

**GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN INDIA AND THE WEST: A READING OF
ANITA DESAI'S NOVEL FASTING FEASTING**

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Bodoland University, Kokrajhar

Submitted by: Jaya Mazumdar

Roll No: PGENG408A22019

Registration No: 013607/2022-2023

Supervisor: Dr. Manab Medhi

Department of English

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I declare that this dissertation “Gender discrimination in India and the West: A reading of Anita Desai’s novel Fasting Feasting,” is my own work conducted under the supervision of Dr Manab Medhi.

I also declare that this work is not a part of any other work that has been submitted anywhere for any degree by this university or other university. The authors have been given proper credits.

Signature of the candidate

Jaya Mazumdar

Certificate

Dr Manab Medhi

Dept of English

Bodoland University

Kokrajhar, 783370

I hereby certify that the dissertation “Gender discrimination in India and the West: A Reading of Anita Desai’s novel Fasting Feasting” was prepared by Jaya Mazumdar, Roll no. PGENG408A22019, for the fulfilment of the M.A course of the Bodoland University.

She has done this work under my supervision and my guidance.

Dr Manab Medhi

Supervisor

Signature of HOD

Department of English

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Abstract:

Gender discrimination is a social occurrence where differences are socially constructed on the basis of gender. In this patriarchal society men are considered to be superior to women. Many feminist theorists interpret the phenomena in their various ways. The phenomena have been affecting both India and the west societies. In this different culture women are deprived of social opportunities as we can see in Anita Desai's novel *Fasting Feasting* through the two different family experiences. The study is an attempt to compare India with the west. The study also tries to explore the idea of feminism. The novel explores the various gender inequalities between man and women through the all male and female characters in the story. It depicts the same condition of two different Indian and American families in a different way. Both Indian and American families are male dominated. However the rules and systems of gender discrimination of Indian family differ from the ones in American family. As a result both the differences impact on women life. The novel reflects all the ideas through the character of Uma. Mrs. Patton, Melanie, Mira masi , Aruna, Mama and Anamika all these women are the sufferer and they all are born in a world which does not give respect women as individuals. The main purpose of the dissertation is to explore gender discrimination in India and the west. The novel highlights the loopholes of the Indian and west culture, history and also depicts the picture how women suffered physically and mentally in male centred society. This project explores Anita Desai's way of depiction of gender issues in the both societies through the stream of consciousness of Uma, as long as the complexities of man women relationships.

Keyword: Feminism, Patriarchy, culture, Gender discrimination, Indian and American society

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Gender discrimination is a prevalent issue as per the historical overview. India and the West have traditionally been considered as a patriarchal society. In literal meaning the role of the fathers, where power and decisions are always controlled by men. We can consider women are mainly victims in these societies. Women have been denied property rights, education rights, political rights, and property rights based on their gender. An example, according to wikipedia in United States women were not allowed to vote until 1920, and it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that women began to achieve greater social and economic equality. But still in many parts of the world, gender discrimination is a prevailing issue.

We can know from the history women's position in society is always subordinate to men. In many places we have seen women are inferior to men. Women are told to do household responsibilities and they are fully restricted to participating in public life. Also they are deprived from their own rights as property, education, and office social works and so on. In a very early age, family and society force to do marry the girl. A birth of female child in the family, it was not easy in the earlier times, because they are the burden for a house. Birth of girl child in a family implies the pressure and distress to the parents, because they have to pay a lot of dowry in her marriage to the bridegroom's family. There is a belief that some preference is rooted for male child in the family. The all properties of a family were given to the male members in a house through the traditional role.

There have some movement, while many feminist writers and critics fought for women's equal position and rights like liberation, identity and so on. "The first wave of feminism" begins and spread out the western world in the late 19th and early 20th century. The great and prominent feminist writers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf fought to traditional gender roles and earn some equal rights of women. "A Vindication of Rights of Women" and "A Room of One's Own," both their writings had inspired many women and got power to them for their voting rights and some equal opportunities. "The second wave of feminism" had started from 1960s and 1970s and focused on women emancipation, discrimination, feminine sexuality and equality of works. Some liberal feminist critics as Betty Freidan, Simon de Beauvoir and Kate Millet during the movement had tried to raise their voice through writings and improved the lives of women's in every side.

"It was mainly after the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s that the contemporary feminist ideology evolved and the female voice was heard with special heed. The focus of the literary studies was shifted to women's writing with a view to re-reading, revisioning and reinterpretation it in the light of long-existing gender bias and sexual politics in history, culture, society, family, language and literature."(Singh, Feminism, 12)

After the movement, the aim was to develop women's position and rereading the ideologies regarded women and its progress in the every field. In 1963, the publication of the book, "The Feminine Mystique" written by Betty Friedan reflects

the second wave of the American feminist movement. In her books she talks about the traditional roles given to women in 1950s and 1960s, she wants women to be independent. According to her, women they should live an individual life and follow their interests.

The third wave of feminism movement had started from the year in 1990s to 2010s, at that time there was increasing the identities of individuals. Gradually they had started to speak for their rights and identities. Through these movements women's position in society were going to progress from the curse of marginality to the earlier society. But still women are deprived to make their identity for living an independent life. Still there has the demand for women's career and rights. They even do not get the equal rights like men.

