

# Impact of Globalization on Indian Women in Anita Desai's *Fasting & Feasting*

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**Abstract:** Westernization has been the by-product of globalization and has an impact on the Indian way of life. It has out-rooted the traditional Indian culture and at which western impact in India is astonishing. As the Indian youth has become more promiscuous, married couples cheat on each other. Earlier, this would bring a very strong reaction from society but now such cases are seen every day. Society has learnt to accept these situations as usual. Since the impact of globalization is more we see more bad frights than good ones.

This paper seeks to outline the impact of globalization in Anita Desai's novels especially in her latest stunning novel *Fasting & Feasting*. It is short-listed for the 1999 Booker Prize. It looks at an Indian family despite Western influence bound by Eastern traditions. Desai's title implies in the first part of the novel, set in India through the character Uma, the eldest of three children. She is at home and her marriage ended in humiliation and disaster. In reality, Desai is so adept at portraying Americans through Indian eyes. The impact of globalization moves the novel from traditional Indian household to an American culture by portraying their customs, discipline and displacement that throws up true influence on Indian culture.

**Keywords:** *Globalization, Western Influence, Oppression, Relationship, Cultural Shock*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indian Culture is one of the oldest and richest cultures. Today a serious threat has on Indian Culture due to western influence. Western Culture is establishing its strong base in India and gradually it is wiping the Indian Culture. It has greatly affected our traditions, customs, family relations, respect and love for others. The basic objective of this paper is to look at the changing affects of globalization in Indian society. It focuses on the impact of globalization on the lives of the people in India. It has positive and negative implications in a male dominated society. Indian women suffer immensely and are responsible for baring children. Most of them are uneducated. Women are powerless and are mistreated inside and outside home. Anita Desai clearly projects the condition of women in one of her novels *Fasting, Feasting*.

## 2. FASTING, FEASTING

*Fasting, Feasting* presents the story of a small family in which MamaPapa are central figures with their three children. This tale presents as it exists in the society like thousands of such families with hope, fear, happiness and sorrow. Desai depicts the condition of women, intricate relationship in India and of women in America.

It tells an exploration of the Indian's attitude, the condition of women, marriage system and two cultures. It revolves around the issue of oppression, especially for the women characters. The women are not allowed with authentic voices in their homes or in their societies. It brings out the layers of emotions that woman ought to feel which Anita Desai projects through the character of Uma, throughout the novel. Uma is the main character in the novel that represents typical women of Indian society. She is portrayed as a pretty girl who is clumsy, slow, and not academically inclined. But she has an earnest desire to learn, despite her weakness. Her joy and hope is destroyed. In Indian custom girls are raised to be married and boys are to be educated. Uma is like a virtual slave in her own house and an outcast in the society due to her marital status, premise which ultimately destroys spirit and opportunities in her life.

The novel is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the life of MamaPapa living a life in their quiet house with their three children. Uma, the eldest daughter, turns out to be dullest of all. She is neither pretty nor educated. She is not smart as her younger sister Aruna. She is in her teens when her youngest brother Arun is born. Her parents stopped her from continuing her convent education so that she would take care of the newborn child.

Mama actively responds to matrimonial advertisements in the newspapers; but most people reply that they are looking for someone younger or more beautiful than Uma. After many rejections the family is disheartened about Uma's prospects for marriage. Unfortunately, two matches have broken for her. Her parents are cheated by giving a sum of one lakh rupees to one match in advance towards dowry. After taking dowry, they break the engagement and refuse to return money. Again after so many days of search, another marriage proposal has come to Uma that a man is interested in Uma. The prospective bridegroom is older, works in the pharmaceutical industry. Uma is married to Harish a man with four children who was married earlier. MamaPapa are cheated by them miserably, stamping her unlucky for marriage. Uma's life is miserable and is full of frustration and despair. She is a woman who becomes the victim of a patriarchal society where women are not allowed to hold their own. As her marriage fails and she cannot escape from the prison that is her home.

