

**WOMANISH TEARS IN NTOZAKE SHANGE'S *FROM OKRA TO  
GREENS* AND ANITA DESAI'S 'SURFACE TEXTURES'**

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**ABSTRACT:**

For centuries women is not subjected to their own rights. The society considers male experiences and gives an image as one sided. The voice of women is always inconsiderable. The pathetic situation of women remains same even after centuries change, many writers are flourished through worldwide and voices to the voiceless in their works. The culture and living practices of human are varied from the western culture to eastern culture. Every female writer of the world fights for women's liberation. The struggle results in the emancipation of female. The present paper focuses upon the womanish tears in the family and the society which is choosen from the works of African American author Ntozake Shange's choreodrama *From Okra To Greens...*, and the Indian author Anita Desai's short story collection *Games At Twilight*. Both of these writers study female agonies and their inner traumas in the male centered society. These writers clearly picture these aspects in their works which is applicable for today's society.

**Key Words:** Emancipation, Struggles, Inner Traumas, Pathetic Situation

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In the present context, the rise of women's awakening and of ripening consciousness causes the consequent battle against a tradition formed by male dominated society. Yet the fact remains that feminism is essentially a movement

social in basics and socio- political in proliferated dimensions, and is primarily directed against the sufferings of women at the hands of wicked men.

In this typical society women are controlled by the male community. They lost their individuality and liberation under the hands of patriarchal society. The male child is given more importance than a female child. Female infanticide is found among the society. Women are the silent sufferers of the society. Their tears are unnoticeable by the male community. Anna Jameson in the work *Victorian Women's Fiction: Marriage, Freedom and the individual* points out,

Surely it is dangerous, it is wicked in these days, to follow the old law, to bring up woman to be ' happy wives and mothers' ... as it for woman these existed only one destiny one hope, one blessing, one object, one passion, in existence; some people say it out to be so, but we know that it is not so; we know that hundreds, that thousands of woman are not happy wives and mothers, are never either, wives are mothers at all. (10)

The African American writer Shange speaks of the female inner conflicts through her choreodramas. Her notable play *From Okra to Greens...*, reveal the tears of the protagonist Okra. She is betrayed by her husband. Similarly in Anita Desai's short story collection the short story 'Surface Textures' the husband fails to care his family and child. The problem of female is aroused from her family. The society consoles the female for sake and no remedial measures are taken by it. In Indian tradition Hinduism states, "the father looks after her during childhood, the husband protects her during youth, and the sons take care of her when she becomes old. Women are never fit for freedom". (Manu Smirithi 9) According to the society woman is meant for the caring of her husband and children. No society is ready to accept her inner expectations.

In Anita Desai's 'Surface Textures' the protagonist Shiela suffers to lead her family in a peaceful way. Her husband Harish finds pleasure in textures who fails to think about his wife and children. Shiela cries out and falls on the road on seeing her husband's attitudes. The passerby asks for her agony whereas the husband never asks a single word. This pain hurts her a lot. Shiela is a responsible wife who always thinks about the bread of her family. Harish gives up his government job for his individual pleasure and search a new meaning in his life. His irresponsible activity leads the family into poverty line. As a typical wife she tries to manage her family. Many wives of the Indian society strive to manage their family like Shiela. In the opening of the story the writer pictures his thirst of textures. Shiela asks him to cut down the melon but he is not ready to spoil its surface, he looks at it for a long time. As the writer quoted,

... the melon seemed puny to her and boring to the children, from the start her husband regarded it with eyes that seemed newly opened. One would have thought he had never seen a melon before.... He gave her a reproachful look as he picked up the knife and went about dividing the melon into quarter- moon portions with sighs that showed how it pained him. (224- 225)

Most of the time he spends in isolation and finally he moves to swami state. Here the wife saves her children in difficulties. The neighbours of the family come forward to pacify their disputes. But it does not work out. The tears of the wife cannot shake the hard heart of the husband. His odd behavior makes him jobless. The wife is in need of money to run out the family where as the husband is not worrying for food and other things. His unusual attitude leads him towards holiness. In Raji Narashimhan's *The Last Embrace*, the wife of the narrator plans to leave her husband alike Shiela. At one situation she prepares to live a separate life like the

narrator's wife in *The Last Embrace*. The wives of the Indian community strives more to live with their husband. Their strangeness changes the minds of the wife.

