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A CRITICAL STUDY ON DEPICTING DIFFERENT THEMES IN WRITINGS OF ANITA DESAI & NAYANTARA SAHGAL'S NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

This abstract explores the distinctive thematic elements present in the novels of two prominent Indian authors, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal. Both Desai and Sahgal have contributed significantly to the realm of Indian literature through their thought-provoking narratives and insightful character portrayals. This study delves into their works to highlight the diverse themes that shape their literary expressions. Anita Desai, known for her introspective prose and vivid descriptions, frequently explores themes of alienation, identity, and the clash between tradition and modernity. Her characters often grapple with their sense of belonging in rapidly changing socio-cultural landscapes. Additionally, Desai's exploration of inner emotional turmoil provides a window into the complexities of human psychology. This abstract will analyze how Desai's novels such as "Clear Light of Day" and "In Custody" embody these themes, offering readers a deeper understanding of the human experience.

Keywords: - Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Indian, Work.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS – WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?

Sarita (Saru) is the protagonist of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, which was first published in 1980; the story follows her as she moves backwards and inwards to engage with herself, clearing the "picture" by erasing the conception of a self-image and re-examining an image constructed by "others." The focus is on the individual, who is interested in learning more about herself in the context of her family and community.

After publishing short pieces to women's publications, Deshpande claims she finally felt fulfilled when she penned *The Dark*

Holds No Terrors. She said that the idea of the empowered female protagonist from her short fiction "A Liberated woman" has been percolating in her brain for quite some time. She continued by saying that she felt that she had gotten near to her goal with that work. She insists that she never considered it a "women's novel" and that it was instead "a serious novel about a serious human predicament." When asked about the challenges of writing *Of Concerns, Of Anxieties*, she said, "It was difficult to write; it was different from the other novels I had read written by Indian writers... but all the reviews that came spoke of it as novel about a woman, a middle class woman, a professional

woman, etc." A book written from a female perspective. (178)

Deshpande says that she found her voice and her topic in the book *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. This work introduced her to her genre, and once she discovered her voice in novels, she abandoned short fiction. Even while she found it challenging to write the book, the struggles experienced by the story's female heroine, Saru, came naturally to her.

This introductory passage is taken from the *Dhammapada*, one of the fifteen canonical Buddhist texts known collectively as the Buddha's Basket of Discourses. The *Dhammapada*, also known as "The Way of Truth," is an expository work on Buddhist philosophy and morality that consists of 423 Pali verses spoken by the Buddha. The epigraph makes Saru the one responsible for his own redemption.

Sarita, a successful doctor who is also married to Manohar and the mother of two, moves back in with her parents when her mother dies, seemingly without explanation and for an extended length of time. After having married the handsome poet Manohar against her mother's desires when she was a young lady, Saru now re-enters the house and re-crosses the threshold. A recurring motif in Deshpande's fiction, "the return" prompts the protagonist to reflect on her current situation, including the marital rape that prompted her to leave her husband and return to her former life as a working wife and mother. The final phrase of the first chapter reveals the rapist to be the victim's husband, plunging the reader into the middle of a rape scenario.

II. THE BINDING VINE – THE

VOICES IN THE CITY

Urmila, the main character in *The Binding Vine*, finally speaks out after a lengthy period of quiet that has been the norm for women. Women's roles, responsibilities, and even behaviors are called into question by some of Shashi Deshpande's early characters. They have come to the realization that they must break free of the bonds that have restricted the rights of women for millennia. They are painfully aware of the suffocation and debasement to which they have been subjected by time-honored social conventions and their assigned duties. They achieve self-awareness, but only as it pertains to their immediate circumstances. These women don't share the current feminists' desire to purify society of its ills and burst out in a trial of glory by raising their voices in anger.

One interpretation of *The Binding Vine* is as a book that brings together, on a grander and more dramatic scale, ideas from its predecessors. The concept of a guy controlling a woman and claiming monopoly over her body is one Deshpande wanted to explore further after having dealt with it in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. It's also possible to see it as a story about women reclaiming their voices and rebuilding their lives via the written word. Lakshmi Holmstrom, expanding on the themes of *That Long Silence*, states that the book *The Binding Vine* is about the silences of women's life as well as the silences that are broken and the tales that are spoken. The work is metafictional since it focuses on the genre of fiction written by women. Additionally, the work is "to a large extent, a novel about mothers and daughters," as Deshpande puts it.

