CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION
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The advent of English in India proved a blessing in disguise to the country as a whole. It is English that stirred the National writers to oppose the British policies in India through their writings. According to K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "what makes Indo-Anglian literature an Indian Literature... is the quality of its Indianness in the choice of its subjects, in the texture of thought and play of sentiment in the organization of material and in the creative use of the language."¹ The Indian writers’ choice of English as the language of expression of his creative urge also has come under some criticism. India being a country where different languages are spoken, an Indian writer is prone to accept the multilingualism. English can no more be considered an alien language. As Raja Rao puts it, "English is the language of our intellectual make up like Sanskrit or Persian was before."² The Indian writer in English is in an advantageous position being able to draw from the perennial sources of Indian literature. A. K. Ramanujan dismisses the arguments, "it is not a matter of controversy whether people can, will or should write in a particular language. I don’t think people who write have a choice in the matter."³ Kamala Das in her poem *An Introduction* pleads to be given the freedom to choose the language. She asks, "why not let me speak in any language I like?"⁴ The three innovative writers, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand have brought recognition to the new genre namely Indian – English Fiction.

The progress of Indian - English writing can be divided into two parts: Pre Independence and Post Independence periods. This is a convenient way of dividing the progress of the entire Indian - English writing. It is but
natural that literary period can not be grouped into water light compartment but there are some authors who bring with being the influential traits to the development of Indian-English fiction. In Pre-Independence period the pioneers like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya depict the socio-economic and political realities. Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Attia Hosain, Shakuntala Shrinagesh, Santha Rama Rau, Nayantara Sahgal, Arun Joshi and Anita Desai belong to the past-independence period. The second generation particularly belongs to the female novelists. As observed by N. R. Gopal:

They too appear as much concerned with a new variety of challenges and problems as their worthy predecessors had been with the gross realities of caste and class conflicts, exploitation, and the proverbial Indian poverty.

The journey of the Indian English fiction begins with Bankim Chander Chatterjee’s novel Rajmohan’s Wife, which was modelled after Wilky Collins’ Women in White. This pioneering novelist who imitated the form of 18th and 19th century British novelists sought answers to the contemporary social concerns in man’s ethical consciousness. Indian-English fiction finds its rich manifestation in the trio of R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. They portrayed such characters that flock in their novel from countryside. R. K. Narayan’s Malgudi Days is an expression of the newly gained consciousness of free India where town people leading obscure lives begin to sway with the rhythm and cadence that freedom offers. Despite the surface hilarity in his novels, there is always an under current of pathos with gentle irony and is savage, farce, satirical and full of
condemnation. He limits his province to the South Indian middle class. He peopled his fictional world of Malgudi with the variety of characters. According to some critics, Narayan's Malgudi, a South Indian town of his own creation is, the real hero of his novels. *Malgudi* is Narayan's *Casterbridge.* In this context of character formation the view of Iyengar seems appropriate here: "It would be interesting to advance the theory that *Malgudi* is the real hero of the ten novels and many short stories" of R. K. Narayan.

Mulk Raj Anand with his characteristic social consciousness portrays the high handedness of the rich against the weak and downtrodden. The dismal social scenario stifles every possibility of growth and expansion of an individual. Anand ventures into Indian villages to probe into the causes of malaise, miseries and deprivation of peasants, labourers and untouchables and diagnoses it as lack of education, superstitiousness, religious orthodoxy and egoistic barriers based on caste, religion, power, self and politics. Anand is a crusader against superstition feudalism and imperialism.

Raja Rao, hailed, as a cultural ambassador of India to the Western literary world mostly prefers to probe into the Indian socio-religious traditions to comprehend the metaphysical nature of reality. His *Kanthapura* (1938) deals with the sweeping influence of Gandhian thought that ignited the whole country and spread like a great forestfire. Raja Rao in his thematic context of Gandhian philosophy represents the episodic form of the story. They are the novelists who pervade their sentiments with the freedom struggle of India. *The Serpent and the Rope* is said to be his *magnum opus.* The every titles of his novel are symbolic in that they indicate his preoccupation with different drenches of vedantic thought. Other
distinguished writers like Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Balachandra Rajan etc follow the big three. Their endeavour is to trace a man’s place in the massive violence, slaughter, rapes, abductions and mutilations that shook the Indian subcontinent at the time of Indian’s partition.

Bhabhani Bhattacharya, who is rightly regarded as one of four wheels of the Indian English fiction the other three being Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao, is neither as prolific as Mulk Raj Anand or R. K. Narayan, nor as meagre creatively as Raja Rao. His fictional output, spreading over a period of about thirty years consists of only six novels and a collection of short stories vis. - So Many Hungers? Music for Mohini, He Who Rides a Tiger, A Goddess Named Gold, Shadow from Ladakh, A Dream in Hawai and Steel Hawk and other stories. He won Sahitya Akadami Award in 1967 for his Novel, Shadow from Ladakh. His creative works are widely known and highly acclaimed the world over, and most of them have been translated into twenty-six languages, including fourteen European languages. His dream of a better tomorrow reflects his buoyant optimism and idealistic humanism. He wants a judicious synthesis of our ancient morals and modern science. He derived the idea of synthesis as well as the idea of fullness of life from Tagore’s writings. Bhattacharya could not escape “Tagore’s magic spell” all through his literary career.

