The New Women In Anita Desai And Jhumpa Lahari’s Novel

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The new women seek a new identity in a male dominated world no doubt women have so many bitter experiences, the miserable humiliations, the helpless cries of women go unnoticed. New women brings new ideas new thinking and new attitude, when the social pattern changed the women came forward emerged as the new women to see a new identity.

Key note: - new women, new identity.

The term "New woman" indicate intelligent, independent, educated and emancipated woman defying the stereotypical image of a woman. It was a voice raised against male supremacy and an attempt to re-demarcate gender roles. According to Dr. Andrzej Diniejko, the ‘New Woman’ was a cultural phenomenon striving for self-fulfillment and autonomy rather than sacrifice, prefers to be single than victimized by the conventional marriage set up. In male dominated world women have bitter experience they are helpless their cries are unnoticed.

Anita Desai is such Indian women novelist who feels the pain the plight and the problem most acutely and so we find desperateness, disparity and destruction over powering her characters. Desai like virginia woolf deals with the psychology of mind and she goes deep into the heart of her characters to expose their inner feelings and take out the hidden questions that is spring at the core of their heart.

Jhumpa gives a realistic image of the ‘New Woman’ in her novel, ‘The Lowland’. Only the two major woman characters in the novel, Gauri and Bela are considered for the present study. Jhumpa’s women are very different from a traditional Indian woman. They prefer to be identified as individuals rather than women. They have a strong conviction for life and do not compromise in their attempt to retain their identity. They are confident, dynamic and capable of facing the challenges of life.

Maya in Desai's most popular novel cry ,the peacock is a miss fit romantic herself she is critical of her husband’s practical approach to life she loves nature but her husband has no time to wait and see. The astrologer’s prediction is that one of them would die after 4 years of marriage.

Gauri is the most complex character in the novel. She was born in a large family with many sisters and a brother. All her sisters are much elder than her and were married after a few years she was born. Since her childhood, she had lived far from her parents for some reasons. She enjoyed the autonomy she was granted by them and glad that there was no authoritative control of her parents over her. She was sent to her maternal grand parents’ house to live with her brother, Manash in Calcutta. The physical distance from her parents caused her having no deep emotional attachment with them. Gauri’s grandfather, a retired Sanskrit professor and a voracious reader was always an inspiration to her in her life.
In Anita Desai’s novel Sita realises that one has two compromise with life and identity oneself with the wholeness of being. Sita, the 'new women', shuttles between the past and the present. At one time she is disillusioned when she tries to cling to the past but finally she realises that she should be bold enough to March forward with the present. She returns with a new insight, a new awareness. She now knows that whatever the attitude of the society the 'new women' must not escape from it.

Bela is another female lead character in Jhumpa's novel 'The Lowland'. The catastrophic decision of Gauri to abandon her family knocks the life of Bela into trauma. The terrible isolation from her mother marks a deep impression upon her for her whole life. Initially, Bela struggles to overcome the shock. She turns inward and introvert. Gradually she learns the lessons of isolation from her life. Her acceptance of truth transforms her and turns her to have a different perspective on life. She becomes highly individualistic to choose the career she prefers. Bela chooses to work as an environmentalist and also sometimes works as an agriculturist. She prefers to live as a nomad with no fixed address and insurance.

The emptiness in her life converts her defiant to tradition. The troubled marriage of her parents had a demonstrated impact on Bela which infused courage in her to denounce the system of marriage. She declares that she decides never to marry in life. She gives birth to an illicit child and decides to bring up the fatherless child. Thus Bela exhibits an indomitable spirit and faces the challenges of her life with confidence.

Anita Desai's Bim in clear light of day is the 'new woman' who rejects the traditional concept of marriage and prefers to remain single. Anita Desai's women characters fail to achieve any sort of harmony with the outer world because they are neither ready to involve nor to surrender. They neither accept nor resign. They are always in search of something new; something that can provide a more authentic existence for them.

The characters Gauri and Bela can be compared with New Woman of Victorian era, which no longer see marriage, followed by motherhood as inevitable in life. Gauri is married twice and becomes a mother but doesn’t see fulfillment in her married life and motherhood. On the other hand, Bela discards the institution of marriage itself. Thus, Jhumpa Lahiri’s women characters in the novel ‘The Lowland’ redefine the nature of woman and stand by their abilities breaking away from the stereotypes of womanhood. They face challenges of life with courage and with enormous inner strength.

Anita Desai revolts against this attitude towards women. The women have their own feelings, emotions and passions. Now they are coming out of there cocoons and joining hands with men to work shoulder to shoulder along with them. No doubt they face difficulties and drawbacks at every step but they try every possible way to assert and attain their self respect. Anita Desai and Jhumpa Lahari both believe in the growing awareness among women for their rights and individualities.

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