“In the earlier novels, women rebelled against major social issues like child marriage, denial of education to girls, and atrocities suffered by a woman in her husband's house. In contemporary novels, there is more depth and complexity in the choice and treatment of women. Just as modern society is complex, so are the women. In both periods, women characters have been shown to be searching for identity, for self- awareness.”(Singh, 153)

In this Research study we are going to explore the aspects of inequality which Anita Desai also depicted in her novel about the sufferings and struggles of women by searching their rights. *Fasting Feasting* is a novel written by Anita Desai that explores

the lives of two different cultured families. It contrasts the experiences of the male and female characters in a society, first of all the Indian family's son who went to the United States and the daughter who remains in India talks about the inequalities between men and women. It highlights the cultural exceptions and gender roles as well as the social norms and limitations over the individual lives. Desai characterized them as a sufferer, starving to their dreams and imaginations and as a sensitive. Sense of alienation is a strongest element of her novel to describe the women characters. We can observe Uma and her sisters were growing up in a traditional Indian household where they never get any respect from the family members. Uma's character highlights the prevalent gender discrimination in India and reflects the challenges and inequalities face by girls such as education, employment and social exceptions. The portrayal of the other characters verifies the strong patriarchal norms in India and America. In society women have a limited right to making independent choices. Women are expected to follow to societal rules dedicated by males on them. The novel portrays differential aspects between men and women through the two different families. It also emphasizes the deeply rooted gender biases where Traditional roles and exceptions are often favoured to men. The second part of the novel also gives an idea of gender inequalities of West countries through the character of Mrs Patton and Melanie. There has also some similarities and differences like India regarded to gender discrimination.

Anita Desai is one of the prominent Indian women writer, poet, novelist, short story writer and so on. Basically she focuses on women's life. The themes he uses in her works such as patriarchy, resistance, gender inequality, marginalised women, and

hegemony of males, mother-daughter relationship, patriarchal ideology, oppressiveness, submissive nature and conflicts experienced by women. Those themes related novels are “Cry the Peacock” and “Voices of the City” talks about Identity. Fasting Feasting also depicts the above mention themes which will help in this research study to elaborate the idea of gender discrimination. She presented the women characters in a typical way to show the marginalization and the inner feelings of women.

We can consider that women are mainly victims since the down of civilization. Women are objects of desire for men and society as well as the vulnerable members to them. We all know that gender discrimination in all over the world indeed a significant issue that requires some efforts to promote equality. Anita Desai also gives a feminist view in the novel through the women character. Women provide care, supports, helps in crisis and so many essential things to a family and their members but the society fails to give respects and equalities as men got the opportunities. In this patriarchal society women are women’s are the product who fulfils the needs of men and the society.

There are a huge number of feminist writers in contemporary world that have portrayed the image of gender inequality in their writings. Women characters in their fictions and dramas are portrayed as subordinate and stuck between traditional hegemonies. We can see through their characters, many women are dominated by their husband in marriage life, child in parental life and in the last stage of their life in our society. Those are the representative characters of marginalised women of our society. They became the victims under the male dominance society and ruin their

future. The cultural norms and limitations have ruined the lives of women. A small girl child, young child, new born babies, wife, mothers, sisters and widows are the equal sufferer in a society. The families destroy their girl's future by early marriage in early ages. Society does not prefer women to be independent, self-sufficient and to create identity. Also women can't avoid the traditional rules and regulations including marriage and in every field of life. Women can not make a separate free life in the society. They are bound with the stereotypical feminine roles. The stereotypical picture of women dissipate, helpless, speak less, submissive and very patient in the novel has shown by some feminist writers.

In English literature many prominent feminist theorists, writers have discussed the topic of gender discrimination in their works. There have some Indian and Western feminist writers they brings the idea to the world. Their contribution influences the women to think for identity, freedom and self dependent. But although there have some women issues related to gender discrimination. Similarly in my selected novel by Anita Desai's *Fasting Feasting* presents the complexities and challenges of women through the both part of the novel. India has a deep rooted patriarchal society compared to the West. Traditional and cultural norms of the West countries are different to India. Even though, many western feminist theorists and writers have depicted the idea of gender discrimination in their works. Those countries are very rich in the economic field and also they have civilized people more than India. Their ideas and the thoughts are not similar to Indian society. Their laws also very powerful and shows equality, although there has a barrier between women and their and their dreams. So as a marginalized, they have to suffer their life through the norms given to them by society.

In this research study we are going to discover the issues of gender discrimination. To make my argument strong and to comments on inequalities, I choose the novel *Fasting Feasting* written by the women writer named Anita Desai. She depicts the same issues related to gender discrimination through her works. She tries to give a critical image of gender discrimination to the readers. The novel also talks about women subordination and marginality in a society. Desai depicts the two different family pictures to describe gender discriminations. There are different gender experiences for men and women of the two different cultured families. But in every field of life women are the most sufferers to two the different cultured families. This study is an attempt to discover the gender inequalities between men and women, where I have include so many feminist writers who talked about gender discrimination and for the freedom of women. There are also so many research scholars, they presents about the idea of gender discrimination through their thesis, journals, articles, research papers and some books. I have included their ideas to give a brief description of gender discrimination in this dissertation. The works of those writers will help me to analyse my research study and will give a very strong image of women inferiority. We all know that gender discrimination is a very critical issue in the society. It was also a prevalent issue in the early ages but still there is the presence of gender inequality in modern society.

