



ISSN: 2395-7852



International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts, Science, Engineering & Management

Volume 10, Issue 3, May 2023



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 6.551

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Representation of women through Anita Desai's novels "Clear Light of Day" and "Fasting Feasting"

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ABSTRACT: This project deals with the vulnerability of women and their condition in the patriarchal Indian society as represented by the eminent author Anita Desai in her two of her very renowned novels 'Clear Light of Day' and 'Fasting, Feasting'. Women in India already goes through several societal adversities since ages which makes them feel trapped inside their own house, within their own family members. And this, even in the contemporary world, has still not stopped. Women allow a hefty quantity of burden to carry on their backs when it comes to their families as according to the society there are certain rules on how and what exactly a woman should do when it comes to fulfil the duties towards their families, which ultimately leads them to dedicate the rest of their lives for the sake of the comfort of their family members, overlooking their own comfort and jeopardizing their own dreams and ambitions.

KEYWORDS: Plight of women in male dominated society, Struggle of countless Indian women, Paradoxical nature of the males in a family, Burdens and responsibilities of women, Gender stereotypes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Anita Mazumdar commonly known as Anita Desai who was born on June 24, 1937, in the city Mussoorie in the state Uttarakhand in India. Desai is an English Language Indian Playwright and Novelist, short story writer, also, author of children's book who outperformed in reminding characters in addition to mood through pictorial images ranging from the meteorologic to the botanical. She had been Three Times Booker Prize Finalist, also won the Sahitya Academy Award in the year 1980 and Padma Bhushan award in the year 2014 and also Lifetime Achievement Award Winner. Author Anita Desai was born to a German mother and Bengali father. Throughout her childhood, she grew up learning and speaking three languages, which are, English, German and Hindi. She is known for her sensitive portrayal of the inner feelings of her female characters. Her novels mainly focus on the tensions between the family members and isolation of the middle-class women within their families in the Indian societies. Her magnificent way of narration helps readers to exclusively connect to characters in the novels especially the despondent mental conditions of women in the middle-class families. She included various themes in her novels like deacease of traditions, German antisemitism, stereotypical western views of India.

Desai's mother Toni Nime was a German immigrant and her father's a Bengali businessman D.N. Mazumdar. Her Bengali father met her German mother when he was engineering student in pre-war Berlin; and they tied their knot during a retro when it was still unfamiliar for an Indian man to marry a European woman. In a while after their marriage, they stirred to New Delhi, where Desai was raised up with her two elder sisters and brother. With her neighbours she grew up speaking Hindi and spoke German only at her home. Outside, she also spoke English, Urdu and Bengali. She completed her schooling education from Queen Mary's Higher Secondary School at Delhi and got her graduation degree in English Literature in the year 1957 from The University of Delhi, that is, Miranda House. That following year (1958), she tied the knot with Ashvin Desai, who is the director of a computer software company and also an author. The couple together has four children.

Desai's novels characteristically feature expressive and romantic imageries of India's countryside, and much of their encounter is consequential from the immigrants who suffer imprisoned outside society. Several of her books scrutinize the role of women in the Indian societies, and many describe family associations and affairs in present-day life.



About the novel “Clear Light of Day”

The novel *Clear Light of the Day* was foremost published in the year 1980 by the one of the India’s very best-known author, Anita Desai. Exclusively, in this novel *Clear Light of Day*, Anita Desai represents the Indian women as downgraded and side-lined characters fronting numerous challenges and loads levied by the male-controlled society. They bear a resemblance to colonial themes whose lives are splintered. Amongst the lady characters in the novel Bim, Tara, their mother and Aunt Mira, some way or the other, all are displayed as they are subordinated by a male-dominant or paradoxical values and ethics which undervalues the female partisanship. The project demonstrates how these women accomplish their hazardous circumstances and stands up to a culture controlled by men. This research project reflects on these Indian women’s lives in an attempt to see how they find dissimilar ways to emphasize their presence or being. An ace way in which these female characters continue to survive is by inflowing male conquered society and implementing their dialectal and principles. As these women are incapable or impotent to progress their environments, they scuffle to establish their very own individuality by means of the oppressor’s dialectal and principles. Primarily set in India’s capital city Old Delhi, the story revolves around a middle-class Indian, Das family of four siblings and their relationships with each other. The narrative technique used by the author is exclusively unique because of its unremitting time period transformation throughout the entire play.

