IN CUSTODY

BAUMGARTNER'S BOMBAY
Anita Desai's novel *In Custody* again is a re-creation of the problems and the agonies of the wounded self. Desai's novel "In custody" dramatise the critical moments of Sarla, the protagonist. "In Custody" opens with the arrival of Deven's old friend Murad at his school where he is a teacher. He feels happy to meet his friend, but soon he becomes nervous because his friend always exploits him. His friend Murad is an Editor of 'Awaz' an Urdu magazine and runs his office at Kashmiri Gate in Old Delhi. They have studied in the same school but their temperaments and circumstances are different. Deven's father is dead and his mother is helpless to support him. His family circumstances make him an aimless and uncertain man. His life is full of inferiority complex and unhappiness because of his temperament towards life. He is dissatisfied with his wife. He cannot get rid of his inferiority complex and due to this he fails to command the respect of his students. He fails to face his students and control them, and this shows his lack of courage to face difficulties. As a matter of fact, he does not try to tackle the problems, but escapes from them. His cowardly nature makes his married life problematic and difficult specially for his wife Sarla. His cowardly nature also makes him unsuccessful in life, and thus he alienates himself even from his job. He feels the need to ask Murad to pay him money for the articles he has written for his magazine. But he does not have courage to do so:
"All through his childhood and youth he had known only one way to deal with life and that was to lie low and remain invisible."¹

The town Mirpore where Deven Lives lacks history and has hardly any future:

"...............the town had probably existed for centuries in its most basic, most elemental form."²

In this novel Mrs. Desai presents Sarla's existence also has no past and aim for the future like Mirpore town. Her husband Deven is not satisfied at Mirpore because here people live an insignificant and unknown life without any aim and future. When Murad persuades Deven to take the interview of Nur an Urdu poet who lives in Delhi, he accepts the proposal without caring for any thing or his wife. However, he feels that he lacks the ability and courage to interview Nur, and therefore, it is wrong to accept this:

"...............task for which he was not qualified, for which he had neither the experience nor the confidence."³

In spite of this, when he reaches Nur's house, the poet misbehaves with him and speaks with anger. Deven tells Nur about his purpose to interview him, but the poet becomes angry when he comes to know that the interviewer is a Hindi teacher because he hold that Hindi is given priority to diminish the Urdu language. When Deven returns to Mirpore, he does not go to his house because he does not want to face his wife Sarla, he directly goes to the college. The fact is that he does not have enough Courage to stand the hard reality of life. Deven goes to his house

² Ibid, P. 19.
in the evening and finds his wife very angry but he does not Care for Sarla. Deven feels as if he was in prison marriage a job and family had placed him in a sort of cage. In this novel Mrs. Desai concentrates on the predicament of modern women in male dominated society and her destruction at the alter of duty and marriage. Sarla appears to be an simple housewife. There is wide gap between Sarla and her husband and her married life is an instance of maladjustment. There is a lack of communication between them. Deven does not share his emotions and experiences with Sarla and does not tell her anything about the sad experiences at Nur's house. Deven likes Urdu Poetry, while Sarla dislike it. Sarla's temperament is prosaic while Deven seems poetic. She remains mute whenever she is angry with him, while Deven:

".............bawl uncontrollably if meals were not ready when he wanted them or the laundry not done or a button missing or their small son noisy or unwashed, it was to lay the blame upon her ........Tearing up a shirt she had not washed, or turning the boy out of the room because he was crying, he was really protesting against her disappointment, he was out to wreck it, take his revenge upon her for harbouring it."4

Sarla is not Deven's choice, but that of his mother and aunty. Like other dreamy girls, before her marriage, she aspired to possess phone, car and refrigerator in her husband's house, and wants to live a luxurious life after her marriage. But Deven can not fulfill her aspiration because he is a ordinary temporary lecturer. This was shattered her dreams and aspiration and embittered her life. Both are disappointed in their unhappy married

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life, but they do not share their disappointments. Sarla finds herself a stranger in the company of her husband.

"Although each understands the secret truth about the other, it did not bring any closeness of spirit, any comradeship."\(^5\)

Deven is alienated from his wife, and lives in his dream world of fantasy in "In Custody". Anita Desai delineates the delicate swings of mood, the fragments of feelings perceived and suppressed, the life of senses as well as the heart-wringing anguish of the protagonist Sarla, a housewife. Here, Simone de Beauvoir observation is worth quoting:

"A free and autonomous being like all creatures-(a woman) finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other."\(^6\)

In the novel "In custody" Anita Desai reveals that marriage is a fate traditionally sanctioned to women by society. But marriage is not the same thing to man as to a woman. The two sexes are different from each other, though one has the necessity of the other. De Beauvoir observes:

".........the necessity has never brought about a condition of reciprocity between them; women have never constituted a caste making exchanges and contracts with the male caste upon a footing of equality."\(^7\)

A woman like Sarla is allowed no direct influence upon her husband. Neither upon the future nor upon the world. She has to reach out beyond herself towards the social milieu only through her husband. But does the husband allow? Absolutely not, Deven is impervious and

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7. Ibid, P. 446.
indifferent to her emotion urges. Instead, it is Sarla who has to cater to the needs of his inner urges. In such a situation, Sarla feels alienated from Deven. To Ann Forman, women experience themselves as the fulfillment of other peoples needs:

"Men seek relief from their alienation through their relations with women; for women there is no relief for these intimate relations are the very ones that are the essential structures of her oppression." 8

Mrs. Desai clearly reveals the situation of women like Sarla in the society. Her views on feminism find full length description in character of Sarla in "In Custody". In her opinion marriage subjugates and enslaves woman. It leads her to "aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slips away gently toward death without questioning its purpose." (De Beauvoir 1974: 500). Women pay for their happiness at the cost of their freedom and Sarla is not exception. Probably she believes that a female's job is only to reproduce and breed and to take care of the offspring's growth and development is to look-out of the male. This seems to be a blot on her feminity. Anita Desai emphasized that such a sacrifice on the part of a woman is too high for anyone since the kind of self-contentment and security that marriage offers woman drains her soul of its capacity for greatness. Through, the character of Sarla, Desai is portraying the inner struggle of a woman to express herself, to discover her real self. Sarla perceives herself as a shadow of the female self, a negative, an object. A woman's role is not only confined to the centripetal needs of the family in which she lives but also to its centrifugal needs. It is here that woman has to be more than her domestic role as a submissive housewife. She has to

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become a 'Society lady' as Anita Desai would put it. But there also, she is a meek and yielding creature. Centuries of tradition have made her so and she takes pride in such suffering. But we do not find Sarla expressing such pride in her suffering in her family, she was an incomplete being. Without a sense of the wholeness of personality. As a woman, Sarla is hardly left with any choice. Her life is so acutely circumscribed that she can not make quick decisions and hence fails arrive at concrete determinations. The novel deals with a woman's attempt to assert her individuality and realize her own freedom. Mrs. Desai depicts how it brings her into confrontation with family, with male-dominated society. Deven betrays Sarla's hopes for harmony and integration, for peace and happiness. He fails to be her 'alter ego'. Neither is he 'a sheltering tree'(like Shashi Despande's Roots and Shadows") to protect her in weal and woe. Instead she finds that she has relinquished her identity by surrendering before Deven's masculinity by becoming his wife. In this novel, too, Anita Desai has handled the theme of ill-marriage which is one of her favourites, in the discussion of feminism and here Sarla is a victim of it. Her husband's attitude towards her is unsympathetic and un-understanding and Deven is absolutely ignorant of her sufferings. The harsh realities of life produce in her a sense of frustration and resentment. She has been mentioned only in hints, within a framework or restricted appearance. She, like Deven, is also a victim. Her defeat and failure are presented as follows:

"He understood because like her, he had been defeated to; like her, he was a victim. Although each understood the secret truth about the other, it did not bring about any closeness of spirit, any comradeship, because they also sensed that two victims; ought to avoid each other, not yoke
together their joint disappointments. A victim does not look
to help another victim; he looks for a redeemer. At least
Deven had his poetry; she had nothing and so there was an
added accusation and bitterness in her look.\textsuperscript{9}

Anita Desai always tries to portray the human tragedy chiefly
created by the sensitive approach to life. Sarla, the chief protagonist in
"In Custody" is thrown into pits of disaster due to her marriage and
circumstances. She is very much upset because the hollowness of her
marital life. She does not believe on her husband. She looks at his
frequent tours to Delhi as his affair with some girl. Mrs. Desai has
portrayed the character of Sarla whose behaviour towards her husband
and his preoccupations is one of the suspicion and distrust:

"Sarla sat watching him, scratching the side of her
nose in an offensive way as she watched. Finally she gave
her lips a sarcastic twist and said, "So, no more Delhi for
you? What happened .......you - you were thrown out?"\textsuperscript{10}

This paragraph from the novel is sufficient to tell in detail how her
marital life is. Her financial position is also not very sound, and it has
affected her family and marital life. As a wife and soul-mate to her
husband, Sarla proves to be a failure. She always tries to perform her
duties as a housewife but Deven never becomes an emotional support
either to his wife or to his family. Deven is a coward who shrinks away
from his responsibilities towards his family. He considers his job as a
lecturer as "Leaps of rubbish" Creating hindrances towards his fame and
glory in the literary field. Deven is so timid that all the time he searches
for some excuses to conceal his failure. Deven is responsible for making

