

Title: *A Study of Love, Sex and Marriage In Anita Desai's Novels*

Author: Vinay Dubey

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Reviewed By:

Mrs. Madhuri Bite

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Anita Desai, a well-known Indo-Anglian Novelist of Post-Independence era. Her contribution is considered as more significant in the development of Indian Novel in English. Most of her work deals with inner life which is crowded by psychological problems. Her novels highlight the themes of love, marriage and sex. Her characters are usually women who are haunted by a peculiar sense of doom, withdraw themselves into a sequestered world of their own, become Neurotic, self destructive and unhappy. These women characters are too introverted to be able to cope with their personal circumstances and adjust themselves to life and meet its problem both courageously and adequately.

Anita Desai, one of the most distinguished among the younger set of Indo-English writers. She presents powerful characters with full enthusiasm and encouragement in every circumstance and in each and every walk of life. Sensitiveness is a dominant feature in all her novels. She portrays the pathetic picture of a lovely married Indian woman who aspires to triumph over the chaos and suffering of her rather unusual existence. In most of her works she compares the life of women belonged to East as well as West. She observes that the life of women in India is slow and empty but in the West it is hurried, busy and crowded. While making conclusion she states that both types of lives in the East and West cannot give full satisfaction to the heart of woman. Marriage, love and sex are dominant themes of her novels. In this book the author presents Anita Desai's views on the major themes of marriage, love and sex. Marriage is a social institution and also a partnership between husband and wife. It is the social recognition of the relation between man and woman. Economic relationship, mutual understanding and love are the foundation of the institution of marriage. The institution of marriage plays an important role in the building of the structure of society. 'Love is an itching of the heart that cannot be scratched.' There is a great deal of truth in this definition because it is love on which human existence rests. Love is the basic need of human life and without it human existence becomes dry and mechanical. Love before marriage is totally different from love after marriage because before marriage, there is only love but after marriage, duties, responsibilities, ego all become the parts of human life and love is changed into anger, irritation, hatred etc; sex is also not less

important in life. Love, sex and marriage are contemporary to each other and without sex married life is not supposed to be happy. Thus marriage is a social recognition of sex between two persons.

Creative writers are often objective artists but the fact that the making of their genius is the outcome of the influences- hereditary or environmental- cannot be ignored. They consciously or unconsciously manifest their faith, aim and their compulsions. The formative influences in the making of the genius of Anita Desai need a microscopic vision. Anita Desai was born on 24th June, 1937. Growing as a blooming artist at the age of seventeen she started her career by writing prose, mainly fiction and these pieces of art were published in children's magazines. With diverse influence to fertilize her career as a writer of Indo-Anglian fiction, Anita's first novel *Cry, the Peacock* was published in 1963. Her second novel, *Voices in the City* was published after a couple of years. After obtaining a reputed place in the literary world she published her third novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* in 1971. *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is her fourth novel published in 1975. Her fifth novel *Fire on the Mountain* published in 1977. Lastly comes her mature fruit of fictional career- *In Custody* published in 1984. Thus, the impact of her knowledge in English classics and her knowledge of Hindu Scriptures especially *The Gita* make her prolific novelist of Indo-Anglian fiction gifted with feminine sensibility had raised English language to lyrical heights. Through her novels Anita Desai has tried to raise the question of Indian woman's unhappiness after her marriage. The question of woman's superiority or inferiority to man is irrelevant. In all her novels Desai describes the helplessness of millions of married women, the emotional world of women and their sensibility as well as psychology. Anita Desai describes the marriages in India and the various complexities involved with them.

Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* is the story of a hypersensitive young woman, Maya, who cannot get over the trauma of a prediction. An albino priest forecasts death for Maya or her husband, in the fourth year of their marriage. Hearing this prophecy she loses her peace of mind. And this is the reason that Gautama's long discourses on detachment appear to her life-negating. In a fit of insanity she kills him in order to find life for herself. So the philosophy of detachment is the main cause of the failure of their married life. In her second novel *Voices In The City* Desai tries to present a touching account of the life of Monisha, the married sister of Nirode. Monisha's miserable life is empty from within and without. She is married to Jiban and her relationship with him is marked "only by loneliness" because of the carelessness of Jiban, or their misunderstanding. Monisha tries to search for a real meaning of her life but at the end, she feels frustration. Monisha is always suffering from mental agony. The absence of love in her life, mal-adjustment with husband, loneliness- all these torture her mentally and make her shriek in agony.

