a character Monisha in one of the works of Anita Desai, Voices in the City.*

### **Introduction**

The great revolutions and incidents that occurred in India, during the reign of the British, lead to the birth of the Indian English Literature. There were many ignored Indian writers, like Aurobindo, Sarojii Naidu, who started to write in poetry form, prior to the Macaulay famous works on English Education. The different kinds of customs and traditions, Independence struggle, caste issues, gender discrimination and a male chauvinistic society all lead to a wide variety of works from the most prominent authors of India. In the same scene, a part of contributions done by the women writers are also to be counted and one such pre-dominant writer was Anita Desai.

An exposure to a highly cosmopolitan culture, in all spheres, right from Education, culture was a an advantage to Anita Desai as her birth was in a family of Bengali & German parents. Her education at Delhi University gave a new concept about life and it became as an obsession for her to start writing in English. Anita Desai in her works tries to portray a panoramic view of the different relations that existed in the society. It was her writings in which if we keenly observe, she tries to highlight the point that there is a change in the established relations, in a different way.

Her career started with the best novel Cry the Peacock, and the list included masterpieces like Voices in the City, Bye Bye Blackbird, Where shall we go this summer, Fire on the Mountain, ClearLight of Day, in Custody, Baumgartners Bombay. Divergent themes like Alienation, Human relationships, East & West, Death, Violence, helped her in elevating her novels.

Search for reality, this is one of the important aspect in which the writer Anita Desai is highly engaged in. Exemplary portrayal of a woman psyche in her novels is the one distinctive factor that which makes to stand on the top when compared to men writers. The elegance is seen in every character depiction. Most of the characters in the novels of Anita Desai surrender to their destiny , thus leading to a tragic ending. Not only the internal forces,



but also the external forces like city culture, family constraints play an important role in making their characters so tragic. In most of the cases the forces both external and internal make the characters fall as a victim. This frustration and disenchantment at length leads to the idea of death.

Anita Desais' unearthly skill lies in exploring the untouched deepened cores of heart and thus she is the only novelist who can reach the inner segments of the mind of a struggling woman. This paper makes an attempt on focusing on a character called Monisha from the novel *Voices in the City*, where Anita Desai tries to clearly depict the feelings of a newly married woman, who finds herself as an alien because of the new ambience into which she steps in after her marriage.

The character named Monisha is characterized in such a way that, it clearly depicts the poetic abilities of the novelist. With the influence of the greatest 20<sup>th</sup> century novelist, this character Monisha, is not in a position to understand the importance of the traditions and she just falls a prey of them in minute issues.

The arrival of Monisha it self makes her a bit awestruck as its a huge family welcome in the most traditional manner, including many new relations in the name of uncles, aunts, nephews, niece, cousins, in-laws and into a very big four storied building and that new place is the ancestral house of Jiban.

Monisha suffers a lot of discomfort both from the internal and external forces, i.e., her husband as well her in-laws and relatives. Her inability of bearing a child is the major reason for this ill-treatment, which makes her to lead a life of loneliness. A ridiculous verbal silence from all ends makes her to suffer a lot, thus leading to marital discord.

The library of books which she possessed on her own, show the intellectual capacities of Monisha, but this facility of having her own library doesn't give her any satisfaction instead that leads to an additional pain because she is not allowed to peep into those books and get enthralled. Like the different varieties of classics she has in the library, she has different reasons that wont allow her to her privacy.

Monisha feels herself being placed in a labyrinth, where she is allowed to move but no way out. There are various reasons that makes her feel so, right from her husband Jiban, the torment offered from the joint family members, her brother Nirode whom she attends because of his illness, and all the household day to day tasks, stimulates her to feel to abscond from that place. She couldn't enjoy her private married life. Its such painful that because of the intense works she is forced not to meet her husband in the day and she meets her husband only in the evenings. This is all the agony of a woman who was a free bird before her marriage and whose feathers were tied in the name of marriage.

Her independent thoughts and liberty at her husband and personal life stand questioned on a fine day when she takes money from her husband savings, in his absence. All her in-laws



looks at her in distrust which was an undigested bitter experience for Monisha especially at a women's economic dependence. This instance clearly explains about the situation of literate jobless women.

The bitter experiences that she faces at different levels makes her to question about her useless existence. 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."* She compares herself with the Bengali women who do everything and ultimately await death. She wildly tries to understand the meaning of life but she fails and she gets the essence that life is like an unsolved mystery and she finds her life too which stand in between a meaningful life and death.

She could find a solution to end all her agony in the name of suicide, when she couldn't find any solace in listening to Bhagawat Gita. She has a lot of questions in her mind which doesn't allow her to be serene. Even the thought of moving to her mother, also triggers some sort of fear in her mind because of her mothers disapproval. She feels like all doors closed as no one is ready to accept her or she couldn't find any empathetic human being who could understand her, the only solution she has in front of her is ending up her life by committing suicide.

Monisha is in a typical situation where she can't find any space in the same place where she is standing. The gawky situations faced by her and her position as the eldest daughter in law makes her more uncomfortable. The education and her previous exposure to the society doesn't help her in finding an answer for her broken situations. She just stays in a broken life expecting a helping hand to lift her up, which never comes for her rescue.

Monisha encircled with all these various kinds of difficulties, understands the typical life at kolkatta in two different ways, one is predatory and the other is suspicious. Being surrounded by a huge joint family but unable to find a place for herself, in that chaotic condition, lead Monisha to re-create a world for own self, and even her basic nature of being pessimistic, allowed her to a typical destruction of her personality.

In such a painful desperate condition, Monisha ends her labyrinth life by committing suicide, where she puts an end to all her psychic problems.

### **Conclusion:**

Even though many writers of fiction tried to experiment with stream of consciousness, it was Anita Desai the one and only one who stood as an exemplary. The way she narrates the characters inner agony and the way she treats them with great care made her to be a pioneer. She stands for representing the un-dealt problems of women, exclusively with the inward struggle of an individual.

Desais female are the most sensitive. She depicts all her novel characters in such a way that they are most fragile and to be dealt with utmost care as they were in a state of brittle. She



displays a vivid picture of the broken nature of the women characters but never tries to give a solution for the agony faced by her characters. Alienation will be pee-dominant feature which is engulfed in her works and characters.

Not in her works or in her words she never mentions that her characters crave for a sense of sympathy. They are all well established, educated, more sociable but at a point when it comes to the point of inner psyche the depth will be so deep such that it becomes a vain effort if tried to explore. Every character has its own family or seen in a well established family. Never they are shown as individuals but the development of the character and after it is unfolded completely, it will be identified as a victim of alienation. Anita Desai touches both inner and outer psyche of the character to give an overall shape. Its Anita Desai, the only and only who knows the depth of pain that a character undergoes and thus is portrayed in a marvellous way.

Monisha realizes that she lost the ability of leading her life like others who were around her. She finds herself untouched and she feels like as if though she was packed in a room of emotions which doesn't belong to her and the same emotions torment her to the core leading to commit suicide.

Anita Desais novels seems to be dry, without humour and fun, thus resulting her typical style of dealing the inner psyche of suffering women. This analysis sums up the perspectives verbalized about one of such woman character Monisha, in Anita Desais works *Voices in the City*.

#### References:

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