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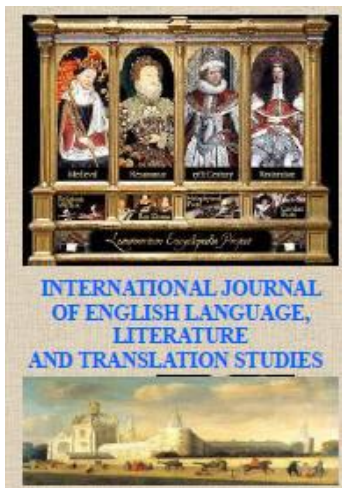
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## ANITA DESAI AND KIRAN DESAI- A COMPARISON

Dr. P. JAYASEELA<sup>1</sup>, A. BHAGYALAKSHMI<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Prof. in English, Tiruppur Kumaran College for Women, S.R.Nagar, Tirupur, Tamilnadu

<sup>2</sup>Ph.D. Candidate & Asst. Prof. in English, Tiruppur Kumaran College for Women, S.R.Nagar, Tirupur, Tamilnadu



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### ABSTRACT

Literature records life and society's response to it which is embodied in author's creation. Indian literature in English is perhaps smaller in volume compared to several regional languages. Woman has inspired literature and herself is a creator of literature and therefore woman's presence in literature is all pervading. This is true of Indian literature in English also.

The purpose of this paper is to flash- light the social realities reflected in the novels of Anita Desai and Kiran Desai. Anita Desai was the one novelist who concentrates more on the exploration of modern Indian sensibility. She observes the realities from a psychological perspective. Anita Desai is in many ways a representatives of Indian woman novelist in English. Her contribution to fiction in independent India is more significant than the other women novelists such as Ruth Praver, Nayantara Saghul or Kamala Markandaya. She as a woman writer has a belief and concern more with thought, emotion, and sensation than with the action, experience and achievement. She is not only attended to the problems of women in the Indian society but was keen on portraying the social world. Her novels are certainly the reflective of social realities. Kiran Desai, the daughter of Anita Desai has won where mother could not succeed though her novel was short listed for the Booker Prize thrice. The daughter continued along the contours marked by her mother but she is perhaps more interested in social and political upheavals. She says that her prize novel is, "as much hers as it is mine". While Anita Desai's novels reflect the social reality, Kiran's novel manages to explore every contemporary international issue. The remarkable thing about Kiran is that she is aware of Anglo- Indian inheritance- of Naipaul and Rushdie- but she does something pioneering.

The objective of Indian writing in English is twofold- to take stock of oneself and to project to the world Indian ethos. Both mother and daughter do not believe that literature ought to be confined within the reality. Their novels explore the ordinary and common- place in all their bewildering complexity. Truthfulness is its motto, realism is its animating principle

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Literature is like a vast canvas in a framework in which writers portray their characters. It records life and society's response to it which is embodied in author's creation. The aim of the paper is to flash light the social realities depicted in the novels of Anita Desai and Kiran Desai.

In the house of fiction are many mansions. The Indian English fiction in post independent Indian has assumed all kinds of colourful traditions. The novel thrives in a complex society with a dense social structure. It explores the ordinary and common place in all their bewildering complexity. Truthfulness is its motto; realism is its animating principle.

Anita Desai's major themes are human relationships, alienation, loneliness, lack of communication, East West Encounter, violence and death. Her novels unfold the inner realities and psychic reverberations of her characters and tell the harrowing tales of blunted human relationships. The novels are certainly reflective of social realities. She was keen on portraying the social world.

Being the daughter of representative of Indian novelist, Kiran Desai has won the Booker prize, where her mother could not succeed though Anita Desai's novel was listed thrice. Kiran walked on the foot steps of her mother, continued along the contours marked by her mother's experience and the way of writing.

It is clear to those of us who have read Anita Desai that Kiran has learned from her mother's work. Both write not just about India but about Indian communities in the world. The remarkable thing about Kiran is that she is aware of Anglo- Indian inheritance but she does something pioneering. While her mother is interested in exploring the social realities, she is more interested in the social upheavals.

Inevitably odious and embarrassing mother- daughter comparisons were made and it speaks volumes for both women that they handled a potentially fraught situation with so much generosity and grace. Kiran always acknowledges the debt she owes her mother and the literary pedigree she has inherited.

Mother and daughter have decidedly different writing style. Anita is a deceptively quiet writer; Kiran is little bit more showy as a writer. While her mother had to learn how to teach in a different country, she struggles with learning to write. Her prize winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss* is like her mother's, she manages to explore every contemporary issue; globalization, immigration, economic inequality and multiculturalism.

Kiran explained that *The Inheritance of Loss* as exploration of post-colonial chaos, did revolve around the same initial story line as one of her mother's original novels. Both the novels (*Fire on the Mountain* and *The Inheritance of Loss*) deal with embittered old Anglophile people who withdraw from the world only to have their solitude interrupted by the arrival of a grandchild.

One feels that Kiran has not conceptualized the characters clearly; she seems to be echoing a similar situation in Anita Desai's novel *Fire on the Mountain* where Nanda Kaul's lonely life is disturbed by the arrival of her great granddaughter Raka. Like her own great grandmother she wanted only one thing- to be left alone. Nanda realizes that Raka "was the finished, perfected model of what she herself was merely a brave, flawed experiment". (*Fire on the Mountain*, 47)

In the *The Inheritance of Loss*, the judge realises that Sai "... was more his kin than he had thought. There was something familiar about her, she had the same the accent and manners" (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 210)

While analyzing immigration and its associated problems it must be understood that new immigrants came from a society where they had been part of the whole community. Once these people leave their original homelands, they experience the pangs of alienation Nanda Kaul; the outcome of their deliberate choice is dispossession and displacement.

Kiran does not take the same interest in the psychological working of her characters. Anita individualizes the characters by giving them names. Kiran does not give names to Sai's parents or the cook who are very important characters. She presents the miserable life of illegal immigrants so vividly, but there are big gaps in the Indian side of the story. In the novel, the American social background is better depicted than the Indian family. Kiran beautifully sums up the attitude of the anglicized class of Indian society, educated in schools. Hich believe that "cake was better than laddoos... English was better than Hindi" (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 35)

Anita Desai's *Bye-bye Black Bird* though a work of 1972 based on the theme of immigration of native Indians to England and it has still its bearing on the cultural relationship of these two nations. There is bound to be the clash of ideas, traditions, and social systems where to opposite cultures collide and create confusions. The theme of immigration and consequent alienation of characters concerned has been the subject matter of choice for many Indo-Anglian artists. But what differentiates Mrs Desai from others in the same sphere is her capacity to turn such experiences into the monument of living art. It is the simple rendering of emotions of Indians who face abnormal situation in living and partly living every moment of life on an alien soil.

Unlike her mother, Kiran said she does not think of marrying or having children where all her mother's women are the victims of marital incompatibility. "Marriage becomes part of your personality and your life" she said. "If I had a child, I'd have to break out of it and be sweet. But as writer and a daughter of writer mother I am trying to understand late and anger". ("The Inheritance of Loss" *The New York Times*, (February 10, 2006)

Daughter of the distinguished Indo- English writer Kiran does not share the same intensity that her mother weaves in her potent tales. But she does not disappoint in producing a maddeningly entertaining novel. Not that the strains of the umbilical chord is negated totally in Kiran's writing.

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