CHAPTER – IV

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

Feminist consciousness provides a new awareness of the woman’s role in the modern complex world. The concept of feminism incorporates a broad spectrum of ideas and possesses an international scope. In patriarchal society, a woman is considered inferior to man. Gradually, as a result of consciousness raising efforts, women have become aware of the limits and dangers of feminity.

The novels of Anita Desai is basically female-oriented. She dives deep into the inner working of the protagonists and brings to light the hidden depth of human psychic mind particularly those of Indian women. Her works mark a new and mature phase in Indian English fiction. She claims the unique distinction of giving a new dimension to Indian English fiction through her very first novel, Cry, the Peacock (1963) - which shifted the focus to the unexplored realm of the female psyche.

Her early novels concentrate on the feminine sensibility at war with the hostility and callousness of a male-centred universe. Her later novels such Fire on the Mountain, In Custody, Baumgartner’s Bombay and Clear light of the Day reveal her sensitive apprehension of the
existentialist angst of the modern man trapped in Islands of loneliness, equally alienated from family and society.

Through her themes, characterization and images about confinement and lack of freedom, Anita Desai has raised pertinent questions regarding the status and role of women in the society. The most crucial issue that she takes up for discussions again and again is the question of women’s freedom.

Anita Desai’s novels contain a significant quantum of social criticism in them. They highlight the traditional status of women in society and the dominance of male in it. Maya’s helplessness is conveyed through the following one-line description: “she sat there, sobbing, and waiting for her husband to come home”.

Most of the protagonists of Anita Desai’s novels are seen as neurotic, psychotic, crazy, abnormal or eccentric and bordering on insanity, both by the majority of critics and other characters within the novels. Desai probes into their problems, be it of a mother, a daughter, a sister or a wife. At the same time, they examine the psyche of their creations and analyze their relationships with the society at large. In patriarchal system, the women lost her importance, she became just dependent and inferior. Her status in life and her identity is defined in terms of her relation to other; father, husband and son. The woman is known by her passivity and
obedience and if she rebels against her situation, it automatically renders her abnormal or crazy or neurotic.

The psychic needs of each individual vary according to the cultural set up and the social status. Every society has its own particular problems related to women. It is the culture of a particular country, which too determines the behaviour of a woman. But one common goal, however, is to please men – by being meek, quite, obedient and docile.

The Indian women in Desai’s novels are forever, dominated by and dependent upon a male member of her family. Her life centres on these relationships. If the affiliation with any of these individual is broken, she becomes mute because she has no nervous control over her emotions. Ultimately, this break-up drives her to either nervous breakdown or to a neurotic state of mind. This neurotic state of mind can be an attitude of compromise or moments of rebel as presented by Anita Desai’s women characters.

.... and man defines women not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being... She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute – she is the other..."
Feminism means a sense of personal course. The feminist consciousness is the consciousness of victimization. As a philosophy of life, it seeks to discover and change the more subtle and deep-seated causes of women’s oppression. It is a concept of raising of the consciousness of an entire culture. Present day feminism is a historically specific movement, rooted in French English thought and in British liberalism and consequently wedded in deeply critical style to notions of truth, justice, freedom and equality. So feminism must be viewed as rapidly developing major critical ideology or system of ideas in its own right.

In ultimate analysis, feminism emerges as a concept that can encompass both an ideology and movement for socio-political change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women’s subordination within any given society. As a philosophy of life, it opposes women’s subordination to men in the family and society, along with men’s claim to define what is best for women without consulting them, thereby offering a frontal challenge to patriarchal thought, social organization and control mechanism.

Feminism is a global and revolutionary ideology and as such calls for a definite stance, a set of firm, exacting attitudes. The ideology is political because it is concerned with the question of power; it is revolutionary because it is against the status quo.
A feminist is one who is awakened and conscious about women’s life and problem, and feminist consciousness is the experience in a certain way of certain specific contradictions in the social order. That means that feminism apprehends certain features of social reality as intolerable as to be rejected if one is to transform the society for a better future. In terms of its fundamental significance and impact on literary studies during the second half of the twentieth century, the feminist theory matches the major conceptual developments like Marxism and psychoanalysis.

