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MAJOR THEMES AND TECHNIQUES IN THE NOVELS OF ANITA DESAI

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Abstract

Anita Desai is a very popular Indian novelist. She is known as the mother of the Indian psychological novel genre. Her meticulous depictions of modern Indian life have secured her a place of honor in the pantheon of Indian authors. Winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award, Desai has authored as many as sixteen works of fiction. She began her writing at the age of seven it was in English. She has written novels, stories, children's books and articles. She is often considered as psychological novelist a feminist who deals with major themes of isolation, lack of communication, inner struggle, man woman relationship and marital discords. Her protagonists are female. Language and technique used by Anita Desai is as per theme and situation. She uses memories of past that is Nostalgia as a narrative technique. Her distinct style of writing, original characters, use of language, realistic theme, and narrative technique has made her writing so endearing which earned many words, recognitions and awards for her work. Her contribution to the literary world is without any doubt is great. All aspects of her writing are discussed in the paper.

Keywords: - Feminist, isolation, physical landscape

INTRODUCTION

Indian writers have made significant contributions to the literary world at national and international level. They focused on Indian culture, traditions, race, politics and self-identity. Many Indian writers have made their place in world literature. Indian texts written in English today must be viewed in a global context. Indian fiction written in English appeared in almost 80-90 years. Harvest of novels in the 1930s by the great writers R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. It was followed by a new generation of novelists such as Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rashid, Geeta Mehta, Anita Desai, Shobha De and Arundhati Roy. They explored various topics. All of them have achieved considerable fame for their fictitious contributions. Indian novelists have explored female subjectivity to establish identity. Among them, Anita Desai is one of the most prominent Indian novelists in English. She is one of the most popular, world-famous, and best novelists of all time. She enriched Indian fiction as a whole. She holds a unique position among Indian writers in English.

With the advent of her Anita Desai begins an era that promises a new trade in Indo-British fiction. She is one of the leading Indian novelists of the post-independence era. She is one of the most prominent Indian



English writers. She is credited with introducing India to her psychological novels in the tradition of Virginia Woolf. She introduced her psychological realism in her first novel, *Cry the Peacock*, in 1963. She is arguably the most widely read contemporary author of Indian English. This talented Indian writer was born on June 2, 1937 in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand. Her father is Bengali and her mother is German. The positive atmosphere of her home and her highly creative imagination helped her vision mature. Her father was a Bengali businessman and her mother was of German descent. She was educated at Queen Mary Higher Secondary School and Milinda Her House at Delhi University, where she earned her Bachelor's degree in English Literature.

Her writing career began with short stories published in magazines. Her short story, Famous ones are *Ghost House*, *Mr. Bose's Private Bliss*, *Mr. Bose's Private Tuition*. She also wrote essays and reviews for various magazines and newspapers. A collection of songs called "*Twilight Games*", which includes songs called "*Pineapple Cake*", "*Sale*", "*The Escort*", "*Devoted Son*", "*Farewell Party*", "*Pigeons*" and "*At Daybreak*". She wrote children's books such as *Peacock Garden*, *Cat on A House Boat* (1976) and *Village by the Sea* (1982).

Her story was followed by the first novel, *Cry, the Peacock*, in 1963. Desai influenced Indian English literature with Her valuable novels *Voice in the City* (1965), *Bye-bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where shall we go this Summer* (1975) *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody*, *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1989) and *Journey to Ithaca* (1995).

Anita Desai is a very popular and sensitive writer in India. Her popularity is reflected in the increasing number of scholars engaged in critical study of Her works in universities in India and abroad. She is an Honorary Fellow of the University of Cambridge. She was a Fellow of the Royal Society of London. She was an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She has received several awards and honors, including the Padmashri and Padma Bhushan from the Government of India and the Tarak Nath das Award for promoting Indo-US relations. She won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978 for Her novel *Fire on the Hill* (1977). Merchant Ivory Production adapted her novel into an English-language film called *In Custody* directed by Ismail Merchant, it won the President of India Gold Medal for Best Film in 1993. The film starred famous Indian film personalities Shashi Kapoor, Shabana Azmi and Om Puri.



Trying to discover the true purpose of existence, Anita Desai makes her characters her mouthpiece. They are not just representatives or cardboard creatures. They don't just represent a certain society or a certain moment. Anita Desai's main task in her novels is to explore and explain the human psyche and self. In today's socio-political environment, the plight of modern man seems to be one of the author's dominant interests.

