

Gender and Feminist Awareness in the Novels of Anita Desai

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to get an understanding of Anita Desai's perspective and point of view on the socio-cultural concerns of female independence and empowerment by doing a critical analysis of the fictional universe that she has created. Desai is a notable Indian woman writer. According to the findings of the research, Desai, by exposing the psychological anguish of female characters in her books, makes it obvious that Indian feminism is significantly different from the feminism practiced in western countries. In addition, the writer's ability to accurately portray the pitiful position of women in Indian patriarchal culture is shown by the accuracy of this work.

Keywords: *Indian Social Milieu, Gender Oppression & Feminist Perspective, Western Feminism.*

I. Introduction

It is impossible to divorce a writer from the realities of the period in which they lived. It is inevitable that the sociocultural political milieu would discover creative interventions in a writer's writings in the form of an indirect remark on the behavioural ethics prevalent at that time and place and beyond its local circumstances. When one is forced to evaluate feminist representations in a piece of writing by any writer, one is forced to question feminism, its validity, and its need in a specific circumstance. Therefore, before delving into an analysis of Anita Desai's gender and feminist issues in her book, it is vital to take a quick look at the annals of the current times as well as the history of the feminist movement in India and its significance.

Indian context on gender oppression and feminist perspectives

In a country like India, where there is regular trafficking of women, where female fetuses are killed, where five-year-olds are raped, where a mother cannot give birth to her child in peace, and where girls are burned as dowry, women, as a result of a patriarchal societal structure, act against other women, treat them as inferior, and manipulate them mentally and physically. In such an Indian setting, the effectiveness of western feminism is truly puzzling. "Women's issues could no longer be confined to a ghetto" in the context of gender awareness discourse in India. Shunder Rajan (1999) commenting on gender discourse informs us that,

...in studies of culture, religion, law; in political analysis of state and civil society; in the sociologies of family and community; in the economics of population, poverty and labor; in official that is governmental and administrative concern such as census, development, population control and projects of the eradication of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, in the "new social movements" (dalit, ecological, tribal, anti-dam, peasant, trade-union, and self-employed); and in the "(p. 3)

Gender discourse and the feminist movement are inextricably intertwined with Human Rights concerns due to the perverted and inhumane acts that all people in the country commit against women to subjugate them. Indian feminism should not be conflated with western 'ism', as Kishwar (1999) argues in *Off the Beaten Track*. She writes against the 'imported label' and describes feminism as "the international band wagon" As the editor of the feminist journal *Manushi* (meaning humane), whose subtitle is "A Journal about Women and Society," she is concerned not only with women's equality, but also with the entire spectrum of sociopolitical issues pertaining to the preservation of human rights. She denies being a 'feminist' and refuses to be categorized by western terminology.

Given that the socio-historical-cultural-religious context of the Indian situation is vastly different from that of the western situation, she believes that Indian feminism requires "redefinition." To quote Kishwar (1999) once more, "...women should only receive their due rights and place in society if they go beyond petitioning the government for symbolic gestures and concessions on narrowly defined women's issues" (p. 271-276). Following her argument, just as feminist representation in politics must be redefined, so must the subject in literature.

However, this does not imply that feminist principles are novel to this land. Long before the western world was aware of the feminist movement, ideas of women's emancipation and rebellion against patriarchal structures dominated the country. In their two volumes on *Women in India*, Tharu and Lalita (1995)

meticulously trace the history of the women's movement and 'resistant literature by women' in India, beginning in the sixth century B.C.