There is certainly a change of ‘idiom’ in the Indian English fiction after 1970 and the novelist’s probings turned ‘within’ rather than ‘outside’. Arun Joshi portrayed a different kind of existentialist hero in his works, a person who with an overbearing feeling of meaninglessness and rootlessness
finds himself a ‘foreigner’ an ‘outsider’. Because of their shy, solitary, withdrawn and rebellious stance they feel out of place.

Anita Desai does not deal with such problem which are totally the purview of a feminist thinker. There lies a deeper distinction between feminine sensibility and feminist approach. The novelist (working on the feminine sensibility) does not hesitate the to pinpoint the equal responsibility of female characters. While a feminist thinker (working on the western oriented feminism) tries to see only the suppression, oppression, cruelties and injustices done to the woman kind in the past and he links this phenomena with the present. Desai does not follow this kind of ideology in her fictional world. The term feminism is an ideology which denotes female. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term ‘Feminism’ was first used in the latter part of nineteenth century and it was defined as having the qualities of females. In general, feminism is the ideology of women’s liberation in all its approaches as a woman who recognizes herself and is recognized by others as feminist. The feminist consciousness is the consciousness of victimization. As a philosophy of life, it opposes women’s subordination to men in the family and society, along with men’s claims to define what is best for women. Feminism is defined as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome whether it is the husband or the father or the community or religious and ethnic group. Even today an average woman feels uncertain about his identity as a social being. So feminism is committed to the struggle for equality for women rights historically and politically. It emphasizes the value of women as they are. The word “Feminism” particularly in word of Alice Jardine: “Who and what, then do we mean by “Feminism”? That word... poses some serious
Elaine Showalter in her book *A Literature of Their Own* calls women’s writing a subculture. She traces the evolution of this “subculture” from the times of the Bronte’s to the present day. The development is outlined by her, very convincingly, in three stages:

1. Feminine: The phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition.

2. Feminist: The phase of protest against the standards and values in favour of autonomy.


The term “Feminist” has been handled rather cautiously by many women writers. They consider even the term “Women writers” as derogatory, taking away their artistic autonomy and identity and categorizing them by gender. In a paper presented at seminar *The Dilemma of the Woman Writer* Shashi Deshpande Protested: “A woman who writes of women’s experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, caused her strong feelings. I don’t see why this has to be labelled feminist fiction.”

Anita Desai has expressed her views in an interview with Yashodhara Dalmia, “I find it impossible to whip up any interest in a mass of women marching forward under the banner of feminism.” A feminist critical approach is equally useful in illuminating a searching exploration of the role and status of women in society as depicted in creative Literature.

Indian women novelists in English constitute a significant group. They like their male counterparts, successfully integrate the diversity of Indian culture and experience. Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabwala,
Nayan Tara Sehgal, Bharti Mukharjee, Shashi Despande, Uma Vasudev, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy and Anita Desai etc. assume credibility and authenticity by seeking answer to their explorations against the Indian background – social, religious and cultural. Quest pattern in these writers is also as diversified as is in the novelists of the other gender. However Anita Desai and other modern women novelist raise a voice for feminine sensibility which is not the same what feminism is.

Though women writers attempted their hand at this new genre as early as 1879, it is not till a later date they could occupy a position of importance along with the stalwarts. Kamala Markandaya, the earliest of the top-ranking women novelists, shot to fame with her very first novel *Nectar in a Sieve*. To date Kamala Markandaya has ten novels to her credit. As an Indian writer settled in London, she is familiar with the interaction of the two cultures Eastern and Western. Her novels reflect the East-West encounter in different contexts and project the resultant identity crisis. Kamala Markandaya believes that literature should play a constructive part in righting the wrongs of society. Her concern is with human beings. It is observed “personal relationships are Kamala Markandaya’s forte – step by step she builds up relationships, analyses them and dramatically makes them represent something larger than themselves.”

A fine feminine sensibility pervades her fictional world.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala spent the major and the most fruitful part of her life in India. Her creative urge found its artistic expression during her stay in India. She wrote eight novels and published collections of short stories. Her novels are — *To Whom She Will, The Nature Of Passion, Esmond In India, The House Holder, Get Ready For Battle, A Backward Place* - and two
collections of short stories *like Birds, Like Fishes* and *A Stranger Climate*. She touches upon some of the real and day-to-day problems confronted by the middle class and lower middle class people. She is often compared to Jane Austen. She says, it “is because my earlier books dealt with the same sort of society as hers did.”

Nayantara Sahgal has established reputation both as a journalist and as a novelist. She has written a good bulk of English novels – *The Day In Shadow, Rich Like Us, A Situation In New Delhi, Storm In Chandigarh, A Time To Be Happy, This Time Of Morning* and two other books namely *Freedom Movement in India and Indira Gandhi’s Emergence and Style*. Her novels present an authentic picture of India after Independence. She has also depicted the reign of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and as she herself was a daughter of renowned freedom fighter Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. She was naturally attached to the social, political and philosophical vision of Nehru and Indira Gandhi. As a fictionist she staunched realist who revealed the contemporary scenario of India in her novels she is described as “one of our best socio-political novelists today.” Nayantara shows the need for a new morality in which a woman is treated as man’s equal and the relationship to be cemented with mutual trust, love and understanding.

