

ميرال الطحاوي وأنيتا ديساي: إعادة النظر في النهج النسوي

م. م. أسراء حيدر محمد الجنابي

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية/ كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية/ جامعة بابل

البريد الإلكتروني Email : israaljanabi11@gmail.com

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية، السلطة الأبوية، النضال، التحديات، التهميش، الاستبعاد، عدم المساواة، المجتمع الذكوري، التحيز الجنسي.

كيفية اقتباس البحث

الجنابي ، أسراء حيدر محمد، ميرال الطحاوي وأنيتا ديساي: إعادة النظر في النهج النسوي، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الإنسانية، أيلول 2025، المجلد: 15، العدد: 5.

هذا البحث من نوع الوصول المفتوح مرخص بموجب رخصة المشاع الإبداعي لحقوق التأليف والنشر (Creative Commons Attribution) تتيح فقط للآخرين تحميل البحث ومشاركته مع الآخرين بشرط نسب العمل الأصلي للمؤلف، ودون القيام بأي تعديل أو استخدامه لأغراض تجارية.

مسجلة في
Registered ROAD

مفهرسة في
Indexed IASJ



Miral Al Tahawi& Anita Desai: A Feminist Approach Reconsidered

Assist. Lect. Israa Haider Mohammed Al Janabi

Dept. of English/ Faculty of Human Sciences/ University of Babylon,
Iraq

Keywords : Feminism, Patriarchy, Struggle, Challenges, Marginalization, Subjugation, Inequality, Phallogentric society, Gender bias.

How To Cite This Article

Al Janabi, Israa Haider Mohammed , Miral Al Tahawi& Anita Desai: A Feminist Approach Reconsidered, Journal Of Babylon Center For Humanities Studies, September 2025, Volume:15, Issue 5.



This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

المُلخَص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة الصور النسوية الموجودة في روايات الكاتبة الهندية أنيتا ديساي والكاتبة المصرية ميرال الطحاوي. مع عقود من الخبرة، تستكشف الكاتبتان الصعوبات التي تواجه الهوية الأنثوية بالإضافة إلى القيود التي تواجهها المرأة في عالم أبويّ وذكوري. يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة صُور الشخصيات النسائية وصراعاتها والموضوعات النسوية الموجودة في أعمال هاتين الروائيتين. ومن خلال الفحص الدقيق للمقاربة النسوية التي اتبعتهما الكاتبتان، تقوم هذه الدراسة بتسليط الضوء على الوسائل التي تتحدى بها ديساي والطحاوي الأدوار الأنثوية التي عفا عليها الزمن، وتشارك في الحوار المستمر حول المواضيع النسوية في الأدب.

Abstract



This study discusses the feminist images available in the novels of the Indian writer Anita Desai and the Egyptian writer Miral Al Tahawi. With decades of experience, the two writers explore the difficulties of feminine identity and the constraints women face in a patriarchal, masculine world. This paper aims to examine the depiction of females' characters, their conflicts, and the feminist topics present in both writers' narratives. Through a close examination of the writers' feminist approach, this article aims to highlight the means in which Desai and Al Tahawi defy the outdated femininity roles and subscribe in the constant dialogue on feminism in fiction.

1. Introduction

Feminist literature seeks to empower the females' beliefs in terms of political, social, economic, cultural, and social equality. It defines feminine roles as uneven to those of men's in terms of rank, privilege, and authority. Feminist literature in this sense depicts the outcomes to females, males, families, and societies as unfavorable. As a literary genre, it existed even long prior to women trends.

Patriarchal power is the system of laws and norms that men create to dominate and control women in social, political, and economic domains. As a result of these gender-discriminatory practices, women no longer have voice, identity, or need in society. Additionally, patriarchy created gender stereotypes in which women are weak and subservient but men are strong and intelligent. These unfavorable attributes that the patriarchal system bestows on women lead them to feel helpless and submit to male dominance.

