

A passage through the works of Anita Desai

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Abstract

This paper studies the peculiarities of Anita Desai's writing by making an analysis through her works. She is very genuine through her writings with greatest indianess. The characters were in a quest for female inditify.

Key words: Works of Anita Desai

Article

Anita Desai is one of the major voices in the modern Indian English Fiction. She ushered in a new era of Psychological realism in which genre of novels with her eminent Indian women novelists writing in English. The very concept that women need something more than just food, cloths and accommodation in aptly illustrated in her novels.

She represents the welcome "creative release of the feminine sensibility" which began to emerge after the Second World War. A novelist of considerable merit, Desai has enriched the tradition of the Indian novel in English. Her innovations go to make her "a disturbing and demanding presence in indo-Anglican fiction" she is an artist of a higher order and her concern for human beings has imparted profound appeal to her novels.

She was born to a Bengali father and German mother in Mussoorie, India on 24th 1937. She was educated at Queen Mary's Higher Secondary School and later at Miranda House, Delhi... born and brought up in India she was definitely influenced by her mother's foreign culture also. She started her writing at the age of seven but received attention with her first novel, **Cry the Peacock**, published in 1963.

Anita Desai chief concern is with "The journey with in" of her characters, the chief protagonists being female chief characters therefore the recurring themes that we come across in her novels is the agony of existence in a hostile and male dominated society that is not only conservative but also taboo-ridden. The metaphysical world too attracts her attention and so does the mental apprehensions and the sense of insecurity in the lives of her protagonist who are undergoing traumatic psychic experience due to the collapse of value system and lack of satisfactory alternatives. Despondency, failure and frustrations, particularly hi the matter of human relationships do not; however give rise to complete chaos and anarchy. On the other hand we perceive the struggles of the protagonist as heroic attempts that finally bring glory to the individual and add dignity to the sprit of freedom. Thus her torte becomes in the words of K.R.S Iyengar "the exploration of sensibility the particular Indian Sensibility that is ill at ease among Barbarians and the Philistines, the anarchists and the moralists".

In **Cry, the Peacock** (1963) Desai first hovel, the identity crises of the protagonist Maya, stems from several inter-related factors. She is a passionate and sensitive young girl married to her lawyer father's protege Gautama, Being a practical minded person detached from emotions, he is totally antithetical to her. The marriage was never fruitful and slowly Maya turns into psycho path whose emotional needs were seen to be colliding with that of the extremely practical out look

of her husband. The climax of the story lies when Mama's attachment with her father further develops in to an 'Electra complex*' which again acts as the catalyst in the following of her marital relationship with her husband

The hyper sensitive mind of women is illustrated by Desai in the tenderest way where the atmosphere of tension is set ideally against the backdrop of a sultry Indian summer. In the *Cry, the Peacock*, Anita Desai finally leaves it to the readers to complete the story. The oppression and depression, the anxiety and fear, the frustration and foiling of the female protagonist set against a typical Indian scenario brings out the very best of the writers in a coherent way.

Anita Desai novels and short stories evoke characters, events and moods with recourse to a rich use of visual imaginary and details, which has led to comparisons with the modernist sensibilities of T.S Eliot, William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf.

Anita Desai's second novel ' **Voices in the city** (1965) sketches the spiritual odyssey of a world weary, lean and hungry looking journalist named Nirode doomed to reside in Calcutta this novel seems to be more realistic in the novels of Anita Desai. The human drama of alienation takes place against the background of Calcutta city. Nirode the central figure in the Novel is a rootless nihilist a psychic out law. In his dog headedness, Nirode refuses to make even the most necessary compromising that life demands. Nirode is one a restless, unending but futile quest and wants to understand her identity. The main character Nirode, Monisha , Amla and the city of Calcutta itself, all engaged in quest for true meaning of their lives.

Bye Bye Black bird (1971) Anita Desai third novel has a different theme from the earlier novels. It explores in the main, the immigrant sensibility via a new foreign culture and the consequent problems of adjustment, belonging, roots, past etc. The novel acquires added significance as it examines the questions of east west encounters and cross cultural relationships. Viewed from this angle, there are three main characters, Dev , Adit and Sarah. But Adit's wife Sarah has the most deserving claim to be the protagonist. Here Dev starts moving around in London like a tourist observing and enjoying its various attractions and allurements, he begins to undergo a slow change from Anglophobia to Anglophilia later Adit's attitude towards England undergoes a sea change. His Anglophilia gives way to a sudden and disturbing nostalgia for his home land.

Her fourth novel, '*Where shall we go this summer*' (1975) is in reality the discourse of its protagonist Sita's predicament - how to cope and contend with the dull tedium of a meaningless and joyless life in a sterile and indifferent city like Bombay with the maturity of the narrative act of Anita Desai. The nature of the identity crisis of the protagonists in her novels becomes more complex.

The immobility and frustration of the central female character in *Clear Light of Day* (1980), Bim Das an apparently independent woman who is the hostage of her past memories, are conveyed by zooming in on several details of the house where she lives, signifying decay and dullness. Sim's sister Tara, who is visiting her in the crumbling family mansion in Delhi during the momentous days of partition , observes that the dullness and the boredom of her childhood, her youth, were stored here in the room under the worn dusty red rugs in the bloated brassware amongst the dried grasses in the swollen vases behind the yellowed photographs in the oval frames - everything, everything that she had so hated as a child and that was still preserved there with this were the storeroom of some dull, uninviting provincial museum. Bim and Tara are

inevitable extensions of all other Anita Desai's protagonists, Tara's weakness also throws Bim's character in perspective the novel is refracted through the consciousness of Bim. Quite contrary to expectable Bim parents are both portrayed as remote and far removed from the world of their children. It is as if the two for together in a society where prevented virtues are selfishness in difference and cruelty

Nanda Kaul the protagonist in Anita Desai fifth novel '*Fire on the Mountain*' is unique among the protagonists of Desai other novels. She is very old, having great grand children. During her youth she had a very active and dynamic life, playing different roles in different times with consummates. This character also depicts an image in our mind.

Anita Desai's novels tries to tackle the central aesthetic problem of modern writer- the problem of rendering "complete human personality ...in an age of lost values , lost men, and lost gods " The twentieth century has been rightly called " The age of Alienations." The modern man^ is doomed to suffer the corrosive impact of alienation , which manifests itself variously in the form of generation gap, the compartmentalization of life, the stunning of personal development and the conspicuous absence of a sense of meaning punters of life, and so on . In her novels Anita Desai has chartered this very crisis tormenting a sensitive soul. The pervasive sense of alienation has corroded human life from various quarters. The modem man has shrunk in sprit languishing in confusion, frustration, disintegration, disillusionment and alienation. The self alienation is the more basic frcjm of rootless ness and can thwart an individual's mental and psychic development in an alarming manner.

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