CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Anita Desai’s novels are a true reflection of the women’s situation in male dominated society in which women’s evolvement as individuals is obstructed. They are so handicapped by domestic tension that they are made incapable of reaching out to wider world. The dark domestic atmosphere suffocates them, some of them try to adjust themselves with this suffocation, whereas, some extreme cases go the extent of destruction and death. They rise above despair and darkness, make a heroic attempt to overcome the calamities of life. They realize that despite anxiety and despair, difficulties and complexities life is worthy to be lived.

A close study of novels shows that almost all her women characters, Maya, Monisha, Sarah, Nanda, Sita, Bim, Amla, Raka, Sophie and Uma go through emotional deprivation. The peculiar childhood, un-gratifying adolescence and dissatisfying middle years do not render them an opportunity to reach maturity of thought and feelings. Their fathers are indifferent to them in their childhood and husband’s ignore their emotional needs in their adult life. Consequently, these characters find it difficult to evolve their self and their situations pose a grave threat to their survival.

As the structure of society and culture have changed during the modern period, the feeling of alienation has resulted inevitably in the lives of women. In some of Anita Desai’s novels, the debilitating effects of alienation are only mildly felt, in others they lead to scenes of trauma and mental crisis. Whatever, its effects, alienation and its horning influences on female self is portrayed sensitively and subtly by Anita Desai. All her novels have something definite to say about the feminine psyche caught up in a web of turmoil, anguish and inevitably alienation. Her earlier novels *Cry, the Peacock, Voices in the City and Fire on the
Mountain end with a tragic note, but the negative approach presented in these novels is not a part of Anita Desai’s personality. The later novels like Where shall we go this Summer, Clear Light of Day, In Custody, Journey to Ithaca. The village by the Sea and Fasting, Feasting end with a positive note. A change in attitude comes with Clear Light of Day and Anita Desai nurtures ‘feminine self’ through acceptance, compromise and accommodation rather than withdraws and rejects or suicide or death. We find a remarkable change in Anita Desai’s vision of life. She seems to have a broader and comprehensive viewpoint of human life. We observe a steady progress in the march of females from a negative attitude to a positive attitude, from self-alienation to self-discovery and from alienation to de-alienation.

Being an Indian, Anita Desai has taken family as a basic unit. Family, social, psychological, biological and cultural forces have their sharing in molding her female characters who are highly sensitive and extraordinarily aware of their own actions and the hostile situations existing around them. We notice a touch of neurosis and schizophrenia in the behaviour of some women characters. But the signs and the symptoms of neurosis and schizophrenia in their cases are not of severe kind. Inner struggle and discordant social and cultural forces produce neurotic and schizophrenic situations in their lives. These adverse forces become hindrance in the development of feminine self and make her women protagonists experience a terror of despair, loneliness and frustration and further causes mental crises in their lives.

Anita Desai has depicted women of all ages and groups in her novels. By presenting the stereotype of woman and her problems in an understanding and sympathetic way, Anita Desai makes everybody realize the predicament of the women in a male-dominated society. Almost all novels mirror the different facets of feminine psyche.
Anita Desai’s women characters are no more wooden creatures, subject to suppression and male domination only. They are the women having their feminine self. There is a transformation in their characters. The transformatory power of Antia Desai’s novels lies in her taking up the task of revealing the process of self – awareness at work in feminine self. *In Cry, the Peacock*, Maya’s feminine self awakes and she, in the end, realizes that Gautama, her husband, is feelingless, preoccupied with his work, her-in-laws never consider her as a respectable and lovable member of the family. She also realizes that her physical and mental needs remain unfulfilled. It hurts her feminine self and finally it forces her to push Gautama down from the terrace to death–Monisha, in *Voices in the City* realizes that her life is completely weathered away. Her life has no attachment, no enthusiasm, no inspiration. She feels that she is treated as an outcast in her own family. It disturbs her mind. Her feminine self – is awakened and ultimately she decides to end her life. In *Bye–Bye Black–Bird* Sarah’s feminine self is not merely wooden. Her self is awakened and she realizes that she is neither English nor Indian like her husband Adit. She also realizes that she has become a “Nowhere Woman” and fails to realize as to which group does she really belong to. Her self doesn’t tolerate it and finally she accepts a strategy of withdrawal. Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* also shows her self’s awareness in her behaviour. She finds her life shadowy and lonely when she realizes that her husband, Raman and her children are totally alien to her, the way ladies behave in the house and the violence she witnesses in family and society. She is suffocated in such atmosphere. The growth of her feminine self is choked. Hence, she decides to withdraw from her husband, children and the family and not to give birth to the fifth child. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* experiences her husband’s dishonesty with her, callous and ungrateful attitude of her children. It gives the torturing blow to her feminine self. As a result it is finally awakened and she decides to live a desolate life in Carignano. She has been
withdrawn from life and family. We also find the self – awareness at work in feminine self of the women of later novels like – Bim, Sarla, Lotte, Sophie and Uma.