Through social change and a reorganization of the patriarchal system's gender roles, feminist authors aim to challenge the patriarchy that oppresses and exploits women. The radical movement aims to establish women's freedom and equal status in all areas of everyday life. In Frederick's opinion, "feminism is a movement based on the interest of women's equality and the challenge of sexual discrimination established by the patriarchal system." (Frederick, 1992:18) Despite having differing opinions about potential solutions to achieve women's equality, the founders of the radical movement, believe that patriarchy is the primary source of women's oppression, marginalization, and submission to male authority. Millett argues that "the main reason for the oppression of women is the patriarchal system." (1995: 22) Patriarchy treats women as inferior men and treats them as male slaves.



Marlene France approves this opinion stating that “patriarchy is a system that gives men the privileges of power and economic superiority.” (1983: 239).

The role of women in Bedouin society is confined to caring for the family, children, and home under the patriarchal system in Al Tahawi’s works. Thus, feminist authors disapprove this patriarchal oppression performed by masculine power and argue the key cause of all forms of discrimination and marginalization against women. In this case, women are depicted as “subordinate by the patriarchal system and are exploited, dominated and made subordinate by males.” (Rhodes, 2005: 4) Arab women, particularly Bedouin women, experience oppression in which they are denied rights, marginalized, and discriminated against in a system that is based on gender. Through the status of the female characters in her books, Al Tahawi exposes some of the oppressive Bedouin traditions that Bedouin women endure as well as the position of Bedouin women under parental control.

Though men writers were the first to write in this type of literature, some women authors, such as the Bronte sisters, issued their feminist literary works under the male pen names. This indicates that it was hard for women authors to publish their books under real names in public. Nowadays, women can write without any restriction or fear of social ill-treatment.

2. Feminist Literature

Feminism was born as a result of women being treated as a subordinate entity to men in society. This movement was called ‘Women’s Liberation’, where females request equivalent privileges in the political, social and literature. In terms of literature, feminism concentrates on women by issuing a rule capable of decreasing male power. Feminist criticism needs also to be capable of disclose features of women’s subjugation of males. However, feminist issues are always associated with the issue of equality and gender equality. And through feminism, females are capable of displaying their genuineness. In this sense, they are no more viewed as feeble entities as they used to be seen by men, but can work and as productive as males.

As a literary genre, feminism is connected to the notion of theory of feminist literature in which the focal concern of analysis is on women. This branch of literary doctrine does not suggest assessment of women, or

evaluation of women writers; it simply denotes that critics are fully aware of the coexistence of male and female in any given society, fiction and life in general. Appraisal of fiction as a female implies reading with the intention of revealing the biases and principles of the authority of patriarchal female, who still have their power on writing and fiction reading. Suwardi Endraswara states that in examining works of feminist literature a critics needs to put in mind, “[the] position and role of female figures in literature, lags of women in all aspects of life, including education and community activities, pay attention to the literary factor, [and] how the reader respond[s] to women’s emancipation in literature.”

In general, woman is an integral part of human life; they play a vital role throughout history as they help man in many of his daily tasks and are the biological source for the development of the human race. They were even regarded as a holy goddess in some cultures, and there are some myths that tell stories about women’s worship in some societies in many parts of the world. Nonetheless, the male- dominated social systems continued to deny women’s rights and deprive them of their privileges, and their rights in equality with men. As such, women were confined to staying at home to merely perform domestic duties. In communities all over the globe, males are viewed as superior to males, “Boys, more in the family system of partisanship is always the only hope in continuing the descent.” (Ratna, 2004: 183) In literature, however, males are often presented as dominant and ruling against females and that they are viewed as object for men’s erotic satisfaction, “In Old Javanese literature, especially in *Wiracarita*¹, 510 *Kakawin*² are clear if the image of women tends to be a figure of idolatry. Women are figures that should be contested by men, especially their beauty and skill. The important point: women must be loyal to men (Endraswara: 2011: 144).