Shashi Desh Pande is one of the latest voices to arrive on the scene. She is the daughter of Kannada dramatist Adya Rangacharya. She has written five novels – *Come Up and Be Dead, Roots And Shadows, If I Die Today, The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*. *Roots And Shadows* was awarded the Trimurti Rangammal prize for the best English novel published in English in India during 1982-83. She has reinforced the female dilemma in her novels. Her concern for women is reflected in her
novels, which are deeply rooted in the line of socio-moral sexual novel. Hence her regard for the social problems, especially of the middle class women, is evident. She admits her wide reading of feminist theorists like Simone De Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf and other feminist novelists like Margaret Drabble and Doris Lessing.

Anita Desai breaks a new ground in the world of Indian English fiction by shifting the emphasis from the external to the internal world. She mainly “illustrates the internal drama of human life in her fiction, and concentrates on its basic facts... her creative faculty to exploring the deeper psychic and mental states of the protagonist.”¹⁴ Her novels delineate the inner lives of hypersensitive women who are in eternal quest for meaning of life. Anita Desai states that all her writing is “an effect to discover, to underline and convey the true significance of things.”¹⁵ She represents creative release of the feminine sensibility, which began to emerge after the Second World War. Desai’s novels can be analyzed taking into consideration the psychological motivations of her novels as psychic drama through flashback, diary-entries, self - analysis, ruminations, rumbling of dialogues and descriptions of places and people. Her central theme is the existential predicament of an individual, which she projects through incompatible couples, very sensitive wives and ill-matched husbands. Desai feels that her novels “deal with what Ortega Y. Gasset called the terror of facing, single-handed the ferocious assault of existence.”¹⁶ Prof. Jasbir Jain discovers the vision of ambivalence in Anita Desai’s fiction:

The world of Anita Desai’s novels is an ambivalent one; it is a world where the central harmony is aspired to but not arrived at, and the desire to love and live clashes – at
times violently ... in conditions of solitude which is
presented in its varying shades and meanings.\textsuperscript{17}

Anita Desai is one of the most eminent and distinguished Indian
English writers writing today. Her dual heritage, both racial and cultural has
had a strong impact on her life and has also influenced her writing at the
thematic as well as stylistic level. She was born of a Bengali father and a
German mother in Mussoorie, India, on 24\textsuperscript{th} June 1937. She was educated at
Queen Mary’s Higher Secondary School, and then at Miranda House, Delhi
University where she took her Bachelor’s degree in English literature in
1957. Desai’s father was an engineer and her family hailed from East
Bengal, now called Bangladesh. Born and brought up in India. She was
definitely influenced by her mother’s foreign culture also. At the age of
seven, she began to write prose, mainly fiction, and published some small
pieces in children’s magazines. She has married, has four children.

Anita Desai is a recipient of many awards in India and abroad. She
has held many prestigious posts in India and other countries of the world.
Her novel \textit{Fire On the Mountain} for which she won the Royal Society of
Literature’s Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize and the Sahitya Acadami
Award for English for the year 1978. Her \textit{Clear Light Of Day} was short
listed for the 1980 Booker Prize. Again her \textit{In Custody} was short listed for
1984 Booker Prize. \textit{The Village By The Sea} was the guardian award for
children’s fiction in 1982. In 1999 her recently released novel \textit{Fasting},
\textit{Feasting} was also short listed for the coyetous Booker Prize and ended as a
runner –up in the hot race.

As an academician, Anita Desai has great personality of literature in
the world. Anita Desai is a fellow of the Royal Society of literature in
London, of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York and of Girton College at university of Cambridge. She teaches in the writing program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and divides her time between India, Boston, Massachusetts and Cambridge, England. Her novel, *In Custody* has been filmed by Merchant Ivory Productions in English and Hindi (titled “Muhaﬁz”).

In *Cry, The Peacock* (1963) Desai’s first novel, the identity crisis of the protagonist Maya, stems from several inter-related factors. She is a passionate and sensitive young girl married to her lawyer father’s protégé Gautama. Being a practical minded person, detached from emotions, she is totally antithetical to her. Maya requires a love partner with wide sympathies, highly sensitive, imaginative and responsive temperament which Gautama lacks. She belongs to a traditional Brahmin family which believes in astrology and other prophetic strains of Brahminical order. On the other hand, Gautama’s family represents the rational side of life. Her unhappiness is, however, more a product of her own consciousness and her inability to outgrow her romantic and protected childhood as also the prophecy of the albino priest. She is unable to face the ordinary realities of life. Toto’s death is a foregrounding of the death which, in Maya’s view, is bound to occur according to the prophecy of the priest; the death of one of the partners four year’s after their marriage.