About the novel “Fasting Feasting”

Published in the year 1999, the novel *Fasting, Feasting* written during the contemporary period of Indian literature by the eminent Indian author Anita Desai. The story spins around the general clank found along with the particular and specific roles that are assigned by the society to men and women individually, which follows women to never get out of their houses to attain education. marry as early as possible, then be at their houses, bear children, devoting all of their life into serving their families, obey their husbands and follow all their orders. Meanwhile men should achieve and accomplish all the education that they desire to gain, absolutely with no boundation and no hurry to get married rather become successful in life. However the novel is also about two different cultures that are, the culture of India and the culture of America, but towards the end it will be quite superficial of the fact that when it comes to a patronizing society, culture or country doesn’t matter. Man of the house dominating his wife is common and it prevails everywhere around the world. *Fasting Feasting* was also nominated for the Booker Prize Award winner in the year 1999 and it was all decided that Anita Desai would win the booker prize but however it was disgraced by J.M. Coetzee. There were some disagreements among the judges regarding the debate to decide the winner but later, it was decided that *Fasting, Feasting* would go for Runner-up.

Representation of women in Clear Light of Day by Anita Desai

To begin with, Anita Desai’s novel, *Clear Light of Day* was primarily published in the year 1980, offers us the female character Bim, who is neither perplexed by her past nor is she senseless for any characteristic of the lifetime. Bim is displayed as a matter of thought-provoking study of ‘Self’ in evolution from juvenile headlong, she appreciates and withstands the sensitivity and judgements that brings her up to a life of social responsibilities. She is unrestricted from any emotional or any psychological disturbance. The only ordeal she passes concluded is to comprehend the recurring transformation of time. Tara is her equivalent sister and two brothers Raja and Baba. They are growing up with their rather apathetic parents, including a diabetic mother and a father who stood as nothing for the children but a principal man of arrival and departure. In this very particular novel, we are learning about how the two sisters Bim and Tara alongside two brothers Baba and Raja nurture up. Their parents are unresponsive and impartial for their own children’s needs and requirements during the time of their growth. Both the sisters Tara and Bim scuffle for existing and their individual identities.

In the novel ‘*Clear Light of Day*’, the central character Bim is portrayed as a single adult female living in an old house with her psychologically handicapped younger brother Baba. The story throws the spotlight on an Indian family in the city of Old Delhi, India. Bim had to look after the cerebrally handicapped brother Baba, when Tara, and her companion Bakul have come back to their home from America. As per the story progresses, Tara and her elder sister Bim replicate on their family. Tara is an unrecptive woman who does not try to demonstrate her female identity. Bim and Tara struggle against the male-controlled or we say patriarchal society.

In novel *Clear Light of Day*, the main female characters scuffle for their individuality in spite of all the boundaries and restrictions. For instance, they give the impression to accept the philological and principles of the foremost class. This particular study goals to demonstrate how the female central characters like the colonized focusses contest to proclaim their presence in different conducts like hybridizing. These particular women employ the persecutor’s dissertation and principles in order to endure and survive. The story circulates on an Indian family in the city old Delhi. The fledgling



daughter's reminiscences and involvements. They also have deuce brothers named Raja and Baba. Baba is portrayed as the fledgling member of the Das household, who is cerebrally handicapped. Subsequently the siblings lose both their mother as well as their father, throughout their core juvenile segment of life, Bim was the only sister who had to look after her brother Raja, and his sister Tara, along with her NRI husband have reimbursed to her household. By way of the story progresses, Tara and her older sister, Bim, mirror on their household, when Raja falls sick after concurring the disease and became ill with tuberculosis, she was the one who nurtured him posterior to healthiness. She correspondingly had to overhaul for the full grown auntie Mira when she fell sick as well, at the same time, taking care of her mentally retarded brother Baba.

