

## A Brief Study on Anita Heiss's Novel *Tiddas*- A Story of True Friendship and Sisterhood

Ch Aruna<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Associate Professor of English, Hindu College, Guntur- 522003, Andhra Pradesh.*

**Abstract**—One of the greatest chick-lit books ever published by an Australian Aboriginal author is *Tiddas* (2014) by Anita Heiss. "Tiddas" is an Aboriginal phrase that is specifically used by Northern Australians. Therefore, among the Aboriginal people, it is a broad phrase that refers to sisters or great women in life. The term "tiddas" is the plural form of "tidda" as a grammatical particle. Women are the main characters in the majority of Dr. Anita Heiss's works. The heroine of *Avoiding Mr. Right* (2006), Alice Aigner, stands in for both the state of Aboriginal women in a White-centric society and the entirety of Aboriginal civilization. She affirms in *Not Meeting Mr. Right* (2007) that Aboriginal women were completely exploited due to the social degradation and cultural miserliness of the modern era. In their actual circumstances, even they were unable to select Mr. Right as their lifelong companion. Even the novel *Tiddas* received a great deal of praise, and the author acknowledged in the book's Author Note that she was really excited about the publication of *Tiddas*, which coincided with the debut of the stage adaptation. I still have a lot of friends and relatives there, even she acknowledges. I adore Canberra, and I've never had a poor time there. It even appeared in *Manhattan Dreaming*, one of my works. However, as far as the name of the novel *Tiddas* (2024) is concerned it absolutely a story of true friendship and sisterhood. It is the most enjoyable and human story dealing with historical and contemporary Aboriginal issues.

**Index Terms**—*Tiddas*, Aboriginal, Friendship, Cultural miserliness, Exceptional woman.

Five women who are sisters, closest friends, and incredibly close to one another are the subject of the 2014 book *Tiddas*. They discuss their own experiences and the difficulties they encounter in their actual circumstances in the Australian state. These five women, who might be considered the decade's best friends, get together once a month to talk openly and honestly about a variety of topics, including recent books, romantic relationships, sex,

dates, pregnancy, marital life, even menstruation, personal lives with their husbands and boyfriends, experiences at work, and many other private and personal matters.

Like *Avoiding Mr. Right* and *Not Meeting Mr. Right*, the book *Tiddas* is mostly focused on women. Three Wiradyuri women and two non-Indigenous women make up the five main characters. Veronica and Nadine are the two non-indigenous ladies, and Izzy, Xanthe, and Ellen are the three Wiradyuri women. However, after attending the same school in central New South Wales, Australia, they have remained great friends for decades despite their apparent racial disparities. Over the course of their twenties, these five sisters/friends move to Brisbane and get together once a month to talk about relationships, literature, and other topics. In actuality, they have no qualms with talking about anything in their life. They talk about the various facets of their existence, including the context of their cultural identity, their indigenusness, and several other current political and historical topics, because they are so open, honest, and intimate. It's interesting to note that women are frequently viewed as little more than the spouse or mother of another person. However, the native women are prepared to become independent and self-sufficient.

As a result, they have fled their country to forge their own identity separate from the cultural misery ingrained in Australia's male-dominated White culture. As a result, Anita Heiss, the authoress, correctly comments about the novel:

"I use the book club as a setting to look at particular themes and issues around identity, fertility, infidelity, and relationships between husbands and wives and brothers and sisters," says Heiss. "There are also references to Black Lives Matter, and Aboriginal identity in terms of how we define ourselves as First Nations peoples."

Thus, Anita Heiss, the author of the work, has made it apparent why she wrote the book *Tiddas* (2014). One may argue that the main components of the fiction are the literary representations of Indigenous groups, especially the Koori community, in the larger society. There are many indigenous and Aboriginal aspects in Heiss's *Tiddas*. However, the novel's main storylines and happenings should be discussed before delving into those components. Veronica, Ellen, Nadine, Xanthe, and Izzy are the main characters in the book. They were all attending an Australian high school in Mudgee. Izzy was the first Black woman to get her own television program among all the other characters. The narrator of the book *Tiddas* had characterized her as: the first blackfella to host a mainstream talk show on free-to-air television. She was going to be Australia's Oprah. She held her dream carefully in her hands, and her nightmare unwillingly in her belly.

