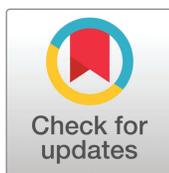


ORIGINAL ARTICLE

DESAI'S THEORY OF EXISTENTIALISM AND ALIENATION IN THE NOVEL 'VOICES IN THE CITY'

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ABSTRACT

The focal point of this research paper on the subject of the lower class society in Anita Desai's *Voices In the city*. Desai's primary focus on the matter of Existentialism and Alienation through the lives of its characters like Nirmal, Monisha and Ayesha grapple with isolation, moral ambiguity and the absurdity of life reflecting existentialist concerns. She portrays alienation as a product of urban modernity, where individuals are disconnected from their roots and struggle to find purpose. The novel underscores the tension between the personal freedom and societal constraints, echoing existentialist ideas of choice and responsibility.

Keywords: Existentialism, Modernity, Societal, Alienation, Struggle.

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INTRODUCTION

During the previous two and half decades huge numerals of women writers in Indian fiction have attracted a great deal of awareness and commending statement. Prominent among them are Kamla Markandaya, R.P. Jhabwala, Nayantara Sehgal, Veena Paintal, Attia Hussain, Jayshree Chatterjee, Nargis Dalal, Namita Gokhle, Tapti Mukherjee, Santha Rama Rao, and Anita Desai.

Anita Desai is one of the most remarkable and the utmost eminent fiction writers among the younger set of Indo-English writers today. She finds place in book-analysis, journals, interviews and seminars. In critical literary text on Indian writing in English, Anita Desai is the finest well known amongst the Indian novelist writings of English of the subcontinent. More than half-a dozen novel and collection of short stories of her have since been published. She has been hold in great respect with Sahitya Academy Award in 1978 and the Guardian Award in England in 1983.

Anita Desai's novel *Voices in the City* has a character of significantly chief as well as inconsequential temperament and the entire city of Calcutta in the surroundings. As a matter of fact that in the novel the city of Calcutta is a locale and become visible as a live persona in its own right. Calcutta is not only presented in the form of an actual framework, which can be explored in the viewpoint of meaninglessness and absurdity but an effort has been made to compel the city work in the formation of a force and an negotiator, which makes life incoherent. In consequence, the city of Calcutta transcends the character of a locale opposed to whom a subject matter is introduced and it turns into vigour. In *Voices in the City* a strive is made, perhaps for the first time, to associate with the subjective world of individual to the spirit of a locale.

Desai's unquestionable existential concerns have distinguished her from other novelists of her stage of life. She displays some sort of similarity to Arun Joshi, but Joshi has yet to accomplish the inclusiveness.

Desai's central subject is the existential predicament of an individual, which she projects through coronary partners – very tactful spouse – very sensitive mates and incompatible companion. Every time she creates a typical situation, she furnishes with a faultless poetic treatment to every feature. Thus the existential absurdity in Desai amalgamates lack of communication and brings it to intellectual crisis and further more it makes a pressure of drama and pulls, while the foremost characters are discern in the quest for their individual identity.

However Desai's characters and embryonic of reality throughout them, they convey with them a sense of isolation, alienation and pessimism. She shares out with the dislocation of ordinary life, morbidity of temperament, maladjustment in family life. She plunges deeply, darkly and silently to work out the inconsistencies of modern life and adds a current dimension turning inwards into the actuality of aliveness. She scores out life's unsolved problem, upheavals and chaos. She is repelled by the bareness and unsecured like soul Bellow or Margaret Arwoods, the existentialists.

Each one of the dramatis personae of Anita Desai is existential, unbiased or communal. She introduces every one of them as an irresolute mystery. By using initial individual narration, she permits them to notify his or her narrative, whether nowhere the scholar perceives that Desai is manipulating her persona. Consequently Desai chooses the technique of portraying the story to encounter the challenging probability. A trivial circumstance or an insignificant occurrence in her novels evokes instinctive and neurotic reciprocation.

Anita Desai never engrossed eminently in depicting superficial actuality as the pursuit of inmost veracity lying beneath the ostensible extent. In an interview she appraises Yashodhara Dalmia:

“One's engrossment can severally be an everlasting forage –for denotations, for principles, for- dare I say it – honesty. I believed of the sphere as an iceberg – the one-tenth observable overhead the surface of the water is what we designate the real life, however the nine-tenths that are immersed, comprise the sincerity and that is what sole attempt to explore. All my writing is an effort to stumble on, to italicize and to trail the correct consequence of objects. Alongside this exploration of the elemental verity and finding out a special folklore and philosophy, it is the way that fascinates me most – and by this I connote uniting dialect and symbol, word and rhythms- to acquire a definite integrity and to inflict order on disarray”

In her fiction Anita Desai strives to seek for the immersed veracity by exploring the inner psyche of her temperament and her possessive aspect of existence, which is elementally unlit. For her, the world is full of brutality and demolition. Demise dangerously surpasses desires and significant and threatens destruction. An individual discerns isolated and alienated in this dark world. He is depressed and apprised of the emptiness and meaninglessness of all the components and formation around him. Faith in God, which could have aroused some desires in this dark and despairing world, is not sought by the cognitive characters of Smt. Desai. In view of the fact that they have nothing to egress, the majority of her persona rebel against the existing structure of life. Whether as they have nothing to brawl for, their confrontation is unenthusiastic, thus ends in failure. Especially they even do not scuffle and only extract but they are dismayed when they feel that all their attempts are futile and the withdrawal can never be attained.