The major central female characters in *Clear Light of Day* are Bim and Tara, who are sisters by blood and who seem to be worlds away from each other. During their childhood, although Bim is portrayed as insubordinate and desires to be a 'heroine' in the future on the other hand, Tara is portrayed as timorous and is contented to be a 'mother' when she grows up to be an adult. The particular novel concentrates on the individual undercurrents amongst the characters but also remarks on the circumstances of women as a complete. Bim repeatedly gets self-protective and distrustful of her spinster position, and more than once scoffs Tara for her purportedly easy choice of life by getting married and having kids leaving the country. Tara is not a wide-ranging spineless person, but her life is depicted very traditional in terms of gender relationships and expectations and hopes. The two sisters Bim and Tara grows up observing their brother, Raja, getting privileged treatment; Bim, in specific, was upset and unsatisfied with this. She trashes to get married for the reason that she does not perceive how it will advance her life and chooses that now she will be self-governing, tutor, and make her own choosing. Desai also propositions egalitarianist annotation with the judgement of Bim and the Misra sisters: like Bim, they are instructors and breadwinners of their domiciliary, but they are not sturdy plenty to speak up in contradiction of their manipulative brothers. The Misra girls, who are exclusively portrayed as intellectual and brainy, confidently would have liked to go to the college and gain education as well, but wretchedly they are married off instead. Partaking been deprived of an education, they have to effort for a chickenfeed in order to fund their lethargic, sluggish and self-indulgent brothers. Even though their ageing pater communicates to Bim that it used to be unlike before, that in the old times men distinguished their duties with the women that they were to protect and provide and appreciate the women in their families, the old man's defence of the male-controlled system is annulled by his gratified declaration that, when he was young and at their age, he was even shoddier than his own sons.

In the conclusion, in spite of her grumpy temperament, it is Bim who is the central character and the real hero of the novel *Clear Light of Day*. Contrasting Tara and Raja, Bim is strong-minded to create her own method in the world. As a sturdy, independent and a self-determining woman who stick to her very own values and morals throughout the variations that time fetches, she can oblige as a prototypical for the young girls she imparts and teaches, by persuading, she will transform the paradoxical civilization

Representation of women in *Fasting Feasting* by Anita Desai

Since the premature stage of development, women have constantly remained subjugated and demoralized in the society. Female writers have inscribed about their position and core role in the Indian society. Complications of women are the fundamental melody of the most of the women writers. It is fairly ordinary to picture the hitches of discrete and separate inspecting widespread opinion of sight. But it is pretty preposterous and absurd to ponder that how an Indian woman is getting dominated in several ways every single day and even after seven decades after India prevailed independence. Anita Desai's novel "*Fasting, Feasting*" designates the miserable condition of women in the patriarchal society, and their exclusive part of being like a doll that they play in a household and also the position of the unmarried women in precise. A woman should be beautiful and should only speak when she needs to be spoken, know how to fulfil all the domestic chores and should not get out of her house for long.

The two main female characters Uma and Aruna are two sisters who are raised up, cultivated, and presented with nothing but only marriage in their mind. Uma's parents try to arrange a marriage for her but she gets rejected numerous times only because of her flawed looks as again, the society's solemnly wants a woman to be beautiful otherwise she has every possibility to fail in her life. After the numerous shots and tries of their parents to marry their eldest daughter Uma fail repetitively, Mama and Papa throw the responsibility to raise her baby brother and their son Arun to Uma. She is asked to drop out of the school and abandon her education so she could stay at home and look after her brother Arun. Even after begging to her teachers to take her back to school she eventually fails and has to quit her schooling. This proves to the fact that the core responsibility of a female is to be at home and serve for their family members. She should dedicate her entire life into being at home and taking care of her family where education should be the last