The concept of woman is of central importance in the formation of feminist theory. But as a concept, it is radically problematic because it is crowded with the over determinations of the male supremacy, invoking in every formulation, the limit constricting other, or mediated self-reflection of a culture built on the control of women. Recent theorists resist the universalizing tendency of cultural feminism and highlight the difference between women and men in a way that undercuts arguments for the existence of an over-arching gendered essence.

Anita Desai is a very distinguished and distinct women novelist. In her novels, Indian English fiction has acquired a depth which it seldom had before. Anita Desai has written by and large about women characters and no wonder that most of her novels move around women characters. She is preoccupied with the theme of incompatible marital couples. We come across different kinds of women characters in her words.
The assumption that persists is that women are fundamentally different from men and this has been the cause of the subordination of women. It is argued, then, that women’s differences from men, is the chief reason of women being oppressed, denied, exploited and dehumanized. It ought to be stressed that the fundamental fact of male domination over women is discernible in all societies.

Patriarchy is justified by the biological difference between men and women and is causative factor of the universal oppression of women by men. Tracing the major attributes of patriarchy Adrienne Rich writes:

Patriarchy is the power of the fathers, a familial, social, ideological, political system in which men – by force direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labour determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everything shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male…

Yet again, only with the approval of the male and to the extent patriarchy is willing to accede, a woman can enjoy anything of privilege or influence. This has led to the pessimistic depiction of women as the innocent, passive, and powerless victims of male violence. Kate Milet’s
argument can be cited in this regard:

Instead of being openly coerced into accepting their secondary status, women were conditioned into embracing it by the process of sex-role stereotyping...

From early childhood, women were trained to accept a system which divided society into male and female spheres, with appropriate roles for each, and which allocated public power exclusively to the male sphere...³

At this point it becomes necessary to examine the differences that result in the biological trap in which a woman is entrapped. In the sexual act there is the animal like lack of self-restraint on the part of the male partner and there is the servility and larval vulnerability on the part of the female partner. Consequently the male partners vicariously experience sense of power.

There is always the tendency to hurt and insult the female because of the biological inferiority. The history of patriarchy presents a variety of cruelties and barbarities: the suttee executions in India, the crippling deformity of foot-binding in China, the lifelong ignominy of the veil in Islam, or the wide spread persecution of sequestration, the gynacium and purdah.

The patriarchal mentality has concocted a whole series of rationales about women to justify their acts against women. It is argued that the
woman's biological condition and the biological inferiority of woman sets her apart. The notion is that the female is essentially inferior.

And as the human institutions grow out from deep and primal anxieties and are shaped by psychological mechanism socially organized attitudes toward woman arise from basic tensions expressed by the male. Kate Millet offers a pointed observation which runs as follows:

As both the primitive and the civilized worlds are male worlds, the ideas, which shaped culture in regard to the female were also of male design. The images of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs. These needs spring from a fear of the “otherness” of women. Yet this notion itself presupposes that patriarchy has already been established and the male has already set himself as the human norm, the subject and referent to which the female is the “other” or alien. Whatever its origin, the function of the male’s sexual antipathy is to provide a means of control over a subordinating group and a rationale which justifies the inferior station of those in a lower order, “explaining” the oppression of their lives…

There is the persistent and worldwide feeling that the biological and sexual functions of the women are impure. One detects evidence of the
biological condition of the female being considered impure in literature and in myth.

The vent of menstruation, for instance, is a largely clandestine affair, and the psychological effect of the stigma attached has a great effect on the female ego. There is a large anthropological literature on menstrual taboo; the practice of isolating menstruating females in huts at the edge of the village occurs throughout the primitive world.

