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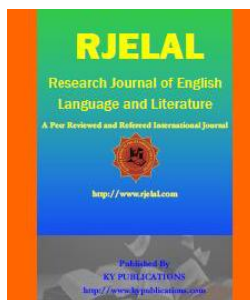
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## RENOVATIONS OF UMA AND RACHEL:A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

Psychoanalysis investigates the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements of the mind. Anita Desai and Margaret Laurence have a conscious approach to the plight of their women characters. This paper focuses on two of their characters Uma of 'Fasting, Feasting' and Rachel of 'The Jest of God' with their claustrophobic environments. Uma is designed inept and she is far from the mundane expectations, Rachel is extremely shy and shuns companionship. The two individuals and the settings around them contribute to each other in the development of the complications. Both Uma and Rachel face psychological, social and economic challenges. They try hard to overcome the challenges which affect the serenity of their family. In spite of the multi-dimensional pressures they nurture their individuality. The life journey of both these characters takes them to self-discovery.

**Key words:** Women characters, Uma, Rachel, Psychoanalysis, Fasting-Feasting, The Jest of God.

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The struggle of literature is in fact a struggle to escape from the confines of language; it stretches out from the utmost limits of what can be said

-Italo Calvino

Anita Desai and Margaret Laurence are distinguished writers of their own country, tend to interpret their culture to the rest of the world through their illustrious writings. Though they are from different backgrounds they write about the same concept, 'Individual dignity'. For both, novel writing is a flexible genre and they include psychology, philosophy, comedy, tragedy, criticism etc. This tendency helps them in handling all the complex situations through simple plots. They do not give importance to society and its general happenings; they create a world which is more personal through which they portray the shapelessness of life. The main concern of this paper

is to explore the subtleties and nuances of the human psyche with two selected characters, Uma of 'Fasting Feasting' (1999) by Desai and Rachel of 'The Jest of God' (1969) by Laurence. The points which furnish the span for comparison begin with the characters being spinsters and veer on with their travel towards marriage, failure in proper communication, impulsive struggle of them to attain wholeness and their transformation as 'mother'.

The 'Mind' which cannot be defined without being ambiguous can be an attribute of consciousness, perception and memory. Psyche is yet another problematic term and it can be put as the totality of human mind. Psychological disturbances connote a lot to an individual. The problems of psychological isolation are twin fold, firstly it affects the normal life of the affected person and secondly it poses a threat to the mental

health of a person. Both these characters are trapped in psychological isolation and the consequent effects are perceived.

Uma, elder daughter of an Indian family, never succumbs to worldly desires and isolated by the society. Till the deceived marriage she never reflects isolation but after that she tends to find a person to disclose her bosom and comprehends that she is isolated. The first word of the title 'Fasting' refers to Uma as she is observing fast in every aspect of life. Uma has psychological disturbances, the subservience she accepts, longs for a road side eatable and has no guts to talk to her parents about that. She is so pathetic that at least the other protagonists know what is happening; they make efforts to overcome it though it is futile, but Uma never understands that she is not in the expected of fixed order of life.

She says she wants to go to school not for learning but to escape the claustrophobic torments, it shows that internally she is not normal. As the definition of claustrophobia goes, it is an extreme or irrational fear of confined places. Uma is confined to her household, after the schooling she expected marriage to go out of the place which shattered. After that she gets a very few opportunities to go out, mostly with *mamapapa* and sometimes with relatives with lots of resentments.

"It is not good to go running around. Stay home and do your work – that is best,' Mama opines with an air of piety.

'I do my work all the time, every day,' Uma cries tearfully. 'Why can't I go out sometimes? I never go anywhere. I want to go to Mrs. O'Henry's party.'" (FF 117).

Her claustrophobic ordeals try to make her more crouch down to a vegetative existence. She wants to have a look at Aruna's flat with an overview to sea at Jhuhu but thinks that she cannot tolerate her fussiness and is also frightened that the visit would pave a chance to more condemnation.

Uma's isolation leads her to epileptic attacks. In the novel she gets three attacks and she cuts a very pathetic figure. Whenever she feels helpless she gets fits. First when she was stopped from school she falls at the feet of *Mother Agnes*,

the school principal, crying and she gets the first attack of fits.

"Nor had she simply fainted – she was writhing, frothing a little at the mouth and moaning, banging her head to one side, then the other. When Mother Agnes tried to lift her, she began to roll so violently that mother Agnes had to go to the door and call for help." (FF29)

She gets the other attacks during Aruna's Marriage reception and in the Ashram when she stays with Mira Masi. Uma lives her way of life but the societal isolation makes her to diminish.