1.2 Literature Review

This research study has explored the gender discrimination in India and the West in Anita Desai's novel *Fasting Feasting*. The novel *Fasting Feasting* depicts the inequalities and the sufferings face by the women in the male cantered society. In my research study I have also explored the idea of feminism and women's struggle for their identity. Also there we have so many critics, essayists, writers and the other scholars who have talked about the similar concept and the theory in their various papers, articles, journal and books. Khairunnisa has published an article entitled "Gendered experiences in Indian and American family as portrayed in Anita Desai's *Fasting Feasting*," in this article she discusses how women and men face different difficulties in a society for their gender, specially the struggles of women's. She also explored the gender norms and limitations of two different cultured families through the male and female characters in Anita Desai's novel. Karam Fazal, Nawaz Rab Khan and Aziz Ahamad have published an article named "An Analytical Study of Gender Discrimination in Anita Desai's *Fasting Feasting*." The article deals with the aspects of gender inequalities and the patriarchal society. It gives a brief description of the typical women characters and their marginality depicted in Anita Desai's novel. Through the women characters they talked about the societal roles those are constructed for women. Firdusa Begum also presented an article entitled "Traditional and Gender in Anita Desai's *Fasting Feasting*" in her paper, she talks about traditional gender role and the sufferings of women's in male cantered society. It deals with the identity and subjugation on women. Priyanka Mahajan's synopsis "Emergence of New Women: A new feminism approach in the select novels of Mahasweta Devi, Manju Kapoor, Rupa Bajwa, and Shubha dee,"(2017) in this paper she depicts the changing of women through the deep rooted patriarchal norms and their struggles.

Ruchi Panday presents an article, “Patriarchy and Resistance in Anita Desai’s Fasting Feasting,” in this paper she talks about the strong patriarchal norms and the sufferings of women in society, she also presents the aspects related to gender discrimination as dowry, young marriage, bore of a girl child, restriction on study and eating, parental life etc. Tamanna’s article named, “Maya’s Materialistic longings Resulting in Alienation and Frustration: A Feminist Reading of Anita Desai’s Cry The Peacock,” here this paper focuses on the inner trauma and sufferings of a female character, fear, depression and frustrated life as demonstrated in the character of Maya. Dr. Rupali Hiwarkar presents an article, “Gender inequality in selected novels of Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai: A Study,” also depicts the feminine issues and women’s insecurities and struggles in society. Monika Duggal and Gunjan Agarwal’s article, “Gender discrimination in the novels of Anita Desai & Githa Hariharan,” says about the differences between men and women is a huge issue in society. Also presents misunderstand of creating gender inequalities. Prastyowati: The Study of Gender inequality Found in Ellis’s novel “ The Breadwinner,” and Dr. Om Prakash Ratnakar’s article, “ Gender discrimination in Mahesh Dattani’s Tara: A Critical Analysis,” presents the same aspects of gender inequality. Tara the women character in Dattani’s novel reflects the neglecting act by her parents and bothering for her brother.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

It is a research study on the topic of “Gender discrimination in India and the West: A reading of Anita Desai’s Novel *fasting Feasting*. This research is an attempt to discover the presence of gender inequality. It gives a brief discussion to the marginality of women emancipation as well as a feminist overview. The objective of this study is to discover women’s sufferings and humiliation under male chauvinism through the character of Uma, and how they all are discriminated by their family and society.

This dissertation will try to study about identity and individuality. This study will also try to show the relation between men and women as well as the understanding of gender roles, feminism and the impact on women. It’s including in education as a modern tool can be provide equality to men and women and to their emancipation.

1.4 Research Methodology

To analysing the research methodology on the topic “Gender Discrimination in India and the West: A Reading of Anita Desai’s Novel Fasting Feasting. My main aim in this research study is to explore women’s conditions, attitudes, social phenomena and to explore gender inequalities through the selected novels.

To support my argument in the dissertation I have referred some liberal feminist theory for helping me to analyse how I have portrait women’s conditions, identities, inequalities, relationship between men and women, domination in patriarchal society and also the consequences of those types of struggles. I have included its criticism from the great works of Betty Freidan’s book. Also there are other critics like Simon De Beauvoir, Kate Millet, Marry Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf and others, who have also offered their various criticism of feminism.

The main data has been used to the study of the dissertation by analysing the novel through a critical reading to identify the inequality between men and women and their hazard complexities. The other sources for the study as books, journals, articles and essays have been used to support the description of the primary data.

CHAPTER 2: Gender and gender discrimination in India and the west

The World Health Organisation has a decent definition! “Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed.” when society talks about gender norms,’ it’s referring to behaviours and roles associated with men, women, girls and boys.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research provides a fuller definition: “Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviour, expression and identities of girls, women, boys, men and gender diverse people.”