Based on Lalita and Tharu's analysis, the uprising against the power structures was not proportional to the repressive pressures, and women continued to be exploited through child marriage, Sati, widowhood, and the Devdasi lifestyle. The women's empowerment movement in India made significant progress in the aftermath of nineteenth-century nationalist ideas. In significant part due to the efforts of Raja Rammhun Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, it began with the education and emancipation of women. Women of the middle class gradually acquired a new identity as a result of the infiltration of western ideas and the development of 'Bramho Samaj'. The excerpts from stories included in the second volume by Tharu and Lalita reflect only half-truths about the Indian reality of the twentieth century, focusing primarily on the problems of middle-class women. Again, if regional literatures demonstrate resistance writing against patriarchal pressures, Indian English writers do not delve deeply into the subject. Just attempt to compare works such as *Adyaja* by Indira Goswami, *Stanodayini* or *Draupadi* by Mahasweta Devi, *Samskara* by Ramaujan, and *Gandharbi* by Bani Basu are just a few of the works of Indian English fiction writers that deal with gender and feminist issues. Not only do English novels lag behind in terms of theme, but also in terms of representational quality. Possible explanation for this deficiency in Indian English novels is the author's disconnection from the ground realities. English, after all, is the language of the urbane middle class privileged. This brings us to the issue of textual representation and reality in Indian society, which involves complex concerns regarding who should represent, what is suitable for representation, and what reality, etc.

Anita Desai: The Figurative Imagination and the Social Perspective

The books of Anita Desai must be viewed in this societal setting or in the framework of the development of Indian feminism. When thinking about the feminism in her literature, it would be acceptable to leave out the difficulties of the "have-not" segment since her books deal with middle- and upper-class society. When taken as a whole, her works show a development in women's mental understanding of their place in society. Any direct source for any of Anita Desai's works is impossible to cite. The author herself doesn't mention any. However, she explores gender problems from an Indian socio-historical viewpoint in her books like *Cry the Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Where Shall We Go this Summer?*, and her most recent book *Fasting, Feasting*. The first three books by Desai are an examination of the despair that women experience as a consequence of their incapacity to deal with their familial circumstances. The most recent book explores challenges surrounding women's education and their desire for self-sufficiency and a purposeful life.

Women who have had the privilege of getting education are the subject of Anita Desai's writing. However, as her books show, formal education and degrees did not until recently inspire women to carve out a place for themselves in society and achieve self-sufficiency. Even in the 1980s and early 1990s, the Victorian ideal of the lady remained the dominant social perception. Women continued to confine themselves to the "interior space" since it was more respectable for the middle-class household and the suppression had taken on a mental dimension. The "mad women" or "hysterical" women in Anita Desai's books are members of this generation of women who were spouses and daughters in Indian society in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Women often experienced depression, isolation, and boredom due to the grind of their everyday responsibilities and meeting the demands of their spouses and children. Women often committed suicide or sometimes suffered from neurotic illnesses as a result of repressing their impulses and a breakdown in family communication. By looking at her female characters in this way, it is easy to pinpoint their mental problems and discover explanations for their acts.

Cry the Peacock (1963) and *Voices in the City* (1965), two of Desai's earliest books, deal in two distinct ways with the subject of the unhappy housewife. Maya in the first book is driven by her husband's inability to understand her to the brink of insanity. In the second book, Monisha has to put up with her husband's callousness as well as the oppressive control of her in-laws. While Maya becomes mad, Monisha decides to end her life as a means of escape. Such occurrences are typical in middle-class Indian homes.

Maya and Monisha are both from middle-class Indian families. Although Maya's family is a nuclear one with only her husband, Monisha lives in a mixed family home in North Calcutta. The two ladies have nothing in common other than the fact that they are both childless and lack love and affection. Anita Desai makes no mention of how to deal with their despair. Neither Maya nor Monisha make an effort to come up with better ways to live. They do not consider leaving their community in order to achieve their economic independence, which carries with it a feeling of freedom and self-worth. Maya and Monisha both live stifling lives that torment their brains. Because the author's main goal is to investigate the mental condition of women under such circumstances, she does not give these women characters their full potential. The first two volumes then turn into a study of two female characters in their isolating, cramped surroundings. The author uses internal monologues as a narrative style to depict their suffering and reveal what Indian middle class society is like for

women. Because of this, the narrative language in these books "allow(s) us to consider the specific story as an image of the events the story is about..." White (1990), page 110

In *The Law of the Threshold*, Lal (1995) examines the patriarchal influences that affect Indian women's lives. She examines the three phases of Indian feminism, which go from "interior space" to "doorway poise" to "exterior adjuncts". The themes of "interior space" are explored throughout Anita Desai's first two books.

