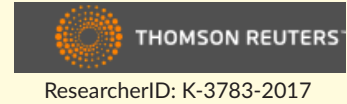




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### Study of Contrasting Characters in Anita Desai's Novel '*Clear Light of Day*'

Prin. Dr. Chandrakant R. Mandlik

Shiv Chhatrapati College, Junnar (Pune)

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#### Abstract

Woman is not inferior to man. As a human being she can also enjoy equal status which is given to man. She can shoulder responsibility of the family as a man. She has sufficient enough strength to defend the hurdles coming in the way of life. The female characters Bimla and Tara, daughters of Das family in '*Clear Light of Day*' are presented opposite by Anita Desai in their thoughts, feelings and understandings.

**Keywords:** *contrasting characters, Bimla, masculine identity, old India, Tara, new India*

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## Study of Contrasting Characters in Anita Desai's Novel '*Clear Light of Day*'

Prin. Dr. Chandrakant R. Mandlik

Anita Desai is one of the most popular woman writers in India. Her novels mainly focus on the life of women characters. Anita Desai is recognized as the forerunner of the women's writing. The plot of her novels is independent and characterization is sensitive. The women characters, Bimla and Tara in her novel '*Clear Light of Day*' are presented in contrast in order to show their independent identity. One may underline their contrast in their thinking, emotions and realizing the world.

### Plot of the novel '*Clear Light of Day*'

The destructiveness in '*Clear Light of Day*' is sign of dominance and power. The action of a novel takes place in Delhi's mansion which is a center of writer's interest. The protagonist in the novel is Bimla who has been born and brought up in an upper middle class family of Delhi. Bimla's parents deal very indulgent life without tension. There is no event which shows parent's affection and love for children. Consequently, the three children, Bimla, Tara, and Raja have to take care and protect of themselves. Baba is a dumb child and requires special care. Bimla starts looking after domestic matters after the death of her parents. She remains unmarried and determines to run the house. Being responsible in the house Bimla plans her sister. Tara married to Bakul. Bimla becomes a surrogate mother. When the Insurance Company manager, Sharma requests him to shoulder liability of it he refuses the request on the ground that people in the city suffered due to partition. Bimla is worried about rent of the house, care of Baba and feeding to six or seven persons. Feeling angry on Raja's reply Bimla says, 'Rent to be paid on the house, and Five six, seven people to be fed everyday and that Tara to be married off, and Baba to be taken care of for the rest of his life, and you to be got well again- and I don't know what else.' (Desai, 2001:67)

### The contrast between the old and new Delhi

The contrast between the old and new Delhi is clearly seen by everybody. No changes and developments are found in old Delhi. Day by day the place is leading to decay. Because of oldness the houses look like tomb. The physical appearance of Delhi seems to be like cemetery. On the other hand, New Delhi is a jumping place because many things happen there. The important events take place every day. During the reign of Tughlaks, the Khiljis, the Sultanate, the Moguls significant events took place. The British people built New Delhi. People in old Delhi are still depending on backwaters; they are dull and do nothing for themselves and their families. This

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contrast is explained through the words of Bimla. 'Anyone who isn't dull and grey goes away to Delhi, to England, to Canada, the Middle East. They don't come back.' (Desai, 2001:5)

### Contrasting characters in '*Clear Light of Day*'

'Bimla and Tara are completely opposite in their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the world, and each serves as a foil for the other's lack of a critically reflexive self-image'. (Thukral, Ruchika. "Clear Light of Day Characters".GradeSaver, 1June2017Web.) Bimla, the first child of the parents, is from upper middle class section of the society. Therefore, the novelist presents her as the leader of the family. It shows that woman is not inferior to the man. She can enjoy equal status which is given to the man. Woman can possess power of the family. Bimla is made to establish her own identity by presenting her individuality in the disguise of virile. The features of her personality reject the femininity in her.

Tara and Bimla are contrasting characters. They are born and brought up in the same house. They have enjoyed childhood days together. Still their style of life, attitude towards life, their ideas and thinking are absolutely different. Bimla has an interest in wearing jewels. According to her one should not give and spare more time in dressing. She does not accept the gifts when Raja wants to offer pearls and strings. Tara uses graceful pale blue nylon night gown and fancy silver slipper. On the other hand Bimla uses to put on hand-made cloths which have no proper shape. Tara wears a lot of golden and silver Jewells. Bimla does not like ornaments. Commenting on Tara's use of gold bangles Bimla says 'I never thought you'd be the kind of woman that carries a bunch of keys at the waist'. (Desai, 2001:12)

Right from the childhood Bimla desires to be independent who is rational and not sentimental. Bimla and Raja have same interests. They are involved in the activities and deeds with courage and boldness. Tara does not like such behavior. Instead of participating in the outside events she likes to be at home with aunt Mira. Raja wishes to jump in a lion-mask. Tara likes her ginger cat.