\textsuperscript{9} Desai Anita, "In Custody", London William Heinemann, 1984, P. 68.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid, P. 73.
the matter worse. He becomes so oppressed with the interview that his attitude towards his wife becomes supercilious. Deven fails in both of his roles- as a social being and as a husband, and this badly effected the life of Sarla. In Sarla's life, happy moments are so rare that it can be counted on the finger tips. Sarla, true to her feminine virtues, plays the role of an ideal housewife but the role of a wife restricts, rather circumscribes herself development by taking away her freedom of thought and expression. Regarding a woman's role-playing Rosemarie Tong observes:

"Sometimes women play their roles not so much because they want to, as because they have to in order to survive economically and/or psychologically virtually all women engage in the feminine role plays."\(^{11}\)

In this novel, Mrs. Desai reveals that Sarla is not exception of it. Sarla is discontented with this pre-ordained role of a woman. She has so many choices but of a married woman like her, she is left with a few or practically no choice save what her husband wills and desires. She can not unburden herself. Her feminine instinct is curbed and suppressed. Despite all these, she is reluctant to admit failure and drags on with her marital life which encloses and imprisons her true self. A woman's responding and relating to other's needs may detract her from her own sense of identity, of her becoming so fluid as to assume any shape. Sarla feels as if she had become so fluid that she has no tangible shape, no form of her own women's experience is primarily defined through interpersonal, usually domestic and filial relationships: serving the needs of others. Her identity exists "largely as being-for-others (needing to please: narcissist vanity and deriving security from her intimacy with others) rather than being-for-itself". (Waugh 1989: 43). Such is the

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paradoxical situation in which Indian women are enmeshed. Like Sarla they laid ambivalent lives. The cherish within their hearts deep and profound love but when the occasion comes for expressing it they retrace. Willing to wound, they hesitate to strike. They are loyal and obedient women who have been nourished and reared by a traditionally bogged society. Should woman as passive characters put on a hypocritical stance towards themselves as wells as the society? Should they out of fear for the male put on the mask of unreasonable submission? These are the questions that the society puts before the dominating male. Woman as a subordinate sex is characterized by obedience and submission, and under male dominance women have "developed a tendency to prevail by passive means." (Klein 1971: 167). Women surrender before men whom they really love. But does Sarla submit before Deven's masculinity because she loves him? No, Sarla is scornful of love. She is a woman of free thinking, her thoughts are with the coming generation of women steeped in a scientific rational way of life. She compromised with Deven only for, she wanted to show the society that her marriage was a success and so she had put on the mask of an obedient and subservient wife. Mrs. Desai clearly reveals here that marriage for woman is only compromise that's all:

"It is the masculine code, it is the society developed by the males and in their interest, that has established the woman's situation in a form that is at present a source of torment for both the sexes."12

The tragedy of Sarla's marriage is that it fails to assure her the promised happiness. It mutilates her; it dooms her to repetition and

routine. Almost, always it annihilates her. The subordination of women in a mailist culture is symptomatic of hierarchization of socio-moral values between the sexes. It symbolises the polarity between activity and passivity, between meek obedience and defiance. Helene Cixous observes:

"A male privilege can be seen in the opposition between activity and passivity. Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is coupled with the same opposition: activity/passivity."\(^{13}\)

Women are often the symbol of passivity. Cixous further maintains:

"Either the woman is passive; or she doesn't exist. What is left is unthinkable, unthought of. She does not enter in to the opposition. She is not coupled with the father who is coupled with the son."\(^{14}\)

Woman is thus reduced to matter, a mere object. This reduction of woman to matter or a commodity is in the main phallocentric pattern. Sarla's husband treats her as a matter, a mere object subjected to his own will. It appears that Sarla has just a formal relationship with her husband. Intimacy between the husband and wife is lacking. Woman in Desai's novels symbolise the overpowering materialism and the lack of spirituality, that characterises modern age. With the crumbling of moral and ethical values there is an inner conflict which drives the modern Indian women to seek shelter in different identities for momentary solace. Desai's novel shows the struggle of woman against the predatory male-


\(^{14}\) Ibid, P. 288.
dominated society. In character of Sarla Mrs. Desai reveals the psychological situation of woman in Indian society. Viola Klein observes:

"Being in the position of outsiders, intruding into a finished system and restricted by a century-old history of submissions, which had bred in them a sense of inferiority women's chief claim in their struggle was, as a natural result, to prove that in all respect they were just as good as men."\(^{15}\)