In her latest work, *The Binding Vine*, Shashi Deshpande makes her most outspoken declaration yet on a woman's sexuality. Shashi Deshpande uses the narrative of Urmi as a springboard to explore the sexual mistreatment of women in traditional Indian culture via the eyes of Mira, Kalpana, and other characters. (Mohan 151)

Urmila, a college professor, is a middle-class professional lady in Bombay, like most of Deshpande's female heroines. Urmila's young daughter Anu has died, and the tale opens with her in mourning. Deshpande's works often return to the idea of loss.

Most of Deshpande's books begin with the protagonist experiencing some kind of crisis that leads them on a journey of self-discovery. Urmila begins to deal with her grief, questioning, and self-evaluation following two major events: the discovery of her mother-in-law Mira's poetry and her engagement with Shakutai, whose daughter Kalpana had been brutally raped. Deshpande's strategy of contrasting the past with the present serves as a pivot point in Urmila's path to self-realization.

The ceremony through which a trunk containing Mira's documents is presented to Urmila is reminiscent of the ancient Indian practice of presenting the family jewels to a son-in-law's new wife. Also crucial is the fact that Kishore's foster mother, Akka, who was married to Mira's late husband, is the one handing over the confidential documents. What he truly wants now is a mother for that motherless kid," Akka had been informed of her future husband, who was still deeply attached to his previous wife, Mira. (TBV 47) In contrast to Mira's narrative, this one

focuses on the immense severity of the circumstance, Akka's resilience, and her sudden, out-of-character tears for Mira. What follows is Urmi's quest to learn more about the lady she refers to as "Mira," rather than "Kishore's mother," and the recovery and reconstruction of a life that has made an unusual impression on her.

III. NOVEL AS BIOGRAPHY: A STUDY OF STORM IN CHANDIGARH

Novel as Biography: Analyzing "Storm in Chandigarh" and "The Day in Shadow" is the subject of the third chapter. The books *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) and *The Day in Shadow* (1971) are analyzed in this chapter from a biographical perspective. After the success of *A Time to be Happy* and *This Time of Morning*, Sahgal has written his third book, *Storm in Chandigarh*. In its creative representation of the prevailing political volatility, *Storm in Chandigarh* is reminiscent of her first two books, *A Time to be Happy* and *This Time of Morning*. Both *Storm in Chandigarh* and *This Time of Morning* examine the complicated social and ideological conflicts that arose in India after 1947. *Storm in Chandigarh*, however, surpasses both in terms of its aesthetic growth and resolution of the novel's central dramatic struggle.

The story explores the complexities of human relationships through the lenses of love, friendship, honesty, freedom, and equality. Against the political background of the battle between the newly separated states of Punjab and Haryana over the problems of Chandigarh and the Bakhra Nangal territorial legislation, the 'Storm' in the lives of three married couples is shown.

The political outlook of this work is similar to that of the previous. In the aftermath of India's political freedom and economic prosperity since 1947, this book shares the captivating drama of fatal changes in social connections. The threads that connect her past biographical works to this book are present here. The human soul in its natural cultural setting, with its signature reaction of Freedom to the threat of transformation. Except for Dubey, none of the characters in his tale are public workers or elected officials.

IV. NOVEL AS BIOGRAPHY: A STUDY OF THE DAY IN SHADOW

Nayantara Sahgal's *The Day in Shadow* is her fourth book. The author nearly seems to be writing about himself in this work. Based on the author's own harrowing experiences, it is an authentic portrayal of a divorced woman's struggles. A male protagonist named Raj is at the novel's center. He has strong convictions about individual liberty and will not accept passive treatment. Delhi, the capital of a newly independent country, is the second main character. This city takes on a life of its own and influences the fates of those who live there.