Anita Desai’s female protagonists are not mere goddesses or robots but they are individuals. She has presented both the extremes. If at one extreme there are sensitive women characters, on the other, we also find thick skinned women with blunt sensibility. In *Cry, the Peacock* we find examples of two extremes Maya, on the one extreme, is fragile, with deep cultural roots and refined sensibilities. On the other extreme is her friend Pom who absolutely does not bother and is a typical woman with love for clothes, jewellery, colour, and looks. *Voices in the City* articulates Monisha’s plight and shows the women as female birds in the cages. She loves to see herself as an unfettered individual and not to become at any stage a complacent, tame wife who adjusts herself to a gilded cage. Sarah in the *Bye – Bye Blackbird* is alienated from her parents. She is a woman who is always aware of those forces that change her destiny as a female. Even with all her acceptance Sarah remains an outsider in her own chosen world. She is very calm by nature. She lets her husband dominates her and take all decisions, even very important ones concerning her, without consulting her. Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, on the one extreme, shudders at the idea of giving birth to a fifth child, she withdraws herself from her husband and decides to live on the magic island. On the other extreme, she consents to the advice of her husband and comes back to Bombay to deliver. Sarla in *In custody* is usual, ordinary, compromising missing and a lady of normal temperament. She tolerates unhappy material life. Her responsibilities as a mother makes her frustrated as she has no money in her hands. Her predicament is the lot of every second Indian woman. Sophie, in *Journey to Ithaca* is a very much devoted wife. But as a normal woman she becomes jealous from Matteo’s affinity to the mother. She decides to isolate from Matteo’s world. She stays in the ashram and gives birth to baby girl, Isabel. Next in the line is, Uma in the novel, *Fasting, Feasting*. Uma is a plain, simple, uneducated, spinster
daughter from a close unit orthodox Indian family. She is trapped at home, smothered by the overbearing parents and their traditions. She is less valued child. She grows depressed and never tries to assert herself in the family. On the other extreme there is Aruna who marries in the good family of Bombay and dominates everybody. Her assertiveness highlights Uma’s depressed nature. Uma is reduced to the status of a maid servant in the family, a liability.

The strained conjugal and familial relationship hampers women’s evolvement of feminine self in the novels of Anita Desai. Most of female characters are victims of strained relationship with society and with family. The gap of communication between Gautama and Maya is felt throughout *Cry, the Peacock.* Both Maya and Gautama discharge over trifles and are tiff with each other. Maya considers her marriage to be a ‘hopeless regret’ and a ‘broken affair’. She feels a torture, guilt, dread and imprisonment within the four walls of her private hell. Like every woman, Maya desires physical and psychological demands to be fulfilled. But she realizes that Gautama is unconcerned about it. When she desires a close contact with him to ease her anguish, he preaches the doctrine of non-attachment from *Gita* to her. It hampers herself. She alienates from everything. She finally involves herself in sensual life to the extreme of such attachment that her past romantic life becomes an obsession which resulted in homicide and suicide. Nila, Gautama’s sister is another female character in the novel. The growth of, her feminine self is also influenced by her unhappy married life. She comes to Gautama because she wants a divorce from her husband.

*Voices in the City* presents a moving picture of Monisha’s married life. To Monisha, her marriage with Jiban is the most excruciating of all social institutions that traps and tortures her isolated feminine self. Monisha’s relationship with her husband is characterized only by loneliness and lack of communication. Monish with her husband Jiban lives in a conventional culture in which a woman’s most important roles are child bearing, cooking,
cutting vegetables, sieving food and brushing small children’s hair under the authority of a stern mother-in-law. In such atmosphere, Monisha feels suffocation and as a result, her feminine self hampers completely. She has lost her own feminine identity. Finally, Monisha’s claustrophobia and exasperation ends in suicide.

