

## Self Identity in “Voices in the City

**T. Karunanithi**

Assistant Professor of English (PG), P.K.N.Arts and Science College, Thirumagalam, India

---

### Abstract

The indo-Anglican presents a consistent picture of the changing social realities in the post- independence era. Anita Desai’s work represents a unique blending of the Indian and the western society. The novel catches the bewilderment of the individual psyche confronted with the overbearing socio-cultural environment and the ever beckoning modern promise of self-gratification and self- fulfillment. Based on the life of the middle –class intellectuals in Calcutta, voices in the city is an unforgettable story of a bohemian brother and his two sisters caught in the cross-current of changing social values. In many ways, the story reflects a vivid picture of India’s social; translation a phase in which the older elements are not all together dead, and the emergent ones are not fully evolved. Anita Desai succeeds in creating a living, imaginative and eloquent pictures of India.

**KEYWORDS:** Post- independence, overbearing, beckoning, gratification, self-fulfillment , evolved.

---

### Introduction

Anita Desai’s “Voices in the city” explain the story of three siblings as they struggle to find their identity while living in the Indian capital of Calcutta. The story was bared on the life time of Desai spent in Calcutta in the early 1960s and it’s a radical changes of social in modernizing India, exploring what happens when traditional Indian ways of life come into conflicts with new trends and ideas to effect on young once.

Desai described the reality of Calcutta occurs frequently throughout the text, the city is presented as a force that helps shape the three characters at the center of the narrative. Desai does not shy away from presenting the negative side of living in Calcutta, emphasizing the crowds, noisiness, frenzied pace, lack of time to think and reflects. The city also presented as a place where young people are unable to find happiness in their lives or jobs due routine life pressure.

### Self Identity in “Voices in the City”

The title of the novel has made critics to debate on the point whether Nirode, the protagonist of the novel or the city of Calcutta may be called as the hero. Desai’s skillful handing invests the city with a character Nirode. Discussed in depth by A.V. Krishna Rao who also feels that it is Calcutta which is the hero of the novel and not Nirode.

Thus although one may be tempted to consider Nirode as the hero of the novel, the city of Calcutta is indeed the invisible protagonist of the novel. Calcutta, conceived as a force of

creating, preservation and destruction is ultimately identified as a symbol for the goddess of Kali (A.V. Krishna Rao 175)

Monisha is neurotic, sensitive and liable to over thinking situations. She has married into a very traditional family, where she extremely plays the role of dutiful and devoted wife. However, internally, she is in deep turmoil due to the ugliness of her new surroundings. She is living an unwillingness life it seems to be ugly and meaningless. She is unable to bear a child, one of her primary duties as a wife, which she interprets as an unwillingness to bring another life into a world. Monisha's younger brother Nirode also has trouble to adjust a life in the city. From the beginning of the novel, he is working as an editor in a newspaper but he quits because he cannot find meaning or a mode for self identity or expression in the work. He rejects all aids from his widow mother instead accepting, preparing to fail on his own.

Nirode, the protagonist started several business ventures, even he started a magazine (Voice) of his own and contributed some writings. But all his attempts fail as his magazine folds and his writings are rejected by theatre groups. Nirode attempts to model his existence after a painter named Dharma who seems to be at peace with his life in Calcutta, though Dharma is a mysterious to understand his motivations. Finally he resolves his conflict after a visit from his mother, when Nirode has a dream of his mother as Kali and recalls that the goddess with destructive powers also has the power to preserve what is important. He feels, "I want to move from failure to failure, step to rock bottom. I want explore that depth" (40). He fails to make even the necessary compromises that life demands.

Amla, the youngest daughter, struggle with of the same issues as her siblings but she is still relatively naive and hopeful at the beginning of the novel. Amla wants to lead an individualistic life in the city. She is not interested in the joint family system. Where the freedom of a woman is completely lost. Amla, worries about her brother Nirode and her elder sister Monisha. She often tries to change their life style by giving advice. But she is shocked to see that they are the victims of the ruthless society. She feels "that this monster city that lived no normal, healthy. Red blooded life but one that was subterranean, under life, stealthy and adorous of mortality has captured and enchanted or disenchanted both her sister and brother" (150). After sometimes, she finds out that Dharma is a philanderer who treats his daughter very poorly. However, the experience also gives her a new perspective on his life, allowing her to come to terms with her dull job and boredom living in Calcutta. The death of her sister serves as a secondary shock that father motivates her to make changes in her attitude she finds something that does. Making illustrations for a translation of the Panchatantra. This peace of ancient Indian political philosophy appeals to her because she finds its finds its message meaningful and its way of being convinced.

### **Conclusion**

People dissatisfied with their lives in modern society are common, they living a boring life in the city, they moved meaningless life and running an ordinary life. They lost their lives in the city in order to live a sophisticate life. So they lost everything including their identity. Through these characters Monisha, Nirode and Amla, Desai deal them who feel out of place, bored or existentially troubled in their lives in the city. Desai

explores the ways people try to find meaning in their lives, sometimes her characters succeed as Amla does and sometimes they failed like monisha.

### **References**

Desai, A2001, Voices in the city, Orient Paperback.

Jain, J,1999,The Novels of Anita Desai. Printwell Publishers, Jaipur: Isbn81.7044-450-0.

Roy, A,1999, "Patterns of Feminist consciousness in Indian writings in English.

Prestige Books,New Delhi. Print.