CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION : A SURVEY OF DESAI'S NOVELS

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1.0 Novels of Anita Desai: A Brief Survey

Anita Desai, born in 1937, is one of the most significant fiction writers of Indo-English literature today. Victoria Glendinning writes, "She writes an extraordinarily delicate, lucid English which puts many English writers to shame." (Thomas, 2000: 175) N.R. Gopal has rightly pointed out, "Each book has an individual structural pattern of its own. However, all the mechanisms she employs tend the work a unique harmony where incidents, people, situations combine to produce an artistic whole." (Thomas, 2000: 193)

Anita Desai's novels mark a distinct break from the traditional themes and techniques used by the earlier Indo-English novelists. Anita Desai is not concerned with the social, political or moral problems. For her "the inner climate, the climate of sensibility that rumbles like thunder and suddenly blazes forth like lightning is more compelling than the outer weather, the physical geography or the visible action." (Ambekar, 1989: 102-103)

Anita Desai is a very distinguished and distinct female novelist from the rest of her generation's other female novelists. In her novels Indian English fiction has acquired a
depth which it seldom had before. Her novels have drawn worldwide attention and she stands in the forefront in the world fiction. Whereas other female novelists concentrate upon a linear path which shows the development of a story in a causal sequence, Anita Desai writes in the symbolic mode which not only subordinates plot to the other character but also pushes it to the background. (Gopal, 1999 : vi) She has used more symbols in her novels. Her device of symbolism play a significant part in her novels in capturing the intensity of the feelings of her characters and in describing their inner world. An attempt has been made to bring out this use of symbolism in her novels with special reference to 'Where Shall We Go This Summer'.

Anita Desai is one of those few Indian novelists in English who have tried to understand intimately the predicament of their female characters. She excels in delineating human relationships. While dealing with her female characters, especially their relations with men, their drives and reactions and their sexual repressions, Anita Desai has made significant efforts to step out of the main current of narrative devices and language techniques as developed by the masculine approach. She has tried to look at things
particularly from women's point of view. All of her novels tell the shocking tale of blunted human relationships. Anita Desai has raised appropriate questions regarding the status and role of women in society. The most decisive issue that she takes up for discussions again and again is the question of women's freedom. I have surveyed briefly all of her novels.

1.1 Cry, The Peacock

Anita Desai has introduced marital disharmony in some of her novels. Her first novel 'Cry, The Peacock' is the sad story of Maya and her relationship with Gautam. It highlights the problem of "Misfit Marriage". Maya, a young girl in her full youth and emotions, is a hyper-sensitive, sentimental, imaginative and obsessed girl with a feeling of inevitability of misfortune from her childhood. She is a pampered child who has been brought up in a fairy world, ill-equipped to cope with reality. She has led a protected life. Things become all the worse when she is forced by the circumstances to marry an old man, entirely, irrational & illogical. Her husband Gautam is several years her senior and eminently successful in life in the worldly sense. He is a cold, intellectual, logical, brilliant, ambitious, serious-minded
practical man to the core. Both Maya and Gautam are entirely opposed to each other in their temperament and emotional responses.

Maya is a motherless child and that is why she does not grow into a balanced personality. She is often haunted by an astrological prediction, the prediction that her marriage is to fizzle out in its fourth year with the death of either wife or husband. Since she is childless herself, her predicament becomes all the more acute, this give emphasis to her isolation. She was unable to establish effective communication with her husband as she is too introvert. She lives in utmost sensual and sexual dissatisfaction since he is twice of her age. With a busy husband, uninterested in her feelings and emotions, she is totally out of tune with her surroundings.