It ought to be noted that in all patriarchal societies the dominant male eats first or eats better food, and even where the male and female eat together, the male is served by the female. Yet again, all patriarchs enforce taboos against women touching ritual objects like those of war or religion or food. It is because women are considered by their biological condition unclean. Therefore, the women are not permitted to eat with men. Women eat apart in many countries even at this point of time.

Moreover, all patriarchs have hedged virginity and defloration in elaborate rites. Virginity presents an interesting problem in ambience. On the one hand, it is a mysterious good because it is a property received in tact. On the other hand it represents an unknown evil associated with the man of blood. Ernest Crawley makes a pertinent observation which is worth quoting here:

So auspicious is the event of defloration that in many tribes the owner groom is willing to relinquish breaking the seal of
his new possession to a stronger or older personality who can neutralize the attendant dangers. Fears of defloration appear to originate in a fear of the alien sexuality of the female.\textsuperscript{5}

It is the object who endures the attendant bodily pains and mental anguish. In defloration it ought to be noted that in the houses of men, boys have such low status that they are often called the wives of their initiators the term wife implying both inferiority and the status of sexual object. The derogation of feminine status in lesser males is a patriarchal trait.

At this point of discussion, it is necessary to refer to the two leading myths of Western culture. They are the classical tale of Pandora’s box and the Biblical story of the Fall. In both cases earlier man’s concepts of feminine evil have passed through a final literary phase to become highly influential ethical justifications of things as they are.

Pandora was the origin of the damnable race of women a plague which men must live with. And when patriarchy wishes to exalt sexuality, it celebrates fertility through the phallus; when it wishes to denigrate sexuality it cites Pandora. Kate Millet’s observation throws more light on the stance which deserves mention:

Patriarchal religion and ethics tend to lump the female and sex together as if the whole burden of the onus and
stigma it attaches to sex were the fault of the female alone. 
There by sex, which is known to be unclean, sinful, and 
the debilitating, pertains to the female, and the male identity 
is preserved as a human, rather than a sexual one .......

The myth of the Fall is a highly finished version of the same 
theme of the female being biologically unclean and sinful. It 
has an enormous power over the mind of the female even in 
a rationalist era. This mythic version of the female as the 
cause of human suffering, knowledge, and sin is still the 
foundation of sexual attitudes, for it represents the most 
crucial argument of the patriarchal tradition of the West. It 
ought to be stressed that everywhere in The Bible knowing 
is synonymous with sexuality and clearly a product of 
contact with the phallus. To blame the evils and sorrows of 
life on the female is in vogue from times past to time 
present. 6

And the pointed argument of Louis Wirth reads will in conjunction 
with the observation with Kate Millet and it runs thus:

As women in patriarchy are for the most part marginal 
citizens when they are citizens at all, their situation is like 
that of other minorities here defined not as dependent upon 
numerical size of the group, but on its status. A minority
group of people who because of their physical or cultural characteristics are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment …..  

But then, interestingly Freud pays chivalrous compliment to the female arguing that the woman is the most beautiful thing that the world can offer. And the woman is the ideal of womanhood. And nature has determined woman’s destiny through beauty, charm, and sweetness. And it is an acknowledged fact that women submitted willingly to the sexual and social subjection of pairing and then to monogamous marriage because, in fact women find sexuality burdensome.

The women constantly longed for relief by the right of chastity. The notion of sexual resistance, the defense of integrity with frigidity, or the preservation of independence through chastity are common themes in a male dominated society. And chastity, or even the negative attitudes towards coitus, which accompany frigidity, operated as patriarchal social and psychological stratagems to limit or prohibit woman’s pleasure in sexuality. But then they could also be transformed in to protective feminine stratagems in a refusal to capitulate to patriarchal force.

It is with such a background that one examines the Oeuvres of Anita Desai. In Fire on the Mountain, the novel for which Anita Desai was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978, the protagonist Nanda Kaul has been depicted as a recluse by Choie, though there is a parital element
of compulsion of circumstances also. Two other important characters – Reka, Nanda’s great grand-daughter, and Ila Das, her friend since childhood days – help us in understanding and appreciating the theme of alienation in its entirety.