Gender discrimination is a social occurrence where differences are socially constructed on the basis of gender and people are not treated equally in any sectors of life. It can be various forms, such as economic and political rights, property rights, education rights, working rights as long as eating rights. Being a longstanding issue it has been impacting various aspects of individual’s life. Especially women are the main victims in this case. This Chapter is to explore the problems basically women are facing through gender discrimination since the early ages in both India and the West.

Gender role mentions the responsibilities of men and women. Some social norms those are created to our families, society and culture. Gender role demands appropriate behaviour for men and women. For example, women are expected to behave typically feminine ways. But men are always considered to be strong and aggressive. There has an another logic regarded to men and women that historically

the colour pink is associated with femininity and the colour blue is associated with masculinity. Most of the times, females are seen very active in leadership roles as equal as men but, in that case society prefers men to lead everything better. We have a fake image in our mind that responsibility of women is to take care and managing households. And men are born to run the family by their income source.

“Don’t touch her!” “You women with sindoor; she is a widow now.”(Goswami Moth, 27) Another woman said, “Listen, Gossainee! You keep her for a few days and then send her back. Her husband’s place is like heaven for a woman. If she runs away from her husband’s house, she is like a naked woman loitering on the street. Even if she tries to cover with cloths people will snatch them away from her body!”(Goswami, Moth, 29).

Women of India and the West are often discriminated by the society and their family. Women’s position in society and household is always inferior to men. This research study will focus on India and the West to explore the inequalities between men and women. It will show the different social norms and restrictions made for women .Goswami elaborates the typical patriarchal norms in her novel where we have seen widow women are a curse for society; they do not participate in any social ceremony and holy events. But men do not need to follow the norms for women. Why women always become the sufferer? Why a widow can’t live a peaceful life in the society like others? In Indian society women after her husband’s death they perform all the societal norms till to the last stage of her life. But men after their wife’s death they need not perform the same norms which women do. Basically gender inequalities

in India display in such as education, healthcare, employment and societal roles. The imbalances often come out from the deep rooted norms and practices and its impacting women's opportunities, rights and so on. It is a significant issue of India which is impacting the life of both males and females. The role of male in society signifies the superiority and power, so males are superior to women. They construct the traditional roles for society. Women are always dominated by the males in this patriarchal society.

“Her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth and her sons protect her in old age: a woman is never fit for independence.”(Manu, ix, 2, 3)

Men control women to their public and private both life. Women are dominated by their father, brother, husbands and sons. They have no choices and interests to consume in the society. Indian society is highly associated with the traditional norms

and limitations to the West. An adult woman can't make any decision without the permission of males. Decisions are often making by the male members of society.

India is one of the poor countries, though there is a rapid growth of economy so gender discrimination remains as the same. Its rank on various aspects is very low including economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and

survival, political empowerment etc. Gender discrimination in Indian society prefers to send the boys to school rather than the girls. Parents are always caring to sons to for making a good career in life. They send their male child in a good educational institute.

“We are more sensitive more intelligent, more compassionate human beings than creeps like you.”(Tara, 51)

In Indian society the belongings of women are mostly given to the boys. The boys take the all dreams and interests from women’s life. But women never stand for their dreams and wishes against the family or society. Women are deprived from their own things. For example, in Mahesh Dattani’s novel ‘Tara’ the writer reflects the inequality between Tara and her brother and injustice to Tara. In the novel Tara is denied to keep her leg which belongs to her, because she is a girl child. And a girl child do not take the responsibilities of her house, they are only born to go to in-laws.

So her parents decided to give the leg to her brother for his further complicated days.

According to Spivak in her essay “Can the Subaltern speak?” asserts

“It is rather, that, both as objects of colonist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keep the male dominant. If, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and can not speak.”

In her essay she brings the idea of subaltern that society keeps the males dominant but women are marginalized, inferior and a helpless animal in society. Women are a product of the society who fulfils the needs of men's. Men use women for their various desires.

“To refer to male domination, to the power relationship by which men dominated women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways.”(Basin, 2006: 3)

There has a lack of awareness among the women about their rights. Society always demands that women are born to take the household responsibilities and to fulfil the needs of all the family members. Women are always subordinate in a deep rooted patriarchy. They face all the complexities during childhood, in a young age and after marriage. They don't have time to take care of self. Women are engage with the difficulties since the birth to end of her life.

Society wants women should be beautiful, slim and expert in household works. Girls are forced to child marriage by their family members. Dowry system, domestic violence and rap are the main issues of India but women can't raise voice for freedom in society but all these categories are not prohibited to men. Women are not allowed to roaming here and there at night they are very unsafe. On the other hand men are always permitted to come out from home at night.

Pnadata Ramabai Saraswati in her essay “Women’s place in Religion and Society” has pointed some laws which use the men to deprive the women of their household. In another essay “The Hindu Women’s Wifhood” by Mahadevi Varma pointed the inner sufferings of women life.

Virginia Woolf asserts, “Imaginatively, she is of the highest importance practically she is completely insignificant, she pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is but absent from the history.”

