

# Personal Turmoil And Psychological Disarray In Anita Desai's "Fire On The Mountain"

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*Personal Turmoil and Psychological disarrays are two different issues. The exact reasons of personality disorder are hardly unknown but it occurs with the effect of society and social experiences. Due to advancements in all the areas there has been increase in the treatments of personality disorders which is possible with medications and psychotherapies. Economic empowerment and prosperity of society is possible when women are physically and mentally sound. Anita Desai's novels stand for a kind study on psychological realism and concerned with psychic life. The concept of stream of consciousness is shown in her novels as her characters thoughts, feelings and reactions are depicted in a continuous flow. The present paper focuses on "Fire on the mountain" and tells about the personality chaos of women. This paper also studies a little girl Raka and two old women Nanda Kaul and Ila Das and expresses insecurity and lack of self-identity in them.*

**Keywords:** Medication, personality disarray, psychosomatic realism and self-identity.

## **1. INTRODUCTION:**

Anita Desai announced a new period of psychological realism with her novels and concerned with their psychic life. The concept of stream of consciousness is shown in her novels as her characters thoughts, feelings and reactions are depicted in a continuous flow. Her novels projected the sensibility hidden in the characters which brings a threat to the present situations. When her works are compared to other contemporary novelists, it indicates new dimensions in portraying and elevating the female characters and their prospective achievements in Indian woman writing in English. In her novel, "Fire on the Mountain" projects the personality chaos of female protagonist and also two other female characters. The theme of the novel is direct fingering at the psychological state of Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila Das. All these female characters lead their life as per the social norms of the day and gets dissatisfaction at fulfilling their desires and ambitions.

## **2. INSECURITY AND IDENTITY CRISIS:**

The novel expresses insecurity and lack of self identity of two old women Nanda Kaul and Ila Das and also a little girl Raka. Nanda Kaul is the central character in the novel, Raka is her great-grand daughter and Ila Das is her friend. Raka is an abnormal child showing some behavioral problems showing an abnormal behavior that requires some type of mental intervention. The plot of this novel is almost brief and straightforward showing the psyches of Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila Das. Nanda Kaul leads her life according to social norms but she did not find pleasure and satisfaction in her life. The brutal rape of Ila Das and her death takes place at the back stage and almost with the announcement of Raka that she has set the forest on fire. Anita Desai makes the readers for the awful ending by carefully embedding cruelty in her imagery and symbolism. This novel is written in three parts which are closely related to each other. In the same way all the three characters are also inter-related to each other. The symbolic image of fire shows the inner fire present in Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila Das. Anita Desai put fantasy and reality together in this novel. Ila Das suppressed with her pathetic life and lives in the world of fantasy. Fire on the forest shows the psychic wound of Nanda Kaul and Raka; "Look Nani, I have set the forest on fire. Look, Nani-look-the forest is on the fire" (158). In this novel, the birds, trees, mountains, gardens, fruits symbolize the nature. Anita Desai brought nature very close in her novels, but Nanda Kaul had no interest in nature. These three characters are cut off from the real life and lives in the world of fantasy. The "fire" metaphorically burns slowly with her characters before it literally ignites at the end of the novel [1-2].

## **3. PERSONAL TURMOIL:**

Nanda Kaul is a widowed woman who wants to lead an isolated life. She spent all her young age for the service of her family. Being a wife of Punjab University Vice Chancellor, she was very busy to manage her social life with visitors. She did service with commitment to her children. She never thought of her personal life. For a married woman, her happiness lies in the care and love shown by her husband. But her husband had an affair with Ms. David, who is a mathematics teacher. It is very much difficult for a woman to accept a painful marital life. If one shows emotions to others then the same is expected, if not shown it lacks satisfaction in life. It is the common attitude of women. Especially women are very sensitive to some issues. It is very difficult for a wife to accept her husband's affairs with others. But Nanda Kaul silently accepted the fact. In her early days she was very busy, that busy schedule forced her to lead after life in isolation, as anything too much leads to aversion. Nanda Kaul feels disgusted when she received letter from her daughter Asha about the problems of her granddaughter Tara. It shows that Nanda Kaul doesn't want woman to suffer, as she herself suffered with her husband. After her husband's death as a widow old woman she completely decided to lead a solitary life with feeling of emptiness because of her personality chaos, when she was young she completely led a disturbed life. Nanda Kaul strongly decided to spend her life at Carignano in Kasauli, even postman's arrival is unwelcome to her. It shows her mood disturbance and adjustment disorder. She even doesn't want to attend the telephone call, she doesn't want to disturb herself from her loneliness. Her great-grand-daughter Raka's arrival is unpleasant in the beginning, because she was vexed up with her previous life and doesn't want to express emotions on others [3-4].

