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SEARCH FOR SELF REALIZATION IN THE NOVEL *THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET* BY SANDRA CISNEROS

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American Literature is a literature written or produced in the United States and its preceding colonies. This American literature can be divided into five major periods like Colonial and early national period, Romantic, Realism and Naturalism, Modernist period and contemporary period. Colonial period came into existence by the European settlers and their writings. The remarkable authors of this period are Mary Rowlandson, William Bradford, Anne Bradstreet and John Winthrop. Romanticism is considered as the period of artistic, literary, musical and intellectual movement that originated in Europe towards the end of the 18th century. The romanticism writer tries to connect their emotions and they celebrate nature in their writings. Realism reacts against romanticism, idealized heroes and sensational situations. Naturalism seeks to present human behaviour objectively on a scientific basis. Modernism is a philosophical movement that along with the cultural trends and changes in the western society. The notable writers of this period are T.S.Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound and Dorothy Richardson. Post modernism tends to acknowledge and value multiple perspectives on reality. It's a broad movement that developed in the late 20th century.

The House on Mango Street is a coming-of-age novel written by the American Writer Sandra Cisneros. She was born on December 20, 1954 in Chicago. She was a creative short story writer, poet, novelist, essayist and artist. She did her B.A. English in Loyola University of Chicago and completed her creative writing in the University of Iowa. She worked as a teacher and counselor for the high school students. As a counselor she analyzed the problems faced by the young Latino Americans and this influenced her to begin her career in writing. Sandra Cisneros' influence towards her personal experience are reflected in her writing. Her notable works are *Bad Boys* in 1980, *House On Mango Street* in 1984, *My Wicked Wicked Ways* in 1987, *Women Hollering Clerk* in 1991, *Loose Women* in 1994, *Caramelo* in 2002, *Vintage Cisneros* in 2004, *Brave Bunro* in 2011. She received most prestigious and honourable Awards like Before Columbus foundation's American Book Award in 1995 for the novel *House On Mango Street*. PEN center USA Literary Award for creative nonfiction, Texas Medal of the Arts, Tia Chucha's Lifetime Achievement Award. Sandra Cisneros' works have been translated into various languages.

The House On Mango Street is a novel that illustrates the life of poor people in the society. The Protagonist of the novel is Esperanza Cordero. In the beginning of the novel author described about the life of Esperanza's family in the Mango street. The house on Mango street is new to Esperanza and her family members before that they lived in a tiny apartment near to Chicago. In that case their life in the Mango street gave more happiness in comparison to their past life. Even though they have transformed to the new house Esperanza felt dissatisfied because it was not her dream house. Moreover this Mango street is near to the Latino neighbourhood in which the poor people are racially segregated. Since her childhood days, Esperanza suffered a lot being an impoverished girl but still she has a dream of her own house. Once they have shifted to their new house Esperanza became close with Lucy and Rachel. Esperanza and her friends enjoyed bike riding and they also came to know about the life of boys from the old woman Marin.

Throughout the novel narrator describes more about the neighbourhood family because those families played a major role in Esperanza's life. The first half of the novel describes the contented life of the girls and how they enjoyed their life. The second half of the novel describes a string of the stories about the neighbourhood families who were suffering a lot than Esperanza. The girls are on the brink of puberty and sometimes find themselves sexually vulnerable. Due to her friendship with Sally, Esperanza faces sexual assault. She secretly writes a poem about her past life and she shares it with the old woman whom she trusted most. When Esperanza finds emotionally hard to leave the Mango street and she was not be able to overcome her feelings then she realises that her attachment towards the people in the mango street. At the end Esperanza remains in the Mango Street but she has matured and she understands that only through her writing she can overcome all her problems.

The novel *House on Mango Street* is analyzed for the theme of self realization and identity. Self Realization holds a significant position in everyone's life as it help one to understand the real cliches of an issue. There are three levels of awakening to self realization such as personal, individual and universal. If one is missed out the other remains incomplete. While realizing a person's ability and potentiality leads to the identity of a person.

"I Knew than I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to. But this isn't. The house on Mango Street isn't it. For the time being Mama says, Papa. But I know how those things go" (HOMS 9).

As mentioned earlier Esperanza family came to live in Mango Street before that, they lived in Loomis and Keeler. In those places Esperanza's family lead a unsophisticated life. In that case they have shifted their home to mango street. This Mango street is near to the Latino neighbourhood where the people are racially segregated. In this new home they get a better life than in the previous apartment. Sometimes when Esperanza and her family members felt pity about their condition, her father said that it's only temporary. But Esperanza firmly believed that one day she will buy her new home where everyone said that it is Esperanza's house but not like the house on Mango Street, she had dreamt of real house.

"I would like to baptize myself under a new name like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisendra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do" (HOMS 13). Esperanza had a desire to change her name, because in English the name Esperanza means hope but in Spanish it means too many letters and it also means sadness and waiting. Moreover it was her great grandmother's name whose life was not very happy, so she had decided to change her name but she remains to be Esperanza.

"Which one is your house? And then she made me stand up on a box of books and point. That one? She said, pointing to a row of ugly three flats, the ones even the raggedy men are ashamed to go in to" (HOMS 31). In her school Esperanza felt very much ashamed by her state of poverty. Already the peers in her school tease Esperanza because of her name and one day her meeting with the Principal made her to feel inferior. Then slowly Esperanza starts to admire her neighborhood families. She understood that her life is better than those who were suffering a lot than Esperanza. She also came to know about the adventurous life of boys from the old woman Minerva.

"One of Tito's friends said you can't get the keys back unless you kiss us and Sally pretended to be mad at first bit she said yes" (HOMS 60). When Esperanza along with her friend Sally went to the Monkey garden Sally introduced her boy friends to Esperanza. While leaving back to home those boys take Sally's keys and said that she could get the keys only if she kisses them. Sally agrees to do pretending as if she knows nothing, Esperanza got angry and went back to those boys home and explains about the behavior of her sons but her mother didn't react much.

"No Flat, Not in apartment is back, Not a man's house...A house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petonias, My books and my stories" (HOMS 68). As days passed Esperanza admired a lot from her neighborhood families and she understood the difficulties faced by them, she had a desire to do something for those people. When Esperanza explains all this to old woman, she advised her to start her writing. Towards the end Esperanza decides to overcome all her traumatic experiences through her writing. Even though she was not able to own her new home she considered her writing as her own home.

The House On Mango Street is made up of vignettes, that are not quite poems and not quite full stories. Esperanza narrates these vignettes in first person narration. These vignettes don't follow complete or

chronological narrative sections. The overall tone of the novel is earnest and intimate with very little distance between the reader and narrator. This paper brings out the struggle for self definition. Esperanza attains her self realization through her writing. In the same manner when people realise themselves in a proper manner it can lead to their identity.

Works Citations.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House On Mango Street*. United States: Vintage,1991.Print.