In the early ages, there were gender inequalities between men and women in the West countries. After the second wave of feminism movement women got inspired by some feminist critics. After the second wave of feminism movement women got inspired by some feminist critics, writers and had tried to speak for their identity and rights. Many critics and theorists assert their views about inequalities through the works. Women perform all the ritual for the society but they fail to respect them and forgot their contribution.

Semone de Beauvoir quotes in her books, “The second Sex,” “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.”

Here Beauvoir gives the definition of women that women are not natural by their birth but it is given by society. Society constructs the all rules for women. Society wants to follow the all rules assigned to women. In the West countries also women suffers a lot. Kate Millet's theory of subordination refers the same thing as Beauvoir said.

"The Scarlet letter" by American author Nathaniel Hawthorne in his novel also asserts those kinds of rules and regulations. Gender inequality in the West can be seen in many forms like political representation of women, occupation, distribution, domestic life, education and economic position.

In the west countries women are also deprived of education rights, political rights, and economic rights and so on. Women in the society are the victim of some violence. We can observe through the writings of great feminist theorists I have mention above. Also we can observe the differences in domestic life, marriage, education life, occupation life and through the men women relationship. The society demands a beautiful body structures, slim body, good looking and physically attractive. So they restrict the girl to eating more foods. In educational life parents does not bother for their girl child rather than the son is given all the opportunities to make a good settled life.

In the early ages women were not allowed to vote neither the political rights. They always choose the choices of men. In their domestic though men do the household works, women are mostly seen in the household activates. They choose the favourite things of men. Males never ask the women for their choices. Birth of a baby girl in a

family indicates pressure and suppression to feed the baby girl as well as the difficulties to take their responsibilities till their marriage. Society wants to follow the rules assigned to women. In West countries also women suffers a lot. Kate Millet's theory of "Subordination" shows the same theme as Beauvoir said.

When man does household works then society get shock to see him in the position. It means women are only responsible for works inside the house. Typically that is constructed to society. Men perform the outside work like, office, institute and some businesses but gradually women are also increasing their position on the outside of the house. There too women are discriminated by males. Men and women relationship is very different in the society of the West countries. Laws are equal to men and women in the West countries but yet there have some differences between men and women. In many places of those countries women can't take the privileges to live a peaceful life.

"The problem that has no name" (Friedan, 1963)

This famous feminist writer and critic Friedan also shows in her work about women liberation and emancipation. The complexities of women and their struggle in society have made them strong to establish their position in every field. She once more quotes-

"I want something more than any husband and my children and my home."

(Friedan, 1963)

Through the essays we can see the struggle and sufferings of women in the West countries. They speak for liberation and identity. They want to become independent but the cultural norms are the huge suppression for women. They can't give the opportunities to live a life as an individual. In a deep rooted patriarchy women are never safe and independent.

The female characters of the novel they are highly engage with their interests, dreams and imagination. But the women are living in an alienated society and they never get any help, supports from their parents, family members, relatives, brothers and from the society. They are fully alienated from their environment. She talks about some contemporary issues also which are connected to women life. We all know gender plays a significant role in our society so these are very effective to women. A clear image of India and the West is portrayed in the novel. In the novel Mama as a traditional women acts like a submissive and a obedient women, daughter and wife as well as a mother. She too helps to her daughter in rising to face the same difficulties as she has experienced. Mama, Uma's mother also get a very

CHAPTER 3: Gender discrimination in Fasting Feasting

In India or the West women follow the rules assigned to them by male authorities. Gender inequality is portrayed by Anita Desai in her novel *Fasting Feasting* through the pathetic situation of Uma and the other female characters. The novel is divided into two parts: one is about an Indian family and the other is about an American family.

There are several differences and similarities of thematic relation between Indian family and American family in *Fasting Feasting*. The main thing is that both families are male-centered families. Gender inequalities in both Indian and American families can be found in every field of their life: domestic life, education, marriage, men-women relationship, and so on. All women of a household are expected to do all the chores like cooking, cleaning, washing, worshipping, and taking care of the whole family members.

In the novel we can talk about the character of Mama. Here she is responsible for all the chores at home and without any hesitation she does it. Because Indian women believe that it is their duty to do all household things. In her childhood she has been taught by her mother giving respect and priority to the men at home because men are considered the centre of a family.

Mama said, "In my days, girls in the family were not given sweets, nuts, and good things to eat. If something special had been bought in the market, like sweets or nuts, it was given to the boys in the family." (Desai, 19)

Mama she has been taught in her childhood, the same thing she was applying on her daughter Uma. Uma was the eldest daughter of the family. She is being asked to do all works at home without any payment. Her father used to keep her busy to serving fruits, tea, coffee or biscuits and also spreading her winter cloths under the sunlight. She has to do so many things such as write a letter to Arun, to find out if he has received the parcel contain the tea and the shawl they sent him through Justice Dutt's son. In between she has to drive off the urchins who are after the ripe mulberries on the tree of the gate, and see if the cook has brought the green mangoes for pickle and has all the ingredients and spices but no extra that might be stolen. Uma has to sacrifice her interests for the sake of her family to do the duties in the household. Sometimes she used to raise her against family for personal interests. But her protests have made to drop out of school. Mama forced her to taking care the baby brother. Her mother said,

“You know you failed your exam again. You're not being moved up. What's the use of going back to school? Stay at home and look after your baby brother.’ Then, seeing. (Desai, 31)

Uma's hands shake as she tried to continue with folding the nappies, she seemed to find a little pity. ‘What is the use going back to school if you failing, Uma? She asked in a reasonable tone. ‘You will be happier at home. You won't need to do any lessons.

