

Portrayal of Women Characters in Anita Desai's *Fasting and Fasting*

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Abstract

Anita Desai is a well-known Indo-Anglian novelist who has carved a niche for herself in the matter or presentation of women characters as they live in the world. Her novel *Fasting and Fasting* centers on the women characters. In the modern world of hurry one cannot look for the legendary women character who mostly submitted themselves to the will and pleasure of their male counterparts or even their parents. Such situations are plenty in the novel. The author clearly points out the cruel and crude nature of some men in the society. This paper is an attempt to study the sufferings women portrayed in the novel.

KEYWORDS: Hurry, niche, legendary, crude and cruel.

Introduction

The Indian Writing in English in the Pre-Independence period mostly remained male dominated. Woman is devoted to the portrayal of the image of subjugated and marginalized women. It is a fact that woman is victimized and subjugated by the male community everywhere. She has been the subordinate sex and has to conform to male standards. They are never regarded as autonomous beings. As a result of their exploitation and subjugation, to assert their identity, women turn rebellious and now they are aware of their rights and hence revolt against the traditional norms and fight for equality in the middle-dominated Indian society.

Indian women writers are popular for female subjectivity and their novel depict their own identity. Traditionally, the work of Indian women writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. One factor contributing to this prejudice is the fact that most of these women write about the enclosed domestic space, and women's perceptions of their experience within it. Consequently, it is assumed that their work will automatically rank below the works of male writers who deal with 'weightier' themes. Additionally, Indian women writers in English are victims of a second prejudice, vis-à-vis their regional counters. Since proficiency in English is available only to writers of the intellectual, affluent, educated classes, a frequent judgment is made that the writers, and their works, belong to a high social strata, and are cut off from the reality of Indian life. The majority of these novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated housewife, this subject matter often being considered superficial compared to the depiction of the repressed and oppressed lives of women of the lower classes that we

find in regional authors writing in Hindi, Bengali, Malayalam, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, and other native languages.

Indian women writers have given a new dimension to the Indian literature. Indian English literature has developed over a period of time and writing in English did not start in a day. It took many years and several distinguished personalities to bring the present status and distinction to Indian English literature. Indian literature is not only about novels, it is also about poetries and short stories. Before the rise of novels, several women writers compose songs, short stories and small plays. It is still believed that women are the upholders of the rich Indian tradition of fables, storytelling and more. In the mid-nineteenth century, more women started to write in the English language. With the passage of time, English literature has witnessed several changes in the writing patterns. Women novelists have incorporated the recurring female experiences in their writings and it affected the cultural and language patterns of Indian literature. They have brought a stylized pattern in the whole context of Indian writing. Nowadays, people enjoy reading the Anglicized novels presented by the new age women writers.

Critical analysis:

Anita Desai is a well-known women writer and novelist of India in English. Her novel *Fire on the Mountain* made her to receive the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978. Anita Desai's novel *The Fastening, Feasting* gained her more popularity because it was selected as finalist novel in 1999 for Booker prize. In *Fastening, Feasting* Anita Desai focuses on the women suffered in their family due to patriarchy. Anita Desai describes how the children were dominated by their family of middle class and patriarchy effects on the next generation in her novel *Fastening, Feasting*. The novel *Fastening, Feasting* was divided in to two parts. The first part portrayed about suffering of women characters in the society and family and the protagonist of the novel is Uma. The second part of the novel describe about Uma's brother Arun. We have chosen only the first part of the novel for this research paper. The novel starts with a husband and wife they are seems like same person and have unity between them. Uma call them as mama papa. Uma was forty three years old but she was unmarried. She spends all of her life in serves to mama papa. Her flash back reveal how a child was suffered and lost opportunities due to authoritarian households. Women when they were a child suffered by their own family because of she is a women till now family values only a male child not a female. Uma loved studying in convent school but she was asked to return to their parent's when she was fifteen years old due the birth of her brother. This shows how the societies give more important to the male child. Still in many countries for male child they have given more important than female child. The sufferings of female children are still happening all around the world. To take care of Uma's brother, her parent's stopped her schooling. When attain the age of sixteen they arranged for marriage but the groom was fall in love with Aruna, Uma's sister. The second engaged person only took her dowry and the third one married her in a traditional wedding but his intention is to enslave her as a second wife at last Uma's papa saved her. Her marriage become on utter failure. Failure in school made her to fail in marriage life also. This reveals how the society creates an aversive situation for women in this world. The second women portrayed in the novel is Mira-masi, she is a widowed aunt of Uma she want for pilgrimage to the temple. Uma also joined her on pilgrimage to temple she was longed to stay with her aunt but she was taken to home. According to Indian tradition women are went to pilgrimage in their old age Anita

Desai's Mira-masi is also belong to this type of category. She is an old women who was taken to spirituality as an act of opposition. Another women of the novel is Anamika, she is beautiful and very intelligent women as a result of her intelligent she got a scholarship to study in oxford but her parent's does not allow her to study they arranged her a marriage. Anamika's mother-in-law intimidates her and her husband burned her into ashes and turned it as a suicide. Uma's younger sister Aruna the next character in the novel who is absolutely different from other character of the novel. She married successful men whom she dominates and he was trapped by Aruna's desire. In our society there are many women living like Aruna. The last women characters in the novel were Doctor Dutt and young Moyna daughters of the neighbour Mrs. Joshi. They are the only happiest women in the novel. The first part of the novel ended in Uma who witnessed for Anamika's murder. In our society women are lacking opportunities due to patriarchy dominance. Even though there are lot of women had an opportunities to set their career but still now there are lots of women suffering in the society which was unrevealed. This paper concludes that women are not a weak person to sacrifice everything and accept the sufferings. They also had a will power but they don't have courage to spoke against their family. Uma is an example for the painful life imposed on her by patriarchy society.

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