



A Comparative Study Of Female Protagonists In The Novels Of Arundhati Roy And Kiran Desai

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Abstract:- Through the prism of Erikson's and Marcia's psychosocial perspectives, this paper seeks to examine the subject of identity in the novels under consideration. We can learn more about the complexities of human identity and the different variables that shape it by looking at the experiences and conflicts with the identification of the female protagonists. Female characters frequently take center stage in identity crisis discussions written by women writers. No two female characters have been presented as admirably as those in Arundhati Roy and Anita Desai.

In Roy's novels *The God of Small Things* (1997) and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), prominent women characters with identity crises are shown to include Ammu, Rahel, Kochamma, Mammachi, Kalyani, Tilottama, Maryam Ipe, Jahanara Begum, Zainab, Loveleen Kaur, Sangeeta Madam, and Revathy. In the same way, the quest for identification is important to Desai's female characters, such as Kulfi and Pinky in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and Bela, Sai, Noni, and Lola in *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006).

Keywords:- Identity Crisis, Women Protagonists Erikson, Marcia's psychosocial approaches.

Introduction: - Numerous disciplines, notably the fields of psychology, philosophy, history, political science, sociology, science, geography, and economics have studied identity extensively. Erik H. Erikson, a renowned psychologist who coined the phrase "identity crisis" in his 1950 book *Childhood and Society*, made one of the most significant contributions to the subject of identity studies. According to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, an individual's identity goes through eight stages that either shape, change, or erode it. James Marcia created a theory of identity that elaborates on four identity statuses, which is another key contribution to the study of identity. Identity foreclosure is the first state, in which a person commits without considering all his or her options. The acceptance of ideas without inquiry characterizes this status.

The second status is identity diffusion, which results in social exclusion and an uncommitted, self-destructive identity role. The third status, identity moratorium, emphasizes an individual's open-mindedness and consideration while requiring active alternative research. One is prepared to consider options at this point, but there is no firm decision. Identity attainment, which shows a person's strong dedication and offers an appropriate solution to numerous identity difficulties, is the fourth status. They openly explore the various problems women have with identity crises. These authors provide a

distinctive viewpoint on the challenges faced by women in their search for self-discovery by delving into the complexity of identity. Their writings serve as examples of how literature can illuminate significant societal concerns and compel readers to think about their own lives.

Identity Crisis Suffered by Women Protagonists

India's patriarchal system brutally represses women's efforts to achieve independence. The portrayal of the predicament of women in patriarchal India by Roy serves as a potent reminder of the ongoing fight for gender equality. Through the perspectives of three generations of women, Roy's debut book eloquently captures this cruel reality. These women are abused by men, even their spouses, on a physical and psychological level. Despite their fortitude, the trio's problems ultimately cause their marriages to break apart. While the marriages of Ammu and Rahel result in divorce, Mammachi unusually separates from her spouse.

The only time Mammachi's husband Pappachi stops physically abusing her is when his son Chacko steps in. The novel by Roy illustrates the major obstacles that family and domestic responsibilities provide for Indian women. According to the novelist, practically every Indian wife's life is comparable to that of Draupadi in some way. The bulk of people endure in silence like Mammachi while some struggle like Ammu. Roy ponders over the value of ladies in the family and association. It is universally acknowledged that they play a crucial function, yet there is debate over their current standing.

The novel emphasizes how society's attitudes towards, and treatment of women need to change. Women need to be treated with the respect and dignity they are due. The book acts as a wake-up call for society to acknowledge the difficulties and tribulations Indian women confront. It is a call to action to build a more equitable and just society where women are recognized as equal partners in life's journey rather than just as objects. Roy explores the physical and psychological pressures Indian wives experience in her book. She draws light on the challenges of small characters like Kalyani, the wife of K.N.M. Pillai, in addition to the experiences of prominent female characters.