The peacock's cry is symbolic of Maya's agonized cry for love, understanding and life of involvement. Maya is neither able to get company from her husband nor sexual satisfaction. Maya believes in a life of total absorption and involvement, but Gautam preaches to her the need for detachment. In the words of Maya, Gautama "who lived so narrowly, so shallowly", was a 'harmless, guileless
being who walked the fresh grass and did not know he touched it". (P. 169) In a moment of extreme bitterness Maya tells Gautam in so many words how she loves him. But Gautam's attitude to Maya is that of a typical husband who wants to keep her at arm's length. He treats her as a child, a light-headed woman who is not worthy of his confidence. He leaves Maya emotionally and spiritually starved and insecure. Perhaps their great difference in age works as a big gap in their lives, thus four years of marriage without children leads Maya towards her insanity, the death of her much loved pet dog, Toto, aggravates her mental condition and makes her increasingly conscious of the mysterious working of destiny. Reacting to it, she rushes to the garden tap "to wash the vision from her eyes". (P. 15)

It is not that Gautam and Maya have never tried to understand each other. They have made several attempts to reconcile but all the time they are prevented by a nameless barrier.

Maya loses interest in Gautama's facts and hard realities. Her sensitive nature finds it hard to live happily with this man. Her isolation is total when she realizes that he is not able to empathise with her reactions to events around her.

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She cannot dissolve the relationship either. Ultimately, Maya's psychic problems, aggravated by her infantilism, drive her to a kind of schizophrenia. She describes herself as "body without a heart, a heart without a body". (P. 196) In spite of the terrible demands of her conscience to the contrary, she is driven into a desperate situation where her sense of reality is totally lost, leading to unseemingly consequences. At last she kills Gautama and then kills herself by committing suicide. (Cf. Manavar, 2000 : 14, Rajeshwar, 1995 : 142-143, Gopal, 1999 : 38-39, Roy, 1995 : 165-166, Nityanandam, 2000 : 20).

1.2 *Voices In The City*

'Voices in the City' is the struggle of Monisha, Amla and Nirode and experiences of Calcutta. Monisha is married into a traditional, conservative Bengali Hindu joint family with a medieval outlook. She is dreamy sensitive, far more intelligent and unfortunately circumstanced. She wishes to enjoy a freedom which seems impossible in her husband's joint-family home in Calcutta. The open spaces of kalimpong that she associates with her childhood seem unreachable now. She finds her present life meaningless. (Nityanandam, 2000 : (20))
99) Her father, her husband, her family and more particularly the aggressive mother-in-law, all are hostile to her individuality. She possesses a rare intellectual tendency, but in due course her conscience withered and died away. She is childless and lives a miserable existence. Her husband Jiban is insensitive to her needs and her in-laws are far from being sympathetic. She is trapped in the disgusting and cacophonous welter of voices in the monstrous city. She longs for release. She faces the crisis of identity. Her husband is a pathetically wooden and insensitive. So she knows no intimacies, no communion, no mutual understanding, no real sharing of the partnership. Her relationship with her husband is loneliness, silence and discontent. The marriage ruined despite its seeming facade. She is not involved in any kind of useful activity and this spells disaster. Realizing that "There is no escape from it", she becomes a "sleepwalker, ghost, some unknown and dreaded entity". (P. 146) In this way when she is confronted with the hopelessness of life, she needs to escape and the only options she finds is to set herself on fire.

Her sister Amla too has the seeds of destruction within her but fortunately for her she is not lonely and unoccupied. She is involved in her work and meets all kinds
of people. She has no time to indulge in self-pity and is thereby able to preserve her sanity. She becomes "agitated as a moth", for "she had submerged herself in the aqueous swaying underworld of Dharma's art" (PP 261-62) without fighting her battle bravely. To her, art becomes an exploration, and a discovery of one's identity. Isolated from the pressure of the world around her, she struggles to connect herself with nature in order to feel whole and complete. (Pathak, 1991 : 95)

Nirode is perhaps the only male character in Anita Desai's earlier novels whose 'consciousness' is explored. His approach to life is absolutely negative and unlike other men does not want to succeed; instead he desires to "move from, failure to failure, step-by-step to rock bottom and he wants to "explore that depth.... I want to get there without that meaningless climbing." (P. 40) He is involved in some kind of work and that saves him. (Cf. Fernandes, 1994 : 170-171, Acharya, 1991 : 54-57, Nityanandam, 2000 : 19, Pathak, 1991 : 94)