We find that Anita Desai clears her vision on feminism by presenting another woman character, poet Nur's sencond and Young wife Imtiaz Begum. Murad compels Deven to interview Nur and when he reaches the poet's house, he finds his second wife Imtiaz Begum celebrating his birthday. She sings Nur's poems in the party and steals the show. This hurt him. Nur abuses his wife and tells him about his loveless and hollow married life without caring for his wife Imtiaz Begum. This indicates the contrast between the imagined world and real life of women like Imtiaz Begum who suffers lot because of her circumstances and for her destiny. Mrs. Desai presents in this novel Imtiaz Begum as a brave lady. Deven starts talking with the poet, but in the meantime his wife Imtiaz Begum comes and humiliates the poet calling him coward like a tortoise. She shows Nur the money which she has earned by singing his poems. But Nur and Deven do not look at that money because it hurt male ego. Imtiaz Begum, an awful menace, under the mock sweetness of her tone affects Deven with 'recitation of melo-dramatic and third rate verse: Deven sees her as "Female Mafia" who used men for their own growth. She appears to be fierce and in 'infuriated apparition in white and silver. She is best remembered as the woman with 'spittle-flecked red lips which had parted as scream abuse at the poet." (In Custody, 64) such

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violent reactions upholds the bleeding heart inside her. The role of the loose woman which she plays is thrust upon her. But she is a bold presentation of feminism of the novelist who puts the universal question:

"Was it not intolerable to you that a woman should match their gifts and even outstrip them? Are you not guilty of assuming that because you are a male, you have a right to brains, talent, reputation and achievement, while I, because I was born female, am condemned to find what satisfaction I can in being maligned, mocked, ignored and neglected." 16

By Intiaz Begum Mrs. Desai reveals the restlessness of a woman in male dominated society. She, Nur's 'Janum' is not at all emotional. At hear, a great admirer of poetry, she reacts hysterically when she finds the poet Nur admist horrible, inferior life. The party, the friends, the 'feasts and the furies' makes her 'harsh' and 'accusing'.

"Did he marry me to make me live in Pigsty with him?
Am I to live like a Pig with all the rest of you." 17

This woman belongs to a separate group- very sensitive but when situation demands, she behaves like 'Fire-eaters'. She succumbs temporarily but emerges as soon as possible. Mrs. Desai is deeply concerned with the women's problems, their origins and possible solutions. Through the character of Intiaz Begum Mrs. Desai reveal the actual and very pathetic condition of woman in society. Each novel of her picks up female characters from various sections of the society. As the novel progresses, Mrs. Desai keeps on hinting at the growing importance of woman's role. Intiaz differs from others. Without caring for the gossip of being a prostitute, she reveals her 'essential, unsuspected spirit.

17. Ibid, P. 60.
Without education, merely by some natural gift, she has seized a great poet like Nur. She raises herself to higher status by proving as an intellectual companion by his side. Mrs. Desai, very often, presents the 'two sides' of a coin. She presents man-woman relationship in the context of feminism. Her main motive is that the couples should revise their perceptions, life style and attitudes to cope with the modern Indian society perhaps, 'It is the reason' why Nur married Intiaiz:

"In his old age, to have at his side an intellectual companion of the kind he did not have in his first marriage.”

By providing a balanced and sensible view point on Deven's project, Sarla could have avoided the 'Crux' of their problem. Intiaiz has accepted quite easily a new, additional responsibility of supplementing support (reciting and popularising Urdu poetry) to the old poet Nur. Through Intiaiz, Mrs. Desai creates a new woman who is more challenging and uncompromising:

"None of your friends credit him with even so much intelligence although they profess to worship him.”

To prove her abilities and gifts, she can be demanding and aggressive:

"Is it not you has made me play the role of the loose woman in gaudy garments by refusing to take my work seriously and giving me just that much regard that you would extend to even a failure in as long as the artist was male.”

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20. Ibid, 196.
The Indian woman, traditionally is considered as the pivot of the family. Therefore, she has a very important role to play in keeping the way of life going. Today, society is changing at such a speed that it is difficult for both man and woman to adjust to it. Mrs. Desai concentrates on the resultant pressure of this dramatic social change which goes on threatening the harmony of the family. Each of her novels highlights the superficial gloss of modernism and growing tension and the women like Sarla and Imtiaz Begum are caught in the entangling net of commercialism and are doomed to suffer. Sarla's dream of high status life style and Imtiaz's demand for 'applause and accord' are all separate knots of the same thread. The so-called social changes pave the path of for 'unbridgeable gulfs' to which the women characters fall and find in bottomless abyss. It becomes more than a cage for Sarla and Imtiaz Begum. Each and every woman of her, helps in a better understanding of marital life. Feminine sensibility of Anita Desai has prompted her to explore the pathetic condition of woman in society and family and the tender area of women characters which has been neglected for years in India.