The growth of Sita’s feminine sensibility in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, is weathered in the company of her practical minded husband, Raman. Sita desires to be drenched in the rain of human emotions and love from her husband, but it is in vain. She develops differences with Raman and decides neither to give birth nor to undergo an abortive surgery but to keep it undelivered. Though her feminine self is hampered, she does not seek separation from Raman. She does not take any drastic steps as suicide but to prepare to face life and find a solution. In *Fire on the Mountain*, Nanda Kaul’s relationship with her husband is seen only through her own reminiscences and these are never pleasant. Her feminine self is shocked when she comes to know, her husband’s liaison with Miss David. Even their house she considered to be, ‘his house, never hers’. She is alienated from herself and moves alone to Carignano.

*In Custody* presents how Sarla’s dreams are shattered by her marriage to a man of academic profession. Sarla’s self is suffocated in a middle class family which suffers from socioeconomic problems. Sarla longs for a luxurious life while Deven aspires for an intellectual environment Deven ignores the static relatives of his married life as well as his household responsibility. It hurts Sarla emotionally.

In *Journey to Ithaca* we find that Sophie’s, feminine sensibilities are suffered from her husband’s, disgust. Sophie, a German journalist follow her husband Matteo to India and wanders with him from one ashram to another. As a young wife she has desires to fulfill herself but this is not possible in the stuffy and unruly environment of the ashrams. She longs
to go back to her country. Both of them grow indifferent to each other with one seeking for soul and other for body. Their approach towards life is different. The bitterest quarrel is approached in regard to their son’s education. Finally, she leaves India for her country. But when she receives a telegram about Matteo’s sickness, her feminine self does not permit her to live alone without her husband. She rushes to India and perceives the higher vision of live in her husband. The women characters in the novels of Anita Desai are often socialized to develop their sense of feminine self from the relationship, when they feel that the quality of their relationship is poor, it impacts their well being and self.

In Anita Desai’s fictive world the centrality of feminine self is concentrated in terrifying isolation, finding it hard to reconcile with the world around ‘self. Her female protagonists are constantly confronted with the stupendous task of defining their relation to themselves. Acceptable behavioral pattern is alien to them. The root is not far to find. They by and large, have strange childhood from which they develop a negative self-image and aversion. The immediate result is their fragmented psyche to view world as a hostile place. For them, the domestic life is not their world rather it is a trap where their feminine self is endangered and brought solitary confinements. Hence, most of female protagonists in Anita Desai’s novels are misfit in their society largely because of either some defects in themselves or some evil in the society.

The study of Desai’s novels leads one to the fact that most of her women are driven into themselves to realize their own self. In the process they develop fears, obsessions, neurosis, and schizophrenia and gradually withdraw from society including families and husbands. Maya, in *Cry, the Peacock* requires a love partner with wide sympathies, highly sensitive, imaginative and responsive temperament. But, in the course of time, she realizes that Gautama, her husband cannot cope with her needs. Her real self is banished she becomes
neurotic. She is estranged from herself and depersonalization takes place. It results into depersonalization of Maya who feels many a time that she is not human, only a dream and she loses interest in the things outside herself. She lives in fear of her own death. Lastly, she convinces herself that Gautama does not love life. Then she herself assumes that Gautama has hurt her feminine self by rejecting her love and other expectations. In order to subdue her inner turmoil, she kills him in a vindictive rage. Then, she drags herself into the complete darkness of the world of insane.

Monisha in *Voices in the City* lives in traditional joint family in which a number of traditional bindings are imposed on her. It makes her life miserable. Her life is confined to cooking food and washing clothes. However, she doesn’t mind it. But when she realizes that she is treated indifferently, and her husband, Jiban, is unable to understand and fulfill her emotional needs, she experiences a loss of feminine identity and suffers from mental agony. As a result, she withdraws into the world of her own. She remains aloof from her husband, in-laws and others. After the charge of theft she becomes neurotic and opts for violent end.