Maya is a childless woman and desires to be loved but “Gautama preaches to her detachment.”¹⁸ But Maya wants expression of emotions and affections to drench her love thirsty heart, her mind. But she receives only chidings to which she responds: “How it suits you to quote those lines of a
dry stick." The image of fighting and mating peacock underlines Maya's sexual frustration too.

Another character in the novel is Maya's friend Leila who has married a tubercular man against the wishes of her parents. She married a man knowing his disease. Her attitude towards life is fatalistic. The novel ends with the death of Maya. The mental retrogression suggests that Maya has not been able to adjust herself in the world of reality and after killing her husband, she mentally goes back of her protected and pampered childhood. Thus in the character of Maya, Anita Desai has presented the feminine psyche of both a girl and a woman.

Anita Desai's second novel _Voices In The City_ (1965) is considered a remarkable existentialist novel in which its main characters Nirode, Monisha, Amla and the city of Calcutta itself are engaged in the quest for true meaning of their lives. The story of novel begins with the departure of Arun to England for higher education. His parents and sisters prefer Arun to Nirode and acknowledge his brilliance and bright prospects. But Nirode is only an ordinary clerk in a newspaper establishment though he calls "himself a journalist." Though in comparison with Arun he appears to have failed in the mission as his life. He is unwilling to face and accept this harsh reality. He suffers from a profound sense of isolation and alienation. His sister Monisha is married to Jiban, a middle rank officer in a Government Department and has a large joint family. Monisha is childless, sensitive and a victim of ill-matched marriage. She is happy neither with her husband nor with his family members. It seems that she has been transplanted in wrong soil. She is not much interested in religion even though she reads the _Bhagwad Geeta_. The younger sister Amla has received training as a
commercial artist in Bombay and has come to Calcutta to join an advertisement firm. Mother gets company of her neighbour, one retired Major Chaddha with whom she is also having an affair, which is much resented by Nirode that his Mother has illicit relationship with Major Chaddha. The novel ends with the funeral of Monisha on arrival of her Mother from Kalimpong. In this novel Anita Desai has portrayed feminine psyche of married woman’s life.

*Bye-Bye, Blackbird* (1971) Desai’s third novel has a different theme from the earlier two novels. It explores the immigrant sensibility vis-à-vis a new foreign culture and the consequent problems of adjustment, belonging, roots, past etc. The novel acquires added significance as it examines the questions of East-West encounter and cross-cultural relationships. There are three main characters Dev, Adit and Sarah- but Sarah, Adit’s wife has the most deserving claim to be the protagonist. Dev who came to England with a purpose to get higher education and has firm determination to return India. But here everything attracts him and changes his attitudes towards India. His anglophobia changed into anglophilia. Dev feels hurt and his feelings are injured when he finds himself being discriminated against because of the colour of his skin. When he is sometimes addressed as ‘wogs’ or ‘Macaulay’s bastards’. Other character Adit who came England to settle down here. He also married with English-girl Sarah and made-up his mind to settle down permanently in England. But slowly-slowly Adit becomes nostalgic about his childhood memories and intensity for his native country. Adit explains his anglophilia: “I like the pubs. I like the freedom! a man has here, economic freedom! Social freedom.” Adit has to face many happening, which creates mental sickness. At last Adit decides to leave
England. There is dilemma in his mind whether to leave England or to stay here. Outbreak of the Indo-Pak war is an additional factor and he takes a conscious decision to return to the country of his origin. At last his wife Sarah also accepts and welcomes her husband’s desire like a traditional Indian wife.

Desai’s fourth novel, Where Shall We Go This Summer? (1975) is the discourse of its protagonist Sita’s predicament – how to cope and contend with the dull tedium of a meaningless and joyless life in a sterile and indifferent city like Bombay. Sita resents her fifth pregnancy and gets obsessed with the idea that she may be able to keep the child inside her by revoking the power of magic in the idyllic surroundings of her maiden home in the Manori island. She is shocked by modern town culture and afraid of different nurses, doctors and the process of hospitalization. Therefore she seeks escape from the predicament.

Raman “Not an introvert, nor an extrovert – a middling kind of man, he was dedicated unconsciously to the middle way.”22 He does not understand the depth of the sea that lies in the heart of Sita. Thought of Raman’s coming gives her relief and pleasure. She finally goes back to live with her husband Raman and her children. As a sensitive lady, Sita expects a sensuous and emotional love from her husband. She regards the physical love “Nothing but appetite and sex.”23 She compares her husband and his friend with a band of animals. Sita sketches the past history of the island, her father’s struggles as a freedom fighter and his separation. His father started this Jeevan Ashram with a sense of dedication. Anita Desai has remarked in an interview to Jashbir Jain that Sita’s wish to prolong and perpetuate her
pregnancy in the island is kind of “rebellion right through to the last moment.”

In Desai’s fifth novel Fire on the Mountain (1977) Nanda Kaul is unique amongst the protagonists of Desai’s other novels. She is also very old, having great-grand children. The first part of the novel reveals reclusiveness of Nanda Kaul from society. As Prof. Kaul, the vice-chancellor and husband of Nanda Kaul carry on a love affair with Miss David, the arithmetic teacher. But she is a Christian so he can’t dare to break social custom for marry, Nanda Kaul wants to spend the remaining period of her life in complete solitude and in complete privacy. For this, she has chosen a political old house called Carignano in the hill town of Kasauli. Desai compares her to “a charred tree trunk”. Nanda Kaul thinks that her great grand child’s arrival will spoil her tranquility.

