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How far Men are the Culprit of Women Predicament in Anita Desai's Novels?

ABSTRACT: Human existence has been multidimensional for both men and women. Beginning with man's creation to that of his physical structure extended to his career, man dominates the other (woman). As P.M.Nayak suggests: "Human experience has only been a masculine experience, in other words a malist experience" (Nayak,1). Man has been glorified from all angles and all fields. Even in the literature we find male domination. The aim of this research paper is to analyze how far men are responsible for the distributed psyche and predicament of women in the novels of Anita Desai.

Key words: Predicament, disturbed psyche, multidimensional, malist experience.

According to D.H.Lwarence, "The greatest relationship for humanity will always be the relation between man and woman. The relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child will always be subsidiary."

Since the time ago men and women both are created with equal importance by God. Man has glorified from all angles. He distorted the female voice, denying her an equal force. Philosophers with no exception have contributed to the glorification of man's image. Women is assigned the status of second sex but according to Adrienne Rich, a Woman centred focus has given way to some new ideas about maleness and masculinity. (Eisenstein,19)

Feminists theorists like, Simone De Beauvoir, Eva Figes and others gave great importance to the issue of women and articulated the suppressed female voice. Fighting out all odds has not solved the problems. An analysis of a few novels of Anita Desai shows that things have changed but not completely. Thus, an attempt is made in this paper to analyze how far the males are responsible for women predicament in Anita Desai's novels.

Novelist Anita Desai mainly dwells on the predicament and dilemma faced by the urban middle class women. In her novels women characters are given importance right from the beginning but as the story progress the various forces in the society that affect them invariably turn out to be men.

In cry the Peacock, Maya, a motherless child, is influenced by her father. Maya's father in a wish of fulfilling the gap of her mother's absence pampered her a lot and imposed his thoughts, learning and set pattern of livelihood on her. The father figure haunted her even

after her marriage and she fails in establishing a mature and emotionally satisfying relationship with Gautama in her married life. Maya and Gautama was a match between two different temperaments without a single close tie. As Meena Belliappa remarks, “The incompatibility of characters stands revealed-Gautama who touches without feeling and Maya who feels even without touching”. (Belliappa,26).

Maya was very much in love with Gautama and needed his companionship and understanding but there was something missing in their life. The meaninglessness of their relationship again and again dawns on Maya, she realizes that “We belonged to two different worlds; his seemed the earth, that I loved so scented with jasmine, colored with liquor, resounding with poetry and warmed by amiability. It was mine that was hell” (CP,102).

Though Maya lives in a nuclear family and is given the utmost freedom, she craves for male company as she cries before Gautama, “Is there nothing in you that would be touched ever so lightly, if I told you I live my life for you.” (CP,114). While Gautama influenced by modern concepts instead of understanding her confuses her with his theory of detachment. Thus, Maya is crushed between her father’s excess attachments and Gautama’s theory of detachment and turns neurotic.

In voices in the city, the two female characters Monisha and Amla fall prey to two different visages of patriarchal attitude. Monisha, is in sharp contrast with Maya. Maya craves for contact, relatedness, communication which when remain unfulfilled lead her to psychic imbalance. Monisha being secretive by nature considers any contact or communication dangerous. She suggests to Nirode, “Of course, I know, keep it all to yourself, a secret, quite private, all your own, to keep and gloat over. It will hurt so much to show”. (VC, 115).

Monisha was deeply influenced by her brother Nirode. Like Nirode, Monisha is destitute of the vital element of love. She loves to remain aloof like her brother who seems to be a part of her as she claims, “I suffer his fever so deeply because it is mine also” (VC, 130). Her brother controls her with his theory of detachment which is responsible for further disharmony in Monisha’s life.

Monisha when married to Jiban, a conservative man against her taste by her father fails to adjust her in the new environment. Jiban is the product of a conventional culture in which a woman lives like a caged bird without any traces of aggression or sense of identity. For Jiban, his ties with Monisha have no special significance. He treats her as a separate entity as an outsider. The callous behavior on Jiban’s part clearly betrays a lack of trust and understanding between the spouses. He shows no consideration for Monisha’s needs and in a way denies her the basic rights of a wife. Thus, in Jiban’s house, Monisha’s congenital hypersensitivity is combined with an atmosphere of distrust, ignorance, monotonous drudgery and lack of privacy. A loveless relationship with Jiban and others in the family and absence of any creative activity reduces her to a pathetic state. As A.V.Krishna Rao observes, “The absence of the element of love, makes her feel lonely, lost and bitter.... She defines love as ‘an awoken condition of the conscience’ but fears and avoids it because love implies a sense of duty”. At last in a fit of uncontrollable emotional turmoil; she ends her nightmarish,

unhappy, loveless existence. For Jasbir Jain, Monisha's suicide is an "attempt to rebel against this meaningless, death like isolation". (Jain, 24).

Conclusion: Thus, on the basis of the analysis of both the novels it is concluded that to some extent we can say that males are responsible for women predicament but not wholly. It is their introvert, oversensitive nature which is responsible for their predicament. Both the heroines Maya and Monisha are not rational beings they have their own world of fantasy, aloofness and imagination. If we see from one angle males are more practical than women. Women are tender heart person. But men have to shoulder various responsibilities including the bread and butter of the family and always oscillate between wife, family and responsibilities. So they can't be called culprit. Though being hard and practical is also not very judicious on the part of women. Expecting her to be a meek, submissive and obeying is also not fair. Too much expectation, misunderstanding and responsibilities also make women fall prey to isolation, depression and sometimes lead to suicide as in case of Monisha. If we exclude husbands, Maya's father and Monisha's brother, Nirode, are also responsible for their predicament to some extent. Father's over attachment incase of Maya and brother's philosophy of detachment influenced so much to them that they failed to adjust in their married life and jumped into the well of death.

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