

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Every human in the world has an identity since he was born. According to Hogg and Abrams (1982:2), identity is people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others. Family is a first foundation where identity is built. Parenting from the parents influences how a child grows up. In the age of adolescence, teenagers usually find out their identities.

According to Hall (1989), identity is like a true self. Identity crisis is one of the most important conflicts that is experienced by individuals during development. It occurs during cohesion or role confusion stages of psychosocial development. During the adolescent stage, people undergo physical growth, sexual maturation and internalization of ideas about how others view and think of them. Research has shown that supportive parenting can significantly affect our children's positive outlook on their lives, their mental health and their self-esteem.

Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* is a novel about identity crisis. It focuses on the crisis that Uma, the main character, has to face. One interesting thing according to the writer is self-identity crisis that happened to Uma because of her family whereas it supposed to be a place where first self-identity is built.

The story starts from a family living in a small town in India, where culture or tradition influences the future of all children: women are to be married off and men are to become as educated as possible. The story focuses on the life of the main character, Uma, the eldest daughter of her parents. Uma is a first child from

three siblings in an Indian family. Uma has one sister as the second child from that family named Aruna and 1 brother as the last child named Arun. Uma's parents usually called —Mama and —Papa.

The novel describe Uma as one of the less beautiful girls who is awkward, slow, and not academically clever. Uma has a genuine desire to learn, regardless of her shortcomings, because she does not want to just work at her parents' home. Her whole life, she struggles to create an identity of her own and live an independent life. She spends her life in fulfilling the demands of her parents while preparation is made to expand the education of Arun as the only son.

Uma takes little interest in marriage or household chores – rather, she loves attending her convent school, despite her failing grades. Her parents give an opportunity for her to be educated in a school in India. Yet, she was not able to finish her school since her brother, Arun, was born. After Arun's birth, Papa's happiness knew no bounds. Mama asks her to take care of her brother carefully. Then, her life has changed since her brother was born.

The parents try to control the destiny of Uma by teaching her domestic, traditionally feminine skills. Uma has stayed at home to look after her parents, after two failed marriage; middle child Aruna has a successful marriage and has almost forgotten her roots and Arun has gone to the US for further studies.

“Since every adult had to have a role, and these were their parents’, the children did not question their choice, at least not during their childhood.” (Desai, 10). The statement above means the children have no right to question their parent's choice. That is why Uma struggles to get her right in her family as a

daughter. Even though she struggles to live an independent life she cannot liberate herself from the clutch of the age old customs and traditions of this patriarchal society because the patriarchy system is too strong in her family. All the rebellions that Uma has done could not resist the power of her parents' authority. Uma sacrifices her own life for the sake of her parents and to serve them in their old age.

Anita Desai is an Indian novelist and professor in humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She was born from a German mother and an Indian father in India on June, the 24th 1937. She is a professor and also has a degree English literature and a master's degree in History.

Her career as an author began early in the 1960, when she was only 25 years old before her marriage. Anita Desai has been a member of the Advisory Board for English of the national Academy of Letters in Delhi. She has also been a member of the American academy of Arts and Letters. Anita Desai is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in London. Desai has commented on her work: "My novels are no reflection of Indian society, politics or character. They are my private attempt to seize upon the raw material of life." She has dealt with themes like German anti-Semitism, western stereotypical views of India and the demise of the tradition. Her novels reveal the characters though imaginary but are realistic in approach as she says, "I aim to tell the truth about any subject, not a romance or fantasy, not avoid the truth."

The writer chooses identity crisis as a daughter in her family as a topic because it is interesting when a person supposed to get identity from family, but

instead she has an identity crisis by her parent's treatment. The parents have big role towards their children whether they could behave nice in society or will get a good future or not, etc. Uma's struggle sacrifices her own life for the sake of her parents is also interesting to be analyzed.

1.2 The Statements of the Problems

1. What challenges do Uma has to deal with when she faces the identity crisis in her life?
2. What are the impacts of the identity crisis that befalls Uma?
3. What lessons can reader get from reading the story of Uma?

1.3 The Purposes of the Study

1. To know what challenges do Uma has to deal with when she faces the identity crisis in her life.
2. To know the impacts of the identity crisis that befalls Uma.
3. To know what lessons that reader can get from reading the story of Uma.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

By analyzing how Uma can get identity crisis from her family, the readers will know about how the struggles of Uma, Indian woman, in pursuing her desire to get opportunity in school and against patriarchy system in India.

1.5 The Scope and Limitation of the Study

In *Fasting, Feasting* there are five characters; however, this skripsi only analyses one character, Uma, eventhough in the discussion there may be some explanation that includes other characters such as: Mama, Papa, Arun and Aruna.

1.6 The Organization of the Study

The first chapter of this *skripsi* talks about background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of study, scope and limitation of study, status of study.

The second chapter of this *skripsi* is a review of selected literature, in which the writer will talk about approaches or methods which are used to analyze Anita Desai in *Fasting, Feasting* novel.

The third chapter of this *skripsi* is a portrait of an identity crisis condition as reflected through the daughter characters in Anita Desai's selected novel.

The final chapter of this *skripsi* is the conclusion of the study about identity crisis in *Fasting, Feasting*.