

Assertion of Identity Through Sisterhood as Seen in The Novel *Good*

***Harbor* By Anita Diamant.**

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Abstract

Female Bonding has become a central issue in women's fiction. Today, therefore, androgyny is no longer the feminist goal. Sisterhood enables them to discover themselves as persons and nurtures their ties with their community. Anita Diamant's major concern in her fictions is to depict the fragility of love and female friendship, the anguish as well as conflicts arising out of agonizing cruelty of temptation, and identity crisis conflicts of women characters. The novel chosen for discussion is *Good Harbor* by Anita Diamant. The novel reflects her experience as a wife, mother of a 16 year old daughter and a Jewish woman with deep connections to her synagogue and Rabbi. Female bonding is characterized by emotion of affection and trust. Only Kathleen and Joyce can understand the miseries of their lives. They are able to react to their problems and bond with each other very well. The paper "Assertion of

Identity through Sisterhood as seen in the novel *Good Harbor* by Anita Diamant” analyses how the major characters traverses starting from identity crisis and how they harbor their relationships and assert it through sisterhood.

Female Bonding is the formation of a close personal relationship between women. Women writers have realized that women define themselves through a network of relationships, while men do so through relationships. Female Bonding has become a central issue in women’s fiction. Today, therefore, androgyny is no longer the feminist goal. Dr. Aruna Broota A well known psychiatrist and professor, University of Delhi says that: “Women are more loyal and appreciative in their relationship so they possess a tendency to be bonded with each other” (web)

For Asian or European women, sisterhood is a strength and succor. Sisterhood enables them to discover themselves as persons and nurtures their ties with their community. Therefore, friendship with other women becomes central to the fiction of all American women of colour.

Anita Diamant’s major concern in her fictions is to depict fragility of love and female friendship, the anguish as well as conflicts arising out of agonizing cruelty of temptation, and identity crisis conflicts of women characters. The novel reflects her experience as a wife and mother of a 16 year old daughter and a Jewish woman with deep connections to her synagogue and Rabbi.

The novel reminds the reader the critic Bell Hook’s remark:

Women do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity. We do not need to share common oppression to fight equally to end oppression. We do not need anti-male sentiments to bond us together, so great is the wealth of experience, culture

and ideas we have to share with another. We can be sisters united y shared interests and beliefs, united in our appreciation for diversity, united in our struggle to end sexist oppression, united in political solidarity.(65)

Similarly Diamant too in her work *Good Harbor* she eradicates solidarity between the major characters in the novel. Kathleen, a 59 year old children's librarian resolves her problems with Joyce, a 42 year old freelance writer. The novel is a contemporary story that explores the importance of female friendship as a source of strength and support through the worst of times. Through their friendship, she addresses important issues in contemporary Jewish life such as Jewish renewal, differences in observance within families, and preserving an authentic Jewish identity while respecting the dominant Christian culture. In feminist theoretical perspectives on this concept, the female links to be located and strengthened are, not confined to biological mothers and daughters alone. It extends to a female chain of being. Matrilineage involves a celebration of creativity. It also pays tribute to women writers, artists and other influential and strong women ancestors who have struggled successfully to strengthen this lineage.

As a feminist, Diamant believes what is being feminine because "A woman's writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine: at its best it is most feminine; the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by feminine."(Showalter 329). Being a woman who cannot live without her friends she wove in themes like female friendship, and their female ties and problems faced by middle aged women.

In the novel, Joyce and her husband, both born Jewish, call themselves as "Lox and bagel Jews" (19). They light a menorah, a sacred candelabrum with seven branches for Hanukah and

attend a seder for Passover, but that is the extent of their Jewish observance. Kathleen, Born Catholic, is more observant than Joyce. She enjoys lighting candles on Shabbat, an act that evokes the votive candles of her childhood. It is Kathleen, not her husband Buddy, who wishes to maintain a connection with the synagogue. Buddy feels more spiritual while looking at the ocean than at a religious service.

Kathleen herself has been diagnosed with Ductal Carcinoma In Situ, a malignant breast tumour which in turn depresses her and seeks for a sole companion. She is not able to express her emotions to her husband neither to her grown up children Hal and Jack. In seek of peace she visits the synagogue that night and Kathleen met Joyce because it happened to be the anniversary of Joyce's father's death. This is where the female bonding prunes up and they are able to resolve their problems.

The major characters act as the harbor for each of them and they are able to seek solace during the severe storms in their lives. They seek shelter and feel comfortable when they are with each other. Joyce and Kathleen begin to meet each other and they find ways to resolve their troubling emotions. Joyce who feels useless as a freelance writer, finds her teenage daughter getting separated from her and whereas Kathleen traumatized by the clutches of cancer seeks shelter under their friendship. The author has given an apt title for the novel as the characters seeks shelter within them and harbors their true feelings which are hidden form the society.

Female bonding is characterized by emotions of affection and trust. Only Kathleen and Joyce can understand the miseries of their lives. They are able to react to their problems and bond with each other very well. Joyce expresses her pains and her disparity that her family is not

the same anymore. Kathleen is suffering from cancer and she needed a soul and a shoulder to ease her pains and sorrows. Diamant through her characters portrayed the life of middle aged women and their problems. Through her character she brings out the life long bond which can make people forget their scars. They help each other to confront their scars and forget their wounds. In the end we can find out they move on Joyce finishes her novel and prove herself as a writer. Kathleen overcomes her painful tumour and begins to live her life happily.

Through the novel we find that women's friendship overcomes all rivalry and jealousy. It nourishes and nurtures the self as much it does the other. In Diamant's fiction, sisterhood is always a deep rooted, instinctual relationship that brings together women who are very different from one another in every way. Joyce and Kathleen live far from each other and suffer various agonies, their mutual love is genuine.

The novel *Good Harbor* is an eye opener to some of the complex problems in female bonding, marital issues. The novels provide a compelling spectrum of images of women in their so called native country. Her characters whether happy or sad, pulls the readers into their lives and beautifully portrays their lives.

Works Cited

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