CHAPTER – 1

Introduction
Anita Desai is one of the most eminent and distinguished Indian English writers writing today. Her dual heritage, both racial and cultural, had 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 the German mother in Mussoorie, India, on 24th June 1937. She was educated at Queen Mary's Higher Secondary School and later at Miranda House Delhi. Desai's father was an engineer and his 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. After the second world war and with the partition of India in 1947, both her parents decided to make Delhi their home. She feels strongly that although her parents could not return to their original homelands, they were often nostalgic about them. She started writing at the age of seven but received attention with her first novel Cry, the Peacock, published in 1963. Her second novel Voices in the City, which was also serialized in Illustrated Weekly of India before being published in 1965, brought her further renown and success and the process is on till date. She has fourteen creative books to her credit that includes ten novels and two collection of short stories and two books for children. Her novel Fire on the Mountain brought her Winifred Holtby Award for regional literature of the Royal Society of Literature, London, and the Sahitya Akademi award for English for the year 1978. Three of her novels Clear Light of Day (1980), In Custody (1984), and the Fasting, Feasting (1999) were short listed for Booker Prize, and the Village by the Sea won The Guardian Award for children's fiction in 1982. 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 the University of Cambridge. She teaches in the Writing Program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and divides her time between India, Boston and Massachusetts, and Cambridge, England. Her novel In Custody has been filmed by Merchant Ivory Production in English and Hindi (titled ‘Muhaﬁz’) Anita Desai is married and has four children.

Since the publication of her first novel Anita Desai has been the subject of tremendous critical studies. Generally speaking these critical studies tend to dwell more on thematic and philosophical aspects of her writing and less on her skill in characterization. The approach to evaluate her works in relation to the general trends and achievements of Indo-English writings as a whole is gaining popularity.

This may be due to several factors such as the complexity of form and theme in her novels, conforming to the broad parameters of Anglo-American tradition of the psychological novel but retaining the fundamentals of the Indian sensibility and socio-cultural ethos of India, focussing on the important question of status of women in India in the male-oriented and male-defined social and moral codes, subtle portrayal of the protagonists’ quest self-assertion and self-actualization in the face of the rigid codes of behaviour in a conformist and status quo loving society etc. Infact, though the territory that Desai traverses spoil broad, yet the literary space she occupies appears to be limited. She focuses on the trials and tribulations, fears and apprehensions, joys and hopes, Dilemmas and predicament, perplexities and paradoxes, in the physical and psychological lives of her characters in general and the protagonists in particular, to mirror the
multi-dimensional reality in all its contours. Talking about the focus and context of her writing to Yashodhara Dalmia in an interview, she comments: “Writing is my way of plunging to the depths and exploiting the underlying truth. All my writing is an effort to discover to underline and convey the true significance of things”

Jasbir Jains Stairs to the Attic: The novels of Anita Desai views her works thematically bringing out in the process her psychological concerns. R.K. Dhawan feels that, “The central theme of her novels is the existential predicament of woman as individual.”2 Almost all the thematic studies of her novels have concentrated on loneliness and withdrawal of her characters. Fire on the Mountain is stylistically the most successful of Mrs. Desai’s novels according to critics. With her maiden novel Cry, the Peacock she ushered in a new era of psychological realism so in the word of K.R. S. Iyengar, “The exploration of particular kind of Indian sensibility that is ill at ease among the barbarious, and the philistines, the anarchists and the amoralists”3. If Meena Belliappa found in it “A remarkable attempt to fuse fantasy with perpetual experience”4. Darshan SinghMaini termed it as a poetic novel or “extended ode in prose”5. Madhusudan Prasad who has established Anita Desai as an existential novelist comments on her imagery and symbolism that they are used as literary forms to crystallize the various levels of consciousness an illumine the states of mind.