Some critics have pointed out that after the death of her Vice-chancellor husband, Nanda was forced to seek a life of seclusion and solitude at carignano in the Kasauli hills. She had fulfilled all her duties as a wife and as a mother as all her children were now well-settled and wanted to lead a life of peace, quietness and privacy, away from the life of clubs and parties in the day and dreary urban environment.

Therefore, the desire to guard her privacy with the stubbornness of a fanatic, is to be viewed as a positive and life-affirming stance of her psyche. She had been glad to leave it all behind, in the plains, like a great, heavy, difficult book that she had read through and was not required to read again. She also understands and appreciates the compulsions of her children who did not and could not invite her to live with them as they had their own families and jobs to tend to.

This fact, however, also portrays a reality of the upper middle class urban sensibility which values its own sense of privacy and due to various compulsions of time and space, the nuclear families are fast catching up.

Anita Desai, with reference to the character of Nanda Kaul, exhibits this prophetic vision about the future reality of urban life in India, which is
definitely a clue for the sociologist that something concrete may have to be done about this newly–emerging problem on the socio-economic scene. At her own individual level, Nanda Kaul does want to confront her ‘self’ to metaphysical reckoning of the meaning of life and existence.

Therefore, when she gets the news about the arrival of her great grand-daughter Raka, she does get disturbed at the psychological level. But she is also well aware that she cannot help the situation. When Raka actually arrives, all her apprehensions prove false as like her, Raka too is a recluse; and being a recluse by nature rather than by choice, she not only shows utmost indifference towards her great grandmother, she even resents any interference in her own privacy. She wants to be completely involved in the joys and raptures and peace that the world of nature can give her. She admits:

She appeared to have no needs. Like an insect burrowing through the sandy loam and pine-nee-dies of the hillsides, Raka wanted only one thing – to be left alone and pursue her own secret life amongst the rocks and pines of Kasauli.⁸

Thus Raka’s situation, in reality opens before Nanda Kaul, a new dimension of ‘alienation’ which in the context of the modern theories of eco-feminism, empowers women to the process of self-actuation and self-realization in a much more meaningful manner than otherwise.
Ila Das is the only character in the novel who does not have a negative streak in her temperament. She works as a welfare officer with a complete sense of dedication. She enlightens the villagers about the benefits of family planning, about various diseases, and tries her best to prevent them from practicing social evils and superstitions. She tries her best to relate with person whom Ila had tried to educate about the foolishness and undesirability of child-marriage, assaults her, rapes her and finally kills her.

Her death leaves Nanda Kaul too stunned to carry on her normal life. Ila’s death and Raka’s setting the forest on fire, bring the violence in life and society to the centre-stage.

Anita Desai, with the help of these images of loneliness, death and violence, is pointing towards the imbalance between illusion and reality, the eternal existential problem of the human condition. In a very subtle manner, she seems to convey that if we want to make our existence meaningful, we must try to maintain a discreet balance between reality as it exists and the illusions that surround it. This is a positive and affirmative echo that emerges from a close analysis of Fire on the Mountain.

In the fiction, Fire on the Mountain Anita Desai examines the theme of feminism from the point of view of how Nanda Kaul suffers because of her husband’s attitudes and approaches to life. In fact, Fire
**On the Mountain** deals with the plights and predicaments experienced by Nanda Kaul because of her Vice Chancellor husband.

Nanda Kaul suffers a life of dull routine because her Vice chancellor husband imposes his life conditions on her. That is precisely why she alienates herself from her Vice chancellor husband and leads a secluded life on the British conceived hill resort of Carignano.

Nanda Kaul psychologically feels that her Vice chancellor husband is unsympathetic, and un-understanding, and callous. As such Nanda Kaul turns her mind on appreciating the scenes and sights of nature and her interests disclose her neurosis caused by her Vice Chancellor husband. Nanda Kaul is interested in a charred tree trunk in the forest, a broken pillar of marble in the desert, a lizard in a stone wall ...⁹

These reflect the neurotic and psychic mind - set of Nanda Kaul. The main problem with Nanda Kaul is that the experiences, the plights and predicaments with her life turn into one of continual struggle and continual suffering all because of her Vice chancellor husband, who is totally absorbed in his academic routine, badminton parties with Miss. David, and indulging in daily desk work.

