

Concept of Marriage and Identity Crises in the Selected Novels of Anita Desai

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Received 12-03-2022	Abstract: India is a country of many traditions and these traditions are the biggest feature of this country that keeps everyone connected. For everyone, there is a tradition of marriage, which is not less than a fantasy and beautiful dream for an unmarried girl, which changes her whole life within a day. This transition period transformed her recognition and identity, and she becomes the wife of her husband, who is now known by the name of her husband. In India, many husbands and wives live together just because they are bounded by seven circumambulations and they are called life partners. Though there is no guarantee of love between them, life is full of responsibilities and liabilities like the burden that most females have to bear. It's not so easy to live without love and sometimes without understanding and respect too. Overall there is only a compulsion to live an unwanted unhappy life together just for the sake of the family and society. Here, Anita Desai is among those women authors who deeply know the reality behind this curtailed life of women. That's why she brought the life of her female protagonist with truth and honesty and with full sincerity she has shown the mirror to the society. In her novels, every character has her own story	Keywords: Tradition, Marriage, Identity, Life Partners.
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INTRODUCTIONS

The Hindus have idealized marriage in a big way. In the patriarchal society of Rig Vedic Hindus, marriage was considered a sacramental union, and this continued to be so during the entire period. In the Shastric Hindu law,[2] marriage has been regarded as one of the essential sanskaras (sacrament for every Hindu). Every Hindu must marry. "To be mothers were women created and to be fathers men." The Veda ordains that "Dharma must be practiced by man together with his wife and offspring". "He is only perfect who consists of his wife and offspring." "Those who have wives can fulfill their obligations in this world; those who have wives truly have a family life; those who have wives can be happy; those who have wives can have a full life." [2] For a Hindu marriage is essential, not only for begetting a son to discharge his debt to the ancestors but also for the performance of other religious and spiritual duties. The institution of marriage is considered sacred even by those who view it as a civil contract. Then there is a question raised about the identity crises. There is research evidence to suggest that for men, marriage confers protection against depression, while it appears to be associated with higher rates of depression in women. There is some evidence that within marriage, the traditional role of the female is limiting, restricting, and even boring, which may lead to depression.[1] Moreover, in traditional Hindu families, there is a rigid code of conduct for women which prevents communication and expression of emotions, especially negative ones,

because of which there is a higher prevalence of internalizing disorders such as depression in women compared to men.

A society with more than half of its population under identity crisis, where women are raised with the mind-sets of getting ready to be someone's plus one, can only progress as far enough as this thought. Such a mentality hints that a woman has no identity of herself, be it at home or the state level. She is either represented as someone's daughter, sister, mother, or wife. Although all these are the roles she plays in her lifetime, they become her identity in our society.

The concept of marriage in Desai's novel shows her consummate craftsmanship. She sincerely points out the future of modern age women in a male-chauvinist society, which needs to be altered from time to time. Desai never challenges the futility of marriage institutions because she knows their value and importance, but she stresses the relations of her female protagonist. As we know that marriages are just about the incompatibility between male and female characters. Men are rational and practical whereas women are imaginative, sensitive, and emotional. Both have their different attitude, interest, and temperament, they have different perceptions and views to look the life and living life, they even react differently to the same condition but most importantly, they are connected with an invisible, delicate thin thread that we call marriage. Most of the time women are

dependent on men. They have been culturally, emotionally, socially, and financially dependent on men. Family plays a vital role in this relationship as the connector.

Desai has varied terms to explore the different aspects of the feminine psyche to see the man and woman relationships. *Cry, the Peacock* is also a family story dealing with the concept of marital discord between husband and wife, Gautama and Maya. Even after the marriage, Maya cries for her unfulfilled love like a peacock. Desai's clear technique is to present a highly sensitive Maya, who is excessive emotionally weak. Though she is married to a rich, busy, and very practical middle-aged lawyer, the man of cool and clear temperament, does not understand the young and imaginative Maya. Here we can see that normally it is said that money plays a pivotal role in the relationship of marriage life, as it is very essential to live and survive in this modern world, but where money is not valuable in this relationship. Gautama is spiritual and traditional on the other side Maya, a pampered in her childhood is more and more demanding. Though Gautama is a loyal and faithful husband, he can not satisfy her demands and expectations. Usha Pathania, a noted critic, remarks:

Marital relationships are established with the explicit purpose of providing companionship to each other. However, the element of companionship is sadly missing in the relationship between Maya and Gautama. (154, *Novels of Anita Desai A Feminist Perspective*, R.K. Gupta).