In Anita Desai’s work images make the emotions clear, the emotion dictates the image which shape the novel. Meenakshi Mukherjee who believes that imagery reveals the author’s natural mode of awareness commends Anita Desai for her distinctive style and intensely individual imagery which is marked by, “Sensuous richness, a high strung sensitive
and a love for the sound of words." R. S. Sharma refers to her "Anti-fiction" considers her a "Novelist of moods, of persistent states of mind and psyche." Anita Desai's shortest novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975) has been welcomed an interesting addition to Anita Desai's achievement as an Indian novelist writing in English.

Santa Acharya feels that "there is great sensitivity and restraint in the portrayal theme that is common to all her novels." Anita Desai's language is distinct in style and image. There is compatibility between narration and narrative technique. N. Pratima thus says "the narrative power of Anita Desai is very impressive she can provide an interesting account of even the smaller and insignificant events with warmth and conviction." With reference to her novel *Voices in the City* R.S. Sharma feels that "With all its strong sense of place and locale the novel operate primarily on a symbolic level but, it has a vast canvas of events characters and tangled relationships that add to the narrative appeal."

Paul Sharrad while comparing Anita Desai with R.K. Narayan says "If Narayan's irony is inclusive, integrating, accepting, Desai's is exclusive and destructive though equally corrective in its intent - One can not be in the world and not be its creature; one may not go beyond the world and still function in the here and now as a human individual." Some readers study the theme of racial alienation in *Bye-Bye Black Bird* (1971) R.S. Singh considers it a "Weak variation on the theme of racial arrogance.

Where as G.P. Sharma seeks to reject the view that Indian English literature is far removed form the soil Sharma opines that it sufficiently mirrors the nationalist spirit of India. Many critics feel that novel does have a
tremendous potential for the exploration of east-west theme besides the psychic tumult of Sarah. As Meenakshi Mukherjee points out “Sarah Sen is a typical Anita Desai character-complex, hypersensitive and intelligent.”

Anita Desai is a major exponent of the psychological novel dealing with the complex psyche of the feminine. Jasbir Jain feels that Desai’s world of women is primarily, “a world where the central harmony is aspired to but not arrived at and the desire to love and live clashes - at times violently-with the desire to achieve harmony”\(^{16}\). She has created a galaxy of characters both male and female talking about her characters B. Rama Chandra Rao says that, “their (characters of Desai) problems are psychological or spiritual not social or economical”\(^{17}\). Another critic feels that “Within the existential framework, she creates people ‘with dreams and wills’ who in turn create the story, action and drama of the novels.”\(^{18}\). In N. Rama Chandran Nair’s view Desai’s deepest interest in the life of the mind, particularly of her feminine protagonist “enables us to see the Indian women adequately from the inside”\(^{19}\).

Kamla Markandya’s The *No where Man* and Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye Black Bird* converge on the theme of Indians abroad. V.V.N. Rajendra Prasad rightly says, “while Kamla Markandya’s the *No where Man* makes the point directly brutally and cynically, Anita Desai reinforces the point with subtle irony”\(^{20}\). Usha Bande has studied the characters with regard to third force psychology she feels that the conflicts, complexes, defences and the working of the inner life of characters can be studied in the light of Third Force concept of health or sickness. She feels that “The explanatory and synchronic character of Third Force Psychology offers a sophisticated picture of human nature.”\(^{21}\).
Anita Desai is also a high priest of nature and her this aspect of her fiction has not been overlooked by critics and scholars Suresh C. Saxena says “Desai uses nature much in the fashion of an X-ray machine to reveal a close up of her characters, mood and millieu.”22. He feels that nature is an integral part of Desai’s overall vision of a book. While comparing Baumgartner’s Bombay with The Myth of Sisyphus Subhash Chandra is of the view that the hero Baumgartner’s predicament is akin to the existential predicament of Sisyphus. At the same time Suresh C. Saxena feels that “the east-west interface is a recurring motif in indo-english fiction. In one of her novel Bye-Bye Black Bird, Desai too touched on this aspect though rather briefly but in Baumgartner’s Bombay, she fuses the two strands in an artistic fashion.”23