As for the feminist literature, it is rendered to depict women as strong independent characters defiant of patriarchal institutions and gender standards. It introduces themes of gender inequality, sexism, and maltreatment through what women see and experience. Accordingly, it aims to empower women by illustrating their struggles to indicate the significance of feminine issue in literature. This, of course, has raised the women’s morale in their pursuit to obtain emancipation and social justice. Feminism in literature therefore, is a very significant theme; it gives

¹ *Wiracarita* is A Javanese epic poem. A number of versions are lost during the destruction of Ayutthaya in 1767.

² *Kakawin* are long poems written in Old Javanese language with rhyme and scheme.



women the opportunity to express their beliefs and claim back their rights in equality with men.

Feminist literature is not a new genre but due to male- controlled society, it has been repressed and neglected. Throughout the history of feminist literature, one can record that women authors used male names to pen their works. For some, it was the only resort, while for others, it was a good option. Publishing their novels under male names helped them reach out a broader group of readers in a male- dominated genre of literature. They, therefore, had to follow the aesthetic standards of the well- known men writers to suggest equality in gender. Other female writers assume that education is the tool of liberation through educating as well as providing proper jobs for women, and at the same time keeping them politically and legally aware of their rights.

In this sense, women writers became aware of the power of literature as it sheds light on the issues of gender discrimination, inequality or domestic violence. As the number of feminist authors increased, the representation of women characters in fiction world drew larger gaining more attention in the literature. However, scholars trace two evolutionary periods of feminism. The first era was mainly concerned with the treatment of women in a phallocentric society in the duration of which many important works of the men writers have been studied in order to analyze men's stance towards women and society. Second era chiefly studied the relationship between female and literature. Hence, texts were analyzed to understand the treatment of female characters by men in society. This signifies that modern feminism free itself from the patriarchal power and gender restrictions altogether. Today, women show their feelings through writings to enhance the material of English fiction. This results in that feminism has empowered women with self- confidence and individuality identification in the patriarchal society.

From the view point of feminist literature, feminism is considered at the top of its list of priorities for it is a way of thinking and criticism. It interprets cultural values through gender and instigates women to be aware of their equality. In brief, it assumes that variances between males and females are not variances in kind but simply variances in degree because men and women share many biological traits. This suggests that social entities should regard all human beings regardless of gender as equal. This assumption leads to the fact that feminist literature paved the



way for women's equality with men instead of concentrating on females only though they have suffered from gender bias for generations.

3. Indian feminism

The Indian feminist literature is a literary and cultural movement that emerged in the 1960^s and 1970^s. It started as a response to the discriminatory society in India that discriminated between the genders and gave priority to males in every field, including the literary field. It also sought to raise the awareness of feminist issues and shed light on women's rights and problems in the Indian society. When the movement began, it was difficult for women working in the literary field to obtain equal opportunities as men, so they began publishing their work on the websites of feminist magazines and newspapers. As a literary genre, it was influenced by liberal feminism in the West and Islamic principles of women's rights in the Middle East. The movement focused on issues such as sexual oppression, raising awareness of discrimination in society against women in marriage, work and education, and supporting women's rights in inheritance and guardianship. This movement made a huge impact on the Indian literature and society as a whole by giving women a greater place and role in Indian literature and raising awareness of their problems. There is a listless of names which have contributed largely with the Indian women's issues, such as Kamla Das who started to investigate the women's predicament as they tolerate their everyday circumstance of life, Shashi Deshpande, another Indian female author wrote about the repentant state of women, Bapsi Sidhwa, also, featured the financial state of Parsi women, R.K. Narayan traced a woman's journey from dependence on male into an independent woman who claim back her full rights to achieve her liberation, Mulk Raj Anand caricaturized the socio- religious pietism in the Indian society, and last but not the least, Desai who fundamentally portrayed the state of enduring women.