Roy draws attention to the numerous crimes committed against women in India through Kalyani's story. Kalyani is presented by Roy as a gorgeous woman with alluring physical characteristics. She addressed her husband with the courteous pronoun *addeham*, but her husband called her with the pronoun *edi*, which is roughly equivalent to saying, "Hey, you!" (Roy: 1997) When Chacko arrived at Comrade Pillai's home, Kalyani welcomed him. She asked him to wait for a bit, explaining that her husband was on his way back. Kalyani invited her niece Latha to perform a poem for their visitor as they waited. Comrade Pillai arrived shortly after, and the author expertly captured his sexual domination over the women in the home.

It was clear that he had considerable influence over them. With Chacko's arrival, the atmosphere was set, and the anticipation for Comrade Pillai's return was great. The setting was given a touch of elegance by Latha's recital and Kalyani's courteous request. The presence of Comrade Pillai, however, completely altered the atmosphere. Both fascinating and unnerving were conveyed by the novelist's account of his control over the women in

the home. He easily exercised his man of the house power. While welcoming Chacko with a smile and a nod, he ignored the existence of his spouse and mom. Latha's senses darted to him, asking if she could continue the poetry. It was approved. The next action made by Comrade Pillai denotes both the superiority of husbands and the denigration of wives: Comrade Pillai removed his shirt, rolled it up, and used it to wipe his underarms. Kalyani took it from him after he was done and held it in her hands like a gift. a floral arrangement (Roy: 1997). Roy describes how gender roles are rigidly established in India's ancient societal structure. More instances of the ladies' stoic and silent suffering are described by the novelist. Because of the polyphonic voices of her female characters, Roy can explore the delicate topic of identity crisis in great depth in her second book, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The characters Tilo, Maryam Ipe, Jahanara Begum, and Revathy all have important parts to play. The patriarchal structure that rules Indian society, where mothers are adored yet endure great misery, is illuminated by Roy's work.

The novel's core issue is the paradoxical treatment of women, and Roy's examination of it is both thought-provoking and heartbreaking. Three mothers Jahanara, Maryam, and Revathy go through severe emotional and physical suffering in the book because of their daughters. To support their daughters' social and personal identities, these mothers risked their own identities. Miss UdayaJebeen, Revathy's daughter, is the victim of a vicious attack by six police officers. These mothers deal with conventional society's malice despite their kindness. Jahanara and Anjum both experience trauma, while Maryam rejects her daughter Tilo and experiences both physical and mental suffering throughout her life.

Through the course of the book, Tilo also experiences challenges, and Revathy puts up with the vicious attack as Miss UdayaJebeen, her young daughter, struggles with identity issues. These women's characters are depicted by Roy as being the victims of Indian patriarchal culture. Like this, Bela, also known as Nimi Patel, suffers in Desai's book *The Inheritance of Loss* because she is not only the wife of a powerful judge but also the daughter of a wealthy businessman. Through the meek Bela, a character from Desai's book, the unfortunate plight of Indian women is sharply satirized. Desai is a prime example of how Indian women do not own their own homes, just like Roy's characters. Without Bela's permission, Jemu, a prospective judge, is married to her by Bela's father. Bela is forced to consent to her request.

According to Desai, She would be married to one of the most influential men in India if Jemu were to be successful in his endeavor. Emu is initially entranced by his teenage wife's gorgeous appearance; she was just fourteen when they got married. Desai depicts their wedding night in exquisite detail, showing how the little girl is naturally terrified yet is driven to follow the awful tradition of child marriage. With a new name, Bela's long-cherished sense of self-identity ends. Although Bela is Boman bhai's "most beautiful daughter" (Desai: 2006), being a girl makes her luck difficult.

When Sai pushes him to inform Bela about her grandmother, Desai praises Bela's attractiveness through the eyes of the cook: Her delicate features make it clear; she has tiny, delicate toes, a delicate nose, tiny ears, and very fair skin, just like milk. They claimed that based on her complexion, she may have been mistaken for a foreigner. Your grandfather was given a pass because he was a member of the ICS as her family could only wed among

fifteen households (Desai: 2006). To pursue his aspirations in England, Jemu sets out on a voyage after leaving his stunning young wife, Bela, behind. Bela, a wife, and daughter living in India, leads a dull life in the meantime. Jemu takes on the post of a judge after his return from England and immediately falls in love with the way of life there.

