

**Cultural Insensitivity and Patriarchal Oppression: Resistance Strategies in
Anita Desai's *Fasting Feasting***

M.Mifrila¹, II M.A English, Periyar Maniammai Institute of Science and Technology
Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

Dr. V. Saranya² M.A., M. Phil., B. Ed., Ph. D., Assistant Professor, Periyar Maniammai
Institute of Science and Technology, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

Article Received: 22/04/2023

Article Revised: 12/05/2023

Article Accepted: 22/05/2023

Published Online: 25/05/2023

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2023.5.05.82

Abstract

Anita Desai is recognised as being the first Indian author to properly address feminist themes while writing in English and focussing on the plight of women in India. The article examines the culturally based oppression of women in modern Indian society and compares it to the psychological suffering of women in current American society, concluding that women are viewed as domesticated second-class people with no opportunity to participate fully in society. The topic is chosen for the analysis of patriarchal society and to know the similarities between two cultures as Cultural Indifference. To demonstrate Anita Desai's focus on the actual freedom of women, which only results from inside and requires self-realization and revolting consciousness in order to overcome their enslavement in the home and society.

Keywords: Patriarchal society, self-realisation, Gender Discrimination, Powerlessness, Marginalization, culture.

Anita Desai started to show the psychological realities existing in contemporary Indian society in her fiction and she uses different aspects of postmodern literature. Anita Desai's women characters fought against the patriarchy and discover their power to live on their own, without anybody's help and they do not give any regard for the consequences that such a silent rebellion may have on their lives. *Fasting, Feasting* is an affecting book that approaches the subject of separation, family and escapes in a unique way. Anita Desai's *Fasting Feasting* is a novel about the difference between two different cultures Indian, which is recognised for its piety and long-standing practises

and represents 'Fasting,' and American, which is a nation of richness and sumptuousness and represents 'Feasting.' Through the perspectives of Uma in India and Arun in America, the plot is shown. Regardless of their backgrounds and environments, they are both imprisoned by the controlling relationship that their parents, Mamapapa, have with one another. The story of human hunger and appetite is presented in this article.

The word 'patriarchy' is derived from the phrase 'rule by father'. It is used to refer to male domination, power relationships, and a system by which women are kept subordinate. It depends on the belief that males are superior to women, that men should rule over them, and that men should treat women like property. In both public and private spaces, this system oppresses and subjugates women. 'Patriarchal Resistance' in *Fasting Feasting*, examines the characters in the novel. It depicts the discrimination between men and women and also examines the powerlessness of women, and their attempts to resist masculine ideology, which ultimately fail. Women continue to struggle under the oppressive hand of male patriarchal society. Through the fictional character Uma, the writer provides a detailed portrayal of conservatism, where women are dominated by men, highlighting the struggles faced by women in patriarchal societies. *Fasting, Feasting* plot follows Uma and Arun, who are trapped by their parents. A middle-class family needs it to function well. It's crucial that a baby's gender at birth be either a boy or a girl. The birth of a girl causes a family to experience grief whereas a boy's birthday is celebrated well. This novel provides a clear explanation of this inequality towards women. In Indian society, women view their suffering as their destiny and feel proud to follow rules assigned to them by male authorities. In the novel, Mama portrays traditional Indian girls, who are submissive, obedient and passive. She is also involved in raising her daughters to deal with the same fire situations. Mama's patriarchal sentiments towards her daughters are a result of the patriarchal system through which she has been raised.

Uma is a vivacious, oppressed heroine, the never-married daughter of a middle-class family in the rural side of India. She is often frustrated and delights in small things, and is often inspired by the people she encounters who are independent. Uma experiences oppression and marginalisation her entire life, and is duped by her parents. At an early age, Uma disappoints her parents by enthusiastically pursuing school, despite her poor marks, and showing no interest in domestic duties. Against her will, her parents remove her from the convent school early, forcing her to stay home and take care of her younger brother Arun. As an introvert, she readily accepts his failure, which is unhealthy in the process of perceiving oneself-image. This novel indicates the challenges of marriage are still present now, but in a tragic model, with love and rage.

Papa portrays the classic idealistic Indian male. Even though he is a civilised, and intellectual gentleman, he lacks compassion for his daughters. The family of Mama and Papa is typical of Indian culture. He is in charge in every circumstance. Mama should respect any decision he makes because he has a say in everything. A ceremony might be

as uncomplicated as enjoying a meal. After each meal, he receives a napkin and a finger bowl. Only he received this. This is a way of elevating the status of men in the household. This does not simply occur in her family; many Indians follow certain customs towards their husbands or other males. Women's freedom from the oppressive patriarchal culture won't happen until they recognise how trapped they are psychologically and demonstrate a desire to act to change it. This article dealt about the patriarchal society and gender discrimination. Women can also occasionally control other women, it's not just men that do this. Mama, Uma's mother, who has also experienced male dominance, abuses Uma. Women should reject the structure, regulations, and system that patriarchal ideologies attach to them. They will never win this struggle with their meek and submissive attitudes. Modern women are educated, skilled, and conscious of all systems' advantages and disadvantages. They may abolish this system by understanding how male dominance works. They must be vocal opponents of these women's marginalization, tyranny, and slavery as a result of terrible patriarchal beliefs.

Desai highlights the differences between an American family and a traditional Indian family. Arun, the narrator, was sent to the United States for higher studies. Arun was brought up in a conventional middle-class setting in India. Arun's parents are unable to meet all of his requirements while he is away from home, so he must spend his time between the hostel and Mrs. Patton in a small room on the first floor of Bayberry Lane. In the United States, he experiences a completely new and strange atmosphere. In spite of the differences in the two cultures, we can see in the novel's conclusion that the two families initially appeared different and are now indifferent to one another.

Arun begins to realise how similar his family and the Pattons' family from a different culture are as he spends more time there. Desai underlines the generality of family dynamics and relationships, as well as how they may be difficult, confusing, and filled with animosity. In Mr. Patton, Arun sees a reflection of Papa, particularly when it comes to anyone who challenges his authority. Mrs. Patton looks to be more independent than Mama at first, but it soon becomes clear that she still submits to her husband's moods and demands. Both the two groups of characters are integrated into the circumstance. They do not represent either the West or the East because of this. Therefore, neither the Patton nor Uma's families can be associated with the West or the East. Overall the two cultures are explored and demonstrated how the East (India) and West(America) worlds are connected with its freedom and self-denying attitude toward their cultures. This novel depicts the interconnected system of myths, archetypes, and female representations that has a paralysing effect on the social and literary tales of femininity. Desai suggests that while Western culture is seen as advanced and prosperous, there is a certain type of spiritual suffering present in nations like America that is absent in India. Mrs. Patton is seeking a greater meaning in life, but Arun understands Mrs Patton's family is simply his own family in another environment.

References:

Desai, Anita. *Fasting Feasting*. Haryana: Penguin Books, Penguin Random House, 1999.

Gurjar, Durga. *Major Themes and Techniques in the novels of Anita Desai*. vidhyayana.

Feb 2023.vol. no.8.issue 4.

Sunda, Chandra and Subnash. *A Critical study in The Indian Context in Anita*

Desai's Fasting, Feasting. Shodh Ganga 2011.

Volna.L. *Anita Desai's Fasting, Feasting and the condition of Women*. Allen Institute for AI.

1 sep 2005.

Rishika. *Post Modernist's concerns in Anita Desai's Novel*. Research Journal of

English language and literature. Vol. 10. 2022