Maya's marriage with Gautama is a fact of compromise of convenience, comfort, and security. As Gautama was well known by Maya's father thus he does not want any unknown in the life of Maya. He thinks of Gautama as the best life partner for his daughter in every sense. The story starts with the sad demise of Maya's pet dog, Toto, the only companion, to whom she was badly attached, due to her childlessness. The dog was the substitute of a child for her.

Childless women do develop fanatic attachments to their pets, they say. It is no less a relationship than that of a woman and her child, worthy of reverence, and agonized remembrance. (CP4).

The death of Toto was a usual affair for Gautama, as he is a rational, practical-professional, but it was an indifferent and

intolerable affair for Maya. She needs to be consoled deeply this time but the behavior of Gautama is as usual. The problems arise from here. The incompatibility between the relations is due to the dissimilarities in age, temperament, physical and mental outlook to see the things. Desai's concern for Maya's character is deeply influenced by her own life. The same she has shown in Gautama's character, who is influenced by his parent. The main objective of marriage life is the mutual understanding between husband and wife relationship, that how much they are devoted and passionate about their relationship.

Laila is Maya's friend, who is a teacher and deliberately marries an unhealthy and diseased man, without her parent's permission. Her life is full of fatal, sad, and gloomy. She has accepted her destiny as she chooses this life, thus never complains and lives uninterested life. Mrs. and Mr. LAL also show a different perception of their married life. The wife is Sikh and clearly announces her husband's negativity by saying her 'quack and opportunist, male adjusted person. Nils, a divorcee is also not satisfied with her relations and says,

After ten years with that rabbit I married, I've learned to do everything myself. (CP,7).

Pom complains obstinately of her husband Kailash, not ready to give in her wish for Saving a solitary house. Mrs. Sapru is a client of Maya's father who is also leading an unhappy life and came to discuss this case with him as he is a lawyer too.

Sometimes the relationship gets very critical as both the partner does not show any interest due to immaturity and lack of understanding. Especially in the case of arranged marriages, it's difficult for the bride and groom to adjust as both might have their wishes and desires in the expected partner. Adjustment is a time taking process, that needs patience and perseverance. A wedding is not only a union of two-person, but it's a Union of two bodies, their souls, and two families. In Indian society, the concept has different phenomena as the women are blamed and claimed for the relationship. It's due to her grace, love, affection, sincerity, wisdom, tolerance, and sacrifices that she handles all the matters lifelong. A woman does a great role in her life but if she is not able to handle the situation and relationship then she is blamed for an

unsuccessful- unhappy life. P.F. Patil suggests that,

All marriages in Desai's novels are more or less business transactions. A marriageable daughter is handed over to the male partner without considering the delicacy of her mind and feelings. She has to fulfill either the parent's responsibilities or the relative's demands with different intentions. (The novels of Anita Desai A Feminist Perspective by R.K Gupta/156).

Here, Maya's marriage is the evidence of the same evidence, as her father thinks of his friend as a fine and suitable husband for his daughter, without knowing the likes - dislikes or the age difference between them.

There is a close relationship between the brain and the heart. As the brain symbolizes wisdom, the heart signifies emotions and sensitivity. So the balance between both is very to run the relations smoothly. This story symbolizes Maya's regret for love and life. Her quench for the companion and love of her husband is drenched as Gautama is busy with her work. She feels depressed and insane as she is also under the influence of Albino, the fortune teller about the death. Gautama's involvement and disinterest in his marriage create a broad and deep gap in his marital life. Her psychic insane make her a killer. Maya is transformed from a pampered child to an abnormal killer. Maya's hypersensitivity and alienated nature caused the demise of Gautama.

In *Voices in the City*, Desai portrays feminine sensibility through the delineation of relationships. When two different persons are combined with a bond of wedding blindly, without their similarities, the problems are natural. India is a male chauvinistic country where females have to adjust and compromise. If the members of the family are considerate and mature, they work as the link to connect the relationship of husband and wife and strengthen the understanding, but if not then they are the reason for family degradation and discord in marital life. Desai has shown the same real picture to society, where females are struggling, facing difficulties just because they are married. Apart from the capabilities and the potential, they are blamed for all the disharmony in the relations. Sometimes the condition gets deteriorates while they are mentally and physically harassed by in-laws. Before her marriage, a girl who was weaving a fantasy for her

marriage, now, in reality, thinks it was hell and wanted to leave this life. But in reality, she can not leave her life because Indian culture, custom, and families value does not allow her for all these. For her, it is better to tolerate all the torture and harassment rather than speaking to their parents and seeking their help as it will harm the reputation of the family in society.

