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THERE IS A WOMAN AT THE BEGINNING OF ALL GREAT THINGS

Panchaksharayya

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Abstract:-The research scholar has carried out extensive research into Women Characters in Shashi Deshpande's and Anita Desai's Novels. Indian English Literature may be defined as literature written originally in English by Indians by birth, ancestry or nationality. Indian writing in English has a relatively recent history. It is only one and a half centuries old. Indian Writing in English has blossomed and matured and come to hold a place of its own in world literature. M.K.Naik observes: "Though its growth in later years far exceeded that of most other forms, fiction was actually the last to arrive on the Indian English literary scene."

Keywords:woman, Anita Desai's Novels, English Literature.

INTRODUCTION:

Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English Literature. The beginning of Indian English fiction is marked by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Rajmohan's Wife (1864). The Bengali writers mainly dominated the period from 1864 to 1900. Widely known novelists of this period are Toru Dutt, Lal Behari Dey, K. Charkavarti, Kamala Sathianandhan, Behramji Malabari, A.P.Dutta and others. Toru Dutt's maiden romance Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden, published in 1879, is an autobiographical novel. Lal Behari Dey's Bengal Peasant Life or History of a Bengal Raiyat (1880), the best Indian English novel written in latter half of the nineteenth century, is a realistic novel. Though their works are immature, they tried their best to treat contemporary issues. Indian English fiction has taken many strides forward ever since it started. The pioneers Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya laid the foundations of narrative. Some of these pioneers have derived inspiration from the older narrative methods combining them with their own methods.

In the pre-independence era, novels like Rabindranath Tagore's The Wreck and Gora, Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable and Coolie, R.K.Narayan's Swami and Friends and The Bachelor of Arts, Raja Rao's Kanthapura and other works gave firm footing to the Indian English fiction. Satish Kumar says

During this era the toddling Indian English novel, in spite of many hindrances and handicaps, has learnt to stand firmly on its legs. A conscious and artistic pattern has evolved itself. The novel has become a great literary force, a powerful medium for creating social and national awareness and for suggesting ways of changing society.

The Indian English fiction attains maturity, full flowering and wide acclaim in the post-independent era. The novels experience a change in their themes. The themes of current happenings, cross cultural conflict, rural events and the traumatic experiences are seen in the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya, Nirad C. Chaudhri, Kushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markandaya, Arun Joshi, Attia Hussain, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sagal, Nargis Dalal, Vimala Raina, Veena Paintal and Bharati Mukherjee.

In 1980s, yet another breed of Indian fictionists in English emerged. It included Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Deshpande, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Sudhir Kakkar, Dina Mehta and Arundhati Roy. Apart from these, some lesser writers have also emerged on the contemporary scene such as Shiv K. Kumar, Saros Cowasjee, Vasant A. Shahane, K.V.Subbaram and Ranga Rao. Writing about the recent fiction, Prof. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar says, "The

future of Indian fiction has given ample evidence of vitality, variety, humanity and artistic integrity.” (Radhakrishnan Anita Desai has added a new dimension to the Indian English fiction. She was born in the year 1937 in Mussoorie, a hill station near Dehra Dun in northern India. Her father D.N.Mazumdar was a Bengali entrepreneur and her mother Toni Nime hailed from Germany. They married when it was still rare for an Indian to wed a European woman. Anita Desai was the youngest of three sisters with an elder brother. Growing up, Anita Desai spoke German at home and Hindi to friends and neighbours.

She first learned English when she went to school. It was the language in which she first learned to read and write, and so it became her literary language. She began to write in English at the age of seven. She was educated in Delhi at Queen Mary’s Higher Secondary School and Miranda House, Delhi University, where she received in 1957 a B.A. in English Literature. In the year 1958 she married Ashvin Desai, a businessman. They had two sons and two daughters – Rahul, Tani, Arjun and Kiran. Anita Desai’s youngest daughter Kiran Desai has followed her mother into print. In the year 2006, Kiran Desai won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction for her second book *The Inheritance of Loss*. She was the youngest person to win the prestigious award.

Anita Desai left India at the age of forty-five. When she finally ventured abroad, it was to America. Two of her children went to study in the United States and she felt the need to be with them, to provide them with a home. Anita Desai duly took up teaching jobs, first in Massachusetts, then in the city of Boston. She has taught writing at Girton College and Smith College in England and at Mount Holyoke College in the United States.

She is a professor of writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is a member of the Advisory Board for English of the National Academy of Letters in Delhi and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in London. Anita Desai currently shuttles between Boston, Mexico, England and Delhi.

The literary career of Anita Desai started with short stories. Later her interest was not confined within the four walls of short stories. She took equal pleasure in trying essays, articles and reviews. Anita Desai, the short story writer, emerged as a promising novelist on the Indian literary horizon in 1963. The literary world of Anita Desai is vast, crowded with characters from various fields of life. Her experiences and minute observation make her novels vivacious, lively and glorious. Anita Desai says,

Literature has seemed to me more interesting, more significant and overwhelming than the real world. Later, other writers meant more to me. In my twenties when I first began to work seriously and consciously on my novels, it was D.H.Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and Henry James that influenced me more strongly.

As a novelist Anita Desai made her debut in 1963 with *Cry, The Peacock*. Her novels include *Cry, The Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Cat on a Houseboat* (1976), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner’s Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), and *The Zigzag Way* (2004). Her short story collections include *Games at Twilight and other stories* (1978), and *Diamond Dust and other stories*. (2000).

Anita Desai has received numerous awards. In 1978, she won the Sahitya Akademi Award for *Fire on the Mountain*. In 1979, her novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* won the Federation of Indian Publishers and Author’s Guild of India Award for Excellence in Writing. In 1983, Anita Desai received the Guardian Award for Children’s Fiction for her novel *The Village by the Sea*. In 1990 she received the national honour of Padma Shri, given by the government of India for service to the arts.

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