1.3 Baumgartner's Bombay

' Baumgartner's Bombay' is the story of a rootless man, Baumgartner, without family in India. He is unmarried. He is
persecuted by society both in his own country and in his adopted country, of course for entirely different reasons. In his native Germany he is a victim of social prejudice simply because he is a Jew. In India he is never accepted by the society even though he has lived in this country for several decades. When his father’s flourishing furniture business is destroyed by fanatical Nazis, he is advised to try his luck in colonial India. He comes to Calcutta and for some time he does well in the timber business. But then the second World War breaks out and even though he has nothing to do with Nazi Germany, because he holds a German passport, he is arrested as an alien citizen of a hostile country. He is put in captivity along with other Germans for six years in a camp in the foot-hills of the Himalayas. When he is released after the war, he goes to Calcutta only to find the city scorched by communal frenzy attendant on the partition of the country. He comes to Bombay and settles down there, living an ascetic life.

He lives an isolated existence but, his thoughts are not self-destructive. Even when he has lost his job, he does not think of himself all the time. Being a bachelor and having no one to care for, he gets in stray cats and crowds his flat.
with them. They are like a family to him. As he grows older, he grows shabbier. He no longer notices if his shoes have soles that flap, or if buttons on his shirt are missing, or if they are clean and washed; after all the cats greet him enthusiastically and that is all that matters. It is because he has someone to love and care for, even though they are only mean miserable street cats, that his thoughts do not turn inwards to worry about himself. He is not the type of individual who would go and commit suicide, but fate has other plans in store for him.

In the late sixties and early seventies when India was littered with so many hippies, he is ironically and pathetically killed by a German drug addict hippy whom out of human consideration he had taken to his house. The tragedy is all the more acute, for Baumgartner is killed for a small amount of money. (Fernandes, 1994: 182, Gopal, 1999: 33)

1.4 **Bye-Bye, Blackbird**

'Bye-Bye, Blackbird' deals with the migration of the Indians to England and the emotional disturbances experienced by them in England. It examines the psychological process of acculturation to an alien soil, and portrays an evolutionary
progression. It is based on the problematic life of the immigrants. The unwanted black-bird Dev feels the unpleasantness of the English life - lack of suitable posts for the black, variation of behaviour in market places. He comes to England for higher studies, feels an alien. The difference between expectation and reality disturbs him and makes him feel self conscious. He is rejected by the country where he chooses to live. He gives vent to his feelings candidly when he tells Adit: "I wouldn't live in a country where I was insulted and unwanted." (P. 18) Prompted by an urge for emotional identification with his new home, he struggles to discover his identity in strange and silent milieu. Stranded between acceptance and rejection, he is tortured emotionally and intellectually. London makes him award that he does not belong to the world which, he thinks, is the source of his conscious existence. It is this 'otherness' in him that alienates him. Inspite of the rejection by the country he discovers the attraction London holds for him and decides to stay in England. His emotional identification with the English Countryside produces a vigorous change in him.

Adit is an Indian, but he has married an English Girl Sarah, because he has settled down in England. He is very
satisfied and pleased in the beginning. But he becomes aware of his otherness after his visit to the in-laws and the people of the country. He is repelled by it. When war is declared, Adit recalls the Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta in 1947, when Hindus and Muslims killed one another, burnt one another’s houses and raped one another’s wives. He imagines the same scene repeated again in the war that is going on. The war makes severe homesickness in him and urges him to leave behind the cosy nest that he has made for himself. At last when he finds it impossible to stay in England, he behaves in an extremely practical manner. He picks up his baggage and together with Sarah leave for India immediately.

Sarah’s is a case of complete loneliness. She married an Indian brown man. And in doing so she has broken the social code of the British society by marrying a person from India. Her marriage to Adit alienates her from her own culture and even from her individual self. Her main problem is to discover her identity and attain self-actualization, but she fails in these and goes through the agony of loss of identity silently. But the significant thing about Sarah is that she is a devoted wife and even though she undergoes suffering and mental torture, she doesn’t hesitate to leave her native country.
and go for a good tour to India. At the time of going away she felt all the pangs of saying Good-Bye to her past twenty four years.

