**The survival and existence in Anita Desai’s Village by the Sea.**

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Anita Desai is a well known literary figure. She is one of the acknowledged novelists of Indian English literature. Her main concerns were the contemporary issues i.e. just after independence. Her novels are seen with the lives of frustration, loneliness and alienation. She mostly talks of poor and middle class. She presents her character as sensitive, individual and spiritually destroyed. She is concerned with the dark inner world. D.S. Maini said; “a disturbing and demanding presence in Indo-Anglican fiction.” Her novels are generally based on love, marriage and sex, but ‘Village by the Sea’ is a different novel based on the theme of survival, continued existence and endurance. There is a question mark on India becoming independent country. Was this the dream of Indian becoming India a free country? One needs to think over with the novels of Anita Desai. What is the actual condition of Indian Village and its people, what is to be done and many more things? According to Anita Desai; “all my writings is an effort to discover and then to underline and finally to convey the true significance of things.”

‘Village by the sea’ is a novel of survival. It is the world in which Anita Desai tries to bring the real society living in the village. It is a social novel talking about the rustic society based on realism. Anita Desai has tried to bring the real picture of real Indian village. She talks about the downtrodden people. The people who were deprived of basic and fundamental rights i.e. education, cloth, food etc. These are the people who have to think about their daily bread, which is a difficult thing to fulfil. The novel shows how the children of poor family get mature before their age. They come to think about their responsibility. The responsibility which was infact to be carried over by the parents is left for the children. It is shifted on the weak shoulder of the poor children. How the eldest child of the family take the place of parents in the age of play wood and carefree life. The novel has a very common scene of a drunkard father, wailing, bed-ridden mother children left alone to find their livelihood.

The novel opens with a very beautiful scene and landscape, where the day starts with prayer which is the most common practice in every family of an Indian village. Again we find the ancient tradition of worshiping nature, the sacred rock to which Lila and other village women put flowers and kumkum. The worship of the rising sun is seen practised in the novel which is still a common practice in real life. The work of worship are performed by the elderly lady of the house but its different for Lila, as her mother is not well, even cannot come out of the bed so the job was to be performed by Lila, Lila was the elder child of the house and had to take the responsibility of the house left by her mother. The hearts touching scenes have been created by Anita Desai to understand and bring the realism. The scenes like;

“Hari’s head low sank low as he stares at the empty tumbler”

**Hope Change and Development**

Where there is life there is hope this very statement has been reflected by Anita Desai in the novel ‘Village by the Sea’. Life is a process where people have to move from one stage to another if they want to improve their lives. When Hari comes to know about the factory coming up in the village a hope arise in him. He thinks of getting a job in the factory which will help him to run the house effectively. Next, Hari decides to move from Thul to Bombay. Anita Desai was aware with the modern society and development. She knew the importance of science and scientific development in the life of modern India. It was infact the need of modern independent India, as employment was a big issue. Therefore Anita Desai refers to the word ‘Factory’ as synonym to employment. She has tried to pay emphasis to the importance of skill development. We find Hari and other boys talking about factory, skill and employment. Hari says that only a high technical degree can fetch employment whereas the other boys say the training itself in the factory can help to fetch employment. The large uneducated population of India suffering from unemployment can be helped out with the skill development programmes. This can help India to get rid of unemployment among its people. This infact will benefit the larger section of the society. The development can only come with change and every family struggling for survival wants change and development as seen in the case of Hari. Hari thinks of going to Bombay for job, and on the other hand he also thinks of getting job on Bijju’s boat which is to come with modern engines and technology. India is a land of agriculture and this has also been reflected by Anita Desai in her novel ‘Village by the Sea’, by showing it as a main source of survival. It also has a message that to bring development in the fields of agriculture, modern technology is very essential it has to be added in the fields of agriculture. The emphasis of modern technology can be seen in the reference of Biju’s new boat with deep freeze.

The three magical words equality, fraternity and liberty was the dream of independent India. The feeling of liberation can also be seen in the novel ‘Village by the Sea’ when Hari frequently thinks of moving away from his family. He seems to be a frustrated character who wants to get rid of drunkard father. This can well be seen in the statement of Hari;

“Maybe a poisonous snake will bite him. He may step on one and be bitten, there are so many of them and it is dark. Then he would die.”He did not say that in fear, he said it with hope, as if he wished that was what would happen.