Everyone in the novel is concerned about her marriage and the reply for their advertisement is always like

"we are looking for someone taller/fairer/more educated, for Sanju/Pinku/Dimpu" (FF 88).

Somehow they find Harish as a groom and it is a hasty marriage. To everybody's dismay he is already a married man and her marriage fails. Uma's marriage and the talks concerning her marriage stopped by one last question from Aruna,

"Did he touch you?" 'No he had not'. But the topic opens up in her mind 'What it would have been like if he had.' (FF 99)

JyothiNandan based on the twists and turns of Uma's life comments, 'Daughters are seen as possessions – to be used in a manner which suits the parents. Having failed to get (uma) married, Uma's parents use her to make life more comfortable for themselves. The novel hints at the fate of women who remain single in this society' (171)

Uma is a not another but is compelled to take up the nurturing and caretaking roles of a mother. She is made a mother to Arun. Towards the end she resolves to take care of her Mamapapa.

Rachel is psychologically infected with anthropobia an extreme form of shyness and timidity. This phobia is best defined as fear of people in crowded situations and in the worst cases the people may find uncomfortable with a single person around. She is happy when she is all alone in her world, even in her dreams she chooses a far off locale so that she is not recognized by a known person. She tries to change this attitude, to come

out of her social anxiety, as and when she falls in love with Nick Kazlik. She has remained a virgin and at first instance with Nick he says it is her first time and is very obvious and she feels sorry for not being normal in such a situation.

"I don't know what to say what remark to make. I'm sure I don't know why I came here. He didn't want me to come. Anyone else would have done well just for the company. Is it like that?" (JG 91)

She truly had not learned to be indoors of the society and being not impaired by it, she fears everyone and consequently herself.

She isolates herself from the company of her mother *May Cameron* and her friends. Rachel arranges for dinner to her mother's friends as and when they line in for playing bridge. Rachel never brought any friends to home and she is on no occasion a part of her mother's party, she confines herself to her room. May Cameron complains to her friends that she is weaning as she is not eating properly. Isolation due to the psychic disturbance she cannot even eat properly.

"Well, I've got a nice lamb chop, so I hope you'll eat it. You're not eating enough these days Rachel."

"I'm fine".

"you say you're fine, But don't forget I know you Pretty well dear." (JG 20)

She is poignantly wounded when an old student of her says that she is jealous of her life with her boyfriend; she also comments on her that she is not an eligible woman to get married. Because of her isolation in her case it is a psychological disorder she cannot take care of her physical conditions. She does not know what she should do if she is pregnant, she does not have guts to talk about all these matters to her family doctor. She wanted an affair with Nick barely, but she is not able to express her requisite to her aggressive mother. She resolves to go to the doctor but could not explain what has happened.

"I CANT GO to the doctor's. He'll ask about things that are none of his concern. "have you told the man Rachel? Would he be willing to marry you?' Or else he'll say "It's going to be a pretty bad shock for your

mother, Rachel, and with the heart of hers –" (JG178).

This psychological disturbance affects her physical condition and she is endangered with tumor. Unmarried ladies are susceptible to get tumors in their uterus and here the state of being unmarried arise out of the isolation and concurrently the corporeal imperil.

Rachel is also a non-mother character but she longs for a child of her own. She tries to defeat isolation by conceiving a child through Nick. She alienates herself from the society not because of pride but because of fear. Her love affair with Nick liberates her but Nick abandons her, for the fear of her lofty demands to let her free from her isolation and keen desire to be the mother of his child. She gets a mis-period and is too obsessed with her thoughts of pregnancy, debating on aborting it or keeping it.

"How? A knitting needle? That's the favoured traditional way. Nobody knits here. I'd have to buy a set for the purpose. How odd. Or a straightened wire coat-hanger? When I think of performing it, my flesh recoils as though hurt already. And if it goes wrong, What then? (JG 178)

She tries to find the solution with her close acquaintances but soon she supposes that her child would be a long lasting company to her and starts liking it. But to her total shatters, the 'child' living being turns out to be a tumour, a non-living thing. Ultimately she understands that the God's Jest is that she will not bear a child. Optimistically she takes up her mother May as the child and she is determined that this child will not outgrow her any more.

Both Uma and Rachel are single, they have not become mothers but they do know, what is being a mother and the responsibilities of a mother. Both of them are controlled by their parents and they are also subservient daughters. They bloom beautifully towards the end, Uma accepts what is given to her and Rachel becomes the mother of her own mother and starts thinking all alone.

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