3. 1 Anita Desai

Desai proves to be an iconic figure in the Indian fiction; she is a famous contemporary writer of Indian feminist novels in English. Desai portrays feminine aspiration of freedom from the viewpoint of societal and traditional suppressions in a masculine community of her novels. She adopted a broad approach in tackling the feminist issues stating that she writes about women because she is familiar with the women matters and, therefore, capable of treating them better. She writes to discover the human mindset and the emotions of her heroines. Desai added a fresh



aspect to the modern Indian storytelling and gained an important status in the feminist fiction due to her new thematic topics rooted in the feminine awareness in her novels. She deeply studies the personality of her women characters. Desai is a powerful spotter of the society; she concentrates particularly on the position of the women in the Indian contemporary society. Katharine M. Rogers states that masculine tendency to keep women under the men's control is the "most important cause of misogyny, because the most widely and firmly entrenched in society". (Rogers, 1966: 272) Among many, Desai writes about the familial problems, which perhaps are the principal reason behind the estrangement of the women from their family. Also, she casts light on the unknown and unique facets of women's life and world and thereby offers a new perspective through her works.

Desai's novels reveal various stresses and burdens of contemporary life by defining the predicament of human persona and affairs. The primary attention is thus focused on mirroring home and family relationships in a middle-class society in cities. Therefore, it is noticeable that her novels offer a narrow room to speak about characters and circumstance in terms of characters and situations. In this sense, it is asserted that her fiction is "fairly insulated from a blatant adulterous relationship, planned brutal killings or incendiary demonstrations... The explosions in Mrs. Desai's novels only occur within narrow domestic walls." (Horney, 1965: 19) But this tendency in writing is a subject of personal preference to Desai's orientation in discovering the deep levels of subconscious minds which will eventually lead to their predicaments. Desai elucidates this in an interview with Jasbir Jain, "Every writer chooses the sort of characters that interest him or her that he/she knows well and can write about with authenticity and feeling." (Jain, 1987:7) Thus, Desai's fictional world reproduces defined space within which her characters endeavor to learn and understand their being.

Although Desai focuses in her novels on analyzing the characters of the novel's heroines and the dilemmas they face, the writer faces a set of social and political contexts in the novel's society that have a close relationship to the circumstances in which the characters live. Here it cannot be said that the writer's strength lies in discovering sensitivity, "the particular kind of Indian sensibility that is ill at ease among barbarians and the philistines the anarchists and the moralists." (Ibid: 9) Desai is interested in depicting those women in the junction of various effects and search for a reasoning of life that is capable of directing their



different experiences into a comprehensible truth. She tracks her own social experiences in creating her characters' societal plights. It would be improper to classify her just as an author of the mental conditions of her females because these behavioral problems are resulted from the realization of some communal responsibilities and the struggle between her heroines' internal and external spheres matter the writer.

Desai's consideration of feminine character becomes a chief subject in fiction, revealing a strong comprehension of the complicated distinctions that form females' lives in the Indian locale. All Desai's novels explore the intricacies of heroines dealing with issues of identity, independence, and social anticipations. One of the distinguished features of Desai's depiction of woman identity is her exploration of the struggles that young females go through in the Indian society. Desai in *Clear Light of Day*, for instance formulates the narratives of woman characters experiencing the eventful expedition from youth to maturity. These women frequently challenge social standards that prescribe their laws and probabilities. As her heroines go through their experiences, Desai seems to bid her readers to pond over the encounters young females confront in expressing their identities within social prospects.

The majority of Desai's heroines are very emotional and temperamental. They refuse to accept things as they are. They stand apart from their surroundings and dwell in an alienated world of imagination and dreams. She deals with the main themes of loneliness, social conflict and male-female connection, marriage conflicts, loss of interaction, and mental concerns that cause women to feel nervous. She is frequently regarded as a feminist and psychological novelist. The heroines experience disappointment, discontent, and despair. They hurt themselves psychologically while attempting to as they try to break free from the yoke of male control. In her books, the main characters are women. The majority of her books demonstrate her feminist stance, independence, sexual orientation, and portrayal of female characters. As such, it becomes apparent that Desai is rendered to be very much concerned with the lives of young Indian females as social entities in the Indian community. Her growing interest in dealing with Indian women and their social psychological issues as wives, daughters or sisters in Indian society has made Anita Desai a distinguished writer among many in this particular field of fiction.