The inter-racial marriage of Sarah in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* affects her day-to-day life. Wherever Sarah goes out she faces humiliation and insult. She sacrifices childhood, family and friends, but she is not identified herself with the Indian world. In her anguish, she realizes that she is neither English nor Indian. She also realizes that she has become, ‘Nowhere woman’. All this creates mental conflict. In order to escape from it, Sarah accepts a strategy of withdrawal, she suffers from the anguish of alienation of herself.

Sita in *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* by marrying with Raman, comes to a conventional family in which she finds everyone including Raman insensitive and materialistic. Being of sensitive nature, she acutely realizes a gap between her attitude and their attitude to life. She realizes that Raman is also indifferent to her and he fails to
understand her. She feels bored and suffocated in such family. She remains cut off from Raman her children and others. She decides to go to Manori, a magic land for her. Her return to Manori is like the withdrawal from everything. It becomes a trip of self-discovery and a recognition of reality.

We find Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* working hard for her husband, children, grand-children, relatives and others. She is very sincere in her social activities and domestic activities. But her husband’s dishonestly with her, callous and ungrateful attitude of her children give torturing blow to her feminine self. She realizes that she is not the queen of her home, but just an unloved, taken for granted woman, mother of her husband’s children, a social symbol of his respectability – Ultimately, she decides to estrange herself from all and desires for a quite, retired life in Carignano, she withdraws from life and family and we find her a solitary figure in Carignano.

In *Clear Light of Day* Bim’s self passes from self-alienation to self-realization. After the death of her parents and being the eldest member in the family, Bim assumes the role of a father, mother, taking care of brother and sisters and even of her aunt Miramasi. After the marriage of Tara and Raja, both of them leave Bim’s family and settle in abroad and Hyderabad respectively. However, she decides to sustain the family. She sacrifices her life for the sake of others. When she experiences her careless and indifferent parents and Raja’s renunciation of family responsibilities after his father’s death, she feels alienated from all self. She cuts off herself from everyone and everything in the family. But the alienated forces like hatred, anger, bitterness continue affect her mind for a considerable period of time. Her inner spirit of accommodation, sacrifice and reconciliation changes her sense of alienation into a new awareness and the estrangement of Bim and Raja is bridged at last.
Sarla of *In Custody* is another Anita Desai’s woman who is driven into herself to realize her own self and develops in the process. Like an ordinary girl, before marriage, Sarla dreams about future life and partner. But her dreams do not materialize after marriage. Her husband Deven does not understand her motives and needs. He is devoted to art and poetry. In Sarla’s company he feels suffocation. She realizes that Deven has no deep love for her and he tries to keep himself aloof from her. It leads Sarla to psychic troubles. She finds herself in custody in the form of Deven’s house. She has to suppress her ambitions and to the wills and desires of Deven.

*Baumgartner’s Bombay* reveals Lotte as an object of use by the male community. Lotte earns her livelihood by dancing. She seeks refuge in India during the Nazi regime in Germany. She has a false marriage with Kanthi Seth to escape the prison life of detention camp and to get Indian nationality. Kanthi Seth provides her money and a flat in Bombay. After his death, Kanthi’s sons treat her unkindly and she is rejected by them. So, she is left all alone. She feels alienated herself she experiences the pains and feelings homelessness. Lotte, like other Desai’s women, is driven into herself to realize her own self. She realizes that woman is an object of use by the male community and they throw her away as an empty bottle is thrown aurally after its use. However, she doesn’t commit suicide or escape from reality. She also realizes that violence, suicide are not the solutions for the problems of isolation and agony in the life. She accepts the realities of life.

The nostalgic element has played very significant role in development of feminine self in most of Desai’s novels. The female characters grow and emerge and define themselves through the process of remembrance. In *Cry, the Peacock* the memory of the prophecy of the albino priest makes a traumatic effect on Maya’s self. It haunts Maya. It creates continuous fear of death in Maya’s mind and push Maya towards her neurotic state of mind. She moves
like a Pandulam between past and present. Her mental growth is obstructed and her real self is banished. She undergoes mental and emotional crises, which make her unable to connect herself to the main current of life. In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* the second section entitled as Winter 47’ connects us Sita’s sense of nostalgia. Sita wants to escape from the brutal realities and harsh facts of human life. She does not feel ease in the city life of Bombay. She wishes to relinquish the sweet and turmoil of the urban atmosphere of Bombay where she and her husband Raman live with their four children. So, she decides to go back to her childhood past, her parental house, Manori. The island of Manori is cut off from the mainland. Sita’s visit to Manori is an actual grappling with her word of fantasy and memory. It shows her struggle with the past and the present. She desperately tries to recapture her childhood days when she was happy and secure in the company of her father. Sita, there, develops certain completes which turn her into an alienated self.

