

Psychological Conflict and the Construction of Female Identity: A Comparative Study
of Selected Works of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman

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ABSTRACT

This research paper focuses on a comparative analysis of the psychological conflict and the construction of female identity in Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*, Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. This paper explores the internal lives of Maya, Saru, and the unnamed narrator, and examines how patriarchal and domestic societal structure leads to psychological disintegration and identity crises. While Gilman's work highlights the nineteenth century's neglectful medications of female distress through the 'rest cure,' Desai and Deshpande's characters experience the cultural complexities of the typical Indian problems within marriage. These

characters struggle with an identity crisis, with their childhood trauma playing a role in it. The paper uses psychoanalytic and feminist framework to argue that the 'madness' or trauma experienced by these protagonists is not only a clinical failure, but a desperate triggered response to the disruption of their autonomy, and the lack of support they need. Through a comparative lens, the study identifies universal patterns of female resistance against gendered socio-cultural expectations. This paper is also an analysis of cross-cultural feminism, bridging the gap between the nineteenth century western feminist theory through Perkins and the twentieth century Indian feminist works. The paper concludes that the construction of a female identity in these texts is frequently a transgressive act, necessitating a break from the claustrophobic roles of daughter, wife, and mother.

Keywords: Cross-culture, Identity, Feminism, Trauma, Societal structure.