Anita Desai tells about mother daughter relationship in a new light. The relationship is quite unique. Generally in India the bond between mother and daughter is very intimate. Mothers take care of their children a lot. But in this novel the relationship is not so friendly. Mama always instructs Uma to look after the house hold work and engages her to look after her new born baby boy. She is forced to take-up the role of the mother when Arun is born and the mother enjoys life by attending parties, weddings. She escapes her duty of taking care of her child, leaving him safely in the hands of her elder daughter Uma. She is forced to leave her studies. But Uma needs a spiritual mother who takes care for her needs and interests. Mother has to understand her critical situation and should give her moral support like several other Indian mothers do. Because mothers influence on their daughters is strong in the lives and they have the power to change their daughter's personality.

MamaPapa go for any social meetings or at the club. Westerners have so many get-togethers and they give prior importance to fun and enjoyment than their children. Uma's

parents behave like westerners and they don't feel more responsible for their children. This clearly shows the impact of globalization on Indian culture.

Uma's world suddenly brightens one day when her adventurous cousin Ramu, visits her house. Ramu takes Uma to dinner at the Carlton Hotel, the finest restaurant in town.

***"The best dinner we can get in this city. Isn't there a hotel, with a bar?" Pg 49***

Uma, who is not accustomed to drinking alcohol, enjoys the shandy that Ramu orders. They laugh and enjoy the evening together until the hotel band leaves and the dining room lights are shut off. They forget their culture. They enjoy in music, dancing and taking shandy.

***"She takes another sip of shandy Ramu has insisted she drink and hiccups like a drunkard in a farce about fallen women."Pg. 51***

Papa and Mama are waiting angrily for Uma's arrival. Uma is sent to her room in shame for her behavior this evening. This is one of the situations where Anita Desai portrays in this novel which deteriorates the Indian culture with the impact of globalization.

Today there is lot of craze to study in abroad. Most of the Indian students are educating in foreign Universities. Brain Drain is one of the serious threats that India is facing. Anita Desai shows that due to globalization the impact of foreign education in India is more and it reflects in this novel. Arun's father named Papa sends his son to America to complete his degree.

The second part of the novel deals with Arun, the main protagonist of "*Feasting*". According to Indian tradition Arun is a boy so he must receive "the best" in all respects, whether he wants it or not. He is the only son of MamaPapa who is sent for America for his further studies just to fulfill the wishes and expectations of his parents. Since the parents MamaPapa cannot meet all the needs of their son in abroad, he has to live with Mrs. Patton's house. Arun has had peculiar experiences by living with American family with a sense of bewilderment and strangeness. Across the world, he is confused by American college life, especially the customs of Pattons, with whom he spends his life in America. In India most of the families unite and all of them have great importance. Family's support and their involvement at the times of sorrow and happy occasions is one of the Indian traditions. The happy and sad occasions are marked with belief and purpose. These elements seem to be sorely lacking in the Patton household in America.

Western culture reflects in India. As westerners give more importance to fun, enjoyment rather than giving importance to children, Anita Desai mirrors clearly in her novel. On an evening when Mama and Papa have gone out to play cards, Uma finds her in a rare moment alone in the house.

Today's generation has very little knowledge about their culture, traditions & their roots. This is not the fault of children but it is the mistake of their parents who enlightens their children by sending them abroad and making them to forget about the roots their rich cultural heritage.

Women in the urban settings become more independent and self-sufficient. Traditional

Indian women stay at home take care of domestic needs of their children. Now most of the Indian women are setting out for living.

Globalization has created certain needs based on capitalist sentiments. Indian families desire more household income to afford their living and be more independent. Women work and contribute to the household income to afford a certain lifestyle. It also has the power to uproot the traditional views towards women. In the name of modernization and Globalization pretends to uplift people who are really exploited.

Desai flawlessly paints a picture of difference between an under-privileged Indian girl and her much-loved brother, laden with countless privileges. It is a remedy for those suffers from cultural shock since it creates a medium for tolerance. It is a story of a family that seeks to exist against the backdrop of the Indian society with all its common and universal elements.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Globalization has opened up broader communication lines and brought together different worldwide organizations.

This provides opportunities for men and women, which promotes equality between the sexes for which Indian women have been struggling in their lives. There is no harm in taking good things from western but it does not mean that we should completely adopt and misrepresent our identity. To some extent it is fine but our culture has to be valued and respected.

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