Meenakshi Mukherji says that “theme is not something that can be examined separately from the technique of a novel because the theme is determined by the novelist’s choice of point of view.”24. G.R. Taneja observes that though the novels of Mrs. Desai have different themes and preoccupations but, “her concern with the human dream marked by wasted lines and shattered illusions remain the same.”25. Talking about Clear Light of Day Vrinda Nabar feels that “the four dimensional reality is used by Desai to make the intervening sections more than just a conventional trip down the memory lane.”26. But Sudhakar Rathakar Jamkhandi finds that “Anita Desai’s Clear Light of Day is clearly reminiscent of Evelyn Wough’s Brides head Revisited and to an extent, Strindberg’s A Ghost Sonata.”27. Clear Light of Day is divided into four untitled parts though there is apparently chaotic shift in perspective from past to present, there actually is perfect harmony as in an exquisitely composed musical composition R.S. Sharma rightly says “the four sections of the novel, suggesting the ‘four dimension’ of time record the transitions that take place in a New Delhi family.”28
V.V.N. Rajendra Prasad feels that the narrative base in Anita Desai’s text is the family “Anita Desai’s novels reveals the subtle inter-relationship between the self, the family and society.”. Asha Kanwar observes that the use of time plays a crucial role in the structuring of events in any form of narrative she makes a comparative study of Virginia Woolf and Anita Desai and feels that both “Woolf and Desai are concerned with qualitative time rather than quantitative time. Both have a shrewd consciousness of time and of man’s freedom to move at will in the past, present and future.”. Apart from sharing views on the concept of time She feels that Desai and Woolf have some other similarities which can’t be ignored.

Anita Desai has fairly good pen for shorter fiction and children too and has been esteemed highly P.P. Patil while talking about The Village by the Sea observed that the central theme in the novel is “The Wheel Turns”. In his article “A Critical Response to Diamond Dust and other Stories” Basavaraj S. Naikar analyses all the stories in great detail, “most of the stories are written from an omniscient point of view, they are conspicuous for their remarkable and microscopic description, evocation of relevant mood an atmosphere and insight into the subtle working of the human mind.”.

According to some critics, with her novel In Custody (1984) Anita Desai enter a new phase in her creative career. The highly strong or intensely introspective woman protagonist of the earlier novels here gives way to a male protagonist. Meenakshi Mukherjee recognizes the shift in Anita Desai’s fictional world when she points out : “The change is towards a widening of human concerns and of a willingness to integrate concrete historical and specific cultural dimensions in the creation of interior landscapes.”.
Baumgartner's Bombay continues the argument of In Custody and A. Clement rightly observed “Baumgartner's Bombay relentlessly explores not only the human or subhuman condition of just an individual but the universal implication of deracination and estrangement for the modern man”. 34. Talking about Desai's latest novel Fasting, Feasting Pawan K. Verma comments “The depiction is so real that one almost feels that Anita's principal instrument in writing the book was a knife. With that knife she carves out two separate slices of nostalgia, revelling in minutiae and the odd but illuminating detail, the trivia of sound and colour and noise, which finally constitutes for most of us, the substance of our lives.” 35.

There is also a trend to evaluate Anita Desai as a woman through her own reflections and comments, since very scanty biographical material is available on her, some scholars analyses the idealism and commitments of her fictional characters, and apply that to the personality of their creator. B.O. Vyas for example sees her as a perfectionist having faith in life and individuality. That she has faith in life is attested by her own statement, though made in a different context. She affirms : if one opts for life one must compromise with it, like Sita, in Where Shall We Go This Summer? According to her "drawing a line means certain death.” 36. One should learn, like Sita, to be a part of the earth and of life. These views can further he testified by her character’s search for life. In her interview with Ketki Shah, the novelist points out : “to a novelist it is always the individual who is of primary interest and not the anonymous multitude, always the particular rather than the general”37. She, however, believes that one cannot draw a rigid line between masculine and feminine styles and judge the creator. It is just a matter of placing emphasis differently “seen in this light James had the most exquisitely feminine style-D.H. Lawrence was extraordinarily ‘feminine’ too. These
differences in the male and female styles will even out as the differences in their lives disappear. In the fictional world of Desai the creed is the value of the individual and individualism.
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1. Yashodhara Dalmia. “An Interview with Anita Desai”. The Times of India. 29, April, 1979. 4.