In fact, Nanda Kaul neurotically feels that she is forced by her Vice Chancellor husband to experience the existential predicaments of
continual struggle and persistent suffering. Nanda Kaul considers that her husband has left her with her life in shambles and with little nerve in her to even a heave a sigh of relief now and then.

Incidentally, the pointed observation of Brhmanadachary is worth quoting here:

Anita Desai in her novels takes up many complex themes, ranging from the relationships between men and women, between children and parents, between men and society, sexual repression to psychological struggles of the characters. [My Emphasis] .......... 10

And it must be admitted that structurally and contextually, and technically and from the points of view of fictional elements Fire On the Mountain is a signal success for Anita Desai, the Indian woman writing in English. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, the first accomplished critic on Indian writing in English makes the pointed observation:

As we remain mesmerized by Anita Desai’s verbal artistry and her uncanny evocation of atmosphere, her tale unfalteringly glides by and we force a rendition of the veil of happening of memory to gain entry in to the realm of personal experience and attain the desired finale of acceptance........ 11
Many protagonists of Anita Desai’s novels are seen as neurotic, psychotic, abnormal both by the majority of critics and other characters within the novels. In her novels the cause for the weakness is by and large the socio-familial background and upbringing.

**Cry, the Peacock**, Desai’s first novel, chronicles the morbid dread, descent into madness, and suicide of Maya, a young Delhi housewife who is trapped in a loveless, arranged marriage to the much older Gautama.

In Anita Desai’s fiction, **Cry The Peacock** the male character Gautama by his patriarchal attitudes of dominating over his wife and by his indifference to her feelings, thoughts, and experiences causes the sufferings and pains to his wife, Maya. And Maya suffers neurotically because Gautama ignores her and never bothers to understand her needs and wants. Gautama’s diagnosis of her neurosis is correct. For Gautama, Maya’s psychic trouble is too strong to be handled.

Maya’s timid nature is due to her growth and development without maternal love. Loss of her mother at an early age, damaged Maya’s psyche and contributed predisposing cause for a deviant and negative behaviour and depressive disorders towards the later part of her life. She constantly broods over and fantasizes about her childhood days and finally regresses into them by going mad. The reminiscences of the rosy past by her, serves as a substitute mechanism, which works as a defence against
her anxiety and conflict. She thinks:

Yes, now that I go over it in my mind, my childhood was one in which much was excluded, which grew steadily more restricted, unnatural even, and in I live as a toy princess in a toy world. But it is a pretty one.\(^{12}\)

Her father’s conflict with her brother also increases her neurosis. The basic factor of her neurosis is her encounter with the albino astrologer in the temple and his horoscope about the marriage. The albino had predicted death in the fourth year of her marriage. This prediction haunts her continuously and affects her married life.

Maya finds her life empty without children. She aspires for love and life. Toto, her pet dog has been substituted for children in her life. The intense loneliness which follows the death of her dog makes Maya conscious of her loveless, lonely existence and the neglect and total indifferent of her husband.

On his part understanding was scant, love was meager.\(^{13}\)

Maya’s tragedy occurs because, she is too demanding of Gautama’s attention. While Gautama is a calm and practical man, Maya is too self-centred, over-demanding and possessive in her attitude to relationship. Maya’s neurosis arises out of her need for Gautama’s concern for either her, “soft willing body or the lonely wanting mind that need his bed”\(^{14}\), but
he is not bothered about either of these. According to him women can neither be intelligent nor logical.

The episode of the laboratory monkey increases her uneasiness and she appeals to Gautama: “Let me out! I want to live, Gautama, I want to live”\textsuperscript{15}.