Nanda Kaul has shown a split personality, it is due to severe trauma in life. In the beginning she had shown Extrovert behavior with lot of socialization and easy going attitude. She wanted to be isolated but she developed an attachment with Raka and tried to share her emotions and feelings but Raka ignored with that, Nanda Kaul developed disturbances in her attitude. She felt inferior insecure and changed from extrovert to Introvert due to the disturbances in her real life. She expressed anxiety disorders with emotions towards Raka, when Raka's mother was ill again in Geneva. Raka completely ignored her great-grand mother and went to exploration during the afternoon time. But Nanda Kaul wanted her and pouted childishly. Most of the psychologists opine that old age is the stage of second childhood, she behaved childishly like a baby dissatisfied, deficient attention which she did not get in her life. Nanda Kaul shows mood

extremes including outbursts of rage and expression of little or no emotions. She feels no hope for future life. According to Erik Erikson's;

"Stages of personality development the human personality is developed in a series of eight stages that take place from the time of Birth and continue on throughout an individual's complete life. Those who are unsuccessful during this phase will feel that their life has been wasted and will experience many regrets." (1963:128)

Nanda Kaul also expressed the same feelings of despair and bitterness. Successful completion of this phase of life gives satisfaction which she lacks and feels insecurity. In the beginning Nanda Kaul decided to ignore Raka. But Raka ignored her. She ignored so calmly and totally that made Nanda Kaul breathless and exhibited mood disorder. She wondered at this total rejection, natural, instinctive and effortless. When compared with her own planned and willful rejection of the child. Nanda Kaul felt that Raka was the finished, perfected model of Nanda Kaul herself. She had a good attachment with Ila Das, her childhood friend. Nanda Kaul had shown the melodramatic behavior. When she heard about her friend's death news, she rejected to accept the fact and reacted badly to lose her friend presenting Histrionic personality disorder.

Raka is a girl of tender age. Her mother is Tara and grand-mother Asha. Nanda Kaul received a letter about Raka's visit from her daughter Asha. She wrote unfortunate life of Tara who married a diplomat and had affairs with drinking and brutality. Tara's husband Rakesh was posted at Geneva. Raka was just recovering from typhoid. So Asha and Tara felt that it would be better for her to stay at hillside for her early recovery. But Raka was not like all other children, when she went to Kasauli along with her uncle after seeing her great-grand daughter she didn't hug her or talk to her. She was very silent, she wants to spend time lonely at the hill side. After coming to Kasauli she started questioning about the Pasteur Institute to Ram Lal, servant of Nanda Kaul. Raka is an abnormal child. The personality development of every individual starts at the early childhood. During the childhood children start playing with toys and like to imitate their parents. This shows the sex stereotyping. Home is the first place where every child learns socialization and moral values. Man is a social animal, so socialization is essential for every individual which didn't happen with Raka because of her family situations. In her family the male dominating picture is seen. Father was drunkard; he punished her mother every day during the night time. Mother is the first teacher for every child but because of lack of sound atmosphere in her house, mother was not able to teach her anything, resulting in lack of interest in education. Children grown up from unhealthy house develop lower self esteem. They are devalued more frequently and almost never allowed to be the center of admiring attention at home. Raka's mother Tara demanded the largest share of sympathy and attention with her unhappiness and breakdowns. Poor Raka looked like a ghost. She even can't share the sufferings of her mother with her great-grand mother, she just silently accepted her fate which was bonded with her parents. Raka was a perceptive child, disappears silently and suddenly for many hours at the foot of the hill. Raka didn't like to go to school as normal children, she exhibits abnormal behavior. She was shocked when Nanda Kaul asked her to go to school as a boarder at Sanawar in Kasauli. She had shaken her head doubly rejecting the very outright thought of school, of hostels, of discipline, order and obedience [5].