Her novel *Fire on the Mountain* tackles the topic of social communication and weak of thoughtfulness in matrimony. The novel narrates the tale of Nanda Kaul's wife as choosing to have a house of her own on mountain as her haven so that she distances herself from the turbulences of domestic environment. She becomes terribly disappointed with her egotistical, irreligious husband, who "treated her simply as some useful object". (Ray, 1999: 60) In her house, her role is reduced to a kind servant, who "wanted her always in silk, at the head of the long rosewood table in the dinning-room, entertaining his guests". (Kumar, 1998: 41) In this sense, her role in society is limited to giving birth, raising her children and serving her husband.

The concept of disharmonious marriage recurs in Desai's *Cry the Peacock*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, *Voices in the City*, and *Bye-Bye Blackbird* to highlight the theme of marital dissonance: Maya in *Cry the Peacock* is worried about the prediction of a fortuneteller that her matrimony is fated to end with the death of either the spouse. Finally, Maya kills her husband and herself out of craziness, Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, finds herself alienated from her domestic life. In *Fire on the Mountain*, Nanda leaves her house and lives in an isolated place due to her husband's unfaithfulness. *Clear Light of Day* narrates a story of two sisters stuck the restlessness of the Indian society. The novel portrays Delhi as linking the story with history to debate about the middle- class Hindu family.

4. Arab feminism

For centuries, women in the Middle East are considered as inferior to men. This can be attributed to the misinterpretation of social traditions which gave it the legitimacy in degrading women over time. Male ancestors, however, passed these faulty phallocentric considerations of women down to men over generations. This male- biased stance, of course, had a negative impact on women to as a social entity independent of the male- centric power. The writers of Arab Renaissance challenged the traditional status of women in the Arab societies and were determined to advance women's rights as part of a broader reformist project. Their attempts generated the first feminist thought in the Arab World interplaying with nationalism and the struggle against colonizers, whether the Ottoman Empire or European colonialist countries. One cannot overlook that Arab feminism during that historical period suffered from various flaws, such as being exclusive to elite women of privileged social class. Accordingly, the participation of Arab feminist authors in

enhancing the role of Arab women during the Renaissance era was very influential, and therefore this should not be underestimated. As a number of local of feminist movements appear, feminism in the Arab World today defies the overall style. Arab women are still suffering from underrepresentation and misrepresentation in the international women's forums and conferences that would classify them according to their color, class, or religion, instead of examining the question of the status of women through the right historical, cultural, and sociopolitical outlines. Arab feminist discourse need to conduct a study with various disciplines and dimensions study on Arab feminism to deal with these controlling and ongoing concepts.

S. Joseph argues that "Patriarchy in Arab world refers to giving men and old women the authority to dominate and oppress other members of the family. Old women are allowed to take the place of men in controlling other women." (1993: 159) The analysis of this quotation proposes a clean portrayal of assessing the place of Bedouin women in Bedouin patriarchal surrounding through projecting the way of oppressing the women in the novel.

In addition to the historical and political shift, feminist disciplines in Europe had a significant influence on Arab feminist writing. It also affected how the status of women was perceived. Feminist literature is not isolated from the social, cultural, and political debate surrounding it, despite its unique characteristics. Hostile sentiments toward the colonizer developed while many Arab nations were under the yoke of colonialism. These feelings supported Arab women's resistance to colonialism through their intellectual, historical, and cultural ascent. Additionally, the number of educated women increased as a result of colonizing nations building missionary and private schools, and this trend persisted until post-colonialism.

