



## **WOMEN'S VOICES: TRU'LIE' AUDIBLE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*It has been observed that the happiest things as well as sufferings and problems of women have become the culture of today's society. Everywhere and everyone sympathize the women in society and also criticize their lives as per their convenience. Many women writers give a soft corner to the existence of women, focus on their problems that may be due to men or other women and effectively describes the predicaments in which they struggle to live by overcoming their sufferings. The plight of a woman can be understood well and it is different from one woman to another. Some of them emerge as the successful writers, doctors, entrepreneurs, CEOs, etc. and the society tag them together as 'Women Empowerment'. But how many of them reached these positions with pain and sacrifices? Are they happy? If not, why? What and Who is responsible for their failures or successes? How far it is justified to blame men always for their sufferings? Can we say women are the first enemies of women? What is the role of a woman in protecting the other women? These are the questions that arise but are answered very rarely. This paper is an attempt to make women think about these questions and answer them in order to understand themselves for gaining recognition.*

Most of the writers discuss the plight of women from different aspects and through their writings make an attempt to bring awareness among the women in the society. They try to educate them and motivate them to live bravely. Yet the woman's life remains as it is. Only a fraction of women's cries are heard and only one or two are given justice. But the cries of hundred's of women are buried and they either leave this world in silence or adjust to live in chaos, sufferings and sacrifices.

In this paper it has been focused on women characters of Anita Desai's selected works. The purpose of discussing these characters in this paper is to broaden the thinking levels of the women living in the society and contribute for the better life and better society hereafter. This paper also intends to analyze whether the women are liberated in the true sense. Laws were formed to provide opportunities for women. Do the women have real freedom to avail these opportunities? Yet, we find social and cultural restrictions which prevent women from using



opportunities for their development even today and if they dare to, they have to struggle a lot. Only on hoardings and declarations we find statements proclaiming that women are empowered; but in true sense they are still oppressed.

The woman's life in the medieval period was completely dominated and oppressed. Woman was the sole property of her father, brother or husband and she does not have any will of her own. There was no recognition for women. Women were not allowed to write. Even if they write it was undervalued. The girl was considered as a burden. This sort of thinking resulted in social evils such as Child Marriage, Sati, Jauhar and restriction on girl education. The plight of women reached its peak and prayers spread in air hoping for some kind of help. With the call of few male social reformers women realized their misery and tried to protect their rights. Eventually some of them were educated and this changed the role of women in modern India. This period is considered as the period of liberation of women from religious, legal, economic, and sexual oppressions and their access to higher education. Women came up with high self-esteem levels, became more individualistic and confident; as a result they acquired high positions in various fields. Enormous increase in women's literacy rate resulted in high contribution to the Indian English Literature. Many women writers received awards for their marvelous works; they all focused on the realistic theme of women's feelings and her sufferings.

Many novels and articles were written on the emotional and physical sufferings of the women around the world. Most of those works ended abruptly showing women as suppressed as ever without any complaint. Women gained enormous strength to emancipate themselves and lead a life in their own terms. Unfortunately this couldn't happen at once especially in case of Indian women for they strongly believed in their culture, tradition, religious beliefs, relationships etc. The arise of Indian feminists and writers who either lived in the country or in the west had gradually pulled the nerves of Indian women to realize their plight and come out of the bonded shells to live their lives. They started feeling about how important their presence is in the world of their families. Yet they try to comprise for the sake of their loved ones. This situation is highly reflected in the novels of Anita Desai. She has portrayed the complexities between a man and woman relationship. She has tried to explore the psychological aspects of the women characters. She tried to direct the women irrespective of their stands in the society through her characters in a very effective way. The quintessential of the life of women could be understood better from the medieval age to modern age. This study also reflects the transformation of a woman from a scared, dependent, house wife to a secured, strong and independent woman who is successful and equates a man by all means and in all fields. But is this true in case of all women? If not, what are the reasons? Lets find out.

Women in Anita Desai's select works:



Anita Desai's works focus much on the problems and issues faced by the women in today's male dominated world. In some of her novels like 'Voices in the City'(1965) and 'Where Shall We Go This Summer?'(1975), 'Cry the Peacock'(1963) she has portrayed the complexities between a man and woman relationship. She has tried to explore the psychological aspects of the leading characters. Desai made her debut in 1963 with Cry, The Peacock. She received many awards and recognition for her works at both national and international level.