This is certainly the reaction of a neurotic mind: But this agitation is somewhat significant and it reveals her fighting spirit. According to Maya, the cause of her neurosis is her getting "too involved" in others. This is exactly the agony of a neurotic. Maya’s excessive attachment for Gautama and Gautama’s detachment increases her neurotic behaviour. The fear of insecurity is dominant in Maya. A simple thing like walking home from station makes her loose control over herself. Ultimately, she cries out, “you have left me deserted”. She does not feel like staying with her husband alone. She says,

\begin{quote}
God, to be alone with him again, my unknowing, unsuspecting and stand hard adversary in this one irie battle, all night, all day\textsuperscript{16}.
\end{quote}

The root of Maya’s suffering lies in her excessive involvement with the sensuous beauty of life. Maya “is alive” through all her senses and live intensely for each moment”. She has to fight her battle for life alone, for, there is no one in whom she can confide her fears and anxieties except
Gautama her husband, whom her confused mind perceives more as an adversary than a confidant.

Maya herself is in two minds about her relationship with Gautama. At times she looks at him as her guardian and her protector. Trapped by lust for life and greed for experience, Maya is imprisoned by her obsession with her own life. It is not just the incompatibility, the distance between them alone that is the cause of Maya’s suffering. The realization that her desire to live is stronger than her love for Gautama had a shattering effect on her already battered self. *Cry, the Peacock* is really:

Maya’s effort to tell her story to herself, to discover some meaning in her life, and even to justify herself to herself\(^{17}\).

Anita Desai, thus clearly states the story of Maya, is the story of suffering of a noble woman, who was subjected to several psychological jolts which finally threw her off the balance.

When Gautama points out to Maya that for a woman to become pregnant is a matter of joy and it should not draw tears of sadness from a pregnant woman, Maya flies into tantrums. The textual passage makes interesting reading.

I [Gautama] don’t even understand what you are working your self up over..... Like a foolish baby ..... a round faced child in a white petticoat [you are crying] ........... You are
a grown woman no, Maya, no light headed child. You mustn’t allow yourself to grow so upset....

But she does read any sense in his encouraging words. She is frantically trying to terminate her pregnancy and wanting to stay away from Gautama.

And Gautama express only his annoyance at Maya frequently slipping into sad or angry moods or hysterical states. Being a neurotic, Maya with paranoid tendencies, suffers because of the indifferent attitudes of Gautama.

Similar is the strain in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* where Raman causes the sufferings to his wife, Sita. It is because of the indifference and patriarchal approaches of Raman that Sita suffers and turns into a neurotic woman.

Sita and Raman face the problem of inadjustability and incompatibility due to their different perceptions of life as also due to their temperamental polarities. Sita finds it too demanding to live upto the life and to save her fifth child, yet to be born, from the violence that she finds all around herself in the barren and dirty city of Bombay and she goes to the Manori Island.

This decision had, however, been arrived at after a lot of deliberation and after she becomes painfully distressed at the ‘tedium and ugliness of a
meaningless life’. In spite of her best efforts, she had failed to find a viable solution to the confusion and muddle of her life. Hence, she muses:

Only connect, they say. So, he had spent twenty years connecting, link by link, this chain. And what is one to do with a chain? It can only throttle, choke and en-slave\textsuperscript{19}.

Though towards the end of the novel which in other words is the end of Sita’s pilgrimage’, we find her tired, disheveled and vacant, like a player at the end of performance, clearing the stage, packing the costumes. In equal parts saddened and relieved, the novel does not end on a sad note. She returns from the Manori Island a saddened person, yet certainly she is now wiser about the ways of life.

Towards the concluding portion of the novel, Anita Desai further underscores the questions about the mystery and enigma of life:

But was she sure it was not the other way round after all. Had not her married years, her dulled years, been the false life, the life of pretence and performance, and only the escape back to past, to the Island, been the one sincere and truthful act of her life, the only one not false and staged? How could she tell? How decides? Which half of her life was real and which unreal? Which of her selves was true, which false?\textsuperscript{20}
She is further called upon to leave the stage with this impression about the exciting and teasing ambiguity of life.