The nostalgic element has also played a significant role in the development of Nanda Kaul’s feminine self in *Fire On the Mountain* Nanda Kaul’s world is very busy in social activities and domestic duties. Despite Nanda’s sacrifice, sincere and hardworking life has not honored her claims. Her husband’s dishonesty with her, callous and ungrateful attitude of her children give her torturing blows to her self. So, she decides a quiet, retired life in Carignano, a desolate and haunted house in Kasauli, where Nanda Kaul remembers her childhood days spent in princely joys and comforts. These memories of childhood and youth influence her feminine self. By recollecting these memories she feels lonely, desolate and estranged from the family and the society, then she becomes completely changed woman.

Anita Desai in *Clear Light of Day* gives us quite a detailed account of the past memories and thoughts which pass through Bion’s mind. In the mood of introspection, Bim arrives at certain conclusions which then bring a welcome development and change in her. By
recalling past memories Bim finds that there have been flaws and inadequacies in her own behaviour towards Raja and Tara. She realizes that she herself has been somewhat intolerant towards them all. She begins to relent towards Raja. Finally, after going through the dying words of Emperor Aurangzeb, she melts into tears and further softens towards Raja. As a result, she tears off the letter which has offended her deeply, she forgives him and experiences a flood of affection rising in her heart not only for Raja but also for Tara, for Baba, and for her dead aunt Mira. Thus, Bim’s sense of nostalgia has brought self discovery and self-realization of her love for them all in her feminine self.

The seven chapters of the novel, Baumgartner’s Bombay focus on the past memories and the present of the two isolated Germans, Lotte, a cabaret Dancer and Hugo. A bizarre, weird and eerie conglomeration of remembrances and reminiscences lends a poignant and trenchant touch to Lotte’s and Baumgartner’s distraught self. The past is a haunting, harrowing presence in their psyche. Even after their long stay in India, they can never be in the mainstream of the Indian life. After Kanti’s and Hugo’s death, Lotte becomes a totally broken and utterly isolated figure. She becomes homesick though her past is haunting and harrowing. She tries to take recourse to live in illusion, in order to escape and forget the crude realities of her isolated self. She seeks consolation in talking about her past days. It means, the sense of nostalgia works as a healing balm for Lotte’s isolated and wounded feminine self.

In Anita Desai’s novels, there is the reflection of different facets of feminine self. She has succeeded in presenting the feminine self with all its variety and shades. Maya is hyper sensitive and neurotic, Monisha an intellectual type; Sarah is painted as a lifeless doll with spectacwar spiritual depth and insight. Sita is pessimistic and whimsical. Nanda Kaul is a self-effacing, submissive, highly sensitive and venerable woman; Raka is both young
temperamentally and solitude loving. Ila Das is the name of both misery and persecution combined. Bim is an introvert and intelligent sensitive, introspective and self-assertive woman, Lila is bold, plain, resourceful and wise woman. Sarala a woman who cannot see. Life beyond the four walls of the house. She is usual, ordinary, compromising and a lady of normal temperament. Lotte who enjoys over or secret relations with men of their choice, without bothering about the rules of the society, is presented as keeps. Uma is an obedient; dutiful and tolerable woman. Aruna, Uma’s sister, is very self-assertive, obsessive and arrogant daughter of Mama Papa and Mira-Masi is a soothing woman. Thus, Anita Desai has depicted different types of feminine selves in her novels. We come across a galaxy of different feminine sensibilities.

The novels by Anita Desai are not a sociological phenomenon rather it is psychic, feminist. She sets herself seriously to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of millions of married women. These women are fermented by psychic and existential problems. They are, no doubt, conscious of the reality around them but they carry with them a sense of loneliness, alienation and resubmission. They all are fragile introverts longing for their own feminine identity.