While Maya and Monisha's painful solitude in the twentieth century may represent the "interior space" of Indian women, it may also reflect the satisfying roles of mother, wife, and daughter-in-law during Toru Datt's period in the late nineteenth century. It's possible that the pain of an arranged marriage, compromise, and disappointments are not explicitly stated in the autobiographical writings of women from the 19th century. Any perceptive reader, meanwhile, would be able to pick up on the undercurrent of suppressed wants and unhappy compromises. The female lead in Devi's *Pratham Pratisruti* (1964) gets married off at a young age. She is forced to visit her in-laws, suppressing her urge to pursue more education. She swears to educate her kid and prevent her from experiencing the same fate as she did. But her ambition falls short. The difficult existence of the daughter in a shared family is shown in *Subornolata* (1967).

In this way, the two works represent the suppression of women's liberation aspirations for two generations. Both books are examples of autobiographical novels that use metaphorical language to hint at the suppressed desires of women from two generations living in a shared family. In following generations, the issue of women's identity in the family and society grows increasingly complicated. Thus, the agony experienced by an Indian woman who yearns for love and affection from a husband who is severely suppressed by the dogmatic powers of Hindu philosophy is intensified in Desai's debut book (1963). Despite Maya being the main character, the story raises an essential issue of male identity in the setting of India.

The author (1965) deliberately intended to portray Monisha as a wife in a mixed family home in North Calcutta in the framework of the second book. Any reader who is familiar with the culture of the city will understand the significance of this detail. In contrast to North Calcutta, which is more typical of the Victorian "Babu Culture," South Calcutta is contemporary and has a liberal way of life. In Seth's (1990) tongue-in-cheek poem about Calcutta, "Kolkata" is jokingly meant to refer to North Calcutta:

With time and economic difficulties, the so-called aristocracy's splendor and the Zamindari Babu culture (culture of landowners) have lost some of their luster, but the vanity persists. The role of "bahu" (wife) in a household is associated with upper middle class ideals and is seen as aristocratic.

Education for women is no longer valuable, and in Monisha's case, her education was limited to *The Gita*, the Hindu Bible. The 'detachment' philosophical approach of the narrative establishes the patriarchal ideals of the culture in both works. Monisha struggles with this issue till her dying breath because Maya's delicate intellect won't accept her husband's unquestioning allegiance to the detachment concept.

In their cramped surroundings, the two ladies end up with two hysterical individuals. They develop into a study of the 'neuroses' in Indian middle-class homes. Sen's *Paromitar Ek Din* from 2000 features Monisha's situation and her response. The movie highlights the woman's role as a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law through two generations in a joint family household in North Calcutta. Unlike Monisha's situation, the relationship is cordial, yet patriarchal ideals are still present. The mother-in-law from the elder generation was constrained by cultural "values," which prevented her from making a different decision about her life. But Paromita goes beyond the bounds of her "values" to make her decision between a happy compromise-filled existence and her own life.

The female leads in Desai's works don't even explore their options. Even if they do, they will inevitably succumb to patriarchal forces. In Desai's third book (*Where Shall We Go this Summer?*) from 1972, Sita leaves the "interior space" and enters the "exterior adjunct" before retreating once again to the "interior space." She is hysterical as a result of the transitioning period. From the patriarchal perspective, the author presents her persona. She is seen as immature and prone to temper outbursts. Sita, whose name has legendary connotations, must decide between her husband's house and the place her father calls home. Only when she restrains her disturbed self will she be able to live. The contemporary Sita in Desai's story swallows her semiotic inclinations to declare her subjectivity via her compromise in a similar way to how the legendary Sita embraces "Vasundhara" or the mother-earth to seek sanctuary in the regions of darkness. With the symbolic order gaining control, the author also seems to unwind as she offers her audience the answer. Anita Desai (1999) may have addressed the topic of women in Indian society from a wider viewpoint in her book *Fasting, Feasting*, but her story here still originates from the patriarchal lens.

