



Original Article

Social Realism in Anita Desai “The Fire on the Mountain” & Shashi Deshpande “The Dark Holds No Terrors” (1980)

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Abstract:

Indian English literature in the post-independence era witnessed the emergence of human writers who plays female experience at the centre of narrative. Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande are to prominent voices who defeated the social realities of Indian middle-class women while Desai expose inner life of women loneliness and Indian society.

Deshpande focuses on marriages patriarchy and women search for identity. This paper examines how both writers represent quite psychological and domestic behaviour in the society. The study shows society as it really is, with his problem class injustice. In Desai novel it is about how society affect the mind, home and relationship. Deshpande maps the society through everyday middle class Indian society.

Keywords: *Indian English Literature, Social Realism, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Women’s Identity, Middle Class Indian Society.*

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Introduction:

In 1970s- 1990s marked a turning point for Indian women's writing in English with changing education, urbanization. Indian women begin questioning traditional rules. Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande became Central to this

movement. Social realism in Indian society in Shashi Deshpande's novel shows that Indian middle-class home, is the biggest side of gender injustice, while social realism is about how society lies inside a woman's mind.



This paper aim to

1. Analyze representation of women in the selected novels.
2. Understand the contribution of both writers to Indian feminist discourse

Literature Review:

Critics like Belliappa 1992, Jain 1998 and Nabar 1995 have noted that Indian woman writers moved from romance to realism.

Ibsen's "A Doll's House" critiques 19th century gender roles, revealing women's oppression.

The concept of social realism in global English literature by Dr. M. M. Gopi, stated that realism truth, the truth of emotion, which is the ultimate of realism.

Desai has been read through psychological and existential lenses (Rajan, 1993).

Deshpande is often placed within the tradition of social reformist writing (Tiwari, 2007). However, few studies directly compare their feminist vision as two phases: consciousness and assertion.

Methodology:

This study done by using analytical and Critical methods to novels are taken as a primary text.

Anita Desai: Fire on the Mountain (1977).

Shashi Deshpande: The Dark Holds No Terrors 1980.

Discussion And Analysis:

1. Anita Desai as a Social Realism:

Desai focuses on middle class life. Her characters are teachers, housewife clerk. In the novel the Fire on the Mountain, society has no

place for old unmarried and widow women, no security for single women.

In Fire on the Mountain, Nanda Kaul rejects the role of caretaker, grandmother. She seeks solitude in Caringnano.

Key Insight: For Desai, oppression is internalized. Her feminism lies in exposing how women are driven to the margins when denied voice and selfhood.

2. Shashi Deshpande feminism as a voice and choice:

Deshpande's protagonist are not victims In the Dark Holds no terrors, Sarita "Saru" is a successful doctor. Her husband's inferiority Complex leads to marital conflict. Yet Saru confronts her past and choose to rebuild her marriage on new terms.

Key Insight: For Deshpande, feminism means self-awareness. Her woman do not abandon Indian family but demand equality within it.

3. Comparative analysis:

Parameter	Anita Desai	Shashi Deshpande
Core Concern	Social role	Conflict
Narrative Style	Lyrical	Simple, Direct, Reality.

Thus, Desai shows why women suffer. Deshpande shows how women can respond.

Conclusion:

Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande both are social realists, but they show society in a two different ways. Both uses the middle class Indian home as their Canvas. Anita Desai's socialism is inner and psychological, Shashi Deshpande's social realism is domestic and feminist. They create and Indian feminism rooted in a middle



class reality where change happens slowly through awareness and small acts of defiance.

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