1.2

Aims and Approaches

In the present study an attempt will be made to study the psychic process of the female characters evolving from conflict to compromise and finally to acceptance and an affirmation in their search for meaning in their lives. Anita Desai herself said, “Writing is my way of plunging to the depths and exploiting the underlying truth. All my writing is an effort to discover, to underline and convey the true significance of things.” ¹ In order to write with this objective, Desai uses her powerful sensibilities to observe life at its most striking and vulnerable points and combines the same with her artistic vision to create memorable characters.

Her characters have a tendency to turn inward since she is more interested in the human psyche than in outward action. “Cry, the Peacock” (1963) portrays the tragedy of a father’s child Maya young, beautiful, intelligent and hypersensitive as very sensuous fails to grow out of child hood. The extreme sensitivity is rendered in terms of immeasurable loneliness and in the end she commits suicide.

In Voices in the City (1965) the three major characters Nirode, Monisha and Amla are depicted as questers in search of proper vocations and proper moorings Nirode and Monisha are entirely different from each other in their outward approach. Nirode’s is that of cynical indifference, Monisha’s that of quiet submission yet the two are alike in their attempt to put an attitude of non-involvement with the people and their surroundings. Both have to suffer while Nirode strive to find life in self-abnegation Monisha searches it in privacy and both fail. It is the younger sister Amla the third chief character
who is altogether different from them full of enthusiasm and feels involved in everything around her. It is she who turns to art and find her true self as an answer to life. *Bye-Bye Black Bird* (1971) deals with the plight of the Indian immigrants in London. It is about Sarah’s social and psychological withdrawal leading to psychic conflict which is finally overcome by acceptance and a promise of an optimistic future with an Indian husband. It is an authentic study of human relationships bedevilled by cultural encounters.

*Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975) This shortest novel depicts the story of a near neurotic heroine Sita, who is to face the loneliness of a woman, a wife and a mother, by probing deeper into her inner life. She wishes to escape but finally realizes that escapist is no answer to life’s problems and thus she rises out of her frustrations, dejection and despair and compromise with life.

The Sahitya Akademi Award winner *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) explores the alienation of Nanda Kaul and her great gland daughter, Raka. The loneliness and isolation of the two have been presented in detail there is also another alienated figure Ila Das, old friend and classmate of Nanda Kaul who was born in an aristocratic family but was victim of time and circumstances. Thus *Fire on the Mountain* portrays interrelations and differences of three isolated figures.

*Clear Light of Day* (1980) deals with the theme of time in relation to eternity. Bim the chief protagonist is an interesting study of the self in transition. Who after a long period of frustration and anger comes to recognise the importance of an attitude: to forget and forgive.
In Custody (1984) Anita Desai’s forte is the portrayal of feminine character she studies in depth their psyche. In Custody is a different category in the sense that she attempts to study the helpless nature of male protagonist due to poverty, helplessness and lack of initiative. This novel also marks a departure from the earlier novels of Anita Desai. Clear Light of Day its immediate predecessor, has a female protagonist belonging to an upper middle class family settled in Delhi. The novel explores the sensibility of the protagonist within the framework of her disintegrating household while the world outside scarcely figures in this exploration. In Custody has a male protagonist who comes from a lower middle class family and whose consciousness is essentially directed towards a wider world beyond himself and his family. In all her novels, except In Custody and Baumgartner’s Bombay Anita Desai took a feminine world, a taut emotional pattern with the indomitable will of the private self and the radical society linked with the public self as props for a persistent, absorbing and perceptive analysis or in other words, in almost all her novels we witness a psychological upheaval of immense breadth and intense depth especially with a feminine psyche planted at the very centre. Excepting In Custody and Baumgartner’s Bombay all Desai novels gain a special significance in this perspective.