Sadly, he shows no consideration for his Indian wife, and by exercising his dual authority as a husband and judge, he denies her any opportunity to claim her own identity. The judge tries to introduce her to the British way of life but in vain. Male chauvinist Jemu begins punishing Bela severely for all his mistakes, both big and small: Because of the strain, Nimi gets facial blisters, which leads Jemubhai to continue to belittle her dwindling beauty. Nimi begins to comprehend how miserable her life is. Bela, who once had a reputation for charm, no longer exudes beauty, assurance, or presence. She is forbidden by the judge's harsh admonition to leave the house without his consent. Nimi, on the other hand, was brought up to submit to her husband's authority without protest or hesitation.

She thus finds herself bound to the confining four walls of her home, stuck in a loveless marriage. She looked out at the environment but was unable to concentrate on it. She avoided looking in the mirror since she was unable to recognize herself there (Desai: 2006). Nimi, who is going through an identity crisis, comes out to be alone. Nimi continues to experience more suffering, and the judge's rage only grows. Nimi, like many other Indian wives, accepts the fate of being beaten by her husband. Desai paints a realistic picture of the suffering endured by many women in the Third World through the narrative of Nimi.

The judge ultimately chooses to send Nimi back to her parent's house since he is at his wit's end with her behavior. Six months after her arrival, Bela gives birth to a stunning baby girl there. Sadly, disaster strikes when Bela's father passes away, making her uncle the new home leader. To make amends, the uncle notifies the judge through a telegram that his wife is prepared to leave. The judge's response is unmistakable, though: Nimi and her daughter have no place in his life. The painful truths of familial relationships and the repercussions of one's choices are highlighted by Desai's moving depiction of this terrible circumstance.

Jemu enclosed cash in a letter. It won't be appropriate, he said. My work is like that. There are no schools. Constant travel..." (Desai:2006). Claiming her part had already been provided to her in the form of dowry, the irate uncle locks the doors to his home and excludes his niece. Bela visits her sister, where she is humiliated by her sister's husband. She had spent the rest of her life living with a sister who had not married as well or with people in positions of power as Nimi had. Every morsel that Nimi took in her mouth, her brother-in-law disliked (Desai: 2006). The cruel brother-in-law of Nimi ends her life. The judge is also blindfolded like Lady Justice, and she is burned alive. Nimi's existence has been characterized by injustice, oppression, alienation, and deprivation. She is deeply involved in these problems. Nimi is a prime illustration of the harsh abuse traditional women endure at the hands of their husbands. In the book, Nimi passes away just as abruptly as she does.

Conclusion: - In their respective novels, Roy, and Desai both examine the issue of identity crisis, with similarities and contrasts in how they depict the internal and external

challenges that their female protagonists go through. By critically examining their works, we gain an understanding of the numerous facets of womanhood, especially wifehood. In Roy's books, assertive wives like Ammu, Rahel, and Tilo seek divorce from their spouses to express their individuality. Rahel disobeys social norms, Ammu is disobedient, and Tilo is unconcerned with patriarchal restrictions. They accept their families and follow their courses despite social pressures.

Rahel divorces her husband and engages in an incestuous relationship with her brother, Ammu divorces Baba and has a covert affair with Velutha, and Tilo departs from her spouse to live on her own. Roy acknowledges the limitations faced by Indian ladies, but he also looks at their many possibilities. Bela, also known as Nimi Patel, is shown by Desai as a meek, apathetic character who offers no resistance. Bela's judge husband humiliates, slanders, beats, and exiles her from his life, yet she bears the agony without asking for a divorce. She endures suffering and passes away as the judge's wife, never considering any other options. With different viewpoints on the role of spouses, Roy and Desai show a deep grasp of gender and the plight of women in India. The constant struggle and complexity of female identity in a patriarchal culture are discussed by both authors.

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