In *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), Desai explores the relationship between marriage, dowry, and education within the context of the Indian patriarchal society. She questions the ideals and attitudes that are prevalent in society by illustrating them in her story. Instead of delving deeply into the 'other nesses' of the other (woman), the author instead raises concerns about the factors that Indian culture uses to define the 'other'. *Fasting, Feasting* is a paradoxical title with dual connotations.

A son's birth should always be celebrated. It's a prevalent belief in India that having a daughter would bring you sadness.

She will get a dowry and be married off after receiving the necessary education to make herself an attractive wife to a potential spouse. Therefore, having a daughter does little to improve a family's financial situation other than increase obsessive spending.

'Fasting' has these repercussions. In addition to the aunt and mother who are mentioned in the beginning section of the book as "fasting," the main protagonists of the story are Uma, Aruna, and Anamika. The reader learns about Anamika's academic accomplishments even though the narrative mostly focuses on Uma and her unsuccessful educational pursuits.

Anamika is beautiful and witty in contrast to Uma's plain and stupidity. But simplicity is what prevents disaster. Despite being pretty and intelligent, Anamika's sole option in life is to get married in accordance with her parents' desires. Her acceptance letter to Oxford University is carefully hidden so that it may be shown to the potential grooms as one of the requirements for a "good" marriage. Anamika gets married off to a joint family home as a result of the efforts. The tale of Anamika comes to an end for her parents and her kin. Her in-laws do not like her to see her folks, therefore her people do not get to see her again. As a result, the families are the only ones who know anything about her. Through hearsay accounts, the reader learns about Anamika's groveling life among her husband's household and, ultimately, of her horrific demise.

The tragic circumstances of Anamika's life and mental state are not vividly described in Anita Desai (1999). The reader is made aware of her situation as an outsider, much like another newspaper article about a widow who was "burned to death." The author wants the reader to pay attention to how Anamika's family responds to her situation. In four lines, she summarizes Anamika's marriage and state of health (p. 70–71). The marriage incident is described in the opening paragraph: "Anamika is only an outsider, someone who was brought in because it was customary and because she would, by marrying him, boost his superiority to other men. they were forced to put up with her.(p. 70)

In the next sentence, it is said that "only they did not tolerate her". The beating Anamika receives from her mother-in-law is seen by her husband, who remains silent. She is treated like a slave when preparing meals for the large family and told to consume "the leftovers in the pots before scouring them." With a sarcastic flourish in the parenthesis, the author quickly draws attention to this last detail, asking "(or did Uma and Aruna imagine this last detail?)". The outcome for Anamika is a result of the blending of fact and fantasy. The horrors that follow are further described in the following sentences.

Due to a miscarriage, Anamika is no longer able to carry children. She was "damaged goods, she was flawed." Such a decision prompts the terrifying question, "Would she be sent back to her family?" immediately.

Plain reasoning you are so foolish, Uma, you know Anamika would be happier being ignored by her mother at home with her parents.If she is sent home, how can she be content? Who will say what? How will people perceive us?

Who cares what they say? screams out Aruna as Uma considers what to say in response to her mother's lack of tact. What do they believe matters? The mother tells her daughter to stop talking like way as she dismisses her: "Don't speak like that...All these new concepts are not what I want to hear. Is it what you learned from the convent's nuns? She says that since "all this convent education—what good does it do? ", she may terminate their education. Is it preferable to marry you off than to allow you to go there? Desai, in essence, turns terrible events into comedies. She employs irony as a storytelling device to critique patriarchal attitudes prevalent in Indian culture. The news coverage of Anamika's death is similarly irreverent.