Anita Desai’s novels give the impression that the psychic deficiencies influence the development of feminine self of most of the Female Characters. They suffer from the psychic deficiencies like schizophrenia, persecutory paranoids, neurosis, super-ego, self-preservation, frigidity, hyper sensitiveness, introversion, inferiority complex, underchanged libido, cluster-phobia, mental disassociation etc. Barring life of the village by the Sea and Safiya Begum of In Custody all other female chara-characters are patients of one of the psychological disease mentioned above.
Anita Desai in her novels, has focused upon the evolving feminine self. But her novels, to my mind, are always in a state of, ‘becoming’; they never become. It is the process of the development of feminine self. It is the journey and expectation of the self. But the notable thing is that there is never a satisfying end. The journey of the self is never complete. There is no solace, and complete union of the self at the end of the novel. Reconciliation, compromise, realization, awareness, helpless resignation may be there but no gratifying or complete experience is offered to us. In *Cry, the Peacock* Maya’s feminine self yearns for conjugal happiness. But, it is never complete. The actualization itself never gets truly conveyed to us. It is the sweating on the way, the road itself that is stressed. This is the perpetual state of ‘becoming’. The journey of the Self of Monisha in *Voices in the City* is also never complete. Monisha desires love, recognition, privacy throughout her life. But her longing is thwarted as a result. She ends her life. Her self struggles to achieve wholeness. But it doesn’t reach to the satisfying end. Sarah in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* marries Adit-an Indian, in the hope of filling the hollowness of her life with the exotic but romantic world of her husband. Sarah’s feminine self before her marriage with Adit desires to identify herself with the Indian world. Here again the journey of her self remains incomplete. In her marriage with an Indian, Adit, Sarah has lost her parents her former friends and the English world but she has not been able to identify herself with the Indian world which she has hoped her marriage would bring to her. On the contrary, she feels that she is neither English nor Indian.

Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* marries with Raman and expects that if she is good and humble, she will be respected and loved by Raman and submits to him accordingly. But her expectation of the self doesn’t fulfill. She finds her husband and her children and other members are totally alien to her. She feels suffocated in such unpleasant atmosphere. She desires to escape from this suffocation and to go to Manori, the place of
wonder and miracles. This is the journey of her self from manland to island. Again this journey remains incomplete and does not reach to its end. In Manori she to realizes that this island also lacks all miracles or magical charms. The journey of Nanda Kaul’s self in *Fire on the Mountain* also does’nt have satisfying end. Nanda Kaul works hard for her husband, children, grand children relatives and others and is quite sincere in doing her family duties. Being a woman of self-effacing nature, she does everything for others sacrificing her own interests hoping that in return she will be treated in a better way. But she has bitter experience of a married life. It gives blow to her feminine self. She desires for a quite retired life in carignano and lives quite solitary life. She cuts herself from the affairs of life. She ignores all contact and relation- But she doesn’t reach to her end. Her self desires complete withdrawal and renouncement. But the arrival of Raka has disturbed her solitary life. Her expectation not to return to the world remains incomplete. Raka’s arrival means a recall to duty. Bim in *Clear Light of Day* does not live the complete life of hatred and anger against her family members. Her wounded self remains affected for a considerable period of time. Her inner feminine self of accommodation, sacrifice and reconciliation changer her sense of hatred and anger into a new awareness and finally her feminine heart seems to be filled with a deeper love for Baba, Raja and Tara. The journey and, the expectation of the self of Lotte, in *Baumgarteners Bombay* of Sarla in *In Custody* of Sophie in ‘Journey to Inthaca’ and Uma in *Fasting Feasting* remains incomplete. It has never a satisfying end. It is never complete. Thus each female protagonist is seen in attaining the peace of life but fails to achieve. What Anita Desai portrays is deeply felt and suffered against the entire system of social relationships.

Nature in the fiction of Anita Desai from *Cry, the Peacock* to *Fasting Feasting* plays an important role in shaping and sharpening the feminine self of female characters. Nature in the novels acts both as a consoling agent and a disturbing presence. There is a constant interaction between the inner world of the protagonist and the outer world of nature and in
process of this interaction the evolving feminine self is projected. In fact the nature and the natural environment are the material on which Anita Desai; we find weaves the condition of the self. Nature acts both as a metaphor of hope and life. It also acts as an ironical presence that sharpens the awareness and realization of the self. Through its different moods and elements nature casts a deep shadow over the spirits of feminine self. Nature also associates the conscious mental forces. The nature which shapes and influences self, appears basically in its two perspectives – as tamed and enclosed, perceived through the metaphor of Garden, and as open and benign perceived through sights and sounds.

