

Summary

The thesis highlights the crucial aspect quest for liberty in the novels. In the introductory chapter Desai’s concern for psychic life of her character is dealt in detail. Anita Desai stands apart from other female Indian writers due to her involvement with the life of young men and women in Indian cities. She discards all social concerns and asserts that she is interested in individual and not in social issues. She is concerned with psychic life of her characters. Her concern is the ‘why’ and the wherefore of the external action rather than the action itself. Her forte is the exploration of mind and soul and not the body. While dealing with the psychic problems of her characters she finds longing for her liberty in them.

For her depth is interesting. She is not interested in external world. Desai stands apart from other women novelists for she throws light on the inner mental conflict which her character undergo. Narrating the mental agony of a very complex dimension there is forceful yearning for liberty in character’s life. The men and women in her novels are hunted by the desire to attain liberty from the ordinary routine of duties, family responsibilities and social obligations. Anita
Desai’s chief concern seems to be the quest for liberty, which her characters crave for. She has successfully portrayed this aspect in nearly all her novels. There is no plan, no place, nothing to keep them at peace. Their main concern is the persistent search for liberty. Their peculiar childhood, dissatisfying adolescence and unfulfilling middle years make them long for liberty. They search for full liberty within their given condition and situation. Maya, Monisha, Nanda Kaul, Nirode, Sita, Deven, Arun all fail to accept their limitations. They are always in search of a more authentic existence than what is provided to them. They say the great “No”.

Her maiden novel **Cry the Peacock** evinces Maya’s quest for liberty from reality, loneliness & fear of death, which do not let her to be at peace with herself. In order to assert liberty from present turmoil she takes the help of route to go back to her childhood. Thirst for liberty haunts her so much that she becomes aggressive to such an extreme point that she takes the most unusual and ghastly step of doing away with her husband which is rarely taken by a female.
When the characters in the novels are unable to associate themselves with the outer world in which they survive they get engaged in some methods to attain liberty from it.

In **Voices in the City** Nirode snaps his relationship with people and with ideas to achieve liberty. To assert liberty from routine he wants to destroy the chaotic world. Monisha is overpowered by self-destructive tendency and commits suicide to attain liberty from captivity in her husband’s house.

Sita in **Where Shall We Go This Summer?**, Bim in **Clear Light of the Day** and Deven in **In Custody** rise above despair and make a heroic attempt to come back and accept life as it is.

Uma in **Fasting, Feasting** turns to aggression and tries to drown herself to achieve liberty from the boundary of household.

Some characters try to run away from the outside world, duties and responsibilities to secure liberty. Sita, Nanda Kaul, Deven and Matteo try to retire from outside world to attain their ends.

Desai portrays her character’s keen struggle to acquire liberty. All order is gone out of their life. Almost all the characters find it difficult to cope with the given circumstances and situations which
pose a grave threat to their existence. Disgruntled they show their hatred, anger and hostility towards those who make their life uneasy and pose a threat to their desire of individual liberty.

The theme of quest for liberty bound to find recurrence in the novels of Anita Desai for almost all major characters, who form the pivot of novel and around whom the whole story of the novel revolves, whether male of female struggle hard to attain liberty by all means. All the characters endeavour to attain liberty in their own way for the concept of liberty presupposes struggle.

In order to understand the recurrence of liberty in the novels of Anita Desai importance of freedom cannot be ignored. Generally freedom is possessed by all for its an ability to act in accordance with universal values. But in Desai’s novels, it is not possessed by females in this patriarchal society. Due to the absence of freedom on the part of few female characters liberty is not attained. Freedom is crucial aspect in attaining liberty in Desai’s novels for it plays role of a supportive agent in attaining liberty. In novels those Characters do not secure liberty who are not in possession of freedom of thinking, freedom of acting and freedom of will.
Freedom is explicitly presented as the supportive agent in the quest for liberty. Nearly all major characters secure aid of freedom in asserting liberty.

A reflection of the situation of women in the male dominated world is also found in the novels of Desai. Being females they are represented incapable of reaching out to the wider world. Anita Desai portrays females’ desire of liberty from social and traditional bondages in the patriarchal society in her novels. She denies a narrow feminist approach. She herself asserts that she writes about women for she knows and understands them best.

Females are represented incapable of reaching out to the wider world in her novels. The liberty, which females desire to secure, eludes them for they are granted limited freedom. Thought of liberty haunts them so much that they are led to murder and self-immolation.

Maya in *Cry the Peacock* murders her husband to get liberty from marital bondage.

In *Voices in the City* Monisha commits suicide to attain liberty from the repressive condition of woman in patriarchal society.

In almost all the novels females are portrayed in quest for liberty
in a meticulous world dominated by men, who in the guise of a father or a husband pose a constant threat to their integrity.

The novels of Anita Desai are not meant to explain theories of psychology, but they reveal her involvement for the upliftment of women who are seen as worst sufferer due to their marital discord. In almost all works, women are depicted in quest for liberty in a meticulous world, dominated by men, who in the guise of a father, a brother, a husband presents a constant threat to their integrity. In order to attain liberty these female characters have reacted sometimes violently and sometimes silently.

Anita Desai has added a new dimension to her fiction by taking up the cause of the neglected class (women of society). She presents in her novels those women characters who find it very difficult to survive in the male dominated world. Desai presents women’s pursuit for liberty from oppression at every level. In her novels she highlights the miserable plight of women tortured by a humiliating sense of neglect in the male dominated society.

In the novels of women are presented in quest for liberty for they are irritated with the bourgeois values in society. Women are not
treated at par with men hence they yearn for liberty in order to receive privileged treatment. Women characters are burdened with the awareness of their femininity hence they struggle to escape from the rigid mould. Women seek liberty through actions that are finally considered to be male prerogatives. An increasing awareness of injustice done to them slowly made women raise their voice for liberty.

Women meet a dead end whatever road they may take to assert liberty. Their quest becomes a circular journey for them, always bringing back to the point from where they begin it.

The most distinctive feature of Anita Desai’s fiction is the portrayal of the interior aspect of life. She turns her eyes inward and writes about the flickering psychic reactions of her characters. She presents a uniquely Indian sensibility. Her predominant concern is not with social issues but individual psyche of females. She explores the complexities and intricacies of female psyche with rare insight. She plunges into the depth and brings on surface the hidden contours of human psyche.

Female psyche plays crucial role in bringing on surface feminine quest for liberty in almost all novels. Females’ psychic associations
with birds convey their inner longing for liberty. Maya, Monisha, Sita and Uma all seek liberty from traditional bondage in which a woman is caught in male-dominated society. With the help of their psychic turmoil Desai brings on the surface their desire for liberty.

Predominantly interested in exploring the psychic depth of her female characters Desai may be said to be doing something unique among the contemporary Indo–Anglian novelists. With the aid of feminine psyche she has depicted quest for liberty as a recurring theme in almost all of her novels.

Desai has an innate ability to keep into the inner recesses of the psyche of her character in general and females in particular. She has contributed to the growth of Indian fiction in English by delineating psychic aspect of her female characters.

Judging minutely this most important aspect, it becomes crystal clear that quest for liberty forms the backbone of her novels. The novelist creates a rich galaxy of most important part of society, which has not been hitherto given properly by other Indo – Anglian novelist. Being from the same genre she seems to be most suited for championing the cause of nucleus of the family.
She seems to shift the focus from male to female. This endeavour on the part of Desai will make a long lasting impact on society in general and the upliftment of women in particular.

One can gauge the importance of her being a novelist and her novels in the light of this impartment dimension.