Children with mental illness are at high risk of achieving education. Raka wants to spend her time lonely, but when Nanda Kaul accompanies her for a walk, she disliked it. She wants loneliness on a solitary afternoon expedition, secrecy was to have been the essence of it. Raka had a jealous guarded instinct, she hated her great-grand mother intently watching her ascent. When Raka sang a song "I'm ship wrecked-I'm ship wrecked and alone in my boat of sea" shows her lonely attitude. Raka's long illness in Delhi and her weak exhausted state thereafter had absolved her of any further need to socialize. It was obvious that Raka loved secrecy, she even found darkness to be friendlier. When Nanda Kaul receives letter from her daughter Asha, she wrote that Tara was admitted in the nursing home in Geneva. At that time Raka interrogates about her mother, then Nanda Kaul replied briefly about her mother's illness, she kept quiet and avoid to meet others unless they are liked and restrains intimate relationships. She neither shocked for her illness. Raka had shown the impaired thinking and marked disturbances in her personal relationships. The abnormal personality of Raka had directed to an abnormal behavior with anxiety and mood disorders.

Ila Das is a very close friend of Nanda Kaul. When Ila Das visited Carignano, she had taken Raka into the world of fantasy. She even did not have bears and leopards at her house. She spent fantasy prone personality reporting most of the time in fantasizing. Ila Das was from a poor family, when she came to the Punjab university campus as a lecturer in Home science, her mother was bed-ridden and father died of a stroke. The family was divided with drunkard sons and two clever hard working daughters Ila and Rima. Her father paid debts and they sold their horses, house and land. When he died, nobody attended his funeral. There was nothing left for them to inherit. Nanda Kaul sheltered them and helped in their upbringing. Nanda Kaul suggested her husband, the vice chancellor of university to create a job in home science college for Ila Das. But she resigned the job and struggled from pillar to post to earn even 50Rs. Ila Das started interest in social service and she wrote for magazines and journals to earn 30Rs and thought it was a fortune for her. She has quest for identity in her life. Later Ila Das was appointed as a welfare officer in a village. Ila Das told about the superstitious beliefs followed in the village due to the force of priests. She objected Preet Singh for getting married to a seven years old girl to an old man. He is a widower and has six children, she warned Preet Singh not to sacrifice her daughter's life for a bit of land and goats for which he cursed Ila Das. She felt happy when she met her childhood friend Nanda Kaul, swinging her umbrella went to bazaar. Ila Das did not take the Garkhal road which leads to hill side of her village. The grain seller an elderly man looked benevolently at Ila Das. Shop keeper warned her not to go late to her house alone in the dark, but Ila Das laughed and touched with his concern because no one is there in her life to care and share her emotions so she said, I am always alone, I am never afraid. From her childhood, she struggled a lot for the survival of her family [6-7]. She fulfilled all her duties as a son to her old parents and did service to her parents along with financial support. Financial security improves confidence but she was never secure so developed disorders in her personality. Preet Singh cursed Ila Das with obscene words; she became conscious of the dark by the grain seller. Hurriedly travelled all the way of hill side with shabby, rundown houses and dried up gardens. After reaching her hut, she relieved with pleasure. She is alone no one is there for her, loneliness is a very painful feeling. But Preet Singh in passion of rage dislodged her throat and raped her, pained her down into the dust [8-9]. Nanda Kaul was informed by the Garkhal police officer that Ila Das raped and found dead. Ila Das spent all her life in fantasy, she struggled all her life [10-11].

#### **4. CONCLUSION:**

Twentieth century is the age of stress and strain. At present majority of women are suffering with personality disorders but never provoke to consult a psychiatrist because they are panic of societal norms and traditional culture and feel that mentally disorder people will only consult psychiatrist to get mental health service. Personality disorders and mental disorders are two different issues. The exact reasons of personality disorder cannot be said but with the effect of society and environmental experiences disorders occurs. The relationship between parent and child plays an indispensable role in life. Trust brings security and confidence in children. Moral and ethical principles bring good reflection in personality development. In this paper, three different personality disorder women are identified. Nanda Kaul showed chaotic interpersonal relationships and identity disturbance marking a Paranoid Personality disorder as she felt overly sensitive and humiliation. She tends to withdraw from others and struggled in building new relations. Raka displayed Schizoid Personality disorder with a tendency of getting attention towards inner life and away from the external world, showing detachment with others. She had also shown avoidant personality because of rejection by her parents in childhood and expressed incompetent, unappealing, inferior and rejected attitude. Ila Das showed Schizoid personality disorder as she lived in experiencing a deep sense of intimacy but finds maintaining difficult in close relationships and distressing. She lives in fantasy. Due to advancements in all the areas there has been increase in the treatments of personality disorders which is possible with medications and psychotherapies. Economic empowerment and prosperity of society is possible when women are physically and mentally sound.

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