Here, at first, we have to look at the marital life of Nirode's parents. Both feel pride in them, father about the reputation of the name and game and mother about her tea state and house. In reality, they don't like each other as they are not a little bit compassionate and considerate about their relationship. Their conflicts make them like psychic demons. The condition becomes worsens as the father turned into a drunkard and dishonorable being quiet from the family and society and the mother is transformed into a cold, practical, and occupied woman without any values and responsibilities towards the family and children. Thus the family environment affected the children's life too. Because it is said that children are just like the wet soil, the shape is decided by the porter, and here the parents are the porter. From the beginning to the end of their childhood they imitated what they saw in the family. So their behavior is very common as per the norms of their family life.

Monisha's and Jiban's marital life is very ironic and critical. For Monisha, it's full of miseries and grief. Her marriage journey is the path of cactus, on which she has to run barefooted. Her transformation from a silent, simple, sensitive, self-centered girl into a sterile, insane, diarywriting woman has a panic and tragic ending. Both live under the same roof but behave like strangers, they live in the same house but there is no communication between them. Apart from their husband even in-laws don't give any attention to them and blame her for stealing Jiban's money and pressurized him not to believe in her. The question arises that how could a woman do this with another woman in the family. The level of ignorance and hatred increases so much that Monisha began to live an isolated life. Her interest in living life is listed. Her life is just like Maya's, feeling like a failure. N. R. Gopal points out that,

The life of a woman in the given circumstances is never happy and the result is that she burns herself to death. Her impending death by suicide has been poetically described by Anita Desai even

before her actual death which comes later in the novel. (N.R. Gopal, *A Critical Study of the novels of Anita Desai*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1995, p.25)

In most of her novels, Desai shows an imbalance between married couples. Indifference in form of disgust and distrust is very common. R.K. Gupta writes in his thoughtful book,

For Mr. Basu, Mrs. Basu is an attractive plaything. He suffers her whims as long as they are not unpalatable. Arun's wife, the nurse who lives in a world of medicines, has large and rude hands. She has nothing in general with him. Dharma avows that wedded relationships are not upright and made to order. Sonny's father concedes with clamorous laughter..... The silent Professor Bose is more like a household animal who moves at the first sign of any uncommon happening and trots to his wife and her Hilda fish, cooked in strong mustard oil. (The novels of Anita Desai, *A Feminist Perspective* by R. K.Gupta, P.159)

But A.V. Krishna Rao, a reputed critic has a different opinion, after his thorough study he analysis that,

Anita Desai eminently succeeds in dramatizing not only the individual human relationships against the backdrops of a cosmopolitan consciousness but also the growth of individual consciousness from a cynical sense of a loss of identity to the mystical realization of the meaning of existence as well as of his own identity. (A.V.Krishna Rao, *Voices in the city: A study, Perspectives on Anita Desai*, p.178.)

Desai's next novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Looks like an extension of *Cry The Peacock* with the similarities in theme, dilemmas of characters, and the differences between the relationship of husband and wife. It presents the relationships of husband Raman and wife Sita with the same oddities of life where the husband is not having any problem, as he is busy with his work in his life like Gautama but wife Sita is an unhappy and dissatisfied character. The reason for her marital disorder is her sense of alienation and loneliness from family and society. She is transformed from an ordinary woman into a psychic creature, losing her femininity, her sense

of being a wife, and being a mother. Her plight is similar to Maya and Monisha's. The chief aspect of all her problems is that she does not say 'No', not even to her husband and due to this only she has to suffer a lot in her life. She also believes in miracles and childhood fantasies and that's why she does the decision of going to Manori, as she doesn't want to give birth to her fifth child. It shows her desire that she is not interested in continuing her relationship with Raman because of the absence of love and compassion between them. The duties and responsibilities are different things but when we talk about the intense and compact relationship, it is not seen in these two characters.

In this novel, Manori Island is personified, a place where the miracle happens. She witnessed these miracles in her childhood. She has seen how her father made life, easy and comfortable for all, she trusts that there was something in the presence of her father, as he was blindly followed by his followers, there was some magic in his hands that vanishes the illness and evils. His presence was the fragrance of a flower invisible but everywhere.