Ila Das is shown as a childhood friend of Nanda Kaul. She has to struggle hard after the death of her husband. Nanda Kaul held her by appointment in the college. But after the retirement of Mr. Kaul she resigns from the college. One day Ila Das is rapped and murdered by Preet Singh, a native of the same village. Because Ila Das has made a complaint against him for breaking the law of child marriage. As he has married his adolescent daughter with an old man. By her effort he comes on the road. The police inform Nanda Kaul about the corpse of Ila Das. As she comes to know about her reality she rushes immediately to the police station and at the same time Raka sees ‘A fire on the mountain’.

Desai’s sixth novel The village By the Sea (1982) is first novel for children. It reveals the struggle of Lila, thirteen years, and her brother Hari only twelve, yet as the eldest male child of a poor. They live at Thul village
are aware about the economic and social condition of their family. Hari feels responsible about his three sisters – Lila, Bela and Kamal. His mother who has fallen ill. His father who spends most of his time in drinking toddy. Seeing no way to come out from this poverty, Lila and Hari make a positive plan for their future. Hari goes to Bombay and works in two shifts - first as a waiter in Shri Krishna- Eating-House of Gowalia Tank, Bombay. This restaurant is one of the meanest and cheapest for beggars and laboures such types. Here even a “beggar could afford to buy himself a meal here.”26 Second in the watch-shop of Mr. Pan Wallah who is truly a benefactor, the kindest and most helpful of all. Here in the village – Thul Lila gets work in the house of Mr. De Silva who paid her amount for her work and for the treatment of her mother who is admitted in the hospital at Alibagh. Gradually this poor family overcomes its poverty.

At last with positive plans of setting up a poultry farm in village Thul, Hari comes back to his village. He meets his ailing mother who tells him the story of Lord Rama and Ravan, the demon King of Lanka. Rama returned his home, Ayodhaya with victory over Ravan, and hence Diwali is celebrated with lighting. Thus, Hari meets happily with his mother, father and sisters.

In Clear Light of Day (1980) Anita Desai explores a new theme which can be characterized as an existentialist theme of time in relation to eternity. The treatment of ‘Time’ as a fourth dimension brings a thematic newness to the novel. This novel deals with Das family but mainly dealing with the second generation – Bim, Tara, Raja and Baba. It covers two historical periods of India the freedom struggle and the dawn of independence. After the death of parents, only Mira Mausi remains in the
family to look after brothers and sisters. Mira Mausi is a widow who is brought to Das family where she plays the genuine role of a mother. She is portrayed as the traditional Indian woman working and suffering for others.

As the time passes on, Tara marries Bakul and leaves India for Ceylon. Bakul is working as India’s ambassador abroad. Tara is a foil to the character of Bim who is self-reliant and strong. Raja is full of admiration for Hyder Ali and shapes the dreams of his life on the model of Hyder Ali. He loves Islamic culture and Urdu. As he was “carried away by ideas, on wings of imagination, not by reason or analysis.” Later Raja deserts his family for Hyder Ali’s daughter. In old Delhi, in their parental house, only Bimla and his neurotic brother Baba live. Bimla scarifies all the pleasures of a young lady just for the sake of her physically handicapped brother, Baba. After their parents’ death, Bim is practically the caretaker of Das family. At the end of the novel, Bimla has been shown as a being who realizes all times through the flux that makes a reside of time past in present: “That soil contained all time, past and future, in it.”

According to some critics, with her novel In Custody (1984) Anita Desai enters a new phase in her creative career. The highly-strung or intensely introspective woman protagonist of the earlier novels here gives way to a male protagonist Deven who is a somewhat diffident and awkward hero. He is the son of a widow and faces many problems in his childhood. He marries Sarala in Delhi and comes as Hindi lecturer in Mirpore village. But Deven Sharma has unconscious desire for his poetic skill. He is fond of Urdu poems and has great charm for Urdu poet Nur. Nur is a great creative artist and has extra ordinary genius and magnetic attraction for anyone who can be impressed by his personality. A dramatic change comes in his dreary
life when his school chum Murad asks him to interview a prominent poet Nur Shahjehanbadi for a special number of his magazine on Urdu poetry. At this sudden opportunity: “Devan felt a glow creep through him at the thought of writing something in the language which had been his first language.” He even takes up the challenge of being a custodian to Nur’s poetry. After all Deven success to take interview and sends it to Murad’s journal Awaz. At last he thinks that Nur’s poetry is in his custody. He is custodian of Nur’s soul and spirit.

