The foregoing study of the novels of Anita Desai with a feminist perspective makes clear to us that Anita Desai is a superb novelist having deep insight into her female characters. Because, it is only she (though there are also other female novelists) who has made her female characters very true to life, she has written most of her novel in the feminist vein and style. Women novelists necessarily have a special way of looking at things' spheres. But that has neither distorted Anita Desai's vision nor made it to it. In the novels, where her protagonist is a woman, this vision focuses on the environment, perhaps shaped by the predominance of patriarchy. It is in the presentation of this confrontation of the female protagonist with the patriarchal oppressive environment, that Anita Desai's feminism develops. In novels where Anita Desai delineates a female protagonist, the struggle against the oppressive environment assumes the form of a patriarchal domination in one or the other visage, revealing her feminist predilection. She cares more for the individual, in comparison to the plot as pointed out by many critics, with an amazing insight into her psyche. Not able to amalgamate themselves into society around, her characters undertake an inner voyage for the purpose of discovering their own selves. She concedes that nobody is an exile from the society and the individuals should strive to integrate themselves and find fulfillment. Anita Desai differs from the other feminists in that she concentrates on the individual's salvation through self-exploration by depicting its motivation. Her novels do not, strangely, deal with the
problems of the third world feminism. Unlike the other Indo-Anglian novelists, Anita Desai creates an opulent gallery of characters, though dominated by the female. Most of her protagonists are hypersensitive females. They are hypo-chondriaces. Each is presented, as an inscrutable individual, enigmatic and eccentric. Neither are they chosen from the common section of the society nor are their problems related to food, clothing and shelter. They are rebels and their rebellion is not so much directed against problems which are physical nor social. They are psychical and emotional. Anita Desai has given a new direction to novel writing in modern India. A close scrutiny of her works reveals the dimension that she has added to her fiction - the importance given to women - a neglected class of society.

Mrs. Desai, By the powerful search light of her observation, dives deep down and presents the world with her findings which include her prime concern to bear the hard covering of emotions to bring out sheer womanliness in them, to prove that they are being not actually devoid of feeling but in search of a bit of love, and life. Her novels are full of psychological insight and feminism.

Since, Anita Desai is always interested in depicting the inner world of her female protagonists rather then outer atmosphere in portraying them, she shows a keen sense of perception.

The operative feminine sensibility in Anita Desai's fiction is all pervasive. In her novels, Substance, meaning, characterisation, style and form merge with one another in a whole that is an assimilation of her
sensibility. The very fact that each novel of Anita Desai has a female protagonist, goes to prove that her area of fictional exploration is quite unlike those of male novelists with similar thematic concerns, as Arun Joshi. She makes women her central characters to portray them psychologically. Her woman characters are all sensitive and complex heroines of her fiction, and their gripping presentation is a testimony of Anita Desai's rare psychological understanding of the female psyche. They embody various facets of Indian woman. Anita Desai explores a predicament familiar to Indian wives in general - the loneliness that sickens them to their bones - a revolt against the pettiness, horror and violence of everyday life. It reveals the basic feminine spirit of Anita Desai. Anita Desai, like Nayantra Sahgal and Kamla Markandeya, is preoccupied with Man-woman relationship from a woman's point of view. The question of feminine identity is a live issue for Anita Desai and strikes a sympathetic chord in her heart. Anita Desai is emotionally on the side of her heroines, and portrays them with the insight and sensibility of a woman. In a way, we can say that Anita Desai is mainly concerned with the analysis of the mind and soul of her protagonists. It seems, her main business is to deal with the truth of her women character's life, and in doing so, she resembles, to some extent, Dostoevsky, Proust, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Henry James. To her, the novels of these writers are highly revealing and meaningful. Anita Desai may not be a Radical feminist, in the real sense of the term. But, Anita Desai the woman-novelist presents the woman's problems with such an understanding that she is feminist, to say the least. By presenting the stereotype woman
and her problems in an understanding and sympathetic way, she makes everybody realize the predicament of the woman, in a male-chauvinistic society. In most of her novels, Anita Desai has largely dealt with the existential theme. She has always emphasised the alienation of a person form the outside world, be it Maya, Sita, Nanda Kaul, Raka, Amla, Monisha, Sarah, Bim and Sarla. Each of them takes refuge in a self-made world. There is a constant fight between an individual's circumstances and the imaginary world. Her woman characters feel alone, secluded, unrelated to others, and totally incapable of communicating with the people around them. They constantly feel themselves emotionally and spiritually detached from the society around. It is not that they do not want any emotional bondage with others, but their urge for love affection is subdued within themselves. Almost each of her protagonists suffers from a sense of isolation, an isolation from the society and the family, and this isolation is not something confined merely to physical conditions but extends to psychic status too Sometimes we find her women characters are on the verge of mental wreckage. Her characters are devoid of desired love and affection, and so they develop a definite sense of self-absorption. They lack companionship of people or avoid it. They find themselves totally alone secluded in this world.

