

ABSTRACT

The Presentation of the Female in
Three Novels of
Anita Desai

Fazila Mohammed

In today's society, alienation and growing intellectual crisis are prevalent and this is more so in a developing nation like India where the woman serves as a symbol for the artist's dissatisfaction and disorientation with the status quo. The average Indian woman of today is a far cry from her Vedic ancestress, - characters like the Prakriti or the winsome Parvati.

The experience of the traditional Indian woman is explored in order to serve as a contrast to the emerging modern Indian woman in Anita Desai's later fiction. Some background work on feminism is done in order to substantiate the views which are revealed in the paper.

What is clearly revealed in this paper is a biological oppression of woman-as-female which is balanced by the economic oppression of woman as slave. All the options from girlhood through motherhood and manless life style are now open to her. The Indian woman seeks equality and liberation and it is difficult for the woman to reconcile these concepts with the reality of her life, bent down as she is by the weight of traditional Hindu values.

In the final analysis, Anita Desai portrays an anti-motherhood attitude in her later novels. As such one sees a de-romanticized image of the mother. Moreover, the Indian female character emerges resilient as she endures and prevails throughout the novels. Her inner strength and integrity help her to pave her own resolute way through an exploitative, sexually discriminatory world. In the Feminists' view, she serves as an inspiration- a ray of hope for equality and emancipation to the future Indian females.