"When the electricity suddenly comes to life, blindingly with a thump, and lights up the message," someone once said, "the news is like a shock. The specifics appear in a newspaper piece later. In the kitchen, Anamika poured kerosene and killed herself by burning.

In her work, Anita Desai (1999) mocks the patriarchal gaze and its indifference to these horrifying facts of life by humorously revealing the acceptance of such tragedies as simply destiny or "God's will." In Indian society, male power is not the only source of patriarchy. In order to maintain the balance of power in the family, in-law moms often vent their resentment on their daughters-in-law. The girl's mother and other family members are expected to remain quiet spectators in their submission to the patriarchal ideology and control that marriage is the only possible outcome, even if it results in death. The only option, no matter how unhappy you are, is to compromise. With the awareness of the younger generation of women, genuine "feminism" in this sense of emancipation could be conceivable. So, despite being uninteresting, Uma yearns for education and wants to be financially independent of her parents.

She falls within the "doorway poise" classification. However, she also bears the weight of the patriarchal system, which drives her insane. According to the widely held Indian idea, a dowry is required in order to marry off a daughter. Therefore, Uma gets wed to a guy who is considerably older than she is. The tale does not finish here, however, since after experiencing the humiliation of being at her in-laws' house, she

shockingly found that she is married to a guy who is already married. He married her to get the dowry he need to support his already large family.

Uma's father brings his daughter home in a responsible manner, in contrast to Anamika's parents. So Uma is kept alive. In her family house, where she is supposed to help her parents and be of service to them, she does not perish, but she also does not have a life. In the tale, Uma is stuck with a daughter that her parents haven't been able to get rid of, which she must endure with embarrassing tenacity.

Uma's epileptic seizures have a strong religious undertone. A lady who is single is obligated to worship Krishna, the God of Love. Religion serves as a consolation or a bandage to repair the harm done to her life and to lessen the pain of the obvious reality. Therefore, Uma's "loneliness" is alleviated by those close to her who "crave" her. They give her a job in life. Aruna is the one who recognizes hypocrisy. She is intelligent and nobody can trick her. Don't you dare do that during the wedding, Aruna cautions Uma. The worried sister is careful not to ruin her own marriage after summarizing Uma's with the question, "Did he touch you?"

There appears to be no middle ground between Aruna's intelligence and Uma's simplicity and plainness. The author provides no viable answer, and a worse picture of Indian civilization is shown via the comedic depiction of harsh reality.

There is a generational difference between Maya in the first book (Desai, 1963) and Uma in *Fasting, Feasting*. Maya is confined to her physical and mental spaces in order to win her husband's affection. In contradiction of the heterosexual social space that is provided to her as a man's wife, she has no space of her own. Similar to Maya's scenario, Monisha's (*Voices in the City*, Desai, 1965) is similarly caught in her social position.

In the third book, *Sita* (Desai, 1972), there is a revolution that ultimately proves to be self-defeating. However, a modest shift in how people see women's conditions may lead to a slow societal transformation that is brought on by changes in women's psychology. Bim is therefore forced to make decisions in *The Clear Light of Day* (Desai, 1980) that do not imply compromise with a feeling of defeatism. It turns into a decision about taking on responsibility, and she assumes the position of a matriarch who is in charge of the family's traditions as well as that of Baba, a helpless brother who depends on her for existence. In this book, Desai (1980) shows how gender roles may contradict the sex-based masculine and feminine paradigms of activity and inactivity. Bim emerges as the matriarch or patriarch of the home to handle interpersonal disputes and take on duties, while the men of the household are portrayed as weak (Baba), selfish, or irresponsible (Raja).

The oldest family member in the joint family system of India is often in charge of keeping the home together. The father or grandpa who usually sits at the top of the hierarchical power structure is a man. The gender paradigms are thus reversed by Desai (1980). Being a patriarch or matriarch depends on one's psychic abilities. Bim is identified as the 'eldest' gender. Her patriarchal principles of control and matriarchal values of love make her the first family member to carry the weight of legacy and accountability.