You are a big girl now. We are trying to arrange a marriage for you. Not now,' she added, seeing the panic on Uma's face. 'But soon till then, you can help me look after Arun. And learn to run the house.' She reached out her hand to catch Uma's. 'I need your help, beti,' She coaxed, her voice sweet with pleading," (Desai, 32)

Uma's mother wants her to keep busy in household things. She did not like her daily school going. The family does not bother for her. Uma's dreams were ruined by her own family members. No one was to asked about her priorities. Uma was also not allowed to roaming outside the house. She always stayed at home and follows the advices given by he mother. Mama and the other family members do not give values to her choices because she was the ugliest girl in among the other siblings. She was too much dominated by her family. Even if she argued with them no one takes her seriously. Mama says her to act in a feminine way. For Indian women, they have to follow the rules and boundaries given by the male head of the family. Women have restrictions on working outside the home. Indian families, they prefer women to work inside the home as we see in the novel. Otherwise it is punishable to women.

"It is not good to go running around. Stay home and do your work that is best,' Mama opens with an air pf pity. 'I do my work all the time, everyday,' Uma cries tearfully.

'Why can't I go out sometimes? I never go anywhere. I went to go to Mrs O' Henry's party.'(Desai, 106)

Desai uses all the categories of an Indian family through the novel to introduce gender discrimination to the readers specially through the all women characters. Mama is responsible to manage all the works inside the home. She provides all the needs of her husband and the other members of the family. Mama sacrifices all her interest to other things for her husband. She has to pretend in a way which her husband wants.

Also Papa believes that a family without son is incomplete. So he wants a baby boy from Mama. Mama was also proud to be mother of a baby boy. Because having a son or a male child, it raises their social status. Mama was agreed with the decisions of her husband. She never goes anywhere Papa and her permission. But only to the events that Papa wants to attend. She compromises all the things saying any single word.

“More than ever now, she was Papa’s helpmeet, his consort. He had not only made her his wife, he had made her the mother of his son. What honour, what status.”(Desai, 39)

Women are expected to do the household things; the house is only spare of life for them as demonstrated in Mama, Uma and Anamika’s experience. Education is not a priority for Women; they are forced to do marry at the young age before they lost their beauty. As a result Uma Anamika and Aruna’s life had destroyed for their

forceful marriage. In Indian families if boys are given good educations to women to achieve a successful career because they believe that sons are the only pillar of the house to depend on them at the last stage of life. So Arun was sent in America for his further studies by her parents, and to make a good and successful career. Mama has never taken seriously to the need of school-related things in her life. Even she blames her own daughter for going to school. She believes that there is no value of education for women. She says:

“All this counts education what good does it do? Better to marry you off than let you go to that place’ I always said don’t send them to a convent school. Keep them at home, I said but who listened? And now-! (Desai, 72)

Gender differences in the Indian family can be found in the field of marriage also, as demonstrated in Anamica’s life. She was very intelligent in her study and beautiful too. Anamica wins a scholarship to Oxford, University but her family did not appreciate her studies. They admit that marriage is the first priority for a girl.

“Infact, she did so brilliantly in her final school exams, that she won a scholarship to Oxford, where only the most favoured and privileged sons could ever hope to go! Naturally her parents could not countenance her actually going abroad to study- just when she was of an age to marry- everyone understood that, in a steel cupboard in their flat on Marine Drive in Bombay.”(Desai, 70)

The above mention quotes shows or explore that the educational institutes are supposed to be only for sons. It seems to us education is the foremost priority and important for males only. They have given all the opportunities and the facilities. After Anamica's marriage she spends all the time through working for her in-laws. In Indian society women's important duty is to take care of her husband, children and other family members at home. They have tortured Anamica mentally and physically as well as they forced to do work in her bad condition. Everyday she had been beaten by her in laws. Anamica's family did not want her back at home and it will be a very shameful thing for the family in the society. They prefer the society most instead of their daughter. When Uma talks about the incident to her mother for bringing Anamika at their house Mama called her 'silly,'

'As asking, "How can she be happy if she is sent home? What will people say? What they think?"'(Desai, 72)

The men women relationship was very complex in the novel. Men and women have different views on marriage depending on their gender. Men don't have any pressure for marriage, because they don't need to look attractive and perfect in front of their future in laws. On the other hand society always expects women to looking beautiful, slim, and gorgeous and to behave typically in front of the bridegroom family. Aruna's beauty gives Papa a pleasure because she will get a good husband easily.

“Aruna slammed her makeup kit shut. “Yes, this is what women in Bombay use. They don’t walk around looking like washerwomen unless they are washerwomen,” She told Uma.”(Desai, 98)

Daughter like Uma, she get rejected to marriage for her interactive beauty. She is regarded as a shame for her family. A highly educated family demands a large number of dowries from an unattractive girl’s family. For example Uma’s family they had to pay a big amount for her marriage to the in laws.