Anita Desai’s main interest lies in the revelation of the female psyche. She always tries to keep in to the mind and heart of her female characters. Her characters like Maya, Sita and Nanda Kaul are isolated women, and there are two reasons for their isolation. First, these female characters are unable, "to see things steadily and see them whole", and
this creates hindrance in their relationship with others. Secondly, the other members of their family develop a tendency to withdraw themselves from them, without trying to establish an emotional relationship with them. These women characters are astonished by the behaviour of the world outside, which is not sympathetic towards them, and this is the main reason to their isolation and alienation. In a way, her female characters take a retreat from the reality of life by cutting themselves off from the rest of the world. As a result, they pathetically suffer acute depression and mental illness. Maya, Sita and Nanda Kaul are all victim of loneliness and depression. Maya, the protagonist of "Cry the Peacock", tries throughout her life to get rid of her intolerable loneliness. She is a neurotic woman who always live in a world of hallucinations.

Anita Desai has a great knowledge of the female world and her condition in male dominated society, and so she can narrate the inner feelings and emotions of the female protagonists. She also highlights those emotions of women which were hitherto hidden. For example we can take the character of Maya who is constantly devoid of marital love and joys, and this results in her depression and frustration. Her husband, Gautama, is not capable of satisfying her mental and sexual urge. Even psychologists have said that a continuous frustration of the body's sexual needs can be disastrous to anybody, and in Maya's case this frustration leads her to fierce instability. If she had a healthy emotional and sexual life, she would not have turned into such a depressed and distressed personality.
Freud writes that the sexual needs of a person are as important as his physical needs, and if somebody is denied sexual gratification he or she will face disastrous result (as in the case of Maya). In this novel Mrs. Desai reveals sexual needs of a woman which effects her whole life. Maya always felt the lack of warmth and affection in her married life and therefore, she always felt insecure and neglected. The constant negligence of her husband, resulted in her sheer frustration. Since, Maya's whole life is dominated by her childhood memories, she is unable to get rid of them. Maya's neurosis evidently begins with her sexual dissatisfaction. She could get rid of it by being unfaithful to her husband, but since she was brought up in a rigidly organised society which is typically orthodox specially for women, she could not even think of it.

We can say that Anita Desai is a superb novelist who has a deep insight in her female characters. Her Novels present her own view and vision of feminism. Here we can put these world of Sir Walter Allen who writes thus:

"..........every novel is an extended metaphor of author's view of life."\(^1\)

He further writes:

"Every novelist ..........gives in his novels his own personal idiosyncratic vision of the world."\(^2\)

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2. Ibid, P. 17.
Mrs. Desai presents women's world by her female characters. It is true in Anita Desai's case as she herself accepts in an interview with Ramesh K. Srivastava that:

"Usually minor incidents and minor characters tend to be drawn from real life and the major ones from the imagination. Lack of experience may be handicap but lack of sensitivity, thought, intelligence or memory would be far greater ones. I do restrict myself to writing about people and situations I know or can understand yes this is the reason for my emphasis on inner action".  

Her second novel "Voices in the City" is a novel about a woman Monisha and her repressed condition in the family. Novel reveals various aspects of feminism. Monisha like many of Anita Desai's heroines, is sensitive and a victim of ill-matched marriage. She is an intellectual and fond of reading, but nobody in the joint family including her husband, appreciates her tastes, nor does she get privacy. She is an example of a maladjusted woman who is an introvert by nature. Anita Desai's chief concern is human relationship. Her central theme is the existential predicament of the individuals projected through the problems of the self in an emotionally disturbed milieu. Delicately conscious of the reality around them, her protagonists carry, with them a sense of loneliness, alienation and pessimism. Desai adds a new dimension to the genre of

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Indian fiction in English, by probing the unquestionable existentialist concerns of her protagonists.