Desai's female characters are usually neurotic and very sensitive. They are not ready to adapt to reality. They live in a strange world of dreams and fantasies and stand out from their surroundings.

She is often considered a psychological writer and feminist. She covers key topics: self-identity, isolation, inner struggle, male-female relationships, divorce, lack of communication, and women's mental issues that lead to insecurity. Female characters are dissatisfied, unhappy, unsuccessful and disappointed. They try to escape their cages and become mentally injured in the process. In Her novels, the protagonists are female characters. Her treatment of female characters, feminist approach, analysis of gender sexuality and subjectivity can be seen in most of Her novels. Her novels differ from other Indian writers: Nayantara Sehagal, Kamala Markandaya or Ruth Jhabwala, who dealt with East-West encounters and traditions of politics. Desai is concerned with the mental lives of her characters. Therefore, "She was considered a writer of mood and psyche" (Sharma 166).

Kohli notes, "No other writer is as interested in the lives of young men and women in urban India as Anita Desai."

Her engagement with Indian women and their reactions is unlike any other, which sets him apart from other Indian writers. This is explained by the following examples:

Maya is the main character in the novel *Now the Peacock*. Obsessed with death, she is haunted by an astrologer's prediction that her marriage will end within four years if either she or her husband dies. Finally, she kills her husband and commit suicide.

Sita is the protagonist of *Where Are We Going This Summer*. She is estranged from her husband and children. He is left alone in a broken family.



On the Fiery Mountain, Nanda runs away from the house and goes to a distant place because of her unfaithful husband. The novel is praised for its use of poetic symbolism and sounds. It had three female protagonists, each of whom was silenced or damaged in some way.

In the novel "Under Guard" the ups and downs of the human mind are beautifully described. Desai's second novel, Voices in the City, has a significant existential problem. It is a novel about three main characters Nirode, Monisha and Amla. Alienation, isolation, loneliness and self-identity are the main concerns of the novel. The novel covers the author's experiences in the city of Calcutta.

Clear Light of Day is praised for its very moving portrait of two siblings caught in the tedium of life in India. Its characters are revealed not only through images, but also through gestures, dialogue and reflection. It is a study of Delhi that combines fiction and her story with the life of a middle-class Hindu family.

Language and Technique:

We cannot separate theme and technique from Anita Desai's novels. They are not separate elements, but interrelated. She uses places, characters, situations, dialogues and silence to convey the theme. The use of technique and storytelling gives her a special position among Indian writers. This is an important factor in thematic trust. Her dialogues are powerful and touch the heart. She uses different storytelling techniques depending on the subject and the situation. She uses memories of past nostalgia as a narrative technique. In this regard, she has been compared to James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

All readers and critics anonymously agree that Anita Desai is undoubtedly one of the most popular feminist Indian writers in English. She enriched the tradition of the Indian novel in English. Anita Desai's contribution to fiction made her special and raised the status of Indian fiction to the desired height of world literature.

Major Themes:

Most of Her plots are related to Her personal life experience. She never patronized any subject or message. She believed in telling the truth as it is. Her sensitive portrayal of the inner feelings of Her female characters is excellent. Many of Anita Desai's novels explore the tensions between family members and the marginalization of middle-class women. In her books, Anita managed to cover topics ranging from anti-Semitism to Western ideologies in India and the death of Indian traditions and customs. Desai's works deal



with contemporary Indian life, the clash of Eastern and Western cultures, generational differences, and practical and emotional escapism.

Conclusion:

So, Anita Desai is a great writer. She is popular all over the world. She made a certain way for future generations. The garden is extremely important in Desai's world, as Her characters show an unusual sensitivity to it. Trees, reptiles, tendrils, flowers, fruits, seasons and pets are more vividly explored in Desai's novels than elsewhere in Indian English fiction. The characters belong to the upper class. A city, a hill station, a big house with a garden, a disintegrating family, an obsession with the past – these make up the world of a typical Desai novel. Anita Desai's work is part of a new writing style, Anita Desai once said: "My writing style is to let the story unfold by itself. I try not to structure my work too rigidly. Her special writing style, original characters and realistic subject matter. have made her writings so delightful." Desai's cinematography has been widely praised by critics. Her novels are quite short. Her use of imagery and symbols is complex. Her writing style is praised for Her use of poetic symbolism and sounds. Desai's novels show Her constant experimentation and gradual maturation as a writer.



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