The ladies in *Fasting, Feasting* (Desai, 1999) do not exhibit this kind of moral fortitude. The reader is given the impression by Anamika's characterization, which is presented as a journalistic report, that liberation requires more than just academic freedom. Because she lacked the inner fortitude to challenge the family custom or the idea that girls must be married regardless of their mental capacity for other pursuits, Anamika succumbs to a tragic marriage and a pitiful death. Anita Desai (1999) examines the effects of patriarchal tyranny on the Indian psyche via Anamika's situation. Tearing the curtain of representation—marriage for women, higher education for men—requires a lot of fortitude and guts. Aruna has the prowess and fortitude to forge her own destiny whereas Uma have the courage but not the mental capacity to do so. She is an opportunist who at least has the feminine charm and the judgment to claim her bliss. The flaws and opportunities in these three women's personalities show the three stages of freedom experienced by middle-class women in India. Although these realities still exist, there have been significant changes in recent years to the social structures of middle class and elite countries. In recent years, women have taken up the problem of identifying their gender roles in society.

Anita Desai used her female characters in *Binding Vine* (1993) to highlight how her portrayals of women are really a generation behind and how society has evolved. Sarita, a business woman in *Deshpande's* (1980) *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, has the bravery to wage the inner struggle to protect her own identity and space outside of the confines of a severely oppressive married relationship. The second book, *The Binding Vine* (1993), emphasizes the sexual exploitation and torment of women both within and outside of space by addressing the problem of rape. The psychological damage caused by physical abuse may be repaired through women's empathy for their suffering. As a result, the women in *Deshpande's* books resist patriarchal oppression and are able to evaluate the nature of their suffering in order to make decisions about their life.

In Desai's (1994) vision, they do not suffer the same fate as the Mayas, Monishas, and Anamikas; instead, they arise as survivors with the desire to reclaim their lives:

There is a tendency in the west to eschew the existing system and establish a new one. The Indian woman is always seeking compromise and modification. Indian feminists seldom really consider radical change.

Working for a change via the customary role is much more Indian and lot less dramatic. Indian feminism, in my opinion, is more pragmatic than theoretical. Instead of being ideological, it is practical. (p. 168)

Desai must have had radical western feminism in mind when she said in the statement above that we must give up the old system and welcome the new. Anita Desai's assessment is similar to Nandy's (1998) concepts from "Woman versus womanliness in India":

The problem for the more sensitive lady is none other than redefining who she is. Her first challenge is to come up with ways to lessen the importance of certain parts of her function in the family so that she might expand her identity without completely departing from its cultural definition or losing touch with its psychological individuality. The Indian women need to make an effort to regain their sense of identity (42). Desai may see the need for change consistent with being Indian and come up with a solution, but these ideas are not reflected in her writing. Death of Anamika cannot be welcomed with sad indifference. But Desai really accomplishes it in her book *Fasting, Feasting*. Except for *Clear Light of Day* (Desai, 1980), she does not portray women as having an identity in her books; instead, there is just a desire for a better life. The only character with a positive outlook on preserving family relationships in the context of a collapsing society and the rapidly disintegrating ideals of the old Delhi days is Bim in the aforementioned book (Desai, 1980). What may account for the author's mistrust of how women are portrayed in previous books? Does it not have anything to do with her recent distance from her own nation and writing from abroad?

Anita Desai's views on gender and cultural preservation

In *Custody* (Desai, 1984) is the other book that discusses preserving a culture that is in danger of extinction.

But this time, the writer is worried about a guy, not a lady. The narrative centers on a "feminine" man who develops "masculine" ideals in order to preserve the poetry of an ancient Urdu poet and the cultural heritage to which he belongs, which is slowly being absorbed by "post-colonial modernism."