The attitude of Bimla and Tara towards life was different even during their childhood. Bimla wanted to listen fairy tales from aunt Mira. She refused to listen them on realizing that they were boring. Tara was very much interested in reading the books which were brought from the library by Raja. 'But soon Bimla felt it too boring and she would be often irritated and would toss them aside in dissatisfaction. She began to realize they were not what she wanted'. (Desai, 2001:121) Bimla had developed interest in reading history books for searching facts and knowledge. She came under the influence of Florence Nightingale and Joan of Arc. Their selfless attitude made her to see them as her role models. Bimla spared her lot of time for taking care of Aunt and Raja when they were ill. During her childhood she decided to work for poor people. The people who suffered from sickness were helped by Bimla. Bimla began to hate Raja and Tara because of their self-indulgent way of life. 'The world of luxury and extravagance created by them and approved by both of them

excluding her standards, too rough too austere for them made anger flower in her like some wild red tropical bloom. (Desai, 2001:147)

According to Tara, Bimla desires to live in the outside world because she likes to develop relationship and communication with the people. Her behavior is like a rebel. Tara, on the other hand loves to be at home. When she used to go to school she felt it terrific because of huge crowd and loud sound. The separation from the house and aunt Mira and Baba was intolerable to her. Bimla was dissatisfied at home which made her more ambitious. She was interested in study and even in the sports and arts. She was courageous. Wearing dress like male shows the power that men have. Here boldness was admired by the teachers in the school. She does not like discrimination made between girls and boys, brothers and sisters. There are many questions in her mind like why did girls have to wear frocks? She hates the thought of superiority and inferiority. She views keeping the hands in the pockets the boys show sense of possession and confidence.

There is competition between them in all matters. Their opposition to each other during childhood is exceeded by them in order to achieve Raja's respect. Demonstrating herself as a complete, capable, and pleasing diplomat's wife, Tara puts an end to the remembrance of sensitive child whose marriage made the family free from the tension. Bimla always found busy in maintaining her self-status who gives a blow in return to Raja's sensitive, frugal, and financial betrayal. She keeps distance and dislikes a talk with others. Anita Desai develops the characters in a skillful way to present them in the dramatic style. Their feelings of insecurity, living together without internal disclosures and understanding between them are surprising matters to the readers.

Bimla is the eldest daughter of Das family who works as a history teacher. Forty years old Bimla feels happy by living in the old family house which is in the jurisdiction of old Delhi. Her physical unattractiveness and unattractiveness are replaced by some distinctive features like energy, capability and a strong sense of understanding. 'She represents the old India, spiritual peaceful, unselfish, unhurried and sure life'. (Thukral, Ruchika. "Clear Light of Day Characters".GradeSaver, 1June2017Web.) Tara, Bimla's sister is underlined as the opposite to her, Tara's physical background is attractive and sophisticated. She has two daughters. Tara represents new India. She seems to be twisted between the past and present situations of time.

Bimla rules the place and the people like the queen which underlines colonial entity. Baba is her target whom she hits. She has her own reservations. They have shares of the firm. Bimla tells Baba her own ideas about selling their shares to Sharma. One may underline bossing nature of Bimla. Being a guardian of Baba Bimla attempts to adjust with him whose way of thinking and life style is self-indulgent. Her unprotected life at old mansion has made her to understand colonial possessive sense. Bimla has lot of experience which is related to family matters, their roots and food. She knows past and future of the place. Bimla had faced hurdles in the life and enjoyed rich time also. Her brother and sister have shared good and bad experiences of

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life. Bimla has chained her in the house despite of temptations of outside world. The house of Bimla's ancestor looks feeble and old. Still it represents free and liberal India. Bimla does not like Raja's nature of helping others because she understands value of it. She knows principle 'charity begins at home'.

### Conclusion

Depicting contrasting women characters like Bimla and Tara of upper middle class Hindu family in the novel '*Clear Light of Day*' Anita Desai focuses on history of modern India. From the childhood they are opposite in their way of life. Bimla is representative of the old India, a place which is spiritual and peaceful. On the other hand the character of Tara represents new India. Bimla is the central character of the novel who tries to find liberty from the thought of femininity and womanhood. Woman behaves like a man because of change and transformation. Desai herself thinks that character of a woman is not only mere presentation of womanhood but also nation. It reflects nation's movement from slavery to freedom.

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