

A Psychoanalytical Reading and Feminine Sensibility in Anita Desai's "The Voices in the City"

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□ Abstract:

One of the current theories used in English literature is psychoanalysis. It is a psychoanalytic-guiding theory that is regarded as a theory of personality organisation. The academic subject of literary criticism, or literary theory, has long investigated the hidden relationship between literature and psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis has been one of the most controversial and underappreciated critical approaches to literature among many readers. The purpose of psychoanalysis was to demonstrate that the unconscious affects behaviour. Feminine sensibility is a concept that originated during the Enlightenment and extended till romantic age. It describes the extent to which women are influenced by their surroundings.

Anita Desai's "Voices in the City" is an essential novel in defining sorrow, agonies, and the element of holding oneself apart from the outer world. Desai's characters appear to portray the unorthodox sense of hopelessness that predominates every time, as opposed to the standard characters, who always believe in triumph after struggling with the situation. So this paper aims to understand the psychoanalytical point of view of the female characters of the novel and focus on the feminism elaborated by Anita Desai in this novel. This paper's aim is to focus on the three main characters of the novel: Monisha, Amla, and her mother.

The proposed study, **"A Psychoanalytical Reading and Feminine Sensibility in Anita Desai's 'The Voices in the City,'"** aims to investigate female sensibility and psychoanalytical interpretation.

Keywords – Psychoanalysis, Neurotic, Feminine, Feminine Sensibility

In the 20th century, psychoanalytical approaches were introduced in the literary field. psychologists put concrete and logical illustrations to every point that they make. Also, English literature is not exempt from the influence of psychology. Many theories, including psychoanalysis, influence English literature.

The term "psychoanalysis" refers to the branch of psychology. The term psychoanalysis was coined by Sigmund Freud in his book "Studies of Hysteria". But the new inquiry in this field came in 1899 with another German book, "Die Traumdeutung," translated into English, namely "The Interpretation of Dreams" (1913). He then moved to Vienna. In 1873, Freud enrolled at the University of Vienna. He was a consulting doctor for psychological disorders in 1880. He understood that physical cure is totally different from mental disorders, and this led Freud to formulate the theory called psychoanalysis.

Despite this, it is considered one of the most exciting and satisfying approaches to interpretative analysis. This psychological interpretation has become one of the methods for determining a literary text's underlying meaning.

Feminine sensitively was developed during the Enlightenment and refined further throughout the Romantic Period. It describes the extent to which women are influenced by their surroundings. Feminism refers to a set of movements and philosophies aimed at defining, establishing, and defending women's political, economic, and social rights. It is both a global and revolutionary ideology as well as a socio-cultural movement aimed at liberating women from male dominance in patriarchal societies.

Anita Desai is a prolific living writer who has published ten full-length novels of varying lengths, as well as numerous short stories and a few articles. She received widespread critical praise in a relatively short period of time. She is credited with introducing the psychological novel to India, as well as being a pioneer in writing on feminist issues. Her literature is infused with feminine sensitivity, and her subjects are unique, focusing on the misery of women who are subjected to insensitive and inconsiderate spouses, fathers, and brothers. Despite the fact that Anita Desai's fiction strives to analyse feminine consciousness, she is wary of labels and refuses to identify as a feminist. Desai's women are generally on a quest for self-discovery and fulfilment of the emptiness they sense in their relationships with their parents, siblings, and friends, which are all unfulfilled. Desai has built a feminist discourse of literary texts that exhibit traces of a raging dissatisfaction with the patriarchal rules of civilised human existence.

Anita Desai does not address issues that are solely the domain of feminist thinkers. Between feminine sensibility and feminine attitude, there is a subtle distinction. She is unafraid to emphasise the female characters' equal responsibilities. A feminist, on the other hand, strives to perceive only the suppression, oppression, cruelty, and injustices that women have faced in the past and connects these events to the present. Desai has produced female characters that are more and more metaphorical, inverted, and suppressed.

The Voices in the City is a novel by Indian author Anita Desai that explores the lives of four characters from Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) who struggle to find meaning and fulfilment in their lives. In 1965, "The Voices in the City" was published. It is the second novel by Anita Desai. The story is mainly set in Calcutta. The main theme of the novel is rapidly changing modernism. The story is about four siblings, but one leaves the country at the start of the novel. Later, Monisha married into a traditional family. She is a sensitive and over thinking girl. She gets nervous when her family expects her to fulfil all of the responsibilities of a modern wife. Throughout the novel, Monisha's feminine sensibility is contrasted with the masculine world of her father and brother, who are portrayed as ambitious and driven by material success. Monisha, on the other hand, is more interested in exploring the inner life of the mind and finding a sense of spiritual fulfilment.

It's just like taking care of the house and giving birth to a child. But Monisha did not get pregnant, and for this reason, her sister-in-law and mother-in-law wrapped her many times. She talks to her

husband, but he refuses to tell her to adjust and accept the thoughts. One day, Monisha burns herself in the bathroom.