Sarah is alien to Adit's land after leaving the England. She is well aware of the torried oriental heat and ugliness. Her anguish is anguish of loneliness. The reasons why she avoids society and loves salitude have been analysed by Usha Bande in these word : After wedding, her reticence turns into aloofness. Sarah loses her zest to participate in living, apathy pervades her and she feels empty, and inteffectual in directing her life. (Khanna, 1995 : 78-79) Sarah's reactions are more against racial discrimination, than against the dullness of the physical world. But she is involved in some kind of job outside her home. Her work in the school-office keeps her busy and she does not spend too much time thinking about herself. She is realistic and even her sense of alienation which comes from marrying an Indian does not drive her to marbic delusion and tragic loss. Sarah is, however, practical and balanced and hence faces the reality boldly and rationally. All the time we find her grow, from strength to strength. The good thing in this novel is that the feeling of utter hopelessness despair and destruction is absent. (Cf. Nayak

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1.5 Clear Light of Day

'Clear Light of Day' dramatizes the story of a Bimala and the other personages in the Das household. But in the background we come to know the partition of the country, the Hindu-Muslim troubles that India faced as a fledgeling nation and the growing uneasiness of the Muslims in the Hindu dominated areas in India.

There seems to be a certain parallel in the fortunes of the Das household and the changes in fortune that India experienced. In the Das household, the father, besides providing for the family's financial security, does not do much else. The mother too occupies herself with her parties and dinners and the children are left in the care of servants. Later a widow aunt provides children with the love and security that they are so badly in need of. The four children are, Bimla, Raja, Tara & Baba and Bimla is the eldest of the four children.

Raja becomes a poet, who marries a Muslim girl and lives in Hyderabad, Baba is a mentally retarded person, who
always stays at home and enjoys old-fashioned music from gramophone records. Bimla works as a lecturer in a Delhi College and nurses an eternal grievance against her brother for deserting the family. Tara her sister, marries an officer in the Civil Service, leaving Baba and Bimla to seek their own salvation in the ancestral house.

One day Tara visits to her parental home in Delhi. It stirs up innumerable memories of the past. The memory of the petrified condition in which the whole family lives makes them feel as if they are wallowing in a "pond so muddy and stagnant." (P. 12) With their parents now dead, it is left to Bimla to run the old house and lend to the needs of their congenitally retarded brother, Baba. Inspite of the differences in their personalities and attitudes, the sisters Bimla and Tara try to make a close relationship by recalling and reliving the past.

Bim and Raja are at this stage very close to each other. This situation finds a parallel in the pre-British days when the Hindus and Muslims treated one another with respect and there was peace all around. With the British policy of divide and rule, things soon changed. The partition of India and Pakistan creates a deep crack in their familial ties. It
distintegrates their family, becoming a powerful image of their feeling of connection. The partition brought barriers between people who had lived together for centuries in an atmosphere of mutual, social and cultural understanding. Tara, Bim and Raja face a severe identity crisis. They are unable to relate their present to the past.

Bimla chooses to stay single to take care of her retarded younger brother, spurning the offer of help of the others including the offer of marriage of their young family doctor. She sacrifices her whole life for her brothers and sister, 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.

The terrible events of the Hindu-Muslim enmity serve rhetorically to externalize the disruptive tensions of the Bimla, Raja, Baba and Tara's psyche. Having to live in a world charged with hatred and destructive potential, the characters show sign of increasing regression. The highly sensitive being of Bimla is weakened and paralyzed by the seething violent conflict both within and without. Her self is wounded by the callous behaviour of her parents and her brother, very often compares her relations and their memory. Her realisation of her
suffering, her dedication for others and her self-sacrifice intensify her feeling of loneliness. She thinks all her relations - Tara, Bakul, Raja and Benazir----- came brutal invaders into her life only to torture her. In this cantankerous mood of agony, she wishes to get rid of the responsibility of her helpless brother Baba. She chooses Baba as her target: "----- but I might have to send you to live with Raja. I come to ask you ---- what would you think of that ? Are you willing to go and live with Raja in Hyderabad". (P. 163) But Bimla was not without kindness. As her anger is spent, she feels sorry for pained him. She gradually regains her calm, and her heart is filled with love for Raja and Tara and all of them who had lived in the house with her. By implication this is the clear light of day that dawns upon Bim making her way clear, despelling all her confusion and giving her a philosophy of life. With her redeeming realisation and feeling of being sorry, she is able to see the clear light of day. (Cf. Clement, 1991 : 239, Fernandes, 1994 : 173, Nityanandam, 2000 : 19, Acharya, 1991 : 62-66)