From the study, it is clear that the social prejudices and perverted social values affect the feminine self of females in most of the novels. Society is an abstract concept and hence it operates through the members of society, be they husbands and in- laws or other persons. Society exercises its influence and control on the woman through social values. And when those values are Perverted the influence becomes suffocating and for sometime life- sucking, making the woman a psychological cripple living in the hinterland of reality and fantasy. One’s personality and life is most affected when society imposes certain norms on women and demands conformity to them and when those women don’t conform society ostracizes them. This is true with regards to women like Monisha, Sarah, Nanda Kaul, Sita, Sarla and Lotte and Sophie. Monisha’s feminine self in *Voices in the City* has been affected by the suffocating atmosphere of joint family of her in-laws and concerned social values. All her ambitions, talent and potentialities are reduced to be a mere housewife and she can do nothing beyond mundane household chores. And the results she breaks down and ends herself by commit suicide.

The social values and the attitude of society in *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* influence Sita’s self. She is a young sensitive and emotional woman. There is a lack of
harmony in the lives of Sita and Raman. The members of her family do not understand her self. She feels that her husband and member of the family are without the emotional attachment with her. She feels isolated from her husband, her children and becomes the victim of mental agonies. The emotional ups and downs in her self are the result of social values.

There may be various kinds of social prejudices and perverted social values that affect the self. They may communal or socio – political. *Bye – Bye Blackbird* and *Baumgartner’s – Bombay* are two novels in which perverted socio – political and communal values or biases affect the self of Sarah and Lotte. Sarah marries an Indian, Adit. By doing so, she incurs the anger of the white society and has broken the social code of England. So she is always subject to taunts and jibes of all members. If a girl marries in the same culture it is easier for her to adjust to her new home and people. But inter – racial and inter – cultural marriage influences her self and causes adjustment problems. Saarah is the victim of this biases. She feels alienated in her own country and home. Lotte in *Baumgartner’s Bombay* is also affected by the same problem. Lotte’s tragedy is her homelessness and rootlessness. She is devoted to the family of Kanti Lal whose kept she is. But after his death his family members refuse to recognize her. Because the social values consider bigamy as a crime and do not give right to the woman who is kept. It affects Lotte’s feminine self.

Nanda Kaul’s relationship with her husband in *Fire on the Mountain* is nothing beyond and the duties and obligations. Though she is Vice – Chancellor’s wife, the social values do not permit to live a private life. She has to perform all social duties like a common woman. The wife in society has to tolerate the mis-behaviour of her husband. She is abided by social values. She considers her husband as God. Nanda Kaul, in the novel knows that her
husband carries on a love affair with Miss David. But being a wife she tolerates it. This situation affects her feminine self.

Society exercises its influence and control on Uma in *Fasting Feasting* through social values. Society, in the novel, operates through the figures of Mama Papa. The scatting aspect of our social institutions like marriage or family affect the feminine self of Uma whose presence is neither noticed nor appreciated in the family nor her absence. She has been totally neglected by her parents. As per social values, she is expected to be an obedient daughter and she is considered as inferior to male sex of society. So, she has been forced to sacrifice her personal pleasures after the birth of a baby, Arun. It hurts her self.

Imagery in her novels, besides articulating the estranged sensibility and the changing moods of her female characters, reflect their mental isolation. Botanical, zoological, meteorological and colour images are used for the reflection of feminine self’s mental isolation. Anita Desai’s use of images serves the growth of character. The use of images, which is rather prodigal in the earlier novels, gradually becomes sparse in the later ones, resulting in a closer absorption of the images into the texture of the narrative. Anita Desai’s artistry is seen in the perfect correlation between images and the themes on the one hand and images and characters on the other. The major categories of imagery found in Anita Desai’s novels form a pattern contributing to her vision as an artist. Animal and insect imagery brings out the negative qualities of the characters. Bird, Plant and flower imagery is consistently used to bring out the positive qualities in the characters or their pleasant states of mind.

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