Women writers, everywhere, have preference to write about woman characters and often such preference are seen as limitations of their creative abilities. Some critics have gone a step further and said that Anita Desai's novels are written around women characters whose marriages are broken or ill-matched. But this does not pause a problem for her to explore the female preoccupation in the lives of the characters. Most of her female character (like Sarla) are important for their extreme sensivity, especially against a male dominated society and also for their neurotic behaviour patterns. A wife like Sarla in "In Custody", stands against the normal picture of a domesticated one sacrifices her whole life for the family. In Anita Desai, the feminine characters suffer a lot for the
cause of being woman. Some critics have gone deep into psychology of some writers and their heroines. The educated independent women who brush aside the male dominated world as silly and meaningless, have gone ahead as insurgent and have raised a literature of protest. We see here the examples of George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen and the Bronte sisters. Anita Desai joins this illustrious company of female authors who have created memorable heroines like Sarla and other characters like Imtiaz Begum who continuously fight for their rights, and assert their individuality. They are often faced with a choice between conviction and conformity. They always choose the farmer though they have to face the violent tides of the society against them. Thus, through this novel "In Custody" Anita Desai focuses on women who, as chief protagonists, suffer in a meticulous world dominated by men, who, in the guise of father, brother or husband, present a constant threat to their integrity and intuition. The maiden characters are painted in various colours, have been portrayed in varied roles starting from the role of housewives to that of enlightened professionals in educational institutions; in each and every changing situation, they have reacted sometimes violently and sometimes silently, unheard, unknown by others. The restricted surrounding have treated them as helpless birds of cage. Women novelists necessarily have a special way of looking at things because they live in severely confined spheres. But that has neither distorted Anita Desai's vision nor made it inferior. It actually adds some more sharpness to it. In the novel "In Custody" 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 surfaces. Elaine Showalter posits 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 femininity as alienation. In her novels, she explores and exposes the long-smothered wail of the incarcerated psyche, imprisoned within the four walls of domesticity. Here, we have heroine protagonist sandwiched between tradition and modernity, between illusion and reality and between mask and the face. Thus positioned, The Desai woman disowns a ritualistic and tradition-bound life in order to explore her true self concerned with a woman's external quest for an authentic selfhood and an understanding of the existential problems of life, the Desai’s heroine is all agog to retain her individuality in the teeth of disintegrating and divisive forces that threaten her identity as a woman. In this novel "In Custody" Anita Desai has dealt graphically with the problems that confront a middle-class woman in the patriarchal Hindu society.

The novel "Baumgartner's Bombay" opens with the sad mental condition of Lotte, reading the letters of Baumgartner's mother, and it closes with the reading the cards and trying to know the cause of Baumgartner's murder. Especially, in this novel, we can move much closer to the female experiences. A close study of Anita Desai's work reveals her struggle for female autonomy played out against the backdrop of the patriarchal cultural pattern. At the outset, it seems, she is asking a new and different question about the condition of her female protagonist in the society. Mrs. Desai’s writing can be viewed as a self-conscious reaction to overwhelmingly masculinity of privileged dominant gender. In this novel we can identify in her female character a defiant tone of voice in asserting the personal and the subjective. Her emphasis is psychological rather than sociological, her profound intellectual maturity provides a frame work based on gender (female) as the ideological
scheme for the analysis of society in general. Like all feminist literary artists, a sustained analysis of allusive and elusive expression of individual is imperative for her. In her own words, her purely subjective novels "depend upon a private vision". This private vision poses extremes situations arising out of conflicts between the will and the reality revolving around the "Self". Carl Rogers rightly defines human interaction as a way of self-disclosure arguing:

"Man lives essentially in his own personal and subjective world and even his objective functioning is the result of subjective purpose and subjective choice." 21

Now, the centrality of self in Anita Desai is concentrated in terrifying isolation, finding it hard to reconcile with the world around "Self". A common trait in all major women characters of Anita Desai is their longing to be free of all kinds of social and familial involvement. One recalls, Simone de Beauvoirs caution that:

"The independent woman is one who, like man can move from immanence to transcendence in her public life activities and avoid sado-masochistic relationship in her personal life." 22

In the midst of social contempt they face a particular dilemma natured by marital relationship. We see that Lotte is an important character in this novel "Baumgartner's Bombay". She reaches Calcutta to earn her livelihood by dancing in a hotel. Like Baumgartner she also leads a very lonely life in India. She was a German Jew and Cabaret dancer. she marries Kanti Lal Sethia to avoid the detention in the camp.