1.6 In Custody

The novel 'In Custody' deals with two characters that of Deven and Nur. Deven is very poor, young college lecturer
in Hindi at Mirpur but fond of Urdu literature and is a great fan of Nur, a very famous Urdu poet. Deven is married to Sarla but they are not able to get along happily as husband and wife. Both of them are frustrated in their own ways, but they are unable to do anything for each other. Deven feels as if he were in prison. Marriage, a family and a job had placed him in a sort of cage and there was no way out of it. He is pained to notice the dereliction of his marriage. (Pathak, 1991: 42) "The tedium of it settled upon him like a grey, crumbling mildew. He felt aged and mouldy." (P. 66)

Deven comes from Delhi and settles down at Mirpur a small town, along with his sullen and disappointed wife, Sarla and small son Monu. His friend Murad who edits an Urdu journal, 'Awaaz', arrives from Delhi and tracks him out at his college, persuades him to write an article on Nur's poetry for his journal. The temptation to acquire name and fame by writing something on a celebrated Urdu poet like Nur forces Deven to do the task. When Murad's boy takes him to have an interview with Nur, Deven finds himself in an alien and suffocating atmosphere. By agreeing to Nur's proposal Deven falls into his well laid cage, from which he can never escape. Murad encourages him to take the assistance of a taperecorder.
in collecting the speeches and recitations of Nur and later edit
them. Deven arranges to record Nur's views on poetry and a
few poems which he may recite from memory. But the
taperecorder doesn't operate properly and the whole thing
misfires.

Deven spends the money given by the college
authorities not only to obtain the recorder but also to feed Nur
and satisfy the lady who arranges the whole show. The apparent
aim is to keep the tapes on which Nur's voice is recorded in
the college library for the pleasure and benefit of all lovers of
Urdu poetry. But when the tapes are played, they produce
neither well organized dialogue nor the recitation of poems
but a nonsensical jumble of voices. Thus Deven is cheated by
his friends and suffers from the pains of failure. His efforts to
escape from the cage of marriage, a family and a job land him
in the public world of Urdu poetry and intellectual fame. But
that wider world itself is a kind of Zoo in which he finds the
poet attracting public attention. Whether it is the private world
or the public world, the self doesn't find freedom for itself.
Even after the, failure of the entire project, Deven is under
social pressure. His students who help him to restore a sem-
blance of coherence in the tapes, demand first division marks.
Nur writes to him for medical allowance and an endowment for his child from the college authorities. Murad wants him to complete his article on Nur. Deven also receives a letter from Imtiaaz-Begam, complaining of his utter ignorance of her poetic talent. When he approaches Murad for payment of some money for his contributions to his magazine, he gives him a blunt reply, informing him of the excessive bills on drinks and other materials from hotels and restaurants he himself has received. He desires the sole rights of the tape-recordings to sell them to HMV in order to clear his bills and debts. Thus Deven finds no truly sympathetic soul to console him or to draw him out of the woods. Instead, he meets failure and frustration from the beginning to the end. He feels that "He had imagined he was taking Nur's poetry into safe custody, and not realized that Nur would become his custodian and place him in custody too." But the novel ends with a positive note. Inspite of the sufferings and pains Deven is able to perceive a ray of hope. (Pathak, 1991 : 44) At last he becomes convinced: "Perhaps when everyone had cut him off and he was absolutely alone, he would begin to find himself and his own strength." (PP. 189-90) Thus Deven realized that life is not so easy. His sufferings gave him a philosophical outlook. The
1.7 Fire On The Mountain