thing in her mind. Anita Desai builds up the character Uma as a symbol of millions of girls in India who forfeited their education, dreams and ambition of becoming successful and independent just to satisfy the societal expectations. A woman should never go out of her house and should be in and learn all the domestic chores so they could satisfy her in-laws. As portrayed in the novel, the two sisters Uma and Aruna grew up with marriage in their head. Their parents made it pretty much clear to them that marriage is the ultimate goal for a girl so no other thing should matter in their life. A woman's most fundamental ambition should be to satisfy her in-laws and her husband. It is a very common practice that whenever a boy is born it is theoretical to bring contentment in the family while on the other hand, when a girl is born, it is considered to be a curse on the family. Particularly woman in India takes a secondary position in the family since the day she was born. The women exclusively in the Indian middle-class families scarcely has or gets any meagre choices to make and to live their lives as they want but to live on the corporeal and demonstrative scraps or remnants of the male members of the household, be it their husband, father or her brothers. Without giving even a second thought the parents would delightedly spend a hefty amount of wealth or money in fostering and safeguarding the desired schooling or education for their sons, meanwhile the daughter in the exact same family is projected to live with a restricted resource, that too include her marriage expenses. The emblematic discernment and stereotype against the female child is properly elucidated in the particular novel "Fasting, Feasting" as the female protagonist Uma's parents, provided all the objective and all the encouraging education to their only son Arun, who perceptibly is a male child, however, the girls since their birth becomes a matter of concern for their parents because marrying them to a man becomes their ultimate goal. Their son Arun gets the finest education in the United States of America, he is all free to go anywhere he wants and enjoy his life but at the same time, Uma is not even allowed to visit pilgrimages or even go to the school which is barely any far from her house. When her youngest sibling, Arun, who was a boy was born, Uma's parents asked her to quit schooling and instead be home and raise her little brother up. She even begged her school teachers to take her back to school but she failed. As the society expects that if a girl is born she at least need to be beautiful and her physical appearance should be attractive enough for marriage but Uma was not that beautiful according to the society which made all the attempts of her parents to marry her fail. So now they decided that until they could fix her marriage, Uma, instead of going to school would now stay at home and take care of her baby brother, which would also help her to learn all the essential domestic chores so she could satisfy her future in-laws and her husband, once she get married. This is exactly what an Indian female child role should be and for the sovereignty of the male child is a predominant and prime feature of not only Hindu but of all religion of families in India. The protagonist of the novel, Uma, is a prey and dupe of the emblematic Indian family arrangement. As the first-born child of the family and that too, a female child, she has had to carry the extreme weight of her blameworthiness for simply being a woman. She stances deceived by her own father, who never seek any meagre support to his daughter or never bothered about her feelings when they made her leave school, and also her own mother who herself being a woman never bothered respecting her daughter's emotions or needs. Both the parents treated her like a puppet controlled her life and played with her like a doll.

Uma's mother's identity is tangled in with her prime role as the wife of an imperative man or the wife of the man of the house. After giving birth to two daughters her husband is now impatient to have a son and demands his wife to bear son. Despite the fact that now the lady is in her middle- age which is not a biologically appropriate age to get pregnant as it would jeopardize the woman's health. She silently agrees and follows her husband's order of getting pregnant once again. Her husband is undoubtedly a self-oriented, misogynistic man who likes to command his wife and children and take control over them but she barely disagrees with him.

Uma's cousin sister Anamika is portrayed by Anita Desai as a female who fulfils every criteria of the society. Anamika is beautiful, feminine, does not speak much, obedient to her parents and extremely intelligent and studious. She even gets an opportunity in the very reputed and eminent Oxford University which is a dream university for millions of students worldwide. But again, there comes her parents who denies the permission to let her go and instead marries her off to a malicious family who torment, abuse and violate the poor girl and later sets her alive on fire with kerosine oil then viciously kills her. Just like Anamika there are millions of women who detriments the decisive loss of independence or liberty in order to fulfil the societal demands to be a feminine idol.

II. CONCLUSION

The women in India are supposed to fulfil every single criteria the society expects them to do. Anita Desai in her novels 'Clear Light of Day' and 'fasting, Feasting' depicted the miserable condition of women in Indian society that how the bury their dreams and ambition to become independent financially in order to live their life as they desire to live. The characters Bim, Uma, Aruna, Anamika, Mrs. Patton reflects the poor condition of women which people generally fail to notice. All of this starts from the house. Both Bim and Uma's dreams started to shatter from their own house, from



their own family members. The very father, mother, brother fails to compensate with their own daughter and sister. This is probably the common story in every house of India. All these patriarchal families combines together to form a patriarchal society which is solely responsible for the despondent condition of women.

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