The bitterness in her relationship increases up to the level that she decided to leave everything behind and goes to the Island at the advanced stage of her pregnancy, as she does not want to give birth to her fifth child. Her soul cries to stop the biological processes of delivery. Here, the difference between the two female characters and their longing for bearing the child is different. Maya starves for a child and Sita is fed up,

Children... Through her mind flowed a white, flapping succession of nappies, vests, and something quite extraordinary called 'booties' that would have to be gathered together. She could see the expressionless faces of the night nurses in the gynae ward...in the greenish night light, regarding her as she came in ravaged by the first pains. She could see the impassive face of a nurse who would stay by her in the theatre, now and then glancing at her large, flat watch, bored by yet another woman's s panic-stricken labor. (WSWGTS25).

After living a lonely life she becomes mentally and emotionally disturbed and weak. Life was full of hardships and rude realities. She understands the presence of a man in her life. She began to miss her relationship and understood that the island has lost its magical power. Her

pleasant childhood memories are no more pleasant now. She wants to compromise but waiting for her husband's response. Her daughter played a major role in this compromise, as she was even fed up with living a boring life on the island. Uma Banerjee, a noted critic, rightly suggests:

She becomes the victim of neurosis that destroys her mental equilibrium and threatens her sanity till she decides to run away to Manori Island, seeking the miracle that will give her the power of not giving birth. But the magic power of the island belonged to her childhood fantasy and has disappeared with time. (Uma Banerjee, *An Existential Approach Maladjusted in Marital Relations in Anita Desai's Novels: Indian Women Novelist, Set I, Vol.II* ed. By R.K. Dhawan, published by Prestige Books, 1991, p.165.).

The reason for differences between married couples is the lack of understanding and communication. As marriage is described as an essential concept in life, without which the life is thought incomplete, the life after marriage is an absolute condition of survival. Especially when we talk about the wedded life in Indian circumstances, where two contrasted characters are bounded by a wedding band with a long-lasting promise of togetherness. In this relationship, most of the time the woman plays a vital role, where she has to accomplish all her roles passionately and honestly without any expectations. The reality behind all such customs is simply to dominate the woman. All the time she has to follow a restricted life where life becomes boring and burdened, where there is nothing new, where there is the same role and routine, where if anything happens well then no one noticed but if anything goes wrong then the blame and claim are just for the lady of the house. She has to live in a world of the irksome and irritating environment with the pressurized burden of work. The weight-head, and life lost the inner beauty and charm of living a happy and mentally healthy life. She lives life just to keep others happy and satisfied, even if she loses her interest and identity.

The difference and conflict in marital life are very common, depending on the intensity and degrees of the conflicts. The novel *Fire On The Mountain* is crippled with the theme of communication and lack of understanding in marital life. The story of Nanda Kaul reveals the secrecy of a modern wife, where she pays a lot just

because of her position of being a wife of a vice-chancellor. Here, her position in the family and society keeps meaning rather than her whims and freedom. She is disillusioned with her selfish, infidel husband who ' treated her simply as some useful object.' (Solanki 1992:49).

She is just like a gracious hostess all the time for her husband, who wanted her always in silk, at the head of the long rosewood table in the dining- room, entertaining his guests. (18).

In the words of Gopal N.R.

She is so busy raising the family and discharging the duties of a mother, housewife, and hostess that in the evening of her life she is happy in her seclusion even though it is partly voluntary and partly circumstantial. (Gopal N.R. 1993:37).

Desai stresses the problematic life of Nanda Kaul, rather than showing her as the wife of a vicechancellor, leading a luxurious life. She lacks composition and harmony in her marriage life. After the death of her husband, her decision to follow the total isolation is not related to the spirituality of Indian thought. Her isolation is unwilling, but it was due to the circumstances of her life. During her married life, she was deeply involved with people without any interest and self-satisfaction. Her busy and isolated life is fabricated and her soul is isolated. She is suffering from unhappiness in her life. In the words of Dr. Arvind M. Nawale,

She had lied to Raka, lied about everything, nor had her husband loved and cherished her and kept her like a queen- he had only done enough to keep her quiet while he carried on a lifelong affair with Miss David, the Mathematics teacher, whom he had not married because she was a Christian but whom he had loved, all his life lived. The children were all alien to her nature. She neither understood nor loved them. She did not live here alone by choice- she lived here because that was what she was forced to do, reduced to doing. (Arvind M.Nawale, *International Research Journal* Vol. I, Issue 5, 2009/30097).