She did slowly into the red leather bucket chair she'd bought herself when she landed the Brisbane-based contract to host the news channel for Queensland Arts and Culture. Her stories specifically focused on Brisbane's cultural precinct and events, and artists associated with the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, the state Library, the Queensland Museum and the nearby art galleries. The show was broadcast on Art's Queensland own online station. It was a valuable stepping stone for Izzy and she loved it. So proud of her achievement in simply landing the job, she ordered the chair and had it shipped from the US as a gift to herself. It was where she sat to read scripts, her research notes, the newspaper and books for her book club. She'd been known to nap in the chair too (P 3)

She agreed to work as a professional under the terms of the contract she had signed. She had aspired to launch her own program, brand, and audience. Her relationships with the other tiddas were usually positive. She revered her tiddas and loved them dearly. They were, in fact, her best buddies. They were, in the Aboriginal understanding of the word, her real sisters, and that is a fact. However, none of them were Black in the actual world. Regarding their class, Veronica and Nadine were White. They had a very good and healthy relationship:

She had supported them, and vice versa, since school, and theirs was a bond stronger than words could define. And yet today Izzy wanted to move the

sisterhood boundary a little because she knew Nadine would be urging her to drink so she wasn't the only lush, would unknowingly be making her feel guilty about having the 'luck' she didn't, Ellen would be complaining about the lack of eligible men in Brisbane and Veronica would be talking about her three perfect sons. Izzy didn't want to talk about children or men at all. And she was fairly sure she wasn't supposed to drink either. She just wanted to be alone. She wasn't ready to talk to the girls about it yet. That would only make 'it' more real (P 7).

Once more, she had a deep affection for the Aboriginal people, especially the Koori community and the Torres Strait Islanders. Her fiancé "sat at the bar picking at the herbed polenta" (P 180) in *Tiddas* Izzy and Asher, Chapter 9. She was examining the Hong Kong Phooey cocktail that she had placed an order for. At the time, she didn't taste it. This continued for some time, although Izzy showed little interest in food or beverages. Asher was unable to comprehend what had transpired with Izzy. In the meantime, Izzy told her that she was pregnant and would soon give birth. Asher joked that their child will be as smart as Izzy and as cool and humorous as him after their lengthy chat. The intriguing part is about to arrive. The Indian Dalits are a prime example of the socioeconomic divide that exists within the Aboriginal community. The Dalit population in India is divided into several castes and subcastes, especially Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe members. These divides in Indian society were also acknowledged by S. G. Ghuriye in *Caste and Race in India* (2006). The issue of identity problems comes up here. Asher and Izzy were fighting among themselves about who would be the mother of the intelligent, attractive baby that Izzy was about to give birth to:

Asher: You (Izzy) are a very clever woman. We are clever. We made a Murri baby.

Izzy: Koori baby.

Asher: Go the Maroons.

Izzy: Go the blues.

Asher: Don't be giving our kid an identity crisis before it's even born. (P 188)

So, there are always clashes among different sections of the Aboriginal community.

However, in the context of Aboriginal phraseology, "tiddas" denotes sisterhood. There were two female Aboriginal characters in addition to Tan Izzy. They

were Ellen and Xanthe. A married lady named Xanthe is in dire need of a child. She loved being married so much that she would never consider anything that might jeopardize her marriage. Xanthe and her spouse continued to have a rather harmonious relationship. She constantly kept up her physical appearance to please her spouse. The narrator of the book *Tiddas* provides a brief account of Xanthe's physical characteristics and her marriage to her spouse in chapter two, "Addictions, Obsessions and Delayed Confessions."

Xanthe's dark green eyes popped thanks to her smoky eye make-up and blood-red lips. It was 7 p.m. on a Tuesday and she sat in a hip-hugging black Thai silk frock waiting for her husband to arrive. Although they'd both promised to keep the date free to celebrate, she was still grateful that neither had cancelled due to work, as often happened, which was why they were celebrating four months late. They were both workaholics, but still very much in love, and they remained committed to adding to other's happiness in life.... Her (Xanthe) perfect white teeth looked bright against her dark skin. The eyes she got from her Greek father, the skin from her Wiradjuri mother. As a child she was her dad's 'Delphoragine Princess' (Pp 25 - 26).

In terms of their social and marital lives, they were therefore accountable and committed to one another. In *Dark Emu: Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident?* (2014), Bruce Pascoe questioned the colonial notion that the indigenous people were only hunter-gatherers before to the introduction of European settlers. However, he drew attention to the fact that certain European and White men's testimonies and statistics demonstrated that Australian Aboriginals loved farming and aquaculture and would really engage in these activities. Therefore, the Aboriginals have been committed to their profession since the beginning of their existence. Xanthe, one of the sisters in the paragraph that was mentioned, and her husband were both highly busy and workaholics. Thus following the traditions and cultures of their predecessors is one of the indigenous elements. Both Xanthe and her husband were following that tradition which the Australian Aboriginal people had been maintaining approximately for the last fifty thousand years.

