

FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN ANITA DESAI'S NOVEL *CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY*

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Abstract

Indians are extolled worldwide for their high principles and erudite. The success of Indian writers has reached such an extent that woman authors are also breaking into the field in a major way and making us proud with their wonderful writings. Anita Desai is one them who with her keen blade of writing makes Indian fiction in English gain distinction in discovering the social essence and the emotional spirits of her protagonists. She is a keen observer of the society and tries to retain the position of the women in the contemporary society attracting attention of the masses through her writings. This paper is an important insight of feminine perspective in the novel *Clear Light of Day* by Anita Desai, while exploring feminism in Indian Writings in English. At the same time, efforts have been done how various women characters play different roles and emerge out as new identity to overcome the situation.

Keywords: Feminism, Perspective, Novel, Alienation, Frustration, exploitation etc.

Introduction

It is the Feminism movement that grants the same political, social, and economic rights to women as those enjoyed by men. Since ages, the male dominated society had kept away their socio-legal rights. The phenomenon of changing the identity of a girl into woman depends on various factors. The process of social conditioning influences and moulds her psyche to desire and pursue traditionally accepted and encouraged feminine roles only. In order to get woman a new coinage in male driven society, it becomes necessary to change the identity of woman that she is not just to produce human species. The woman has to wait till the dawn of Twentieth Century to feel and experience the sense and sensibility of her consciousness in terms of desires, sexuality, existence and destiny. This process is called Feminism. It is natural that these women even though raised hoods for their self-identity have to suffer to some extent because male society doesn't easily accept this revolution. It hurts their ego. However, in the course of time the scenario is changing and the mind set of patriarchy has gone revolutionary changes. It has considerably encouraged and shaped the feminists' struggle to empower women and helped them transcend their deprived status. Succeeding writers have elevated women's matters by disagreeing and investigating their secondary predicament in the current society. A noticeable change is seen in feminist literature from the demonstration of women's oppression to that of their fight. No doubt, the feminists and feminist writers have been successful in attaining the permissible civil rights for women; still there is a scope to be done at the social level.

Literature Review

Various writers in the past have made efforts to give justice to women to get her self-identity. Authors like Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya, and Anita Desai have selected the the issues confronted by the women in today's masculine conquered sphere as the central theme of their writings. In some of the novels of Anita Desai like "Voices in the City" and "Where

shall we go this summer”, she has depicted the intricacies between a man and woman bond. She has annoyed to search the inner traits of the main central characters. Indian English writing starts with authors like Sarojini Naidu. She charms the readers with her writings as the great poetess. Nayantara Sehgal and Rama Mehta use feminist themes in their writings. She openly opposes Nehru government policies.

Kamala Das contributes in Malayalam her native language too. She is believed as one of the exceptional Indian poets writing in English. An Indian born American writer, Bharti Mukherjee is effective in upholding the ethnic smashes and other social and radical predicaments in North America. A Bengali American author, Jhumpa who is a well-known storyteller weaves the tie of love, self, calamity, falsehoods and mistakes in advanced tactic. Some more names to be mentioned are Anita Nair, Susha VIswanathan, Nergis Dalal, Krishna Sobti, Indira Goswami, Malti Chendur, Gauri Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Shobhade and Arundhati Roy. The novels of the Indian women authors are read by many Indian readers covering both male and female with certain outlooks. They gaze for some “Indian-ness” in their literatures. It is only the women novelists of India who are talented enough for carrying the message of women's movement in an Indian way.

Methods

This paper adopts a qualitative approach to analyse the novel *Clear Light of Day* and explores the feministic approach in the writing of Anita Desai with special focus in her novel. The analysis involves a close reading of the novel's themes, characters, and plot development. The paper examines her novel that describes the psychosomatic growth of a female character, which cannot cope up with the practical world. This is an important probe of illustrating feminism in the novels of Anita Desai, The analysis also explores the role of other characters in the novel, such as Bimla Das (Bim), Raja Das, Tara, Baba, Bakul, Aunt Mira (Mira Masi), Mr. Das, Miss. Das, Dr. Biswas and few others in shaping Sanjay's personality and relationships.