Gopal N.R. 1999. *A critical study of the novels of Anita Desai*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and distributors. Solanki, Mrinalini.

1992- Anita Desai's Fiction: Patterns of Survival Strategies. New Delhi, Krishna Publishing House Her next novel *Clear Light of Day* is an important novel with the sense of the traditional theme of Desai's novel where the writer stresses the relation of brother and sister and husband and wife relation too. The matrimonial differences take the shape of chronic disease for the couple as well as for the whole family. Bimla's mother leads a trustless relationship where there she always passed a normal life with her husband and children:

Her mother had not liked exercise, perhaps not the new baby either... she spent long hours at a dressing table before a mirror, amongst jars and bottles that smelt sweet and into which she dipped questing fingers and drew out the ingredients of a wife - sweet-smelling but soon rancid. (R.K Gupta, 173, *The novels of Anita Desai*).

Bim is the main character, free from the boundations of married life. It was her sole decision so that she could look after her retarded brother, Baba. She looks after him like a nurse as well as a mother. Tara is happily married to Bakul, a concerned and caring husband. She has a compact relationship with her husband. Tara and Bakul's relationship is not like any other wedded character. Sometimes there is a clash but Tara is not like any other female character who would tolerate any such behavior. She knows how to say No. She also feels strain and dilemmas, she is also desirous to come from the gloomy and diseased world, she also wants to feel the real laughter, real happiness in a comfort zone. She wishes to run in the azure, wishes to feel the presence of beautiful earth under her feet, she wants a pleasurable environment all around her, without any conflicts and compromises and differences.

In the past period, women in India have been regarded as one of the most disadvantaged sections of society. The low status of women and particularly the widows can be traced back to the post-Vedic era, where restrictions were imposed upon widows to contribute to socioreligious functions and ceremonies. Depending upon certain situations, they were regarded as inauspicious. Subsequently, more restrictions were put on widows, belonging to marginalized communities. Numerous problems are experienced by them, which we see in the character of Mira Masi, a delineated pathetic figure of a widow. She became a widow at a very early

age, due to which, she became a burden and curse to the family and society. She is deserted by her in-laws and she was blamed for her widowhood. They took her everything like property or financial liberation and expelled her from the house. So Bim's family gives her shelter and she passed her life as an unpaid servant, dying like an insane. R. K Gupta writes about her,

Mira Masi is a glaring paradigm of the violent victimization of widows, she is obsessed with the well...the bride like a cow... that had drowned. (R.K. Gupta, 175, *The novel of Anita Desai: A Feminist Perspective*).

The married life of Raja and Hyder Ali's daughter is quite different. By marrying her, he became a wealthy person and settled with their family in Hyderabad. After the death of Hyder Ali, he was the sole hire of his property and richness. Raja never looked back at his brother and sister till there was the time of his daughter's marriage. In this novel, Desai's attitude and willingness are just to confirm that the relationship between a husband and wife is not only bound to the customs of the family and society. Here, the characters either male or female can take their independent decision on how to live their lives. On one side where Bin decided not to marry due to her responsibilities on the other side, Tara and Raja decided to marry to move forward in their life. Both left Bim alone with mentally retarded brother Baba. Though Bin is working, responsible and independent but she is also a human being who has some wishes and desires, which she deleted from the chapter of life just because of her responsibility.

Custody shows a typical life of a common married person, whose life is not strong financially, and how he struggles to survive his life as a highly educated person. Here, the novel does not present women as highly sensitive, strong, and independent. By nature, they are compromising and dependent. The main character of this story is Devan Sharma, an awkward, but positive and self-sufficient person. The concept of marriage is just as ordinary as we see in most lowermiddle- class families. Arranged marriages are most of the time ill-matched and this story cites the best example in form of Devenand Sarla. Both are just opposite to each other. Finding the change in Mrs. Desai's fictional world, Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly says that,

“ the change is towards a widening of human concerns and a willingness to integrate concrete historical and specific cultural dimensions in the creation of interior landscapes.” (R.K. Gupta, 177).