Kanti Lal dies and after his death his son throws her on the street and deprived her of her property. She is all alone, and has only Hugo in her loneliness. In her later life she is so deeply depressed that she mostly lives in her house and drink liquor. After Baumgartner's death, she only says:

"Yes, Yes, I go now, I go too." 23

In this novel Anita Desai depicts the miserable and alienated condition of alien immigrant in India. Mrs. Desai presents the pathetic condition of Lotte and Baumgartner. Baumgartner directly effects the life of Lotte. Anita Desai depicts the lonely and alienated condition of Hugo Baumgartner, a German immigrant in India. Baumgartner has been living in India for fifty years, and, inspite of his long story, he can never feel the sense of belonging. He receives Indian citizenship, but even then Indians never accept him as an Indian and he always longs for his country. We find the same conditions with Lotte but her condition is more bitter because she is a woman. When Baumgartner first came to Calcutta, he met Lotte. Lotte was once Mrs. Sethia, the wife of a nondescript Marwari businessman of Calcutta. Later she was shunned by his family and then she came in touch with Baumgartner. For her, it was just a shift from Kanti to Baumgartner. Her philosophy of life was just 'compromise', but to some extent she was right in the approach towards life because in our society women are always marginalised and it is always dominated by men. Ania Loomba expresses her views in this regard thus:

"In patriarchal society, women are split subjects who watch themselves being watched by men. They turn themselves into objects because feminity itself is defined by being gazed upon by men." 24

23. Desai Anita, "Baumgartner's Bombay", P.
Mrs. Desai brings fresh insight into the understanding of the female psyche by depicting their frustration. Their problems and worries which find expression through their reaction. Lotte is a victim of situation. Her war is different one-'war within war within war. In her, there is a reflection of Hugo's attitude even though she disguises her disquiet with 'laughter and foul language'. If she called Indian husband, is the prose of life; Lotte reacts:

"Business, business, nothing else matters to the man. Then he gets tired, then he needs a change."25

Infact, the quest for life and love and a pervading feeling of apprehension, Lotte finds, 'no return' from it. In her one finds a mixture of Monisha's silent brooding. Amla and Sita's desire for a sort of release from the terrible oppression of the society. After Hugo's murder, She loses all control and feels to be 'suddenly so old' but the blood stained post cards- the letters of Mrs. Baumgartner to her son-provide her with clues to a 'puzzle', a meaning to the meaningless. The problems of Hugo are also her own problems. But she learns to be more careful by rising above the situation. The struggle is to start. The 'ordeal' is once again to find out her own identity - 'In my beginning is my end". Every female character of Mrs. Desai is precisely chosen and purposeful. Lotte, in the role of a loose woman speaks of the ambition, the frustration and gloom of feminism. Through, the details of her depicted life, Desai compels one's attention to such protagonist who carry millstones round their necks. Lotte's multicolored history like Hugo's is suffocating. She is the embodiment of the changes in the urban life style stretching from Napoli to Bombay. Regarding the importance of money, she explains:

"Don't you? She exploded, without money, one can live? She slammed down her glass and refilled it immediately. You can't be memsahib without money. I did try Hugo, but no, without money, I was only poor old Lotte, not grand memsahib."26

The physical novelty and Kanti's name give her some sort of relief from the existing outlandishness but later on the mental stimulation and companionship make her faithful:

"Who looked after me? Nobody - Except Kanti."27

She is drawn apart and different from other protagonist. Bold and beautiful, the gold bangles from Kanti remind her:

" - but I can't take them off and put them in bank. It is like taking off your wedding-ring. Hindu women do it when they become widows but I wound they are not a wedding-ring after all, only presents. Presents from Kanti."28

Lotte may be a mistress but the care and concern which she shows towards Kanti symbolize a change in outlook:

"I was not even there to hold his hand. His family was already fighting over the property - no one even hold his hand, there in the hospital. Dogs die like that, in the street. This is how we go, Hugo, she wagged her head in the end-alone."29

The philosophical insight is contrasted with individual hypocrisy:

"These boy - I knew them when they were little. If they were sick, I made them porridge. At night, I sat holding ice to their foreheads. I kept

27. Ibid, P. 72.
28. Ibid, P. 73.
29. Ibid, P. 73.
away the priest, called a doctor. Not even a thermometer they had in the house till I went and got one. If they wanted to dress smart, I went and chose their clothes.\footnote{30}

Lotte was devoted to Kanti Lal and his family and she would take of his sons like a mother but after Kanti’s death his family members refuse to recognise her. After Kanti’s death nothing is the same. His sons refuse to recognise her:

"Who is this woman? We don't know this woman.
Throw her out."\footnote{31}

Lotte's tragedy is that she is not a part of the family legally and being a foreigner, she is not even able to express her sympathy to the dying man who had maintained her lavishly and would periodically come from Calcutta to visit her. Worse still when she goes to Calcutta during the last days of Kanti she is not even allowed to go to the hospital. Lotte’s case and her relationship with Kanti Lal’s family is the ironical presentation of women's condition in Indian Society. In ancient Indian we had polygamy and the shahtras described the duties of a co-wife but in modern times bigamy is a crime. But man being polygamous in nature he at times crimes on life-long relationship with the other woman. In the days of Adam and Eve, inequality of sexes was not known but down the ages, woman have been relegated to an inferior position in the social set-up. From being the very incarnation of power (Shakti) and knowledge (Gnyan), women came to be held only as a child-bearing machine and their horizons have been supposed to be confined only to their familial role. Chiefly the blame was put on men and it was believed that male-domination does not allow women to flourish freely. But in the recent

\footnote{31} Ibid, P. 77.
times there have also been sensitive writers like Anita Desai who have taken a humanist approach to the situation. Feminists maintain that women are not mentally different since birth. The female-child is only biologically different but the patriarchal society conditions it into being a woman:

"One is not born but rather becomes a woman, 'Says Simone de Beauvoir. She continues, 'No Biological, Psychological, Economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in the society, it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine."\(^32\) (Second Sex, P. 445)

Lotte becomes a victim to the tendency of society to condition a woman to submit to the norms of patriarchal set-up. Mrs. Desai as a true humanist puts the blame not only on men who are suffering with the complex of male-superiority but also on women who oppress their own kind. It is not only the male chauvinist that acts as the antagonist force but also apathetic female does more harm in terms of the loss of woman-soul. Here, in this novel Lotte's matter is quite different, she suffers much because she was Kanti's kept. Lotte's condition was not respectable in the society and Kanti's family takes advantage of her situation specially after Kanti's death. Mrs. Desai reveals the pathetic condition of this woman (Lotte) in male dominated society. But, Mrs. Desai views women not only as meekly/passively defiant but also as the embodiment of power which presents her clear view on feminism. Lotte rejects the hierarchisation of male values where the female factor is reduced to a negative, and almost nullified. Her views express her desire for the affirmation of her feminine self. It is in fact a search on her part for the genuine female self in a male-centered phallocentric world. But here is

not a tradition one. It is an esoteric quest, something weird and grotesque on the part of a woman. But Lotte never bothers about the social repercussion her esoteric quest might entail. She is isolated from the traditional Indian heritage and its social implications. Taking up a non-conformist stance, she adopts a radical feminist point of view all agog to:

"Destroy the sex/gender system - the real source women oppression - and to create a new society in which men and women are equals at every level of existence."\(^{33}\)

Through the character of Lotte, Mrs. Desai is portraying the inner struggle of a woman to express herself, to discover her real self Mrs. Desai has discussed in this novel not only the world of Lotte but also the world of Baumgartner's mother Frau Baumgartner. In her character, she has again handled the theme of loneliness and frustration. The novelist describes her fading fate in these words:

"The sweetness always ended in a quaver. It drew and produced a teardrop. The teardrop hung suspended, glinting in the light from the window and Hugo watched, memorized waiting for it to explode and drop. Tear-drop, Pear drop. Silver-light, gold-fresh and then - the fall."\(^{34}\)

Both Hugo and his mother are afraid of isolation. They are isolated from the rest wherever they go-Hugo, in India, is a solitary foreigner. His mother shares the same feeling in Germany. It chases them and becomes a dark, monstrous block. there was no peace:

"Because alongside the train was always the shadow of the past, of elsewhere of what has been and could never

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be abandoned - an animal like a jackal in the day; a hyena in the night. In the darkness, it continued to chase the train, chase Baumgartner.\textsuperscript{35}

Though Hugo's parents lives together, yet there interests are quite different. Here, Anita Desai again touch a vital aspect of feminism and presents broken and tense relationship between Hugo's mother and father. His father do not bother to know his mother and do not try to know the feelings of this woman. It really hurts her heart. The temperament of Frau Baumgartner and her husband (Herr Baumgartner) differ very much. Herr Baumgartner has a respectable status in Berlin. He live an expensive life to make a show of satisfaction and prosperity. He always behaves like a rich and prosperous man. On the contrary, Mrs. Baumgartner loves a very simple life and keeps the room of her house far from being showy. She is a beautiful and graceful lady and in this lady Mrs. Desai reveals the emotional quality of a woman. Indifferent behaviour of her husband fills her heart with a sense of contempt, and her confidence in him is shaken. Her husband's cruelty and indifferent behaviour nip his happiness and freedom in a bud. Her husband's cruelty makes her disgusted, frustrated and lonely. Although she sings sweet songs, but they do not give peace to her lonely being. Hugo loves his mother and likes her company once he, with his mother visits Grunewald and there he falls free from the suffocating atmosphere created by his father. He enjoys the beauty of nature, and finds change in his mother also. He is surprised:

"Why she did not come oftener if it made her so happy."\textsuperscript{36}

He realises from her mother's sudden change and there is:


\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, P. 45.
".........a rift, a break between his parents that might have existed for all these years but of which he was only now really aware."

