

Anita Desai and Married life of a woman in Indian English literature

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ABSTRACT

Women are facing various problems related to their social and economic status all over the world except some countable regions. They are downtrodden and maltreated since a couple of centuries. This paper is an effort to understand the contribution of one of most famous woman writer, Anita Desai, in empowerment and feminism of women. She prominently explains extreme bad conditions of Indian women in her novels. Indian women have been downtrodden and maltreated since a couple of centuries. This poor condition of Indian women is highlighted their marital life in Indian English literature so dominantly. But Anita Desai has raised the issues related to plight of Indian women through her novel's characters and tried to sensitize Indian society. Her novel's characters strike a powerful thump to man dominated society. The change in familial relationships is the basic theme of her novels.

Key Words: Emotions, Empowerment, Humiliation, Relationship, Behavior

INTRODUCTION

It is very clear that women are achieve equal rights and opportunities in the world. Some social worker and writes are trying to plead their case. The group of these efforts and movements is feminism. In face it is a group of ideas and movements to defend social, political and economic rights of women. The concept of feminism also focuses and tries to eradicated the problems in women's marital life. The feminism tries of understand gender inequality and social and economical status of women. Earlier feminism focuses on the problems of women of western world but it was criticized and encouraged the multidimensional forms of feminism. It is try to establish equalities in human being without consideration of sex, religion, caste, creed and region. Only and only equal rights cannot be helpful to free the women from present sexual and social degradation. The lack of Intellectual expression, economic development, commercial upliftment, equality at home and their work place and personal freedom also affect the social and economic status of women. Therefore, the feminist writers are re-analyzing the efforts and movements of feminism which can eradicate the all problems related to man dominated society. These writers focus on the marital life of a woman which is not very happy at all in current scenario and is major root of her other problems.

FEMINISM AND LITERATURE

There is explosion of literature, in every form of literature since the rise of feminism especially in twentieth century by women writers. Mostly themes of this literary items are relating to rights of equality for women since the beginning of the women's movement. There has been a strong rise in the amount of literature that is focus on dissemination with women in the society. Theme of the earlier and modern feminist writings is almost same but the way of raising the issues by the modern writers is very effective and in aggressive also. One of the primary aims of feminist writing is its focus on expressing and signify the life of women and their way of thinking. While earlier in history, men writers also tried to explain and focus on the discrimination and maltreatment with women in their writings but readers and critics are not ready to hear and believe women voice. But the main achievement of feminist writers is that women's voice and experiences are listening seriously by the man dominated society. Indian women writers have garnered critical praise for their scintillating literary prowess and making social issues a key part of their work. Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy are the renowned Indian English writers whose genres focus on the issues related to women.

MARRIED LIFE IN ANITA DESAI'S LITERATURE

Anita Desai is one of the famous Indian writers. She is interested primarily in the lives of women in India since Independence. The major works of Anita Desai are *Cry The Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, *Fire on the Mountain*, *Clear Light of Day*, *In Custody*, *Baumgartner's Bombay*, *Journey to Ithaca*, *Fasting, Feasting*, *Diamond Dust and Other stories*, *The Zigzag Way*, *The Artist of Disappearance* etc. In most of her works she writes as feminist writers. Most of Anita Desai's genre describe complexities of modern Indian society in a feminine point of view and highlight the female Indian predicament of maintaining self-identity of Indian woman. Her novels, like, **Cry the Peacock**, **Where Shall We Go This Summer?** **Voices in the City**, and **Bye-Bye Blackbird** also deal with the theme of discrimination and inequality of women in Indian society.

The novel **Cry, the Peacock**, is mainly with the related with clash between husband and wife relationship. The writer elaborates the causes marital disharmony and illustrates how such disharmony affects the family and society. Sometimes, the difference in behavior and varied levels of sensitivity strains the relationships between husband and wife. In this novel, Maya and Gautama have strained relationships because of their incompatible temperament. Maya is ambitious, sensitive and emotional, while Gautama realistic, insensitive and rational. Maya is poetic and high-strung Gautama detached, philosophical and remote. Maya has tenderness, softness and warmth, Gautama is hard and cold. The matrimonial bonds that bind the two are very fragile and tenuous, the growing tension between them reaches its climax when Maya hurts and kills Gautama and also commits suicide.

In **Voices in the City**, Anita Desai points out the absence of meaningful relationships and resultant sufferings. She tries to find out the psychic compulsion that may affect an individual in his/her relationships in whole life and how an individual is affected if he is unable to follow such relationships. Nirode, one of the main characters, is obsessed with the relationship of his mother with major Chadha and considers her a she-cannibal. She is in an affair in Kalimpong which itself is a consequence of differences between relationship of husband and wife. Nirode's relationship with his mother is a love-hate relationship. We have veiled suggestions of his mother fixation and according to psychologists' hatred often is a defense mechanism of the psyche to stop one from committing incest.

If Maya's tragedy in *Cry, the Peacock* emanated from her passion with a father figure, Nirode's tragedy lies in his love-hate relationship with the mother. The novel also deals with the unmatchable marriage of Monisha and Jiban. Monisha's husband is the prisoner of conventional culture. He believes that child bearing, cooking, cutting vegetables, serving food and brushing small children's hair under the authority of a hardcore mother-in-law are the major duties of a woman. Monisha feels imprisoned herself. Her husband is always busy with his job and have no time for her. Even she cannot share her feeling with him. The theme of separation is treated in terms of mother-children relationship which itself is a consequence of dissonance in husband-wife relationship. Monisha leads an equally fragmented and starved life. She becomes slowly away from her mother as well as her husband. The graph of her mental life can be constructed from her long searching and self – confronting entire in the diary. Her relationship with her husband is characterized only by loneliness and lack of communication. He reckons his wife as worth nothing in consequence. He does not bother to ask his wife, when he finds some money missing from his pocket even. Monisha's ill matched marriage, her loneliness, sterility and stress of living in a joint family with an insensitive husband push her to breaking point. The element of love is missing in her life and finally she commits suicide.