When Xanthe had first laid eyes on Spencer in June, she had fallen in love. Simply put, it was love at first sight. They also thought that because "someone" was

from a higher social class, they had quite different cultures. However, they were quite happy and comfortable in their orbit despite a lot of obstacles, which was not only incredibly admirable but also very modern and well-timed. She had never shown her aristocratic attitude regarding her social standing because she was such a fiancée. The narrator herself makes this apparent in the following statement:

Xanthe hadn't thought much about status before, and certainly not in recent times with her work and ongoing obsession with getting pregnant. But the truth was she had a mortgage worth more than many would see in a lifetime. She only bought organic produce, and she and Spencer ate regularly at the fancy restaurants along La Trobe Terrace. She wasn't embarrassed about her lifestyle, but she didn't like being labeled as 'upper'. Just as she hadn't liked being labeled 'boong' and 'abo' back in Mudgee as she walked to and from school and the kids from the rival public school hurled abuse at her from across the road. It was bad enough she was Koori, they'd say, but she was part wog too. Xanthe sighed deeply, recalling the pain of a young child who did not understand the racism that was rife in the late 1970s, or the senseless labels that came with it. Labels she now worked hard to explain to her clients were archaic and socially unhelpful. Labels of any kind rarely served a purpose, and she rejected them all. (Pp 34-5)

Regarding her skin, Ellen, an Aboriginal lady, nevertheless harbored a sort of inferiority attitude. By the time she arrived at Kangaroo Point's stairs, the apartments there were occupied by the majority of Brisbane's population. Once more, she wrote that the majority of the population was "pale." At that moment, she became aware that all of her forebears had black skin. Her family members will, of course, differ from the other tiddas in the narrative. This is also evident in the narrator's statement:

As both her parents were Wiradjuri, Ellen and her siblings were all much darker skinned than the other tiddas, including Xanthe, whose father was a Greek. Hanging out in Kangaroo Point Ellen had realized that she was also darker than many of the locals she passed in nearby streets (P 93).

According to Ellen, Brisbane is still a predominantly "white city in many ways." At times, she thought her family was the most populous in Australia's New South Wales. She developed a reverence for her own

Wiradjuri ancestors as a result of this idea of lineage. Because she was naturally interested in her own people, she also desired to live among her own mob. She really developed a strong and solid sense of "Aboriginal Identity" as a result of her drive to live and her love and respect for her tribe. There, Ellen's parents had successfully spawned six children. Her mother was a stunning woman. Now Ellen is also beautiful but she is old enough to propose to date. It may be that she did not get the fittest boy for her or the boys did not find her good looking and fit enough to be considered as fiancée. Besides, she was also a Koori lady in Mudgee. The narrator of the novel, Tiddas (2014) has rightly does comment:

Ellen was old enough to date, it was different. The boys didn't seem as good looking as the women, or maybe it was that they just didn't appeal to her. Apart from that, she was related to every second Koori in Mudgee. It was simply too small a town for the life she wanted. She missed out so much in her teens helping to raise her siblings, but she knew enough to know she had to get to the city to not miss out on anything in her twenties (P 94).

One of Ellen's blessings was her unusual job. There was no obstacle for women in Wiradjuri Aboriginal society to become "funeral celebrants." In this instance, Ellen had been acting as a celebrant at a funeral. The funerals of relatives and family were attended by all Wiradjuri. Because fatalities happened so often, even they would not have time to arrange funerals. When Ellen's cousin passed away in the book, she spoke and gave a few eulogies for his soul's rest. Since then, Ellen has gained a reputation as a "eulogy giver" in the Mudgee region. It was not at all time taking for Ellen to learn what the Black Aboriginal men would perform during funeral ceremonies.

#### CONCLUSION

Therefore, it can be said that although the sisters in the book Tiddas may have had differing views on certain matters, they nevertheless had a close and strong bond. They were all concerned about the current state of affairs for both women and males of Aboriginal descent. The sisters would divulge everything to one another, even their personal life, because they were so intimate and close. As a result, they may be regarded as the closest friends for

decades. The five women from the 1940s were so sophisticated that they met once a month to talk about the released books. Being close friends, they would confide in one another about any problem they encountered in their personal and real lives. For them, honesty and trustworthiness were the finest policies. They would love, respect, chastise, and make jokes with one another. Everything would be revealed every weekend. A narrative of "generous, witty, a paean to BrizVegas, friendship, and sophisticated urban Aboriginal life," the work must be regarded as such.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Heiss, Anita., Not Meeting Mr Right, Bantam, 2007.
- [2] Avoiding Mr Right, Bantam, 2008.
- [3] Manhattan Dreaming, Bantam, 2008.
- [4] Tiddas, Simon & Schuster Pty Limited, 2014.
- [5] Ghuriye S G, Caste and Race in India, Sage India Pvt. Ltd., 2016.
- [6] Pascoe, Bruce. Dark Emu: Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident? Magabala Books, 2014.