Desai's 1984 book dismantles the hierarchical system of power based on masculine/male (subject) and feminine/female (object). In the book, Desai feminizes the protagonist. Deven is pathetic and nearly absurd. Deven always has a subtle sense of humor when he is among people. Take, for instance, the passages that describe his predicament while serving as a teacher in one of his courses. "Last time I asked you to read," he said, raising his voice excessively in an attempt to reach the perfect pupil, who was invisible and standing outside the door. It has now cracked.(p. 13)

Deven is intimidated by his wife's demands and often teased by his buddy Murad. His deliberate decision-making causes him to actively participate in the process of cultural preservation by taking on the responsibility of safeguarding Nur's poetry. As a result of Deven's inherent lack of the gender characteristic related to his sex, the work makes for an intriguing study of gender portrayal. He decides to obtain the macho quality. The drive to "do" and "effect" determines his gender role, which subsequently has a "performatory" purpose (Butler, 1990, p. 24–25). Baumgartner's *Bombay* is another another book (Desai, 1987) that presents a fascinating study of gender and culture. He is the "hermaphrodite" who is bound by his mother's love and by his past. As "historiographical meta-fiction," the book assumes a psychological dimension where facts are repeatedly repeated as a continuous process in Baumgartner's mind rather than being "re-presented." Even his friendship with Lotte has no bearing on his sexual orientation or gender. Regardless of gender, it is brought on by the awareness of a shared history and cultural heritage that has rendered him and Lotte cultural exiles. Despite spending the most of his time in Bombay, Baumgartner finds the city to be of the least importance to his existence. The book calls into question the spontaneity of cultural exchanges via this encoding of personal history. The gender as a power construct, oppressor and oppressed paradigm functions inside the monolithic cultural sphere. Baumgartner is imprisoned by his German background and perishes there. It is both a literal and figurative death. of the book, the change of location is of little relevance, and the protagonist is pursued by Nazi fears even in Bombay, leading to his demise.

The book that Baumgartner is reading is constrained by the personalization of history. The book poses questions about gender and growth as a literary work. It investigates a singular instance of awareness that is exiled from all notions of "presentness." Baumgartner's portrayal was described as "The Feminization of a Hero" by Lal (1995) on page 128. According to her opinion, the text demands a feminist deconstructive reading in which the novel's creative writing "bypasses geo-political and cultural barriers" (p. 128). Baumgartner, however, is truly genderless, as was previously noted. He does not accept the symbolic order as a result of his mother's absence, and in accordance with Lacanian theory (Lacanianism, n.d.), he never progresses beyond the "mirror stage." Though physically separated from her, he is never psychologically cut off from his mother or his homeland. He continues to be "polymorphous perverse" and is unaware about his gender.

The parts in German and a few in Hindi, which are woven into the primary texture of English, provide signs of multi-culturalism. However, this cultural exchange that takes place in the book via the language does not tarnish Baumgartner's (Desai, 1987) German Jewish awareness. In other words, Baumgartner represents "the

vanishing hero" or "the vanishing gender." He does not have any sexual inclinations as a man because he is in total harmony with his mother and is trapped in the memories of his infancy. He is neither male nor female, reaching into the region of absolute denial of the concept of gender and sex. He also lacks any social or cultural understanding of gender. In other words, only when sex can be understood to somehow imply gender is when he deconstructs Judith Butler's gender heterogeneity in terms of sex, gender, and desire.

II. Conclusion

Desai examines patriarchal oppression by using the social imagination's inherent code in relation to the "desirable" representation of the woman known as "the Sati-Savitri-parampara." To the point of physical and sexual repression, women lack the subjectivity they need. The neurotic eruptions caused by female sexual inhibition are explored in Desai's books. Anita Desai's novels are feminist critiques that aim to examine how the power structures that liberation is pursued through construct and constrain the category of women as the object of feminism. Through the lens of women's awareness, the works challenge the current patriarchal system and pose doubts about the intellectual and psychological aspects of Indian male consciousness. Her most recent book, which figuratively raises voice against oppression of women by depicting a feminized hero, shows the constraints of expatriate writing, in contrast to her earlier works, which reflect gender and feminist problems in middle class Indian culture with some accuracy.

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