Journey To Ithaca (1995) makes a tremendous beginning in Indian English fiction. Like the journey image of T.S. Eliot’s protagonist in The Waste Land, the story of Journey to Ithaca rotates around the protagonist’s journey to the East. It follows the Greek Drama with its devices of Prologue and Epilogue. Laila as mother is the chief protagonist in this novel. She is also a questing figure. Since her childhood, she is not interested in bookish knowledge. She joins the group of revolutionary students of Alexandria. Her mother comments “Such a small child so head strong so independent, it was a dangerous, any one could see that.” Her detachment and her furious outbursts reflect that she is seeking something beyond ordinary comprehension. Laila has some definite plans about her future: “I want – I want to dance …. Not sit here, reading, reading, reading.” She finally comes to the Himalayan regions and seeks her regeneration through her master, Premananda Ji, who initiates her us his disciple. Another journey towards the East is done by Motteo and his wife Sophie in order to know the secrets of life, and death. To journey the east that arouses in him a curiosity to know all that belongs to the secrets of the spirit
Finally Motteo becomes Lila’s disciple. She initiates and fills him with spiritual power. At the end of the novel even his wife, Sophie, realizes and confesses the spiritual regeneration of Motteo.

_Fasting, Feasting_ the latest novel (1999) is the story of a lawyer’s family consisting of husband, wife, two daughters, and a son. The story moves around the plight of an unattractive, not so intelligent elder daughter Uma. The father is a typical middle-class Indian who rules over the family. After the birth of the son, Uma’s position becomes worse. In marriage she is deceived. After marriage it is realized that Uma’s husband is already married and has four children in Meerut. But here Arun, being a male child, is entitled to better facilities for his career and he is sent to the west for his further studies.

Equally moving is the story of Anamika, Uma’s cousin. A bright student who was formally admitted to a college in Oxford is not allowed to prosecute her studies. At last it is projected by her in-laws that she has committed suicide. In this novel Desai shows that the female gender is an oppressed and discriminated lot. The woman who is praised high, idealized and made a divinity in scriptures in practice abused and exploited by our society. Here Anita Desai has presented the grim reality of our society.

As Anita Desai has seen the best of the east and the west since her childhood. Some formative influences in shaping her creative faculty as a novelist are to be marked. The fictional art of the English novelists like James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, Wuthering Heights and Proust left deep influences and were overshadowed on her as a theorist of fiction. She also derives the social and visionary influences from the works of Schopenhauer and Bergson. The existential traits as propounded by Franz
Kafka, Freud, Camus, Soren Kierkegaard and Sartre. It can be noticed that she was influenced by some of these writers and their techniques. When she was interviewed by Prof. Ramesh K. Srivastava she confessed candidly about the structure, pattern, thematic contents and narrative mode offer fictional art: “In my twenties when I first began to work seriously and consciously on my novels. It was D.H. Lawrence, Virginia woolly, Henery James and Proust that influenced me more strongly... the novels of the Japanese writer Kawabata and more and more, modern poetry – particularly that of Rimbadd, Hopkins and Lawrence”

influenced her in later stages. She was only nine years when she first read Wuthering Heights, and although she could not have understood half of it, it struck her, “with gale force, it set my hair an end. I vibrated to it – I have never forgotten that experience and reality has never again seemed to me half as intense, significant or overwhelming as the world of books.”

Ever since Desai learnt to write at the age seven, she tried her hand at short stories, illustrated them diligently look as “proper books.” This, Desai claims, “has become such a deeply ingrained habit, it is like chain-smoking; I chain-smoke with words, with books.”

Bergson makes a distinction between “clock” time and “psychological” time. The clock time represents conformity, arbitrary measurements of duration in terms of standard units like seconds, hours, days etc. Psychological time represent subjectively or realism. There is a dialectical relationship between “clock-time” and “psychological-time”. Bergson feels that real experience does not correspond to the mathematical precision of clock time. The concept of Bergson duration is prevalent in the novels of Desai shifts from chapter to chapter while one chapter would be
narrated in the acting present, the next chapter would depict the past in the present tense. It suggests flux and reflux of the consciousness, where past, present and future lie all mixed together and the consciousness grasps as a "flowing irreversible succession of state that... melt into each other to form an indivisible process. This process is not homogeneous but heterogeneous. It is not abstract but concrete.... It is "pure time" or "real duration" when psychological time merges into clock time; it takes a new approach of working on memories. As Asha Kanwar observes:

The process of memory has therefore drawn the resistant outside world into subjectivity, there in the past, reiterating a kind of unity with it.... Time is profoundly ambiguous in nature, a force both life-giving and life – destroying... is also the very fabric of life, for reader as well as for the hero the very substance of experience; It is therefore at once duration and flow, and founds the density of the narrative at the same moment at which the latter tells of the tragic passage and ephemerality of all things.\(^{36}\)

Like Virginia Woolf, Anita Desai delineates an almost obsessive involvement with the character's past as a key their consciousness, the merger of present and past results into the operation of memories and nostalgia. A pre-occupation with nostalgia and memory thus becomes an integral part of her craft. This merger of time also forms what is called, in the terminology of Virginia Woolf, the stream of consciousness. This kind of novels became famous as "stream-of-consciousness” novel or as “interior monologues.” Anita Desai records the internal experiences of a character at
several levels of consciousness with the help of images and symbols. She is considered as painter of moods, of conflicting choices and inner experiences. As defined by Ramesh K. Shrivastava:

The stream-of-consciousness novel usually connotes uninterrupted, ceaseless, disordered and chaotic flow of the consciousness of its characters, including their varied sensations, disjointed thoughts, memories, associations and reflections which find expression in a stream of works, symbols and images corresponding to the pre-speech, non verbalized, disjointed, illogical level of mental emotional life.\textsuperscript{37}

Like Virginia Woolf, Desai makes use of the stream-of-consciousness as an integrate part of her fictional craft, but while Virginia Woolf uses parentheses to ensure the continuity of thought. Anita Desai uses dashes to the same effect:

He notices a dead branch on one of the silver oaks and, with a small muscle at the corner of his mouth twitching – for he is particular about garden – he complains of the laziness of the gardener.\textsuperscript{38}

Anita Desai’s first novel Cry, The Peacock is a sensitive study of Man’s predicament in a hostile universe. Her formal unity and neat transitions from one consciousness to the other heighten the feeling of disharmony and isolation. In the novel the beginning and the end are conventional enough but in Part II we are let adrift Maya’s stream-of-consciousness as when Maya needs Arjuna’s letter:
Dear Maya... Dear Sister, dear small stupid silly sweet sister. It said.... I heard you are married. Impossible to believe, yet it was, of course, the inevitable for you, and I am sure you are .... Strange Arjuna, strange brother.... I heard this voice again low swift, urgent, when he was serious.39

The main skeletal events of Tato's death, the visit to the Lals, the visit of Nila and her mother and the deaths of Gautama and Maya are held together by carefully selected details which Juxta-pose the past to the present as we are swept towards the inevitable future. Woolf and Desai generally avoid the conventional devices for character delineation. They use memory to give us access to the character's mind. Both Woolf and Desai are influenced by Bloomsbury's style. As Asha Kanwar has rightly observed in the connections: "The style of both authors have been called poetic... both make use of suggestion rather than description, the concept of time of both Woolf and Desai fits in with the definitions of Bergson and Proust... intermediate amorphous shades, often merging... is best experienced rather than defined."40

Characters in the novels of Anita Desai turn inward and speak to themselves in long soliloquies and monologues. Desai adopts the "Stream-of-consciousness" technique what Arnold Kettle calls "a mode of recollection." Maya, Monisha, Tara, Bim and Nirode – all live on recollections of things past. As Anita Desai's fiction finds its appropriate medium in the "language of the interior." It serves her purpose best when she dramatizes the innermost feelings of a character, as Desai depicts private and introspective territory with the soliloquy of Maya:
It became more and more difficult to continue my rest less pursuit of window after window. The heat expanded the bubble shrank, the pressure was tremendous, suffocating. My feet dragged and my body pused against the resistant atmosphere, as though I were wading, wading out of my depth. It was all strange, deathly, strange, innocence turning to guilt, Lilac to purple. Ochre to ugliness. Step by step. All silently.\textsuperscript{41}

This soliloquy depicts that Maya, a psychologically disturbed woman, obsessed with the idea of death is driven to a schizophrenic state like Sarala in Shakuntala Srinagesh's \textit{The Little Black box}.

Desai follows the existentialist treatment in her novels. Idea of existence can be analyzed in the following lines:

Existence is understood by the existentialist philosophers in a wider sense than the classical meaning of the term that a thing exists. It refers to the peculiarly human way of being and it goes under different names – Dasein Heidegger, Existence in Jaspers, and Poursoi in Sartre. It is the factual individual existence that can be known only subjectely by one who exists, and is beyond conceptional analysis or definition.\textsuperscript{42}

As Albert Camus comments "Passion which lifts the mind above the common place of a dispersed world, from which it nevertheless detaches itself, is the passion for unity."\textsuperscript{43} This remark offers the prime impulse behind Mrs. Desai’s fiction; the existential predicament which rooted in the
awareness of death as the ultimate fact of life. Her characters are all lonely and hunted by various obsessions.

Desai's protagonist's strife not only alone with the social customs but also the feeling of isolation and meaninglessness. Maya, Nirode, Amla, Monisha, Sarah, Sita, and Nanda Kaul – all suffer from a sense of isolation that is not merely physical but also psychic. They find themselves alone and anxious in a world in which they are unable to establish emotionally satisfying social affinities. To Kierkegaard, there are three stages in a man's existence "The aesthetic, the ethical and the religious." In each of these stages, man experiences the happiness, pleasure, despair and dread. To Kierkegaard "Anxiety" is a synonym to the word "dread". The anxiety level of mind becomes a journal predicament of man as a social being in the novel of Desai. According to Ramesh K. Srivastava, "It is obvious that existential predicament – the fact of death as the ultimate condition of man and the resultant sense of despair – is the aesthetic center of Desai's Fiction." Her character's problem is to wrest some sort of meaning what Camus has described as "the orifice" or "to control the course of the river, to understand life, at last, as destiny."