Baumgartner’s Bombay (1989). Baumgartner’s Bombay is Anita Desai’s second successive novel where the spotlight is no more on the solitude and interior landscape of the sensitive women. Baumgartner’s Bombay makes a complete departure from her earlier writings. Here, Desai makes an attempt, rather tenuously to explore her roots and family background. As she revealed in an interview, “All these years I’ve been searching for a way to return to that German part of my background”

The Indo-German aspect of Desai background is the centerpiece of all her writings
and no worth while study of her work can be made without taking notice of
her parent’s past and their influence on Desai’s sensitivity, Hugo
Baumgartner the male protagonist is the central character of the novel.

*Baumgartner’s Bombay* Subverts the agenda of colonialism and in
a reverse movement remaps the territories it had appropriated. In this text
Anita Desai has also challenged hegemonising Eurocentric Constructs of
history and sought to repossess not just India’s immediate past but extended
her attentions to Europe as well.

Thus in *In Custody* and *Baumgartner’s Bombay* there is a perceptible
change of direction as far as thematic aspect of her fiction is concerned
and precisely for this reason these two novels do not fall in my gamut of
study so has been isolated.

*Journey to Ithaca* (1995) This novel of Anita Desai explore the
ambiguous nature of divine and profane love. In this novel the spiritual
quest of two characters has been described that of Laila in the Nineteen
Twenties and Matteo in the Nineteen Seventies. The novel has been depicted
as a spiritual quest, a voyage of awakening and recovery of faith i.e. a
journey from alienation to affirmation. At one level the novel becomes a
spiritual odyssey of the female protagonist Laila.

*Fasting, Feasting* (1999) the latest novel from Anita Desai’s pen,
once again seems to continue and advance further the philosophy of her
earlier novel *Journey to Ithaca*, though the tone and toner have become
more subtle here. *Fasting, Feasting* is a cry against discrimination. To put
across her point of view., the author weaves a story about the life and
character of Uma, the daughter of an advocate of a small town. The descriptions of the characters and situations in the novel substantiate some of the findings discovered and propagated by the feminist theorists; like weighing down the woman with the burden of matrimony and motherhood, attaching undue importance to the upbringing of the male children (sometimes to the extent of suffocating them), Showing callous negligence towards the female children, the perpetuation of patrimony, transforming family into an agent of patriarchal politics, socializing children into patriarchal attitudes, causing repression for the female individual, the repression culminating in neurosis etc.

The novel provides an utter stark reality of Modern middle class family in India and America, drawn without any tinge of surrealism or magic realism.

The latest in Anita Desai's oeuvre is *Diamond Dust and other Stories*, published in 2000. In this collection of short stories, Anita Desai describes the meeting of eastern and western cultures in a brilliant and subtle way. The stories in *Diamond Dust* are written from an omniscient point of view. Out of the nine stories, five are set in London and England and four in India. They are conspicuous for their remarkable and microscopic description, evocation of relevant mood and atmosphere and insight into the subtle working of the human mind. Sometimes her virtues become her vices in that the abundance of descriptive element tends to slacken the pace of the stories. As in her novels, she has exhibited her creative talent in her short stories also. One of the striking features of her writing is her typically feminine point of view, which is expressed through her microscopic observation of life in a very subtle and lyrical language. Her stories, therefore, add to the beauty and richness of the genre of Indian short story.

Anita Desai's characters can be classified into four groups. In the first category we have Maya and Monisha both sensitive and married to
insensitive men. Maya is depicted as severely psychotic and morbidly dependent, valuing love and sex above everything else in the world. While Maya craves for love her husband flees it. Hers is a dissociated personality, as such she suffers a dichotomy of her two selves-real and pseudo. Her disillusion leads to violence and suicide. Thus Anita Desai has given the portrait of highly sensitive woman and has went deep into the feminine psyche from childhood to youth and ultimately death.

Monisha is another sensitive and alienated figure suffering from illusion of superiority and married to a dull husband is unable to adjust to her environment. She undergoes a tremendous amount of psychological tussle. A will-less, helpless and passion woman Monisha stands in direct contrast to Maya, but curiously enough Maya is a tragic predecessor of Monisha of Voices in the City as both the characters are unable to find satisfactory solutions to their psychological problems and finally opt for violent end.