Bye-Bye Blackbird is the third and different kind of novel by Anita Desai. Though the theme of loneliness is explored in this novel also yet the technique and the intention are different. Sarah, the heroine of the novel has withdrawn from the world of her childhood. She does not want to look back and in this respect she is different from Maya and Sita. The sense of nostalgia is become a narrative technique in this novel. Anita Desai depicts the theme of love and marriage

very beautifully and minutely in her fourth novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* It seems to be an epitome of an irresistible yearning for a purposeful life. The heroine of the novel Sita, is a highly sensitive girl. With the help of marriage one cannot revive the heart-beating troubles or pains or the happiest moments of other's life. Marriage needs more faith. Anita Desai studies the marital discords resulting from the conflict between two untouchable temperaments and two diametrically different ideas represented by Sita and her husband Raman. The conflict is going on from beginning to end between Sita and Raman. Thus Anita Desai has dwelt upon the problem of marriage, love and sex in her own way. She thinks that marriage alone does not provide a solution of life's tension and chaos. Mental satisfaction and happy married life means better understanding between husband and wife. But Sita and Raman fail to come to a harmonious whole.

In her fifth novel, *Fire on the Mountain* Anita Desai paints wonderfully observed pictures of Indian life, and an unforgettable portrait of old age. The novel explores the alienation of Nanda Kaul and her grand-daughter Raka. In comparison with other novels isolation plays an important role in this novel. That is why the heroine of this novel Nanda Kaul always likes loneliness after the death of her husband. The married life of Nanda Kaul is not life of the ordinary people because there are no emotions and feelings. Her relationship with her husband was nothing beyond the duties and obligations they had for each other. Anita Desai in the novel, *In Custody*, presents the thematic problem of love and marriage in a very exquisite manner, analyses the problem of Deven Sharma, an impoverished college lecturer. After his marriage with a sullen and dull wife, Deven sees a way to escape from the meanness and hopelessness of his daily life. Anita Desai deals with such common problem of post-marital life in this novel. Deven often feels as if his marriage has stood behind his imagination like a heavy weight. As regards her problems of love Anita Desai has tried her best in her novel *The Village By The Sea*. In this novel she deals with such a traditional community of fishermen. The story of the novel is woven around an alcoholic fisherman, his sick wife and their four children – Lila, Bela, Kamal and Hari. Anita Desai describes human relations, man's relation with woman, man's relation with God in the real village Thul, situated in the western coast of India.

Anita Desai's sixth novel, *Clear Light of the Day*, describes the emotional relations, the emotional reactions of two main characters- Bim and her younger sister Tara, who are haunted by the memories of the past. The novel highlights the theme of the effect of the remembrance of the past on the chief protagonists. The novel deals with the theme in relation to eternity.

Anita Desai's vision and art centers round her preoccupation with the individual and his inner world of sensibility- the chaos inside his mind. This is the keynote of her unique vision of the predicament of the individual is contemporary Indo-English fiction. This distinguishes her from other Indian women novelists. Anita Desai, among all women Indian-English novelists has discussed the art of fiction most comprehensively. She is not only well-versed in the theory and practice of the novel but also in vision and art. She analyses her creative self and explores the inner dilemmas and resources of her characters. Dealing with inner world, her fiction grapples

with the intangible realities of life. She delves deep into the inner most depth of human psyche and discovers the inner turmoil and the chaotic layer of mind. Desai looks into the inner world of reality and prefers it to the outer world of reality. She reiterates the difference between truth and reality. For her truth is synonymous of Art, not of reality, so her novels discover and convey the significance of things. The search for truth, she believes, consists in the life of the mind and the soul- the inner life. She captures the prismatic quality of life in her fiction. With this vision and art of Anita Desai, her novels deal with the problems of love and marriage along with other human problems.

Anita Desai's vision of life centers round the nucleus of internal states of mind of her characters. Therefore her images, symbolic and myths are written in the language of interior thoughts. All these images reveal the inner nature of her character with their obsessions, changing moods and psychic aberration. Her novels bear the testimony of this fact. All this illustrates her handling of situations and the problems of love and marriage, along with other human problems.

Dubey has scrupulously analyzed the works of Anita Desai, the book will prove to be a masterpiece of a critical comments on Anita Desai's fictional world.