Hugo is pained to see that the relationship between his father and his mother is not in good condition. After his father's death, his shop is sold and the condition of his mother becomes more miserable. Mrs. Desai by projecting women comparatively in sober rules tries to focus on the submissiveness of them. We find that her novel Baumgartner's Bombay is about Baumgartner, the hero, but through the character of Lotte and Mrs. Baumgartner, we find of feminine psyche. Anita Desai's preoccupation with the feminine sensibility is unique in the annals of Indo-Anglican novel. Her feminism is not of demanding, obstructive clamouring kind but constitutes sensitive portrayal of intelligent, gifted women married to gentle, dutiful but sensitive men and who are slowly sinking in the bog of a dull matrimonial relationship. Anita Desai's novels constitute together the documentation through fiction of radical female resistance against a patriarchally defined concept of normality. She finds the links between female duality, myth and psychosis intriguing; each heroine is seen as searching for, finding and absorbing or annihilating the double who represents the socially impermissible aspects of her femininity. Sexual politics and madness have been noticed and treated as concomitant aspects of the awaked feminine consciousness, both in contemporary Indian and Western fiction. Anita Desai, among contemporary Indian novelist, bring fresh insights to the sexiest nature of the issue of sanity. Desai's female protagonist points out 'the mad clarity of all family relationship, the farcical nature of all marriages, the illusory quality of all human relationship, male and female. Mrs. Desai reveals

that Lotte is not a gothic persecuted maiden. But her mental suffering
brought on by insensitive social norms can be equally bad. Anita Desai
shows us how the women have repeatedly to repress their emotions, their
finer impulses, due to a social code, not of their own making. Constant
rebuffs lead her on to utter humiliation and desolation. By showing each
female protagonist at the end of her tether, Anita Desai is not seeking,
incidentally, revenge for the ills of Indian womanhood. She has fashioned
a new concept of feminist fiction, not to only lock horns with male
supremacy, but also to make us aware that we are not to settle for
existence itself being absurdity, nausea or nothingness. The women here
is on a ceaseless quest, for a more meaningful life not only for herself but
for humanity in general. The novel "Baumgartner's Bombay" also
presents women in non-traditional role, Lotte is fine example of it, Lotte
can not be categorised as the totally stereotyped woman. Anita Desai is
chiefly concerned with the portrayal of inward or psychic reality of the
characters. In dealing with the problems of feminism, Anita Desai has
adopted a realistic mode of writing. She discuss the problems of
temperamental incompatibility, conjugal chaos and inharmonious man-
woman relationship "The great relationship of humanity" says D.
Lawrance:

"Will always be the relation between man and woman.
the relation between man and man, woman and woman,
parent and child will always be subsidiary."38 (Delmia,
"Desai Interviewed" The Times of India)

Due to rapid industrialisation, growing awareness among women
of their rights, man-woman relationship has become a popular concern
because it directly effects a woman's life. Desai uses depth expertly

explores the psychic reverberations of her female characters. Anita Desai illustrates through her women characters, theme of feminism in her novels. The novels of Desai explore the bedimmed and beguiled psyche of female protagonist who has gone through intense and fiery moments of conflict. The protagonist (female) in "Baumgartner's Bombay" is a "lone explorer" of her identity. Desai paves the way for a new kind of novel - the novel of psychic sensibility of female protagonists Desai's protagonists are lone individuals and not a social person:

"No other writer, it is said, so much concerned with the life of ...........women in Indian cities as Anita Desai is."39

Her female protagonists crave for the liberation of their feminine self from the sacks of socio-psychically maladjusted environ. they desire to stay whole but when offered the choice, they retrace and retrace. Anita Desai illustrates, through these women, a spacious panoply of theme in her novels, ranging from left wing politics, feminism, sexual license, generation gaps, the persistent rivalry between marriage, career and self-fulfillment the polemics of tradition, change, religion, the ambiguities of personal and cultural liberation, the pulling tensions in familial relationships, lust, guilt, incest, female narcissism, the restlessness of intellectual woman leading to self-delusion, fragmentation, schizophrenia and all the bedrock hurt connections between men and women. Her protagonists suffer from lack of parental love, disturbed infancy, broken homes and Oedipus or Electra Complex. Disgruntled with their existence, they often Opt out of the mainstream of life. Alienation in Desai's female characters often manifests in immoral ties and activities which we hardly find in any other Indian Women Novelist save Shobha De. Desai's novels reveals her female protagonist's search for their identity in the milieu through self-discovery and self-identification.