**Class Difference and Lost Identity**

The class difference and lost identity are the chief feature of the novel ‘village by the sea’ there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor. It is such an irony that the rich are looked after by the poor in the society, the poor serve them in day today life. The poor are the ones who care for their need but the poor find it difficult to find place for them. All the poor people have the very same look that is hungry struggling for survival. It is well reflected in the novel ‘Village by the Sea’. The De Silvas the rich Bombay people come to spend holiday in their farmhouse situated near Thul. It is Hari and his sisters who help them out during the days. But unfortunately they fail every time to recognise Hari, whenever they come to village. They find the same look in every boy of the village. Hari fails to establish his Identity before the De Silvas as he is poor common boy in need of money for survival. It looks that, class can be built on basis of money. Inspite of negligence from De Silvas Hari and his sisters are ready to help them to meet their need. The most ironical part of class difference can be seen among the animals. The class difference is not only kept for mankind but also for animals. Lila’s dog Pintu had to be kept tied for the whole period of time till the De Silvas’s dog Misha was there on holiday to the village. So, that Misha would roam about freely without any fear. Pintu the dog of a poor family had to give up its independency for the dog of the rich family. Anita Desai compels the reader to think where India stands and where it has to go.

**Sense of Responsibility**

The survival is such an important thing in the life of human being. So Anita Desai has done in her novel ‘Village by the Sea’. It the important factor in the novel. Hari has taken place of his father. It is a common practice in Indian family where the eldest boy is replaced by the father. Hari acts as guardian of the family. He is aware of his responsibility towards his mother and sisters. He adds in a serious way saying;

“Go on go on you are late. Hari shouted raising his switch.”

And even the younger children in the family consider the elder brother next or equal to father. They think it is their right to make demand and ask to full their needs; it is also the duty of the elder brother to fulfil the needs of younger. As seen in the words of Bela and Kamal;

“Hari bhai buy us some sweets”

Hari as a responsible guardian was worried about his sisters’ marriage. He thought about dress, jewellery etc. Things required for the marriage. Thinking about all these and worries led him to move to Bombay to earn money. As Hari thought;

“He would have to find them husbands, and buy them their wedding finery- silk sarees and gold jewellery- and arrange their weeding to which the whole village would have to invite. The bridegrooms might demand a dowry- a bicycle or even a scooter. Gold buttons, coins and jewellery. A cow or a buffalo. A piece of land.”

**Humanism**

Humanism is an important factor in Anita Desai’s ‘Village by the Sea’. Human stands for human. The De Silvas come forward for Lila’s help. Seeing Lila alone they help to take her mother to hospital for better treatment. They even help her father to get rid of drinking. In the society humanism has an important role to play and that is reflected in the novel. The society can maintain a balance only if they the rich and the poor stand for each other. As, seen in the novel ‘village by the sea’ where the De Silvas and Lila’s family stand for each other at the time when Lila’s mother was ill and there was no help for them.

Exploded de silvas; “of course we will pay for the medicine. Go and fetch your mother.”

Further; “wait here- I’ll go band fetch a stretcher and a nurse and go and talk to a doctor....... and take you home.”

**Wealth and Happiness**

The importance of wealth has been clearly replicated in the novel ‘Village by the Sea’ by Anita Desai. Wealth is important for survival, poverty leaves to distress. Hari could easily understand that he has to do some work and earn money for the better living of his family. It was due to debt that the dog Pinto was poisoned by the men from whom Hari’s father had borrowed money. Hari new that he had to go away from Thul to earn wealth otherwise he would never get a chance to help his family out of poverty and out of debts made by his father. Wealth can bring happiness, as seen in ‘Village by the Sea’. The De Silvas, the rich people who come to Thul for summer vacation help Leela to take her mother to hospital. He pays money to Leela and her sisters for their work they do for the De Silvas. De Silvas were infact an employment for Leela and her sistesr in the absence of their brother Hari.

**Women Independence**

Leela in the novel ‘Village by the Sea’ is a symbol of pride for women. Leela, being a girl of teenage dares to take the responsibility of her mother where her age was to hang out with friends and think of other things as teenage girls often do. Sign of distress was never seen on her face, infact she becomes more independent when Hari leaves the house secretly. She realises the need and acts according to the circumstances. She starts working for the De Silvas to support the family, asks for help from De Silvas and saves her mother. Leela is a girl with practical understanding. Though she was not educated but she acts sensibly according to situation. She is a symbol of faith. As seen when her mother is ill and Lila requests the De Silvas for help;

“Lila looked at her with gratitude and explained.... there is a hospital in Alibagh. I thought –I thought if you can take her there- and I’ll work for you- then the money you pay me-uh- that can pay for the doctor and the medicine.”

**Conclusion**

Anita Desai is in true sense the representative of India and Indian writing in English. In her novels she writes about India, Indian people and Indian problems in the society. She uses the theme related to day to day life. Her novels are close to Indian heart and soul of the people, language is simple well readable to ordinary ones. The novel ‘village by the sea’ has been beautifully designed with happy ending.