Then in the second group are Nirode, Nanda and Raka all three cases of neurosis. Voices in the City presents an individual's fight against the self and consequent defeat of the individual Nirode around whom the entire novel is woven, is an angry young man, who is bright, intelligent and sensitive, apt to be rather rough and aggressive and at times cruel in his behaviour. He is a victim of an intra-psychic conflict wherein his expansive and resigned drives clash. Thus we can say that Nirode is a social and psychological portrait of one of the most common effects of anxiety-neurosis.

Nanda Kaul the old women of Fire on the Mountain is the self effacing type, her children are alienated from her and she has nothing to look forward to and this dismal sense of having failed at everything in life produces self reproach and self contempt.
Fire on the Mountain also deals with the detrimental effects of a stifling home environment upon the tender psyche of a young child. Raka the great-grand child of Nanda Kaul is the only child character we meet out of all the other retrospecting grown ups. Raka is not a normal child by any standard she shuns all tenderness viciously. Thus non of the three characters commits suicide though they come on the brink of neurosis.

In third category we have Sita and Sarah. Anita Desai has developed the character of Sita in clear hues and has read the hieroglyphics of Sita’s mind. She lived in her own small world which she carved for herself and in which she reigned supreme. For her mental world was more real than the world surrounding her. She too has neurotic conflicts and frustrations but later she compromises with life.

Sarah in *Bye-Bye Black Bird* is case of both social and psychological alienation. An impact of east-west marriage can be seen on the psyche of Sarah, who is married to Adit and settled in England. Sarah’s eagerness to know her real identity and her failure and consequent disillusionment can be clearly seen as she lives in a dual world - the two social worlds that do not meet; the two incompatible cultures that split her. Though both Sita and Sarah are not fully self realizing individuals but their temporary affirmative attitude point to possibilities of a more promising future.

In the characters of the fourth group, Bim and Amla, we find a greater and more permanent sense of positivity and affirmation Bim the chief protagonist of *Clear Light of Day* is an interesting study of the self in transition. There is synthesis of emotions and knowledge and a fusion of facts and fiction in her. It is needless to emphasise that Bim is the most
interesting and meaningful character in the novel. She is Amazonian in the sense that she can fight her battles and command respect from the male dominated society. She moves out of the precincts of house with an urge to establish herself independently. Infact, her choice of career is not only a longing to fulfill herself intellectually but primarily it is guided by the compulsions of the family and need to look after the idiot brother. But despite her career consciousness, she is not insensitive to relational demands and emotional values. Apart from this, her occupation as a teacher is her psychological need in that it keeps her psyche intact and integrated.

In *Voices in the City*, beside Nirode and Monisha there is one more character who has affirmative faith in life, Amla. She is a brilliant portraiture of her rebellious young women. There is a fusion of optimism and pessimism and joy and despair in Amla’s personality. In fact, the role of Amla assumes significance as an observer, as a witness to the sensitive events in the novel. Her observations on interpersonal relationships reveal her sense of understanding of intricacies of human nature. Endowed with refined sensibility and perhaps pure consciousness, she can look at a situation without any shadow or residue. The dynamics of innocence mark her psychic reactions. Her psyche is yet unravished by the prejudices of the world of experience. Like Nick Carraway in Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby or Anusuya in Kamla Markandya’s possession, Amla narrates the occurrences in their true perspective. The rationale of Amla’s triumph on the road to self lies in her ability to “consciously recognize her individuality”, which proclaims a state of individuated ego.
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1.3
Scheme of the Present Study

Now a word about the scheme of the present study. In the first two chapters I shall briefly outline Anita Desai’s vision of life that emerge through the evolution and depiction of her characters. There will be a general analysis of the problems of solitude and existential conflicts faced by her protagonists both male and females. This will bring us to a discussion of the various solutions found by them, be they sterile, or of a comprising nature or of a compromising nature or of a more positive kind. Chapter three will focus on female psychosis leading to self destruction. Maya in Cry, the Peacock and Monisha in Voices in the City, are the victims of this chapter, who fail to keep track of the road leading to self-hood. Both the female protagonists experience almost identical circumstances. The peculiar familial situation in which they live impart experience which is stifling for both. Their whole existence ways aimlessly amidst the turbulence of their psychic storms. Being over taken by the life denying impulses and being caught in the vortex of sinking whirlpool, they take a last decisive step to commit suicide.