All was bright all was in a whirl, life had no periods, no stretches. It simply swirled around, mudding and confusing, leaving nowhere.²¹

This certainly is neither nihilism nor escapism. She finally makes a compromise, though it is hard to do so. She understands that life and all its business must be continued. Life remains a riddle, but there is now realization of the need to live it in a positive manner, for other also.

And Sita considers any food as fit only for animals and not human beings and she wants to keep away from Raman because she feels that he has great animalism in him. She is fed up with the Metropolitan life in Bombay. She considers the life in Bombay as dreary and monotonous. Unable to live in the strife — torn present, Sita is in the throes of identifying herself with the past, represented by her childhood on Manori island twenty years ago.

The past becomes a psychic residue in her personal unconscious the backdrop of her life, and her obsessive preoccupation with it gives her a strength to leave her home, husband two children and the urbanized life of Bombay for Manori island where she thinks she would
be able to live under a magic spell.

She [ Sita ] saw that island illusion as a refuge, a protection. It would hold her baby safely unborn, by magic [ for she is in her advance stage of pregnancy]. Then there would be the sea - it would wash the frenzy out of her, drown it. Perhaps the tides would lull the children, too into smoother, softer beings. The grove of trees would shade them and protect them.

Neurotically, Sita suffers from Father -fixation that is why she marries Raman much senior to him in age. Sita wants to avoid Raman and Bombay life by withdrawing to the island home of her father in Manori island.

Sita’s desire to up-hold traditional values of an integrated life in the face of the chaotic values of modern city civilization is at the root of her unhappiness and loss of her identity. And it is because of Raman she is unable to adjust to changed life conditions in Bombay in her father – in law ‘s house. Sita experiences existential sufferings because she is left uncared for by her husband Raman. She suffers neurotically because of her husband.
M. Mani Meitei makes a cryptic statement, which argues to the point, and it is worth quoting here:

Sita’s problem seems to be due to maladjustment with her husband; the home life and surrounding atmosphere nauseating her....

A close examination of the whole situation, however, will reveal that Sita’s is more of a psychological problem than being external, as resulting from unfulfilled wishes ....\(^\text{23}\)

And Anita Desai’s *Journey to Ithaca* is a compassionate portrait of people struggling to find a spiritual home. It delineates Matteo as the self-centered individual, who is totally unconcerned about the feelings, thoughts and experiences of his German wife, Sophie.

As stated earlier her fiction is twice born, for it germinates in her native tongue and wears the local colour and then it is accommodated to fit into the stream of the best traditions of British English and British conventions and practices.

It is understood that Anita Desai is a born genius, But then through her power of observation, and her self study she had widened her intellectual horizon, and in the process streamlines her acquired scholarship. With a brilliant brain and brilliant soul, with Indian ingenuity and Western back ground, with writing capacities and real mastery over
writing skills and Queen’s English she has created wonderful works of art.

With such writing skills, Anita Desai has subjected the major theme of feminism. It is with her feminist perspectives that Anita Desai argues how and who are governed by chauvinistic approaches and patriarchal designs subject women to suffer alienation. The indifferent and egoistic men force women to suffer. In fact the life of the hapless Indian women turn into of suffering, struggle one of fatalism, and debasement.

Anita Desai subjects these feminists ideas to excellent literary treatment. Finally that it is established that it is because of the un-understanding men, that women suffer, and therefore, impose alienation on themselves. The un-understanding men thrust all that they experience on their women. This is new valence given to appreciate the fiction of Anita Desai.

Anita Desai’s novels thus occupy a unique place in Indian English Literature as invaluable works of psychological study of Indian women’s inner world from a feminist perspective.
REFERENCES


4. Ibid., p.46.


6. Ibid., pp.51-52.


9. Ibid., p.23.


13. Ibid., p.8.

14. Ibid., p.134

15. Ibid., p.140.

16. Ibid., p.126.


21. Ibid., p.158