4. 1 Miral Al Tahawi

Al Tahawi is an Egyptian writer of short stories and novels. She has published a number of fictional works, including *The Tent*, *The Blue Eggplant* and *Antelope Clicks*. Her works have also been translated into many languages, including English and German. Her novel *Brooklyn Heights* achieved great critical success, and won the Naguib Mahfouz Prize for the Arabic novel, and it also novel reached the short list of the Arabic Booker Prize. Al Tahawi has contributed to highlight feminism in Arabic fiction in her novels. She has attracted the attention of her readers to the dialogue of active heroic women and has advanced the feminist



view of women. By choosing female heroes and numerous women characters living under similar circumstances in her novels, Al Tahawi has attempted to write about the distressed lives of the women of her homeland whose freedom have been suffocated by past traditions. In her novels, she deals with a range of topics such as Arab social practices, the unfulfilled hopes of Arab women, and their struggle to attain their identity. By reading her novels, the reader can conclude that the writer has devoted her fictional work to deal with feminism from the perspective of the prevailing tribal and societal legacies in the Arab countries. Thus, women of all social classes receive great attention from the writer. In her novels such as *The Tent*, *Blue Aubergine*, and *Brooklyn Heights*, Al Tahawi talked about the Arab women's deprivation, despair, and lack of the social status they deserve. In general, the study comes to a conclusion that Al Tahawi does not have an optimistic view of women and that she always links their frustration and despair with their dissatisfaction with their bodies. The female protagonists of these novels, who are usually reflections of the author herself, in confronting their patriarchal societies, become rebellious and demand attention and the right to have high social status. Al Tahawi has established a basis for the Arab women's cultural identity by means of her competent use of linguistic representations and the female- feminist imagination. The writer's novels have become more like archaeological research in history, geography, religion, heritage, and myth. She tries to discover her areas of fertility. Hence, she attempts to represent heroines in a different feminine dress that extends into faraway, enchanting horizons.

In her novel *The Tent*, Al Tahawi projects female characters as classic representations of pessimism, weakness, and compliance, whereas the men enjoy all the advantages of being in power. The patriarchal repression in this narrative is exposed by the power assigned to the old women who have the duty of subjugating other women. According to S. Joseph, male power in Bedouin communities, "male power is delegated to older women to oppress other women on behalf of men. Consequently, the reader realizes that the grandmother Hakima is treated as an instrument to "repress women of the family by patriarchal rules." (1993: 159) Hakima views herself as a subservient woman who is less valuable than men. She also forces her viewpoints and passive attitudes on other women in her family, ordering them to submit to her behavioral codes: "She too had the main gate opened for her... was ever different. Was she really a woman? She was the mother of us all. Our great demon mother who wrapped herself in men's scarves." (Al Tahawi, *The Tent*,



1996:7) Accordingly, “A woman is considered by the patriarchal system as the other, so the male uses her to impose gender discrimination by making her a tool to oppress other women for his advantages and needs.” (Millet, 1970: 72)

Al Tahawi never stops demonstrating the brutality of the Bedouin patriarchal system toward women. Families that do not own girls are considered fortunate by Bedouin society since women are seen as a disaster for the family. In a patriarchal society, a girl born into this world will be closely watched for the remainder of her life, and her family will keep a close eye on her to prevent her from bringing shame to the family: “I’ve always said my prayers and not one of them survived. And what a struggle it is from the day they come striking into the world until the Lord takes them away.” (Al Tahawi, *The Tent*, 1996: 60)

Al Tahawi’s novels search for desert worlds in an attempt to take advantage of the Bedouin narrative heritage, too. As a female novelist, Al Tahawi attempts to engage herself in this social environment to feminize it so that it would become an intimate part of herself and her personal history. Her writings revolve around the Bedouin world of the desert in search of feminine beauty and patriarchal social habits in order to convey the eternal female pains through novels that combine fantasy with reality. She wrote about grandmothers, and aunts who tell stories from the Bedouin folklore combined with folk songs, oral poetic texts, and legends.

Writing to Al Tahawi, is a female contract through which women have sought to defend their rights since they started their revolution against every attempt to marginalize them by the social rules set by the phallogocentric dominant power. In her attempt to shed light on the suffering and sufferings and pains of the Bedouin woman, the author tries to search for what is to come and what will be in order to realize the dreams of the female in a new city with a revolutionary feminist spirit, rebelling against the unjust and rigid concepts she suffered in the past. Also, the writer utilizes feminine weakness in her novels to convey an image of the violence and marginalization in patriarchal- dominated communities. By using this technique, Al Tahawi is capable of helping her heroines reconcile with their inner selves and build horizons unapproachable by the other. She formed a distinguished narrative world with her novels embodying it with a keen sense of storytelling along with



a keen critical awareness the culture of the unspoken in Bedouin societies and the culture of the desert.