As we know there has two parts in the novel. Now I am going to analyse the second part of the novel which is American family. In America men and women also have some differences regarded to gender discrimination, although the differences are not great than India.

“Keeping the freezer full- that’s my job, Arun.” (Desai, 174)

Its shows she considered that taking care of the whole family as her duty. Women are expected to be responsible for all domestic duties. When Mrs Patton’s husband comes at home from the office she provides him all the necessary things. She always cooked food for her daughter and tries to agree with her husband’s choices. She tells Arun

about grocery that she always keeps the refrigerator full with food that means bothering for her family and children so that never they stay hungry.

“Arun has seen mothers of young children do precisely that- lift their babies onto the collapsible shelf where they sit above hills of cereal and cat food and diapers usually sucking the candy they have been given in return for allowing their mothers to get on with the shopping.”(Desai, 179)

Mrs Patton likes to do shopping, buying so many foods, groceries and so on. Her shopping and other chores things show that it is her duty to take care the whole family and providing foods. There is a common thing that in America men and women both

they do household duties but men they not do it frequently as demonstrated in Mr Patton and his son’s characters. Men do it for their personal interest but not as an obligation. On the other hand society expects, women are responsible to do the household works. If any man does the household things in public it would be very shocking activity for the society because those works are for women only.

“Settlin’ in for the wakened?” asks the checkout girl who wears a jaunty jacket of red and white strips and a red bow tie around her white collar.... “Nah. My girl friend’s bringing her parents to dinner. I’m gonna cook for them,” he explains.

“I’ve have been cleaning the apartment and now I’m going to go home to cook the dinner.”

“Gee,” she says tonelessly, “that’s awesome.” (Desai, 182)

Gender inequality in American family seems not more complex than India, Even though there has a lot of differences between man and woman in America. As a west country, the women of America they are highly conscious with their body perfection. According to them if they get a beautiful face and slim body it will create a high image in society. As we the Patton family, they have very much influenced by the media. In the society women are expected to have good and gorgeous physical look, being slim and so on. Then the family members feel proud by the women and their beauty. Society believes that a beautiful and attractive woman of the family helps to increase their position in society. Same things happen in the Patton's family. The women of the family Mrs Patton and Melanie they are highly conscious with their physical appearances. Melanie suffers through the eating disorder and only eats peanuts, chocolates and some other snakes.

“That's all these girls are good are far, y'know. Not like guys. To lazy to get off their butts and go jogging or play a good hard ball game. So they've got to sick it up.”(Desai, 179)

Her brother said that she does not want to eat anything to get a slim body. Her mother said to her for not to eat more and to follow a diet chart. The quote that refers, if she stays in diet it will help to maintain her beauty and body to attract a man. American men want slim and attractive women and they look at the perfection of women. This is also a kind of gender inequalities between men and women. Rod never gets any obligation to be handsome and dashing. Society constructed this type of obligation for

women only. They never care for a women's health. But it should be must to balance their eating to get slim body.

“I've always hated eating meat oh, red, raw stuff, the small of it! I've always disliked it – but never could-never know how- you know, my family wouldn't have liked it.”(Desai, 159)

There is another opinion on eating food. In a family everything is depend on the choices of a man. For example, women always prepare foods choices by men. They compromise of all the difficulties. Women have forgotten their wishes, choices and favourite things. They only eat those things which are cooked for the men. We can Mrs Patton cooks meat which is her husband's favourite. Mr Patton always mock vegetarianism but her wife never replies. She admits that her husband's choice is also her choice. Every time she is asked to buy meat for the family. On the other hand Mrs Patton loves to eat vegetarian foods. As her husband's wishes, she never follows the favourite things of own. She frequently follows of her husband's wishes.

From the view of education career, the father of the family insists his son more to make good career. Because own the authority of a family. Mr Patton is not concern about his daughter's bulimia. He puts some restriction on her daughter's career and did not care about his daughter's skills.

In our society women follow the rules assigned to them through the cultural and tradition norms by male authorities. Gender inequality is portrayed by Anita Desai in her book through the pathetic situation of Uma and the other female characters. Women have the same ability to do something like a man. We can see women are also active in many sectors of society. But in deep rooted patriarchy people do not recognise women as a competitor to men. Through the novel *Fasting Feasting* Anita Desai gave a feminist view to the topic. Feminism talks about the privileges of men and women's subordination in the society according to the writer. A patriarchal society never understands women emancipation. It can be challenging for a male centered society to give women freedom due to deep rooted cultural norms and restrictions that often supports male dominance. Anita Desai explores the all them and the complexities of women who suffers under ungrateful husbands, fathers and their brothers too. Also the individuals face a lot of assault of existence in the novel. She also explores the pain of a married women and their unhappy married life in society in the both part of the novel.