If they make an effort to look ground for resistance in immortality- the world of fantasy then after entering in it they feel that this world is no better than the world of actuality. Consequently the individual is entwining in a category of entanglement, flee from where it is not possible. He worrying anticipate for demise, which too fails to give any denotation to his awaiting.

In Anita Desai, the subject matter of exile occupies the vital role of her fiction. The majority of her characters perceive alienated and exiled even if they remain in crowd, yet they not ever sense the lack of culture them. Unlike Nayantara Sahgal, Desai is more fascinated in the interior world of her protagonist than in ministerial or social realities. Her fiction deals with ferocious assault of existence. Her protagonists are persons for whom alienation is the optimum reality. They are mostly women comprising school girls to grandmothers. They are fragile, introverts, longing for their existence. Most of them feel pain from psychic deficiencies like Neurosis, paranoia, super-ego, self-preservation, frigidity, mental disassociation, introversion, inferiority complex etc.

Alienation has eventually been delineated through images and symbols which withdraw contrasting view of characters and represent pungency and frustration of psyche. Such utensils indicate the changes which a correlation undergoes and strengthen the characters and the readers and symbol mainly worn by the novelist are those which on the one hand consider the deep sensuous love of life and strained tastes of the woman characters while furthermore they point out the dearth of attentiveness in such things in their male spouse.

Exemplification of Existentialism and Alienation in the novel Voices in the city:

- a) ***Alienation through pairs of dramatis personae:*** The novel voices in the city have numeral kinds of dramatis personae, but the relationship of all of them by alienation. Nirode, the main central character in the novel is a congenital negligence and his forage for privilege is an existential.
- b) ***Theme of Alienation through Mother- Children relationship:*** In the novel the theme of alienation has been act towards also in terms of mother- children relation- a further aspect of mutual association. Nirode detest perusal his mother written message and even utilize filthy, offensive words of her. Monisha realize her relation with mother fills up with an innate and patrician discern of duty, of distinction of concern. At the end of the novel, Nirode recognize his mother with divinity kali-the goods of death in an analytical course of action.
- c) ***Theme of Alienation through images and symbols of music and flowers:*** The imagery of music and flowers gives the alienated relation betwixt Mr and Mrs.... Ray, Nirode's parents in the novel. White Mrs Ray settle down with her head bowed and eyes closed in pleasure, listening to the chords to the shehnai players. Mrs. Ray is involved in her garden stirring flowers; Mrs. Ray sits averse to his cushions, idle and contended- in his malice. Such vision likeness is strikingly impressive in highlighting the alienated relation between the partners.
- d) ***Theme of Existentialism and Alienation through the theme of death:*** The theme of death is not prompt and haunting in the novel but it happens frequently in a notable way and casts its gruesome contour on all the facet and formation and present the life as an aimless journey. Although time, it runs aligned to existence. At others it intermingles with life and became an essential part of it. The merging of goddess kali with mother is an exemplification of the same. The death of Monisha modifies a revolt and non conformist Nirode into a person deeply involved and concerned with others.
- e) ***Existentialism and Alienation though the depiction of brutality:*** In the novel depiction of brutality has been introduced in the form of peculiarity of the common way of behaving of the people has been contemplating the essential part of the atmosphere. It is a kind of secret force which bursts out even on a modest touch: "In a Calcutta, it is everywhere, ere. Deceptively it is a quiet crowd passive but distressed. Such fierceness of the diseased state of the soul and the poisonous atmosphere."

- f) ***Existentialism and Alienation through evacuate from life:*** In the novel *Monisha* extract due to the monotony and weariness of life the lack of privacy and the lack of true love .Nirode, withdraws mostly due to meaninglessness of life- “He loathed the word that could offer him no campaign, no pilgrimage and he loathed himself for not having the true, unwavering spirit either within him”. Some unbiased capability, as the place of incident i.e. locale, also force the Calcutta has not been presented in the shape of actual circumstances, against whom a search can be made for meaningless. The unsavoury dreadful monstrous force of Calcutta has been recognized with the goddess kali.

CONCLUSION

Desai's indubitable existential concerns have distinguished her from other novelists of her generation and her theme of alienation and exile occupies the major part of the fiction. In the novel 'voices in the city' the relationship between different types of the characters is characterised by alienation and the search for privilege by Nirode, the main protagonist in the novel, is an existential search. Thus we can state that of the entire existentialist novelist, Anita Desai is the pre-eminent writer.

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