In **'Where Shall We Go This Summer?'** Anita Desai highlights the incapability to lay bare one's soul and absence of expression of thoughts and sharing which results into discord between husband and wife. Different attitudes, individual fears and complex fears work to enhance the distance between the husband and the wife resulting in marital disharmony. Raman and Sita have contradictory views and attitudes about human life. The ill-assorted couple of Raman and Sita face the same problem of husband-wife discord. Sita represents a world of emotion and feminine sentiments while Raman is a man with an active view of life and the sense of the practical. Sita is a nervous, sensitive middle-aged woman with explosive and emotional reactions to many things that happen to her, she always wants to escape reality and does not want to grow up and face the responsibilities of adult life. On the contrary, Raman represents the prose of life. He represents sanity, rationality and an acceptance of the norms and values of society. He is unable to understand the violence and passion with which Sita reacts against every incident. His reaction to his wife's frequent outbursts is a mixture of puzzlement, weariness, fear and finally a resigned acceptance of her abnormality.

He cannot comprehend her boredom, her frustration with her. In this novel theme of alienation and lack of communication in married life is discussed by writer. Sita finds herself alienated from her husband and children. She remains an ignored personality since childhood. She is the product of broken family. She yearns to have the attention and love of others but her father remains busy with his chelas and patients. Even after marriage, she remains lonely. Her husband also is busy. He

fails to fulfill her wishes. As a result, there is marital discord, clash between husband and wife. “Where Shall We Go This Summer?” may thus be seen as a story on the inability of human beings to cooperate with individual and society. It is a story of illusions melting away in the cold light of the everyday and the commonplace. The fight with struggle with life is not a solution to the problems of life. Complete obedience and negligence of the individuality imagination of the human being are not fit for the beautiful conjugal life. Main focus is that human happiness in married life in cooperating the partner not avoiding her individuality. Anita Desai here suggests that understanding of husband and wife is must and without this beautiful life looks like a hell.

The theme of her novel **Fire on the Mountain** also describes communication gap and lack of understanding in marital life as a result of differences and tension. It is the story of Nanda Kaul, the Vice-Chancellor’s wife who lives on top of a mountain in Carignano in the village of Kasauli because she does not want any disturbances from the side of society. She only performs her traditional duties and responsibilities as wife. There is lack of love and attachment in her life. She is frustrated with her husband, who “treated her simply as some useful object”. She plays the role of the gracious hostess whole time for her husband, who “wanted her always in silk, at the head of the long rosewood table in the dinning-room, entertaining his guests”. According to N.R. Gopal, “She is so busy raising the family and discharging the duties of mother, housewife and hostess that in the evening of her life she is happy in her seclusion even though it is partly voluntary and partly circumstantial.” Anita Desai efforts to find out the problematic life of Nanda Kaul, who is living luxurious life but not satisfied with her life. “Outwardly Kauls were an ideal couple to university community but from inside it was all empty, the whole social role and socializing was a mere sham”. Her life with her husband was “lacking in composition and harmony”.

The psychological seclusion of the lady is echoed by the landscape of the mountain - rocky and barren. Her wish to be lonely and secluded is seen in her apathy to receive her great grand-daughter. “Discharge me, she groaned. I’ve discharged all my duties. Discharge”. Carignano offered her the anonymity and escape she longed for. Mrinalini Solunki rightly observed: “Her option for total isolation is not related to the spirituality of Indian thought. She does not opt for this isolation willingly, but circumstances have left no other way out for her. Her long involvement with the people and the affairs of the world gave her neither satisfaction nor a sense of belongingness. Therefore, in a bid to survive she opts for withdrawal, for an existence away from the world of messages and visitors” The novel tells of falsity to which Nanda is forced to. Her marital life was not peaceful. It was not all love and sincerity but the terrible betrayal of her husband prompted her to a life of silence.

The children were alien. The graces and glories were a fabrication, to drive the present. “Her relation with her husband did not involve her inner “self”. The novel gives artificial picture of her happy life with her husband, but the last page of the novel reveals that the whole story was only myth. There occurs another failed marital relationship in the novel – the relationship between Raka’s mother and her excessive drinking and aggressive father. But the writer has focused on the plight of Nanda Kaul as his husband befools and betrays in young age and destroys her life. Lack of understanding of the partner’s feelings and emotions is the major reason of her marital discord. Thus Anita Desai protests against unhappy married life in the fictions through her female characters.

Custody focuses on theme of marital discord and relationship problem of Deven and Sarla that lead to an unhappy marital life. They are totally different from each other in their behavior and attitude towards life. Deven is a Hindi lecturer in a college and Sarla has no interest in literature. She do not that she concludes her husband’s frequent visits to Delhi for meeting his girl friend. She is disregarded and humiliated by her husband. She is disturbed and tensed with bad activities of her husband. Her married life is not so good due to lack of communication and love in life . Sarla is a picture of an abandoned Indian wife.

CONCLUSION

Thus Anita Desai as fiction writer supports the feminism and show the plight of women in their married life. The condition of women in modern India is a paradox. She is climbing on stairs of success but most of them are suffering and humiliating in family life. Even in the modern age, she performs her traditional duties in lack of love, affection, equal opportunities and communication. Their life is full of problems. Anita Desai probes the major reasons of difference during marital life in his writings and also suggests the solutions through her characters.

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