In her first novel 'Cry the Peacock' she portrays the leading woman character Maya as neurotic who in course of time losses the grip of her own individuality. Maya is a beautiful young, energetic, exuberant and industrious lady. She is the lovable daughter of the richest father. Maya is married to her father's friend who is very much senior to her age. He is weak, dry, dull, unimaginative, matter- of fact compared to Maya who is full of life and imagination. Maya expects much from her husband but she fails to live the life which she dreamt of with her husband. She couldn't have the sexual satisfaction with him. Both the characters are totally different. While Maya appreciated the beauty of nature and the beautiful things, her husband is indifferent to such things. Moreover he thinks her to be a sentimental fool. Like Maya the peacocks are the creatures of exotic wild. To get relief from the agony of their denied pleasure they are forced to kill snakes. 'Cry the Peacock' is a symbol of Maya's loneliness and consciousness that have been disturbed by nightmare and sub-human existence. Gradually her despair changes into guilt and insecurity feeling. This led her to become a neurotic. She had been ruled by factors like fear, guilt, jealousy and frustration. The main reason being the relationship of Maya with her husband. As a woman neither she can protest against it nor she can digest the same. Both Maya and her husband never shared anything in common and this spoiled their relationship. Not only Maya if we can see there are more Maya's in disguise around us. Maya has oppressed her sexual feelings and became a loyal wife. If she wanted she could have had extra marital relationship. The men had to realize the importance of his wife who has left everything behind including her parents just to live him. At least by reading Maya there should be awareness among those senseless insane husbands.

Anita Desai's second novel 'Clear Light of Day'( 1980) is a compassionate novel which revolves around the main character Bim and her siblings. This novel is about the vacillating relationships among the members of Das family who split in course of time. This novel reflects family scars and trials and tribulations of familial love. Through the main character the author focus on the emotional side of a woman who can sacrifice her life to take care of her handicapped brother, Baba and how well she can forgive and forget her brother and sister who have forgotten their responsibility towards their family. After her parents death she immediately filled the space of parental figure for her siblings. Her energy and capability,



along with her keen understanding, made herself to be peaceful and managed to convey that quality to others. She represents the old India: spiritual, peaceful, orthodox, sacrifice, and so on. Her character may be complex but one thing that stands out about her character is that change is not easy for her to accept. She never agrees that the world has changed and argued with Tara on this point. But towards the end she could realize that forgiving is the ultimate good quality a human can possess. Through the character of Tara, Bim's younger sister, the author reveals that the women are sensitive, care taking and generous. She has never been truly happy with her diplomat husband, Bakul and feels a lot of guilt that she left her sister to cope with the family after she had gone. She makes sincere efforts to reunite her sister and brother Raja at his daughter's wedding.

She is obsessed with the past which dumped her into intense suffering. She had been let down by her brother Raja in times of need. She lives a secluded life in the decaying Old Delhi, equal to a cemetery trying to swallow the bitter experience of the past. However, she succeeds in bridging the gap between the aspiration and reality. She eventually realizes that love alone redeems and keeps a human being sane and whole. It is this realization that saves her from disaster. Thus the novel ends on a note of reconciliation. Bim embodies Anita Desai's vision of the new Indian woman. She bravely accepts life of spinsterhood to lead her life in her own terms despite its limitations. She doesn't like to lead a life of submissive wife like her sister, Tara and she becomes a truly liberated woman.

It is pitiable to note that not only the husbands but their parents too; one being herself a woman discard women by all means and in all aspects. Desai's works strengthen the role of a woman as a wife, a daughter, a sister, a well wisher, a colleague, a doctor, etc. Women have tremendous energy to do justice for all these roles and yet they face others' ill practices towards them. Little education has been a helping hand to those women who tried to liberate themselves and lead an independent life.

Finally after a series of struggles women got freedom hopefully to live their lives on their own terms. They realized their rights and seek recognition in the society. They started taking decisions in the house and at the work place. They formed organizations to help themselves and other women and worked for their development. As a result they reached very high levels in their careers surpassing the men. The young girls are forging the more traditional lives to a westernized one at present. In the field of literature Indian women writers are contributing a lot. Their works are recognized all over the world. Nowadays people prefer reading the anglicized novels presented by the new age women writers.

The National Commission for Women was established in 1992 for the empowerment of women and to stop the abuse of women such as dowry and female foeticide and infanticide. In 1997, in response to the rape of a social worker in a village in Rajasthan, a panel of judges





of the Supreme Court of India moved to protect the dignity and safety of working women. The Supreme Court issued guidelines specifying norms and procedures to govern the behavior of employees and all others at work places, in both the Public and Private sectors to curb the social evil of sexual harassment of women.

Laws were formed to provide opportunities for women. But do the women have real freedom to avail these opportunities? In fact there should be laws which must create an environment where equality is enjoyed by all women equally. Indian Government too officially declared the freedom of women and the year 2001 as the year of women's empowerment. Yet we find social and cultural restrictions which prevent women from using opportunities for their development and even if they dare to they have to struggle a lot. Only on boards and declarations we find stating women as empowered but in true sense they are still oppressed. If she is successful in her career at home the husband will try to rule her and if she finds herself happy at home then her boss will be the villain in her career live. Where is the protection for women? If the laws are strictly implemented and the people realize good from bad then there will be real independence for women and we will never come across 'Nirbayas' everyday at some or the other place.

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- <http://www.preservearticles.com/201105116459/essay-on-emancipation-of-women.html>
- <http://azadindia.org/social-issues/Women-Empowerment.html>