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The novel is read in many ways. In my study the focus of attention is the predicament of human finitude that portrays the protagonist in an inescapable anarchy of human relationships. The protagonist - each in her own private wilderness - desperately and desparately seeks a semblance of balance and integrity to humanise oneself. What is sought is either smothered or slurried, and one is left forlorn and slighted. The only consolation is that we discern a human face in the lonely yearning and futile struggle for meaningful existence of the protagonist in an alien world where no one knows anyone else in the medley of known faces.

This study intends to explore the patterns and technique adopted by Anita Desai to probe into the inner locales of her characters. Anita Desai believes that familial and social conditions shape individual life and consciousness. Disharmony disrupts the healthy flux of life. Anita Desai's protagonists reflect those conflicting relations in which they survive. My attempt is to explore the inner recesses of the protagonists, study their vision of life and evaluate the conditions in which they survive. I do not attempt at psychologising these characters; rather study the attributes of their fictional existence. How they image themselves in their own lived reality is the object of my study. I have tried to assess the method adopted by Anita Desai in her Odyssey of inward-landscaping the interior of her protagonists.

It is almost a truism that Anita Desai is more interested in the inner quest of her characters than in the events that shape them. She is less concerned with projecting the outer folds of an experience than blending of memories and desires that envelops the protagonist.

The charm of her novels lie in the delicate rendering of the different
shades of inwardness of experience, the subtle presentation of the texture of consciousness as it is woven by the individual's response to life. The surface aspects frame rather than paint the character. The inner, the core of existence, assigns full value of one's experience. Therefore her task as a novelist is to render impressions whether fleeting or long drawn; to reflect moods evanescent as well as habitual; to observe the essence of the characteristic conduct of the protagonist and then to unfold this complexity to craft a character and conjure artistic sensibility.

In Desai's art the 'mind' or the psyche is not treated thematically but rather it is symbolized; it is projected on a screen and scrutinized. The scope of her novel encompasses both "the life in time" and "the life by value", as Forster would say. The people in her fictional world think but their thinking is coloured by their feeling. She does not merely give them bodies but rather an exercising mind that expand to the readers as the 'conscious', and the 'unconscious' with paper-thin transparency. She explores how the protagonists combats with herself and acquire a positive transformation like Deven (In custody); Sita (Where Shall We Go This Summer?) and Bim (Clear Light Of The Day) or loses herself in vain like Maya (Cry, The Peacock); Monisha (Voices in the City) and Nanda Koul (Fire on the Mountain).

The protagonists of her novels are generally disillusioned beings. They are resigned to their destiny, they seek to assert themselves in their own ways. As rebels, they spend a secluded and withdrawn life, involved in their own selves. This eventually results in the feelings of defeat and disillusionment; losing their peace and poise. This is how Desai portrays the anguish of a lonely soul.