Patriarchal system treats women as a means of producing men in order to strengthen the masculine power. And, since they are unable to comply with the male's wishes, they are mentally abused, humiliated, and mocked at. According to the author's novels, Bedouin women are viewed as utterly subservient and accept their fate as being of lower social standing. They weep in private because they are unable to fulfill their husband's wishes and are mistreated to the extent that they are ignored. They continue to try to please their husband but are met with disdain.

Al Tahawi believes that Arab women are unfortunately going in the opposite direction though there are some rights, but social development is moving in a more closed direction and is not commensurate with each other with the development of women's rights, in Egypt, women cannot walk on their feet for a while five minutes. Looking at her is done in an inferior, vulgar and blackmailed manner. Women play numerous roles but are unable to obtain their rights; they are always blackmailed by the guillotine of debt or legislation that eliminates many of their religious rights.

Conclusion

The patriarchal authority that sees men as the focal point of the social structure oppresses the female characters in Al Tahawi's narratives. Due to their limitations, women are portrayed as marginalized; they experience isolation and discrimination. To maintain their dominance and power in the home and society, the men's authority employs force against women. They utilize females for their own ends, making them slaves and obedient. Additionally, they are kept in constant isolation to prevent them from interacting with the outside world. Some of the women's characters in the author's stories exhibit a spirit of rebellion by refusing marriage, making escape attempts, or simply crying, which is a tacit rejection of the patriarchal oppression they endure.

Desai, on the other hand, writes narratives that explore the complexities of female protagonists dealing with questions of identity, independence, and social hopes. One notable aspect of Desai's depiction of female identity is her analysis of struggles experienced by young women. In this sense, her novels tackle themes of isolation, absence of



communication, inner struggle, man- woman relationship and marital disharmony.

The study concluded that women in the novels of Al Tahawi are presented as oppressed and dominated. Both writers introduced their female protagonists as rebellious entities as acquiring the power and self-confidence to reject the unjust standards of racial and gender discrimination. Desai and Al Tahawi manage to depict that their women heroines in fiction struggle hard to overcome the obstacles around them and build up their identity in a male- dominated society.

Bibliography

- Al Tahawi, M. *The Tent*. American University in Cairo, 1996.
- Bennett, J. M. *History matters: patriarchy and the challenge of feminism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
- Endraswara, Suwardi. *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Widyatama, 2003.
- Frederick, D. *Radical Feminism: An Expose: Liberation Alliance*, 1992.
- French M. *The Politic of Reality : Essay in Feminist Theory*. California: the crossing Press, 1993.
- Goal, Kunjbala, *Language and theme in Anita Desai's Fiction*. B. R. Publishing Corporation Delhi, 2001.
- Horney, K. *Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle towards Self- Realization*, London: Routledge, 1965.
- Jain, J. *Stairs to the Attic: The Novels of Anita Desai*, 10-11. Jaipur: Printwell Publisher, 1978.
- Joseph, S. *Connectivity and patriarchy among urban working class families in Lebanon*. Ethos, 21: 4. Journal of Socialist Renewal, 1993.
- Kumar, Radha. *The History of Doing, Kali for Women*. New Delhi, 1998
- Millett, K. *Sexual politics*. Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday. Mandell, N.1995.
- Ratna, Nyoman Kutha. *Teori, Metode, dan Teknik Penelitian Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka



Miral Al Tahawi & Anita Desai: A Feminist Approach Reconsidered

Pelajar, 2004.

Ray, Raka. *Fields of Protest: Women's Movements in India*. University of Minnesota Press.

Minneapolis, MN. 1999.

Rhodes, J. *Radical Feminism, Writing and Critical Agency: From Manifesto to Modern*. New

York: Albany, State University of New York Press, 2005.

Rogers, Katherine M. *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature*. Seattle:

University of Washington, 1966.