Discussing on the level of art, we find that Anita Desai assimilate the deeper influences Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence and George Eliot. Eliot regards not only one part but also the various parts being organized together for the purpose of the whole in the conception of 'form'. Anita Desai also acknowledges the validity of different parts for the larger whole:

Form, as an element of human experience, must begin with the perception of separateness, derived principally from touch (of which the other senses are modifications)
and that things must be recognized as separate wholes before they can be recognized as whole composed of parts, or before these wholes can be recognized as relatively parts of a large whole.\textsuperscript{47}

Anita Desai also prefers to use the pattern in place of the plot. Her plot structure, therefore, shows a splendid fusion of form and expression, contrivance and spontaneity. She considers Hopkins phrase “inscape”, for it is more natural and intuitive, where as plot and plan sound arbitrary and artificial – sometimes she wishes to avoid. The novelist herself writes:

I start writing without having very much of a ‘Plot’ in my mind…. I prefer the word ‘Pattern’ to ‘Plot’ as it sounds more natural, and even better. If I dare use it, is Hopkins word ‘inscape’ – while ‘Plot’ sounds arbitrary heavy-headed and artificial – all that I wish to avoid.\textsuperscript{48}

The title of psychological novel was applied to the fictional works of a group of novelists like Mrs. Gaskel, George Eliot, George Meredith, Joseph Conrad and Henry James in the beginning like a psychological novelist, Anita Desai has concern mainly with the portrayal of the mind, so complex in itself can be taken as Henery James defines this new kind of experience and memory:

What kind of experience is intended, and where does it begin and end? Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness…. It is the very atmosphere of the mind…\textsuperscript{49}
The themes seem to be occurring again and again in the novels of Anita Desai are: human relationships, alienation, loneliness and lack of communication; East and West encounter; violence and death. Her novels are engaged in exposing the labyrinth of the human mind and in indicating the ways to psychological fulfillment. These themes can be found in Richardson, Fielding, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Hemingway and Faulker. Whatever action there is in her novel is part of the integral whole composed of the human psyche, the human situation, the outer and inner rhythms. She makes no bones about the selection of her themes when she admits:

My novel don’t have themes – at least not till they are finished, published or read, do I see any theme, while writing. I follow my instinct. I follow flashes of insight. I veer away from or even fight any thing that threatens to distort or destroy this insight, and somehow come to the end and look back to see the pattern of foot prints on the sand.50

Desai’s novels are autobiographical, in the sense they mirror her “quiet” temperament. Her novels exude the feeding of gentle isolation. She believes it to be inevitable for the quality of one’s experiences must show through one’s work. As she comments:

In countless small ways the scenes and settings certainly belong to my life. Many of the mirror characters and incidents are also based on real life... start from some real experience which continuously grows in their imagination.51
Regarded it is true that she shares some of the qualities which made Jane Austen famous and special. Desai imparts no messages, preachers no morals. Like Jane Austen, she works on a narrow canvas her "two inches of ivory". Desai often tries to paint different pictures, which men seldom understand. Anita Desai also joins the company of female authors, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen and Bronte sisters. Desai's characters like the characters in Charlotte Bronte's novels suffer from lack of parental Oedipus or Electra Complex.

There are some influences of her contemporaries too on her writings. The problem of identity is a recurring theme in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Arun Joshi, Nanyantara Sahgal, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and Anita Desai. Most of these Indo-Anglian novelists have been abroad for long stretches of time and at certain points must have experienced the threat to their identity either directly or vicariously as is reflected in their novels. As Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man*, as the title itself shows, deals with the problem of identity of an Indian couple settled in England. Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* deals with the question of identity in an alien country. Like Kamala Markandaya Desai has artistically peeled layer upon layer of this intricate problem of identity which with "its acid touch corrodes the souls of countless people who embark upon their quest of greener pastures but are lost forever in unrecognizable shapes in the vast wilderness..."52 Structurally, Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* follows the pattern of Anatale France's *Thais*. Thais is a courtesan and lead a sinful life in Alexandria. Where as Paphnuce is a good man who lives in desert, when two characters meet, they change their places. After the meeting with Paphnuce, Thais goes

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to a monastery and gets salvation because she met Paphnuce, a good person. But Paphnuce is dammed as he met Thais. Just as the characters change in inverse proportion in Anatale France’s novel, similarly the two characters Dev and Adit converge and cross in Desai’s novel. In the beginning there is an anglophobia in Dev where as Adit has a deep-rooted liking for England. But in part II the characters change their places. Dev’s anglophobia changes to anglophilia and Adit’s anglophilia changes to anglophobia.

Sometimes Desai, like Hardy, uses the inorganic force of society with all organic powers in her pattern. She, thus, shows her superiority over her contemporaries in balancing the linguistic and literary perspectives in her novels. Anita Desai stands tall as the pioneer in the field of Indo-Anglian novel. Ramesh K. Srivastava has summarized her role in the field when he writes:

It is not only in the subject matter, characterization and in presenting the atmosphere of mind but also in the use of narrative technique, symbols, images and the disturbed time-scheme that Anita Desai serves to be called a psychological novelist.
References


4. Ibid p.11.


16. Ibid. p.4.


23. Ibid., 47.


28. Ibid., 182.


31. Ibid., 165.


34. Dalmia, *An interview with Anita Desai, the Times of India*, April 29, 1979, p.13


51. Yashodhara Dalmia, *Interview with Anita Desai*, The Times of India, April 29,1979