Deven’s character has to play a different role as a failed husband and a lecturer. His personality is weak, has lack confidence and proper planning and presentation that's why he does not receive any respect from his students and colleagues. The root cause of conflicts and disputes between husband and wife is a financial problem, which we see the same in this story. As Sarla is not such demanding and quarrelsome, the life of Deven goes easy. On the other side, he does not give much attention to Sarla, which she knows that's why she understands that it’s useless to speak anything to her husband.

In this novel second main character is Nur Sahib, who rejects his first wife just because she does not match his standard, not glamorous and beautiful as he is desirous, thus he is married to Imtiyaz Begum, a very different and professions witty, quarrelsome lady. R.K. Gupta says, We see that two wives Sarla and Imtiyaz Begum do not revolt against their obsession and the hegemony of their husbands. It is only because they are uneducated and have no source of income they are dependent on their husbands. They feel about the formant and deserted attitude of their husbands but having no means of their livelihood they remain there submissively. (The Novels of Anita Desai: A Feminist Perspective, 178).

Of course, there are many ways to try into the future, thus it’s seen in the capabilities of Desai’s imagination which is less revolutionary. However she has a balanced view of the dying present and a meticulous review of the past which is no longer in one's grip, and it is as such almost absurd to attempt to predict the future of her art, that is novels, accountable to the community, society, and culture, which works as a mirror to show the Clear picture of the Individual as well as the society. Here, fate decides the future of the characters. In the novel Baumgartner Bombay, Desai does not show any intensity and tension in the husband-wife relationship, but Lotte’s crises for her identity has a deep-rooted struggle to show and to prove herself as the wife of Kantilal. Till the end of the story she struggles and fights for her identity in this manly world.

Journey to Ithaca, a fine presentation of spiritual experience, published in 1995 was remarkable due to the brilliancy of Desai’s intelligence. The story revolves around the three main characters, Sophie, Matteo, and the Mother. The couple Sophie and Matteo, after love marriage, join the 1970s flight of young Europeans to India. Both husband and wife are different beliefs. Matteo is an Italian, raised in the luscious countryside around Lake Como, restless since his childhood for knowing the spiritual truth and getting divine bliss. Sophie is German, practical, and worldly- is willing to follow him to the ends of the earth. In India, together they visit swami, gurus, and ashrams. Matteo is seeking spiritual enlightenment, but for Sophie fulfillment lies in earthly love. The differences between the married couple appear noticeably when they meet the mother, a holy woman. Desai interweaves a beautiful story with threads of the love marriage of a young couple Matteo- an Italian husband and Sophie- a German wife revealing the desperate quest Matteo for spiritual identity, existence, and togetherness. Though Sophie is not comfortable in India and feels distressed. In absence of Matteo's love in life, Sophie experiences loneliness, estrangement, existential predicament, rootlessness, and identity crises in India. The love and passion of Sophie as a dedicated wife is seen wider than Matteo. Though she is not in favor of Matteo’s belief it is just because of Sophie’s unconditional love and compassion that she left everything and accepted all the pain and suffering because of her love. Even she left her child with the grandparent and again came to India to be with her husband.

She searches for the reality of Laila, the mother, and reached to her,

She had not wanted anything so emotional, so excessive. Just information, photographs, proof, corroboration- solid, substantial things, nor emotion, and certainty not such a tangle of emotions. She reminds him, ' I am doing research, I plan to write a book. Can you give me photographs, press releases, reviews, anything to do with Laila- the Mother? (JI, 318-319)

In the beginning, Sophie is not convinced by the conversion of Matteo’s behavior and his total devotion to the mythological life of Mother. Sophie proves her as a devoted wife, whose love is unconditional, and in the end, she reaches out to her husband and is convinced of the magical

power and peace of Mother. Sophie is a wife who does not leave her husband alone in his searches and accompanies him in every way.

Marital life is full of duties and responsibilities with day-to-day activities and routine work. Desai's next novel though based on the child- parents' relationship somehow shows the realities of middle-class families. Here Desai presents two different cultures, Indian as well as Western cultures with a varied backgrounds. It also shows the relationship of husband and wife in the patriarchal system, where a woman has to bear the odd and awkward behavior of a man just because he is the earner and master of the family. In this story, the relationship between Mama-Papa is the same. Mama is a silent wife because she doesn't speak anything against her husband, but she is a failed mother as she doesn't understand her daughter and always favors Papa. On the other side relationship between Mrs. and Mr. Patron, shows a modern outlook on a life full of boredom and a careless attitude towards a single child Melanie. Uma is the eldest daughter of Mama- Papa she is described as a myopic, flat-footed, epileptic, and slow learner with an ugly look, that's why trained to look after the newborn child, a boy. Here, the discrimination of the parents is an important key factor. Her marriage is a type of bargain by the parents with a negotiable amount but twice cheated by the fraudulent dowry mongers. But here we may say her a little bit lucky, as she neither shows her a psychic nor does suicide like Anamika. Aruna is a talented and beautiful and smart girl with a modern outlook, thus successfully living her married life without any compromise. Rabbits Patients writes.