In Chapter four, there will be an insight into the identity crisis and tragic self alienation of Nanda and Raka in Fire on the Mountain. The protagonists under examination in this chapter make a quantum leap from gross to the subtle, from ignorance to knowledge, from murkiness to numinosity. Their thin and flimsy relation with the reality that cribbed and contained them from genuiness and authenticity is favorable reshaped ultimately as they encounter and accept the ‘fitness’ of their existential commitment. This awareness not only shatters their preconceived,
misleading notions and design of life but also places before them new openings, new avenues for their existence. In alchemical terms, the quest for self is a progress from darkness to clarity and then to power indeed'. The questers in this chapter respond favorably to the call of existentiality and reconnects with the world of life, instincts, emotions.

Chapter five, will be dealing with the aspect of affirmation and reconciliation with the study of Sita in Where Shall We Go This Summer and Sarah in Bye, Bye, Blackbird. These female characters under study here appear to make a genuine attempt to establish a warm, intimate relationship and restructure and rearrange their psychic existence. They strip themselves of the pretence which beguiled them into an evasion of the recurring sense of personal inadequacy. They find their retirement to the realms of illusions absurd and irrelevant and they appear to enter into a feasible equation with life. It will be observed that in the quest for self, the protagonists travel through different routes vis-a-vis their familial commitments. Their return to the family and society herald an acceptance and affirmation of their existential reality.

Chapter six, will throw light on the act that the novelist is growth oriented. In the present chapter there is study of two heroines Amla of Voices in the City and Bim of Clear Light of Day. Amla unlike other female characters of Anita Desai is endowed with a definite vision and clarity of thought. She is not swayed along by the "dark ways of thinking and feeling" (175) gifted with fairylike qualities. Amla construes life as full of both gaiety and purity. Evil, death, decay and destruction are alien to her psychic make up. Bim the other character of this chapter is continuously engaged in exploring her inner self either through expiation or self analysis. Her endeavour is to find her place in relation to her family dynamics and through self questioning, self introspection, she confronts her
inner turmoil and seeks a final answer. It will not be in appropriate to say that Bim among all female characters analyzed so far emerges more positive, more affirmative and one who completes herself both psychically and existentially.

In course of my research Anita Desai wrote two more novels Journey to Ithaca and Fasting, Feasting. In Chapter seven, there will be an analysis of Journey to Ithaca, which is an addition to the novels of encounter in the in the field of Indian English novel that describes the quest theme. The present paper intends to discuss the novel as female Bildungsroman, a spiritual odyssey of Laila, a white European whose voyage takes her through a range of Islamic, Christian and Hindu cultures and in the process of her exposure to multiple ethnic sensibilities.

In my conclusion I shall be discussing the latest novel of Anita Desai Fasting, Feasting in which through the character of Uma the writer exposes the hypocrisy and male chauvinism in a particularly conservative family. It is a well designed book with two neat parts. But it runs on a different track. To put across her point of view, the author weaves a story about the life and character of Uma. In the present novel Anita Desai also tries to explore the values existing in the East and the West. In a closely knit narrative of deep psychological insight, Desai has taken us into the value systems of two cultures present in Indian, the economically backward land of scarcity and America, the land of plenty. She also brings out in clear perspective the conflicts arising out of false values in a middle class Indian family (Mama, Papa, Uma, Aruna, Arun). The whole story, the action, the characters all are seen through the conscience of Uma in the first part and through that of Arun in the second. Finally, I shall be winding up my work by showing the place Anita Desai has occupied in India English fiction.
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