Anita Desai is obsessively occupied with the individual's quest for meaning and value, freedom and truth, that provide spiritual nourishment to the estranged self in a seemingly chaotic and meaningless world. Anita Desai started with the character of Maya, a childless woman. She continued this theme with Monisha in "Voices in the City" but she has presented women in her novels who are mothers. But her portrayal of women who are childless are more effective and far-reaching. The sensibilities of women who crave for children and their passion for the normal type of life, even when outwardly kept under wraps, betray their feminine feelings:

Motherhood is the ultimate objective of woman and that is why the importance of and craving for children play a very important part in her novels. Monisha is presented in this novel by Anita Desai, as an intellectual woman who is suffocated in congenial atmosphere of her in-law's house. In her third novel "Bye-Bye Blackbird" Anita Desai has portrayed feminine psyche mainly through the character of Sarah. Sarah, is the victim of individual and social violence towards women. She undergoes fits or depression in her lone struggle to assert her identity. Anita Desai delineates in novel after novel the pitiable and awful plights of the alienated self, especially of housewives, facing single-handed the torments and tortures of their insensitive and temperamentally callous husband. Anita Desai has rendered a new dimension to feminism by her Indo-Anglian fiction As Elaine Showalter suggests three phases in the
growth of feminist tradition. "Limitation, protest and self discovery." (Literature 13). Anita Desai's novels are directly related to all these phases. They encapsulate her artistic vision of feminity as alienation. In her novel "Bye-Bye Blackbird", she explores and exposes the long-smothered wall of areas of domesticity. Here we have the heroine protagonist sandwiched between mask and face. Thus, positioned, the Desai woman disowns a ritualistic to explore her true self. Desai's is not the strident and militant kind of feminism which sees the male as the cause of all trouble. Her novel "Bye-Bye Blackbird" deals the psychic turmoil of woman within the limiting and restricting confines of domesticity. Brought down by existential insecurity and uncertainty, women in the novels of Anita Desai are in quest of refuge. Novel "Bye-Bye Blackbird" explores the inner self of Sarah, who symbolises the New woman who is educated and who lives in close association with society brushing aside all narrow social convention about Indians. But as a woman, Sarah is hardly left with any choice. Her life is so acutely circumscribed that she can not make quick decision about her problems. Through, the character of Sarah, Desai is portraying the inner struggle of a woman to express herself and discover her real self.

Anita Desai makes women her central characters to portray them psychologically and to reveal all the aspects of feminism. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?" Anita Desai's fourth novel is a psychological and sensitive study of a modern Indian New woman whose loneliness, boredom and agony arise out of a existential, constitutional and sociological factors. Unable to live in the strife torn present, she is in the
attempt 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 unconsciousness", the backdrop of her life, and her obsessive preoccupation with it, gives her 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.

This vision is the motivating force that urges Sita's leaving her home, much to the dismay of her husband Raman, who sees the absurdity of the plan of a pregnant woman leaving for an unreal place.

Anita Desai's "Where Shall We Go This Summer?" dwells on the theme of incertitude, alienation and incommunicability in married life of a woman. In this novel Mrs. Desai reveals all aspects of feminism by the alienation of a woman, a wife and a mother, an alienation conditioned by society and family. In this novel, Anita Desai presents a nervous, sensitive, middle-aged woman who finds herself isolated from her husband and children because of her emotional reaction to many things that happens to her. She is a woman whose suffering springs from her constitutional inability to accept the authority of the society. Sita is the symbolic equivalent of the modern housewife whose sensibility is perpetually under stress. Her mental agony is the outcome of her inability to cope with the modern society. The conclusion carries the focus of the novel beyond the resolution of Sita's obsessive identity crisis. It points out to a transcendental reality of feminism which Anita Desai, reveals in her novel "Bye-Bye Blackbird". Maya, Monisha, Sita are testimony of Anita Desai's rare psychological understanding of female psyche. they
embody the various facets of Indian women and feminism. The Novel "Fire on the Mountain" too is a study of feminine psyche in the context of feminism, but here Anita Desai presents a big canvas in it, including both an old woman and a girl. Nanda Kaul in "Fire on the Mountain" has raised a big family with full responsibility, but in the evening of her life she loves seclusion and the news of her grand-daughter Raka's arrival, shatters her isolated world. Raka, who is a precarious child from a broken home, presents another facet of feminine psyche. She is fine study of a disturbed girl child, withdrawn, not interested in childish games. She is more interested in rambling through hills and jungles. Her disturbed mental state, culminates in her act of pyromania when at the end of the novel she puts the forest on fire. In this novel, Mrs. Desai presents another important woman character, Ila Das who is victim of male dominated society. Nanda Kaul never relished the role of a mother, even though she played the part expected of her very well. Being a wife and mother, was not a pleasant experience for her. Mrs. Desai presents her female character, in this novel, as an embodiment of feminine voice. She tells that her female characters though not every and always, are somehow related to her life for instance she tells her interviewer:

"Ila Das in "Fire on the Mountain" was woman my mother knew and who occasionally visited our house in Delhi, cashing much hilarity and scorn amongst us. Later when I was in Kasauli, I remembered her violent death in a nearby village. When I wrote the book about Kasauli, she entered it as if she were a part of the landscape, a ghost I had
not planned to introduce but who entered it silently and secretly, without being asked of course, other characters are much more consciously created............"^4

This statement of the novelist, shows clearly her intention that most of the themes of her novels are drawn from the real life incidents and her view on feminism. In her later novel "Clear Light of Day" (1980), Anita Desai presents an image of Indian woman which is totally divergent from the ones presented in her earlier novels. Maya, (Cry the Peacock), Monisha (Voices in the City), and Nanda Kaul (Fire on the Mountain) are portraits of women who reject marriage, family and society, they view marriage and family destructive forces. Sita (Where Shall We Go This Summer?) and Sarah (Bye-Bye Blackbird), initially revolting, accept family and motherhood. But all of them are tormented women plagued by existential anguish and loneliness. Bim, the central female protagonist of "Clear Light of Day" is the refreshing contrast of all of them. In this novel Mrs. Desai reveals Bim as self-sacrificing character. She sacrifices her whole life for her siblings, educating them and marrying them, taking care of mentally-retarded Baba and senile Mira Masi since she was the eldest of the family and the father had died. She is completely different from the other female characters of Anita Desai. Unlike Maya, Monisha, Sita and Nanda Kaul. She is an unmarried woman who is free form the problems of an incompatible marriage. She is a working woman unlike Maya and Monisha. She is not tormented by existential anguish and

loneliness. She bravely resists the onslaught of time and there is a heroic image about her character. Here we can say that in this novel, Mrs. Desai gives a new dimension to feminism by presenting a "New Woman" Anita Desai's gifts as a novelist (feminist) are now fully acknowledged. She is not a traditional novelist of ideas or purpose.

Bim reflects Desai's vision of the identity of the new Indian woman, the dim stirrings of which we see in her desire to dress and smoke like men. She revolts against the traditional image of the Indian woman in words and deeds. Unlike most Indian girls, she opts out of marriage for the life of a spinster. She is reluctant to play the conventional role of a sex-object and a yoked-wife. In a sense, she is the symbol of the emancipated woman, the forerunner of the emerging Indian woman with her liberated womanhood. In this novel we find full description of feminism by New Woman, Bim. In another novel "In Custody" Mrs. Desai portrays the character of female protagonist Sarla. Sarla is a typical, Indian house wife, who believes in obeying her husband. She is a woman of traditional India. She bears all the pains and sufferings which she finds from her husband and family. Her husband never cares for her feelings and emotions. Sarla is a woman who can not look beyond the four walls of her house. In Sarla, Mrs. Desai represents the caged condition of a woman in traditional Indian society, a woman who can not think herself without her husband and children. Even though the wife of a Hindi Lecturer, she has absolutely no interest in literature or in her husband's profession but she bears it for the sake of her family. But by another female character Imtiaz Begum, she gives a voice to her
feminism. Her sixth novel "Baumgartner's Bomby" is about a male character Baumgartner the hero. But Mrs. Desai has discussed here not only the world of Baumgartner but the world associated with women too, the female world or feminism. Through the character of Lotte and Mrs. Baumgartner we find feminism in this novel. Lotte is the kept of Calcutta based Marvari Seth, Kanti Lal, who maintains her in Bombay and comes periodically to her, for booze and sex. By the presentation of Lotte, she reveals pathetic condition of such kind of women in Indian society who pay a lot for this kind of illegal relationship.

