



An exploration of the feminine self: A study of Anita Desai's novel clear light of day

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Abstract

Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* highlights the unending struggle of the Indian women in the male dominated society. Women are exploited and oppressed due to their gender in almost every part of the world. They are expected to behave according to the patriarchal notions of the society. Desai has wonderfully explored every aspect of a women's life to improve herself socially and economically. The problem which Desai and other writers saw in their surroundings like male dominated problems at home and different work places in society get reflected in their works. Of course, Indian women are coy, delicate and submissive, but at the proper time, she is so much enthusiastic that she stands firm like rock and become a formidable force that enemies cannot stand before her and are defeated. Anita Desai is the first writer who has forcefully expressed the existential problems of both women and men. She is the first to introduce the deep psychological probing of her character. Her fictional world is located in the corridors of human consciousness. She is a subjective writer and portrays her characters individually. Her individuality and sensitivity differentiates her from other writers. In her novels, Anita Desai tries to portray the psychic elements. This paper also puts some light on issues related to female as well as male in an Indian society.

Keywords: patriarchy, exploitation, oppression, psyche, human consciousness

Introduction

Feminism differs in different periods and different places and the definition of feminism that can be applied in India is interpreted as an awareness of women and men in the family. Feminism is a range of political movements, ideologies and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish and achieve political, economic, personal and social equality of sexes. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men. The feminist literary criticism has brought about a revolution in literary studies. In India a woman's life is regulated by tradition and family customs which are established by men. A good woman who is a great daughter, sister, wife and mother. Portrayed as a colonized individual in a colonial society or the unwelcomed immigrant in a host country, women are deprived of their individual rights. Under such conditions not dissimilar to those under colonial rule with both suffering from oppression and repression. Women in colonized societies are suppressed twice, once because of their race and also due to their gender. Both the women and colonial subject are marginalized since both struggle to realize their own existence which is compromised by the colonial establishment and the patriarchy. Despite these impediments, they strive to manage their situation to recover their own identity to survive. They experience burdens and barriers which are the inevitable outcomes of their marginalized situation.

Anita Desai is one of the major voice in modern Indian English fiction. In his selection of women writers K.R. Shrinivasa Iyenger included a critique of Desai's fiction and state that her first two novel 'cry the peacock' and 'voice in the city have' added a new dimension to the achievement of the

Indian women writers in India. This dimension takes multiple forms. The journey to selfhood and freedom are important contributions made by Desai to Indian- English fiction. The dominant element of self-exploration runs through all her novels. The self-exploration was new, especially for women character, in the fiction of the sixties. Self-exploration is the process to find out what is valuable to me who feel happy, successful, unhappy or unsuccessful therefore what is right for me is to be judged by myself only the whole process is called self-exploration. Desai's mother characters are also not traditional, self-effacing women. Sita, in *Where shall we go this summer?* Bim mother "clear light of day" is totally selfish and self-absorbed. As in most of the other novels, Desai's focus in *clear light of day* is ostensibly and individual act of self-realization. In this novel, however the personal exploration of guilts, betrayal, inertia and responsibility double as political role in postcolonial India after the country's Independence in 1947. Her analysis of gender and politics thus extends into a critique of Indian nationalism, which excluded gender issues from its political rhetoric of liberation and rejuvenation. If we go through her novels, we will come across that there is a poetic touch in her novels but her temperament when carefully seen is actually prosaic which reveals that she was a talented girl who had the potentiality for both the sphere. In this novel *Clear light of day* Anita gave a message of forgiveness and dedication of one's life to others can transfigure one's life without them life "would remain flawed damaged".

Anita Desai portrays Indian women as marginalized characters facing challenges and burdens imposed by patriarchal society. They resemble colonial subjects whose lives are fractured. Among the female character of Bim, Tara their mother and

aunt Mira, all are subordinated by a male dominated culture which underestimates females subjectivity. In this novel Anita Desai has tried to show how a family's life move backwards and forwards in a period of time. She shows the sacrifice of protagonist Bim for her family. This novel describes the Happy and sad movements of Dad family. Desai has depicted the mental tension of it's protagonist. Bim who sacrifices her life for her younger brother Baba who is mentally retarded. Bim was a very hard working, active, intelligent, sensitive girl. In clear light of day she shown the thoughts and feeling which pass through the characters mind.

Desai's clear light of day deals with the Dad family chronicle. The novel is divided into four untitled parts and the first part is set in the present and refers to Tara's visit to the old house. The second part goes back to the summer of 1947. Correspond to the great partition. Part third is set in an even earlier period of the Dad children's childhood and paints the character of Mira massi but the fourth part returns to the present with a futuristic perspective and depicts the individuation of Bim. Now we can say each part deals with an important phase in the Life of the main characters. The first female character to be studied in Bim, the eldest daughter in family, when compared with other women characters in this novel like Tara, Misras girls and Aunt Mira, represents a subversion of traditional model of women. In second section devoted to the Dad siblings. Desai shows how kind Bim is to Raja during his illness when without ever complaining she takes the primary responsibility for his care. It seems almost unbelievable that with in just a few years she would change so radically in her attitude towards her older brother. This novel "surpasses all other novels in English set in India in characterization, poetic use of landscape and integrity of vision (Daniel: 107)

Desai has actually used Bim as a means to mock and reject earlier discourses that portray women as self-sacrificing heroines arousing sympathy in others. This is consistent with her earlier rejection of romantic fiction and those patriarchal assumptions that make Raja offer her the romantic fiction. In clear light of day Bim has two fold ambition: to be emotionally and economically independent. She never wanted to marry..... I shall earn my own living, and look after Mira massi and Baba and be independent". She would not depend on anyone, not even on her father "for all father cared I could have grown up illiterate- and cooked for my living or swept. So I had to teach myself history and teach myself to teach". The past is important for Bimla both the past and future exist always in time present. Desai quotes on the last page on the novel a very significant line from Elliot's four quartets " Time the destroyer is time the preserver" it is 'time' which bring about a change in the lives of the characters in the novel and about what the bondage of time does the people.

Time is destroyer, it has been described in whole novel, but the time as a preserver is proved in last episode of the novel when mulk and his aged guru are to sing at a party to which Bim and Baba gave also been invited. The essential unity of the family has been preserved by time in the last episode in the novel. Desai's clear light of day concerned with time in relation with eternity is a domain of psychological novel and Bim suffer from mental agencies at various levels in this novel. Desai's exploration centres in inner emotional world and psychic deliemmas of her individual characters.

Particularly of her women in all the novels. This novel is the main forte of her fiction in the exploration of the main currents and under currents of human psyche. Anita Desai's individuality and sensitivity differentiates her from other writers.

At the end of the paper in remarkable clarity of thought. In this insight we can concludes that the bond of family is greater than any other thing in the world. Bim felt their pains and that she could not live without them and at the end to forgive Raja for the insult and realize the importance of family.

Conclusion

In this work we conclude, Anita Desai traces Bim's relationship with Raja as it alters through time. Desai argues that women must struggle to make a place for themselves in a paternalistic nation, where womanhood is a more symbolic construct. Bim is not the 'ideal' or 'best' woman. She is new in the dimension of time by being arebel against the general current of the patriarchal society and in exploring her true potential, along with the struggle to fulfill her urges and needs.

Bim achieve her 'faminine self' in fusion not in fission, in association, not in alienation, in affirmation not in negation. Her deep commitment to her past as a meternal symbol, a faminine principle sustains her against the revages of time . Her quest positively affiliated to others, goes beyond her introvert self. The protagonist of this novel was undergoing struggle while others come out successfully with new realization and hope.

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