The novel, 'Fire On The Mountain', deals with the life-long frustration caused by an unhappy marriage. Nanda Kaul is an elderly lady - great grandmother, but she has not overcome the shocks caused to her by her husband who was a Vice-Chancellor. Her husband Prof. Kaul carries on a love affair with Miss. David, the arithmetic teacher. But as she was a Christian he could not dare break social code and marry her. Nanda Kaul is thoroughly disillusioned with all her emotional bonds whether matrimonial or filial. She thought that she had at last earned the right to reject everyone. She decided to live in the solitude of Carignano, she is compelled both by choice and circumstances to live in a solitary old bungalow 'Carignano', in Kasauli, fiercely guarding her loneliness and privacy. But even there she recalls how she had been ignored by her husband. In spite of having a large number of children and grand children, she suffers from a terrible sense of loneliness. She lives like a recluse in the sprawling house. The reason of the sense of neglect that she suffered from was her husband.
As a result of this neglect, Nanda Kaul had always looked upon herself as an alienated being. (Pathak, 1991 : 34) "She had suffered from the nimiety, the disorder, the fluctuating and unpredicatable excess." (P. 30) She revelled in her life's "bareness, its emptiness," (P. 31) striving "to add to her own pared, reduced and radianty single life." (P. 31)

Nanda Kaul feels relieved after her husband's death because she is free to live life according to her wishes and desires. So deep is the scan left on Nanda Kaul by her husband's neglect of her and his affair with Miss David. She does not forget that her children were all alien to her and naturally she neither understood nor loved them. It is her painfull sense of loneliness even in the midst of a large family that compels to retire to Carignano. But her insulated life is stirred by the arrival of her great grand-daughter Raka, a girl of seven or eight years, an introvert, sensitive as Nanda herself. To Nanda Kaul, Raka's arrival is an unwelcome intrusion. She was simply "an intruder, an outsider, a mosquito flown up from the plains to tease and worry." (P. 40) Raka is very much confined to her own self, angry about any intimacy with Nanda. She is still a child, not yet given to selfreflections and neurotic obsessions. It is the outside world which holds her inter-
est. She busies herself with wandering through deserted hills and gorges, she is specially attracted towards a burnt house and is preoccupied with the idea of a forest fire. A childhood friend of Nanda, Ila Das who has fallen on bad days, is a social worker in a nearby village. She comes to tea with Nanda one afternoon. They have long chat about their early days, their experiences as a social worker, and as the vice-chancellor's wife respectively. On her way back it gets dark and near her village Preet Singh, who was dissuaded by her not to marry his daughter with an old man, is waiting in ambush. Angered by Ila Das's opposition to the marriage, he strangulates her and later rapes her. (Gopal, 1995 : 36) Nanda is informed telephonically about the outrage by the police inspector. She is still to digest this shocking news when Raka comes to say that she has set the forest on fire. This is the end of the novel. (Cf. Manavar, 2000 : 18, Dhawan, 1991 : 33-35, Gopal, 1999 : 35-36, Khanna, 1990 : 122-129)

1.8 Where Shall We Go This Summer?

The 'Where Shall We Go This Summer?' is the story of Raman, his wife Sita and four children. The fifth child yet to be born, yet plays an important role. Sita's childhood was
unusual in the sense that her mother had left the family and the father, a freedom fighter and social worker, was too busy to take care of his children. She lived a life of bad economic condition with limited material comforts, and yet she enjoyed the Arcadian life on the island of Manori in her father's house before her marriage. After the death of her father she was married to Raman, the son of her father's friend Deedar. Initially Sita lives in Raman's joint family. But because of Sita's arrogant, supercilious, unadjusting nature, Raman decides to live separately with his family in a flat. He tries to make Sita happy but she is hard to please and she is always in a state of anger, discontent and indifference. When she becomes pregnant for the fifth time, it is an unpleasant experience for her, and she does not want to deliver the child. She feels that there is a strange loneliness, restlessness and boredom in her existence and that no one cares for her as an individual. She finds her very existence threatened with tedium and boredom - a terrible existentialistic problem besets her. She feels alienated not only from her husband but from the children too. Feelings of futility and nothingness grow upon her. She grows aggressive in her behaviour and, in desperation, decides to go to Manori, against the sane advice of Raman, along with her
two children, Menaka and Karan, even during her advanced stage of pregnancy. She is reluctant to bring forth her new, fragile being into this harsh world, and runs away to a small island which has childhood associations for her "in order to achieve the miracle of not giving birth." (P. 31) Her husband got puzzled at her assertion. But his remark "you should have thought of it earlier ---- It's too late no ---- one can't have abortion at this stage made Sita furious". (P. 34).