The operative feminine sensibility in Anita Desai's fiction is all pervasive. Each novel of Anita Desai has a female protagonist, she makes women her central character to portray the theme of feminism. Maya, Monisha, Sita, Sarah, Bim, Nanda Kaul, Lotte, Sarla are all sensitive and complex heroines of her fiction, and their gripping presentation is a testimony of Anita Desai's rare psychological understanding of feminism. They embody various facets of Indian women. Expect Bim all of them are married and focusing on their plight Anita Desai shows her insight into the institution of marriage. With the tender sensibility of a woman, the novelist presents Maya's tragedy in "Cry The Peacock", as a tragedy of a woman-destroyed at the alter of marriage. Like Maya, other characters like Monisha in "Voices in the City", are also a victim of marital disharmony. Mrs. Desai dislikes warrior's attitude in women, but in spite of her unwillingness at times, she creates characters like Maya, Sita and Bim. She seems to point out that the role of women changes according to situations. Therefore, Maya in a killer's role is as much
acceptable as Sita in unruly wife's role. Bim is befitting to the role of a
manageress and teacher because of the particular situation. they want to
fight and prove the power of women. But under this hard shell of warrior,
the soul of a brooding spirit with the desire of living like a perfect
individual, comes to notice. Mrs. Desai hints that elder women as
managers, should be in full control of the house. Monisha's mother, Bim's
mother, Raka and Sita's mother and Mrs. Baumgartner are the example of
this type. Also we find women in artist's role. Except Amla and Menaka,
others are not seen with painting or drawing. The above analysis clearly
indicates that Anita Desai's heroines, Maya, Monisha, Nanda Kaul, Sita,
Bim, Sarla and Lotte, oscillate between erotic urge and transcendence
which leads to their alienation. it is not their failure to surrender,
acceptance, and resignation that disintegrates their personality, or what
Wescott calls 'depersonality' but their inability to transcend it. The
problems these heroines confront are not totally the creation of the
masculine world but outcome of their deepest probing of the feminine
consciousness: the conflict between attachment and detachment or
'erotica' and 'transcendence'. Maya, Monisha and Nanda Kaul fail to
integrate the two or to arrive at any compromise regarding these normally
incompatible psychic tendencies and in the process are annihilated; where
as Sita and Bim succeed in achieving the 'renewal of self in another
pattern' as T.S. Eliot calls it. In fact, Anita Desai belongs to what Elaine
Showalter calls the third stage in women's literary history.

No doubt the battle for women's freedom has by no means been
won and many novelist are still deeply concerned with the problems
which the victories as well as the defeats present, but Anita Desai's willingness to delineate, confidently and convincingly, a larger questions that confront all human beings, the most intimate concerns of mind sexuality and transcendence, enable her to achieve a secure place in the twentieth century women novelists. The recurring themes of Anita Desai's novels are identified as woman's quest for her identity, her pursuit of freedom, equality and transcendence, her rebellion and protest against oppression at every level. Besides the recurrent themes common to women writers, feminist literary criticism also examines the gender-genre relationship and language used by women writers. There is a quest for a feminine style and syntax. Dorothy Richardson rightly talks about her attempt to create "Feminine Prose" and Virginia Woolf describes "A woman's sentence". Anita Desai looks to the past to anatomise the pain inflicted on women down history, to the present in a passionate affirmation of female identity and experience. The hallmark of Desai's fiction is to focus on feminism through the inner experience of life of her female protagonist.

Most of her novels are related to feminism. Her woman characters react very strongly and sensitively to the forces of our male dominated society. They may have limited experience because of their lack of exposure to the external world, but their insight and intuition are very powerful. Anita Desai says that she has more interest in insight and intuition which or feminine qualities. She writes about sensitive people in an insensitive world and these are usually women. Women are more likely to be sensitive because of the way they are concerned with the
depths of the inner self and the psyche. The following aspects of feminism attract Anita Desai: Marital discord, incapability of facing the hard realities of life, revolt against fate, inner fears of the female characters, conflict between conscious and unconscious mind of her female character, feeling helplessness, self-centred husband, barrenness of women characters, worthlessness and emptiness life of females, meaninglessness, unfriendliness and loneliness, quest for identity and meaning of life, alienation from one's country, inner sadness, shame and broken ego of women, gap between two cultures and its effects on females problem of adjustment in different cultures, society and their revolt, inferiority complex, awareness of uncertainty, conflict between heart and mind, lack of understanding and love, conflict between reality and illusions in life, the indifference of children and husband, revolt against cruel world, rejection by the society, unfulfilled desires of women, courage to make decisions, boredom and monotony of house, pathetic condition of women in the society and their revolt against patriarchal society. Desai's novels reveal her obsessive concern with the fate of a married woman in Indian society today in the context of feminism. After an analysis of Anita Desai's novels one thing becomes clear that if feminism means talking about women, their problem, their oppression in traditional society, their courage for freedom, their struggle for self-respect, their quest for her own identity then one can say that feminism finds full expression in all her novels. We can say that Anita Desai is a superb novelist who has a deep insight in feminism and she presents it in all her novels.