The female characters of the story portray the same idea of my topic. Same condition was happening with Uma in the novel. Uma's forceful staying at home indicates the inferiority of women. She was not allowed to go to school by her parents. Also she fails to protest against her family. Family members never bother for her. Uma's physically and mentally sufferings are the example of discrimination. Uma the biggest girl of Mama, she never gets any attention from her family members. They wants keep busy Uma to look after the youngest baby of the house. Mama Papa tries to

discontinue her study while they sent Arun to America for good studies. She parents encourage her to do marry in a very young age.

After her marriage she gets only humiliation and insult from her in laws. The marriage was just for getting dowry from Uma's family. After Uma's divorce again she faces a lot of embarrassment from the society. Since her childhood she is trained to obey the orders of elders. Her father was the only ruler of the family. There were no rights for Mama to make decisions to the family. They followed the commands by The Father. He was expecting son from her wife rather than a daughter. Mama was also agreed with the thoughts of Papa. Uma is a ugly girls and it's a very shameful thing for her parents. Her younger daughter Aruna's beauty feels proud to Papa. They said that beauty is important to get a good husband. After her devorce, her family was not agreed for Uma's second marriage because of dowry. But Mama always takes care of her son. The son was precious to her father. Uma gets helpless due to neglecting by her parents. The two daughters of the two different families are the victims of parental indifferent.

CHAPTER 4: Conclusion

In this Patriarchal society women are subordinate and marginalised. A huge detail of gender issues has depicted in the novel. The novel *Fasting Feasting* reflects the sufferings and humiliations through the activities of the two families. The all themes of the topic have analysed through the discussion of Desai's novel and some references.

To conclude, the novel *Fasting Feasting* by Anita Desai depicts the critical view on gender discrimination about India and the West through her way of depictions. The novel also explores all the perspective regarded to gender discrimination. It seems women's subordination and marginalization in a society. The two different families in the novel show the different aspects of women's life in a household. In the novel women characters are portrayed as a victim under male chauvinism. The writer of the novel portrays the inequalities between men and women in a society as well as the picture of domestic violence.

We can see that Anita Desai discusses the concept of gender inequality by exploring power, privileges of society and hope of women. So many privileges are given to the men only. Even if women have given any opportunities in any field they can not use it for the male authorities. It affects the field of progress toward equality and freedom, especially in India. The marriage system in Desai's novel considers earning money from the bride's family without doing any handwork. Bridegroom's family demands a huge quantity of dowry. The bride family has to pay a lot of wealth if the girl not becomes beautiful. Those issues are the great issues of gender discrimination.

This study also reflects the idea is depicted by Anita Desai in her novel. This makes an argument about society related to gender discrimination. This study also gives an overview on patriarchal society and its tradition and cultural norms. The study comments on the critical condition of women in a male cantered society.

The study mostly capture on women and their sufferings as a girl in childhood, as a mother, as a wife and in the younger ages. The roots of social and patriarchal norms and limitations are the hegemonic process. Since the ancient times its still happening in the era of equality we can observe through the study. Both in the two families of the novel are strongly constructed by the patriarchal norms. So that women follow the rules and instruction those are imposed to them. The same image has created by the author in the novel. The story of the novel is a highly considerable resource to describe hegemonic role of society on women regarded to gender discrimination.

The novel *Fasting Feasting* depicts the patriarchal norms and restrictions through the main protagonist Uma and the second part of the novel shows the same categories as the first part regarded to gender discrimination. Both Indian and American families depend on different culture and different attribution. In spite of that the both families are male cantered family. So India and the West have some differences and some similarities in the basis of gender discrimination.

In the novel through the characters, Desai presents the issues related to gender discrimination in Indian society. Uma, she is the main victim of those patriarchal norms and restrictions. Her forceful marriage to an old man, parental ignorance, restriction on study and doing all the household works explore the scenario of Indian society. And also depicts the value of girl child for and Indian household. The novel reflects some other aspects as domestic violence, women's marginality, dowry system, men women relationship and their conflicts and lack of communication.

In the other American family of the novel explore the scenario of gender discrimination of the West countries and their patriarchal norms and limitations.

There is the portrayal of women's characters like Mrs Patton and Melanie, Their activity seems how they are separated from the other male characteristics of the family. Mrs Patton's care for her husband and the other members shows that women are born to be responsible for domestic works. There is the portrayal of some differences between men and women in the family as education, domestic life, complexities between men and women relationship as long as in eating's. Through the study we get to know that how the society is very conscious by the women's slim figure and beautiful looks, but not to women.

Through the reflection of some women characters in the novel *Fasting Feasting*, the novelist have attempt to present to become independent and the progress of women's life, Also the positions on some fields as literary, culture, education, politics, economic rights. Women are not economically independent in society. In some places

women face the difficulties for female gender. Women became discrimination on some position those are depicted in the novel by Anita Desai.

The study reflects a feminist view where Anita Desai admits about, identity, liberation, equality, individuality and the pathetic condition of women complex life. Desai depicts the typical images of women characters that are helpless, inferior and so on. By the study of the novel *Fasting Feasting* we can explore various themes as tried to reflect the idea of gender discrimination, feminism and the patriarchy.

At last in this study, we see that Anita Desai have explored the image of two different cultured families and inequalities between men and women through the fictional characters which is exact image of the real society of India and the West.

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