The novel explores the theme of feminine sensibility through the character of Monisha, who is depicted as a sensitive and introspective young woman. Monisha is portrayed as having a deep emotional life, and she is shown to be deeply affected by the people and events around her. She is also shown to have a strong connection to the natural world, which is often contrasted with the chaos and artificiality of urban life.

Psychoanalysis is a theory of psychology that explores the unconscious mind and its influence on behaviour, emotions, and relationships. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, believed that repressed desires and memories could manifest in psychological symptoms or neurosis. He proposed that by bringing these unconscious conflicts into conscious awareness, individuals could gain insight into their own motivations and overcome their psychological struggles.

In *The Voices in the City*, the characters' behaviour and relationships are often driven by their unconscious desires and unresolved traumas. For example, the character Monisha is haunted by memories of her childhood and struggles to form intimate relationships as a result. Her experiences can be understood as a manifestation of unconscious conflicts that stem from repressed trauma.

According to Freud, the conscious and unconscious elements of the mind can clash, resulting in repression (a state in which you are unaware of possessing certain unpleasant impulses, intentions, or desires, yet they still influence you negatively). In general, psychodynamic theories imply that in order to overcome repression and attain mental health, a person must successfully resolve early developmental issues (e.g., acquiring trust, affection, successful interpersonal connections, managing body functions, etc.). In contrast, a mental disease is a failure to cope with these conflicts.

Another character Amla is the smallest of the siblings. She also came to Calcutta to settle down. And she rightly believed that she could succeed. She met Dharma, the painter, and was selected as the model. In the beginning, she was happy to see all these things, but later, the painter group had no morality and no true emotions. She broke her connection with Dharma. She later enjoyed her

work at an advertising firm. Anita Desai's female characters are sensible. In this novel, Amla's sensibility is clearly visible.

Amla has an aspiring nature, and she wants to settle herself in the city of Calcutta. But ultimately, she failed in her life. Amla, the younger sister, underwent commercial artist training in Bombay and has relocated to Calcutta to work for an advertising agency. Amla has a brief romance with married artist Dharma, and the world of upper-class society is revealed through her.

Amla is a complex character in "The Voices in the City" by Anita Desai. Her feminine sensibility is portrayed through her sensitivity, vulnerability, and emotional depth. Amla is depicted as a deeply empathetic character who is attuned to the emotions of those around her. She is sensitive to the suffering of others, particularly women, and is often moved to tears by their stories. This sensitivity is evident in her relationships with her sister, Monisha, and her friend, Tara, whom she supports emotionally through their respective struggles.

Amla's vulnerability is also a defining characteristic of her feminine sensibility. She is portrayed as a fragile and delicate character who is easily hurt by the insensitivity and cruelty of others. This vulnerability is most evident in her relationship with her mother, who is dismissive and critical of her. Despite this, Amla remains devoted to her mother and seeks her approval. Amla's emotional depth is another aspect of her feminine sensibility. She is introspective and reflective, often grappling with complex emotions and feelings of alienation. This emotional depth is most evident in her relationship with her father, whom she idolises and idealises. When she discovers that her father has a dark secret, it shatters her worldview and leaves her feeling betrayed and disillusioned. Amla's feminine sensibility is portrayed through her sensitivity, vulnerability, and emotional depth. She is a complex character who grapples with the complexities of femininity and the challenges of navigating relationships with the people in her life.

According to psychology, the ego functions on the realism principle, which seeks to satisfy the needs of the id in the most rational and realistic manner possible. The ego may accomplish this by postponing enjoyment, compromising, or trying anything else to avoid the adverse effects of breaking society's norms and standards. Here, Amla's ID is satisfied with the help of Dharma.

Monisha's mother is another female character. She is a sensitive character and thinks about her children all the time. The husband's death is the most traumatic part of the novel. After his death, she formed a relationship with a retired army officer, Mr. Chaddha.

In terms of gender roles, women are treated as second-class citizens. Women have no right to enjoy the same benefits as men. A woman has to submit to a man. In the case of Monisha, she told everything she faced, but ultimately, her husband answered that she had to cope with the situation.

Overall, the novel suggests that feminine sensibility is characterised by emotional depth, sensitivity, and a connection to the natural world. These qualities are contrasted with the materialism and ambition that are often associated with the masculine world.

Here, three characters are facing neuroticism. With this neuroticism, the lives of the three female characters take unexpected turns. If they got proper help, they might change their lives. The voices in the city deal with the psychological issues that today's youth face. It is filled with symbolism because it is mostly about the growth and functioning of the psyche. The story revolves around the desire for a meaningful and happy life by three major characters: Nirode, Monisha, and Amla. The wicked forces of the city of Calcutta, which are shown symbolically as a living entity, trap all of the important characters. They suffer greatly as they go through many stages of failure and struggle, and their mental anguish is expressed through a variety of symbols. Anita Desai beautifully explains that people can't adjust to the changing world. All people are dissatisfied with modern values and want change.

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