Manari is an island near Bombay where her father had lived as a patriarch. Manari island seems to her the enchanted island of miracles. She hopes that life in Manari will hold the same magic as it did when she first arrived there. But she feels shocked that things have changed considerably on island. This retreat to her magic island of childhood has shaken her out of her stupor. Peace eludes her even on this island. Her spiritual problems remain unsolved. She realizes that she cannot be happy there. Frustrated and crushed by this disenchantment, she finds that the only course open to her is to return to Bombay with her husband and children. She is reminded of her responsibility to her children, especially her daughter, Menaka and her unborn child. When her husband Raman arrives in the island and persuades her to
go back with him, she agrees to do so and thus she makes a compromise with her situation. She returns in a more balanced state of mind, having spent her anger and frustrations. By the end of the novel revelation comes to Sita and she accepts the world of reality and becomes mentally prepared for the delivery of her child. Thus the novel ends with victory of reason over fantasy. (Cf. Gopal, 1995 : 40, Manavar, 2000 : 16-18, Ram, 1983 : 141-147, Ambekar, 1991 : 202)

1.9 The Village By The Sea

'The Village By the Sea' highlights the real existence of the poverty stricken people living in Thul - a village near Bombay and Bombay itself, but the appeal is universal.

The two chief characters of the novel are Lila and Hari. They live in acute poor condition at Thul. The source of their income is just meagre as their father is a worthless man. He is drunkard who only wastes money for his toddy. Their mother is a sick lady and is badly bed-ridden. A poor and loveless family atmosphere suffocates Hari filling a deep some of despair, frustration and insecurity. (Swain, 1995 : 34) His atmosphere and the poor condition of his house is described as: "The hut should have been re-thatched years ago --- the
old palm leaves were dry and tattered and slipping off the beams. The earthen walls were crumbling. The windows gaped, without any shutters. There was no smoke to be seen curling up from under a cooking-pot on a fire as in other huts."

(P. 9)

Hari wishes to earn money and help his family. Therefore he goes to Bombay. There he works in Jagu's Hotel and learns the art of watch mending from Mr Panwallah. It is there that he learns the art of earning after very hard work for existence in such a grand metropolitan city. On the other hand Lila plays a role of a responsible girl. She works hard with her sisters Bela and Kamal for the masters of Man Ropes. Her painstaking effort changes the atmosphere of her house. Even in the absence of Hari, mother improves fast. Seeing the resistance of his daughter the father also changes into a good man and goes to attend his wife in hospital giving up toddy habits miles away.

When Hari returns home with earnings after monsoon, he finds everything in apple pie order as Thul and on the eve of Diwali there occurs a happy family reunion. The parents meet and the brother-sisters meet. Hari hopes to open a poultry farm at Thul and pull the cycle of family smoothly.
There is the sense of struggle in simple Indians and their desire to exist perfectly. In this way the novel ends on a note of happiness and satisfaction. The story of the novel is not psychic, it is certainly existential. (Cf. Sharma, 1991: 40, Swain, 1995: 34)

In most of her novels Anita Desai has depicted the predicament of modern woman in this male-dominated society and her destruction at the altar of marriage. Each of her characters adopts his or her own manner of facing the problem of frustration, alienation, suffering and boredom of their life. Desai has introduced marital disharmony in most of her novels. It is the artistic way of projecting life, her treatment of modern themes such as alienation, isolation and quest for wholeness have made her quite successful. This makes her an exceptionally unique novelist.

References
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4. Ibid., P. 202.


8. Ibid., P. 15.

9. Ibid., P. 196.

10. Desai, Anita. (1998), 'Where Shall We Go This Summer?' Vision Books, New Delhi, P. 31

11. Ibid., P. 34.


15. Ibid., P. 173.


17. Ibid., P. 40.

18. Ibid., P. 33.

19. Ibid., P. 36.

20. Ibid., PP. 35-36.

21. Ibid., P. vi.


25. Ibid., PP. 16-18.

26. Ibid., P. 19.


28. Ibid., P. 20.

29. Ibid., P. 99.

31. Ibid., P. 95.


33. Ibid., P. 44.


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42. Ibid. P. 193.