Similarly Shange's *From Okra to Greens...*, the protagonist Okra tolerates the physical and mental traumas of her husband up to her possible limitation. But the husband lacks lives fulfillment with her wife which pushes him for another one. But at the beginning stage they love each other in a truthful manner like Shiela and Harish in 'Surface Texture'. These two husbands feel life as a bitter one and search a new meaning. In Shashi Despande's short story 'Rani' the protagonist begins to sacrifice her life for her daughter. Like Shiela, Rani starts to live for her children. In Chitra Banerjee's short story 'Ultra Sound' the protagonist Runu leaves her husband for her unborn child. The family sends her out as she is carrying a female child. The practice of killing the female baby begins from the womb. But she desires to protect her baby. So she comes out from her wealthy family to save her child. Many females of the society are like Runu, Shiela and Rani.

The story of Okra and Greens is similar to the story of a real husband and wife relationship prevailing nowadays. They loved artistically as they are poets. They had a very beautiful life after their marriage. As days passed by, Greens becomes disloyal to his wife. Even though he had an illegal relationship with another lady okra tolerates it. When Greens abandons her, okra had a senseless life. She had no words to express her love and affection to her husband. She feels sorry for her without him. She longs for the true love of her husband.

Greens enjoys sexual relationship with the another one for a short period. Then he realizes the real love of his wife and the fake affairs of other lady. After a few days, he admits

... most victims smile

Without knowing why/ but I know I gotta

o. d. of greens/ i'm sufferin so  
 my pods are gleamin/ ready to jump out  
 the vertical/ into the greens  
 diagonal. (45)

Greens feels sorry for his misbehaviors and attitudes, he comes back to Okra to live a lovable life. Okra as a real and lovable wife accepts his apologies and started a new life with him. Both often refreshed themselves in their bonds. Everyone in the society must realize their mistakes in order to have a peaceful life. Greens is to be appreciable for his realization. Okra and Greens are eagerly awaiting for their unborn future.

our visions are our own  
 our truth no less violent than necessary  
 to make  
 our daughters' dreams  
 as real as mensis. (50-51)

The character Nel in Toni Morrison's *Sula*, married a waiter Jude. Both had a happy life in the beginning stage of their life. But 10 years later, Jude became disloyal to his wife. He had an illegitimate affair with his wife's friend Sula. In *From Okra to Greens...*, Greens returned back to his wife but in *Sula*, Jude leaves his wife. Both women Okra and Nel faced the experience of tears in their life because of their disloyal husbands. Simone De Beauvoir in her 'The Second Sex' states,

Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women in society. It is still true that most women are married, or have been, or plan to be, or suffer from not being. The celibate woman is to be explained and defined with reference to

marriage whether she is frustrated, rebellious, or even indifferent to that institution. (405)

Most of the wives of the society are having troubles with their husbands in a different manner. The problem in their life is different according to their circumstances. But their mental illness is similar whether the woman is from east or west. The men in the society ill-treat their women and only a few come back to their previous status as Greens. Men like Harish forget their humanly responsibility and search for their own fulfillment. The female writers drew their themes from these suffering women. In these stories of female writers women are given primary importance and their lovers or husbands occupy the secondary state. The man and woman relationship is almost similar in the present days with the earlier days. The struggling woman tries to arouse her position in the society.

Marriage is about mutual trust, healthy communication, empathy and responsibility. While a marital discord could arise out of personality issues, emotional instability, impulse control problems, misplaced priorities, or infidelity, it is imperative to understand the reason and get a timely treatment. (June 5, 2014)

Shange and Anita Desai reveal the inner and physical struggles of married women in a distinctive manner. They speak about the pros and cons of the families. T. S. Eliot's poem "East Coker" discusses about the ups and downs of the families. Today's women are subjected to find their own ways without considering the criticisms of others. Still some women are in darkness and they should come out from their ignorance. Virginia views feminine perspective as, "positive, constructive and deep. She opines that purely masculine or 'I purely feminine mind is dangerous".

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