Despite her slow wit, Uma is a good observer and the narrator uses her to focalize on her mother's cunning in playing cards and chewing pan behind her husband's back, her self-pride, her apathy for anything not concerned with her, and her husband and family her loss of identity and complete subjugation by her husband. (Representation of women in Anita Desai's Novels, 244).

On the other side Anamika, a perfect daughter in all senses has to lead a panicked and pathetic marriage life, where there is no understanding between husband and wife and where the husband listens only to his mother and sister. The story reveals the realities of most of the brides in middle-class families, where they are

taunted, abused, and tortured physically as well as mentally due to not bearing a child or for many more reasons. The story of Anamika ends with her end of life. The character of Mira Masi shows the life of an unwanted widow in Indian society. The main important thing of this novel is that every character years and cries for the identity in which only Aruna is succeed due to her bold and positive attitude towards her life, as she knows how to handle the situation by using her wit and brain.

Her next two novels *The Village by the Sea* and *The Zigzag Way*, have different themes, and the concept of marriage is even not seen to an extent. On one side, in the children's novel, the role of parents is not seen much as they are the minor characters, but it's appreciating that in the end alcoholic father knows the value of a wife and relationship in his life and everything goes positive and happy and on the other side as the title *Zigzag Way* shows the twists and turns in life, where all the major and minor characters like Eric, Emily or Em, and Dona Vera are rushing to find something in their life and running for their identity.

Mrinalini Solanki appreciates Desai as a keen observer while choosing the role of female protagonists.

She writes, The female protagonists of Desai are burdened with the awareness of their feminity. They wish to know, along with the other ontological issues, the psycho-biological significance of their being female persons. Heirs of a culture where women have always been subjected to maledominated nor native structures, these women struggle to attain freedom from this rigid mold. The women in Desai's fiction seek freedom through activities that are generally considered to be male prerogatives: Minisha is more fond of books than of new clothes and jewelry; Amla seeks expression and realization of her hidden potentiality through paintings; Bim asserts her intellectual independence and ability by taking teaching as a profession. By taking up these occupations, these women transgress the fundamental social taboos against woman's pursuit of self-identity and independence. They find greater tension and conflict with the people close to them. But Desai emphasizes the significance of these occupations, pursuits, and tastes, as a part of women's search for identity. As a woman writer, Desai is more sensitive to the quests and tensions faced by women, and their

delicate nervous responses to those situations. These women characters struggle desperately to arrive at some image of fulfilled self but their struggle for survival is wrong with great tension. (Sudhakar T. Sali, Anita Desai's Female protagonists, 117- 118).

CONCLUSION

We talk about giving respect to women, providing them with equal rights, and empowering them to be educated and independent. On the other hand, when we define 'respect for women' by associating their identities with men we tie their independence to being dependent on men. We prepare women to be strong and self-made, but when they have to face problems like proving their own identities by linking them with men, even at the state level, what confidence would they be left with? The fact that no documentation or legal matter at the state level can proceed unless a woman has her spouse's name on her identity card, if she is married, crushes the morale down. Whilst men do not even need to provide with their marital status, putting the names of their spouses is far aside. Why this discrimination? Why can't we be given the same benefit as men? What has gender to do with basic rights? The bigotry is evident merely in the fact that a woman becomes a Mrs. after marriage whereas a man remains to be a Mr.

A woman in our society is a victim of an identity crisis in her own home and when she goes out of the jurisdiction of her home even then the laws and regulations do not safeguard her. They make her feel more insecure. Identity conflict can

affect a women's mental as well as her emotional state of mind. It makes her more sensitive towards approval of others' judgments and prone to retaliate with everyone to prove her individuality and independence. Most of the time women's rights are linked with feminism and portrayed as the dominance of women, though it is as simple as acknowledging and encouragement of equal rights of women by the entire society, including men and women both.

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