Discussion

Anita Desai's work is poles apart from other Indian women writers in English. We generally notice that Narayan Sehgal, Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Praver Jhabvala, mainly deals with politics, East-West encounter and social theme; Desai is concerned with the psychic life of her characters. She delineates the inner canvas of the mind and does not peep into political affairs or socio-political truths. In the novels of Desai, she always describes the protagonist women and the sufferings of women in the male dominated society, who have reached different stages in life due to the conservatism of counterparties. The central theme of her novels is the status of women as an individual.

In each of her novel, one senses a novelist eager for a way of living for self-emancipation and self- dignity. Anita Desai's first novel *Cry, The Peacock* focuses light on the theme of alienation. *Voices In the City*, her second novel depicts Indian humanity still in shift more than a decade after India's liberty from the British. The focus here is on human futility. Her third novel, *Bye-Bye Blackbird* gives light on familial conflicts. *Where Shall We Go This Summer* is her fourth novel talks about the theme of existence. In all these works, women, the chief protagonists are depicted as suffering in a meticulous world dominated by men who is sometimes a father, a brother, a husband or a lover presents a constant threat to their integrity, intuition, peace and happiness. These characters are painted in various colors and played varied roles starting from the role of housewives to that of enlightened. The novelist as a

feminist writer introduces the theme of women's freedom in her novels. Her young women characters yearn for freedom but they do not succeed.

The novel *Clear Light of Day* deals with the primary theme as the importance of family. The other themes include the influence of childhood, the significance of mercy and the status of women, particularly their various facets as mothers and caretakers. The title of the novel suggests that love and affection for all the members of the family to which she belongs is more important and the most essential fact of her existence. The novelist makes memory and flashback as the main narrative strategies in her novel. The novel criticizes the controversy of women's roles in society by exposing hardships that Desai demonstrates through the influence of the western culture, the desire of true gender equality, and the social roles that women have to do.

The novel is divided into four parts. It mainly deals with the Das family from the children's viewpoint in the order as adulthood, adolescence and early adulthood, childhood, and at last arrives to an adult perspective in the final chapter. The story centres on the Das family. It begins with Tara and her husband, Bakul greeting her sister Bimla (Bim), living in the family's Old Delhi home. She teaches history and takes care of their autistic brother Baba. They always talk about their brother, Raja who resides in Hyderabad. The section comes to an end when the two sisters visit at the neighbours, the Misras.

In part two of the novel opens with Raja who is severely ill with tuberculosis and is left to Bim's care. In the past, Raja's fascination with Urdu attracts the attention of the family's Muslim landlord, Hyder Ali, whom Raja idolizes. After recovering from TB, Raja follows Hyder Ali to Hyderabad. In the third part Raja, Bim, and Tara are depicted awaiting the birth of their brother Baba. Mira mavsi who has become widow and ill-treated by her kiths, is brought in to help with Baba to raise the children. Raja is fascinated with poetry. The fact that Tara wants to be a mother brings derision from Raja and Bim, who want to be idols.

In the last section, Tara is seen confronting with Bim over the wedding of Raja's daughter. The quarrel is again due to the broken relationship of Bhim with Raja. This reaches to climax when Bim explodes at Baba. After she cools down, she realizes the importance of family love. Tara then goes to the Misras, her neighbours for a concert and there, she experiences resilient connection. Tara gets an advice to return from the wedding with Raja and pardons him.

Desai reaps the harvest of the circumstances of women's suffering in her writing to showcase issues women in society generally experience. The problems of love, marriage and sex are dealt skilfully, convincingly and in a realistic way by the novelist. The novelist has always travelled her own path and attempted to radiate the feminism in her own way. She has always conveyed the inner urges in a proper way of her female protagonists. She has contributed to the India with the feminist concern; the most important thing about her is the way of expression which has made her one of the great feminist writer of the times.

Conclusion

Anita Desai emerges as a well-established Indo-Anglian novelist of Post-Independence era. She has significantly contributed for the growth Indian Novel in English. Her characters are usually women that deal with inner life crowded by psychological problems. She basically focuses on the trouble of contemporary woman in the male dominated society and makes

struggle to vent her. Desai's women characters are much reserved and hence they cannot adjust themselves to life and face its problems boldly. The representation of man-woman relationship in her novels varies with complicated and integrated collective issues. Mostly women are culturally as well as emotionally dependent on man and any disruption in relationship proves to be a loss of self. She has proved the identity of woman from female to feminine. Her female protagonists fight the inner battle and try to crack the situation and attain status in their life.

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