Sahgal writes *The Day in Shadow* following his divorce in 1967. This book is the most autobiographical and "personal" of her works. Her "emotional autobiography," as this book has been called, is best understood when read in that context. This book has a strong autobiographical undercurrent. This book analyzes autobiographical details on several levels. In addition, the social history of colonial India after independence is deciphered. Based on the

author's own harrowing experiences, it is an authentic portrayal of a divorced woman's struggles.

The protagonist, Raj, is a man in this book as well. He is an advocate for individual liberty. He is not one to sit back and take it easy. Delhi, the capital of a newly independent country, is the other main character. This location takes on a life of its own, able to alter the paths of those who visit there. She writes, "In this book, I tried to figure out something that has happened to me — the shattering experience of divorce." Reference: (Sahgal, N. Dec. 12, 1979: p. Despite her distress, she made an effort to readjust. But the marriage did not work out, and she divorced Gautam in 1967. The book succeeds well as a work of literature.

Raj is a prominent member of parliament and a prominent Christian scholar in India. Som's ex-wife Simrit is a freelance journalist and writer. Ram Krishan is the editor of *Free India* and has decades of experience in the field. Sumer Singh is the dedicated Minister of State for Petroleum in the Union Cabinet. Old and sick in the hospital, Sardar Saheb is the senior minister. Som, Simrit's ex-husband, is a newly wealthy business mogul. The adaptable industrialist Shah is keen on Sumer Singh's approved contracts. Som has been working with Laffi and Vetter as business partners for some time.

Som and Simrit's kid Brij is 16 years old and he takes like his father in many ways. There are striking parallels between these fictional people and actual people. These are actual people from the history of Indian politics and culture. Sahgal highlights the variety of human personalities. In the theater of daily life in

New Delhi, the microcosm and nerve center of contemporary India, she enacts the multiplicity of their reasons and mottos.

Som is a cold, materialistic, and uncommunicative man—the antithesis of the principles Sahgal outlines in her memoirs. He supports himself by selling and buying weapons. Two instances of "isolated forcefulness, isolated currents of energy undirected by vision or compassion" are the rise to power of Sumer Singh in politics and Som's success in the business world. (p. 44) These instances illustrate how egotism has become more prevalent in today's culture.

Simrit, the protagonist of *The Day in Shadow*, comes out of hiding to start a new life with Raj. The protagonist, Christian Raj, is certain that destiny cannot be the solution to human problems. This is the tale of a Delhi on the cusp of unseen transformation, populated by a new kind of politician far different from Gandhi in terms of compassion. *The Day in Shadow* shows how that era's brilliant permutations and combinations led to a chaotic patriarchal society. This greatly muddled the human ideals.

V. CONCLUSION

Anita Desai stands out as a major figure on the literary landscape of contemporary women's literature in India. Her reputation as "an Indian Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf" among critics is well-deserved. Her novels and short tales have made her a household name, and she is widely regarded as having made significant contributions to the art and ethos of the book.

Desai's books give a microcosmic analysis of the man-woman connection in the

altered environment of the modern day and have colonial repercussions on the reader's mind and heart for the diverse Indian societal norms. Her books explore, among other themes, the tension between urban life and Nature, as well as the socio-psychological attitudes of man stuck between the fires of tradition and progress. In her psychological novels, she achieves a unified design of both content and form, imposing harmony over divergent currents of emotion and sensitivity that may be found across social classes. The 'what is life' and 'how it needs to be lived' that populate her works are a beautiful reflection of the world around them. She reveals fascinating psychological realities about her characters by delving into their inner lives.

Many of Anita Desai's readers didn't feel moved to comment on her work. That her "writing reveal liner realities and psychic reverberations of her characters" is one of the reasons she is considered a brilliant artist is something that many people have attested to. (Bande 7) More interesting than the weather, the terrain, or the obvious action is a writer whose specialty is the investigation of sensitivity that draws or clears or rumbles like thunder or suddenly blazes out like lightning. "Her language is marked by three characteristics: sensuous richness, a high strung sensitiveness, and a love of sound of words," Meenakshi Mukerjee said of Anita Desai. But Shiv Kumar says, "Never does the writer relax her grip the style which often freezes into a strange academic anemic, stilted, and petrified, it abounds in tritely compounded and palpably alliterative passages."(191-92)

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