Anita Desai is a great analyst of the human mind, a creator of brilliant characters, and an astute interpreter of life. (Bande 167)

Rightly stressing that literature should deal with enduring aspects of human existence, Desai presents human problems and conditions in her novels that have permanent human significance. Effectively portraying inner as well as outer realities of the existence of her characters, she strives to reveal the truth. Mainly concerned with the exploration of the psychic depths of her characters, she becomes unique among the Indian English novelists.

The present study, "The Anatomy of Human Existence in the Novels of Anita Desai" has analysed the existence of the major characters of Desai and has tried to show how they are affected by familial, social, racial, cultural, economic, hereditary and psychological factors. Pathetically living in tragic circumstances generated by the above mentioned factors, many of the characters of Desai undergo umpteen tribulations and suffer many privations. Focussing on the tragic characters, escapist characters and regenerated characters, the thesis has
underlined that Desai convincingly presents a faithful mirror of human existence, that she is a clever interpreter of life, that she is neither a complete pessimist nor a thorough optimist and that her vision of life is a balanced one.

In Cry, the Peacock Maya's childhood experiences in her family are not congenial to the healthy development of her personality. Receiving the full attention of her father she is unable to face the reality of existence. As Bande aptly states:

Cry, the Peacock is the tragedy of a father's child.

Maya: young, beautiful, intelligent and very sensitive as well as sensuous, fails to grow out of childhood. She is incapable of leading an independent existence. Virtually, the whole of her neurotic life is imperceptibly linked with her father's undivided attention. Superficially, it is just a matter of filial affection showered on an only daughter; but it is more than that and it gathers to itself reverberant contexts of associated consequences. (42)

Maya's father-obsession and the dominance of her Id cause her neurosis. Losing her inner freedom and real self she is helpless. Her loveless marriage with Gautama caused by her father's blind faith in a social superstition, Gautama's inadequate love-responses, the parsimonious attitude of Gautama
and his mother and the loveless atmosphere of the family of Gautama make her life miserable and she feels acutely alienated. Reminded of the prediction of the albino astrologer by the death of Toto she begins to feel tormented by the fear of death. Without getting support from anybody else to overcome her fear she gradually thinks of killing Gautama. Though she does not bring herself to eliminate Gautama, circumstances force her to become his murderer. Becoming furious over the unintentional mistake of Gautama she pushes him down the roof causing his instant death. Shocked by her emotional action she becomes insane. At the height of her insanity she tragically commits suicide.

Being insensitive to Maya, Gautama is very much interested in money and fame. A victim of lovelessness he is unable to satisfy the desires of Maya. The relationship between Maya and Gautama is not harmonious because of their temperamental incompatibility. Writing about their incompatible temperaments Srivastava states:

Maya, being sentimental, believes in the world of sensations and emotions; Gautama, being pragmatic and rational, advocates detachment. Maya is dreamy and sensitive; Gautama realistic and insensitive. Maya is poetic and high-strung; Gautama prosaic, sober, detached, philosophical and remote. She has tenderness, softness and warmth; he is hard, cold
and industrious. One is the creature of instinct; the other that of intellect. Maya prefers conversation about love and affection; Gautama and his family about bribery, corruption, libel suits and political scandals. ("The Psychological Novel and Desai's Cry, the Peacock" 285)

Though Gautama speaks in favour of detachment he is not really detached. He is always interested in his own business to the discomfort of Maya. If Gautama keeps harping on detachment it is only to hide the loveless nature of his personality inherited from his mother. It is impossible for him to respond to the sensual. As S. Sharma and Awasthi point out:

He cannot respond to physical sensual stimulus; cannot warm up to any spontaneous overflow of passionate feelings. Anita Desai is brilliantly successful in portraying a masculine character who despite the stimulus of a fantastic sensational function of Maya cannot even once digress by chance into the seething space of Dionysus. (143)

In Voices in the City Nirode, who is cynical about everything in life is greatly affected by his mother's infidelity to his father. As Ramakrishna Rao observes: "He hates his mother because she has become the mistress of Major Chadha. Nirode's 'void,' ... and cynicism do stem from his mother's betrayal of the family prestige" (11-12). Feeling
psychologically alienated he suffers much in order to retain his sanity. The tragic death of Monisha suddenly changes his attitude towards life "including his mother" (Ramakrishna Rao 13). But when he is completely rejected by his mother he finds himself helpless.

The tragedy of Monisha is caused by various circumstances. The strained relationship of her parents and her unsatisfactory childhood experiences generate in her the feelings of frustration, insecurity and alienation and she becomes a neurotic. Her loveless marriage to Jiban and her uninteresting life in Jiban's joint family that is interested in dowry increase her alienation and neurosis. The unsympathetic attitude of the family members of Jiban towards her, the lack of privacy, the disorder of Calcutta and her inferiority complex intensify her predicament. Pained by her loveless nature, tortured by the pettiness of existence and tormented by her emotional barrenness she sets herself on fire. As Krishna Rao rightly states: "Monisha... prefers non-existence to a meaningless existence..." (170).

Like Monisha, Hugo Baumgartner in Baumgartner's Bombay is a tragic victim of different forces. Hugo's familial and school experiences pulverise his psyche. Feeling alienated, insecure, lonely and helpless he develops the attitudes of resignation and acceptance. Being a victim of racial hatred in Germany,
Hugo escapes to India where he struggles for a better existence but in vain. The socio-political situation in India heightens his insecurity and alienation. Without a sense of belonging he remains an outsider in India. His body complexion does not help him to be accepted in India, because he is too fair for India. Due to economic hardships he has to lose his self-respect and neglect his personal appearance.

Inspite of his humiliating and hopeless existence, Hugo does not commit suicide. But he is heartlessly murdered by another German for economic reasons. Commenting on Hugo's tragic death Mishra and Dubey observe: "Baumgartner gets released from his existence when he is murdered and meets death. The ... view that death is the only release from the enduring human condition is fully realized in the case of the protagonist" (157).

Lotte, another rootless German in India, is a passive victim of socio-economic factors. Her false marriage with Kanti Sethia neither gives her the expected happiness and protection nor mitigates her feelings of loneliness, helplessness and rootlessness. The death of Sethia triggers off many problems and lands her in a court case. To escape from her insecure existence she begins to consume country wine and becomes a victim of liquor, that causes her degradation and degeneration.
The unexpected death of Hugo tremendously increases her sense of isolation. As Mishra and Dubey observe: "... Lotte is left alone, all alone and isolated, a tragic figure and a pathetic case" (157). Analysing Baumgartner's Bombay they further state: "The novel, in the final analysis, comes out as a purely psychological novel converging into ... emotions of frustration, alienation, isolation, estrangement and anguish" (157).

In Bye-Bye Blackbird Aditsen, an Indian immigrant, who settles in England for attaining economic prosperity feels neglected and alienated. His marriage with an English woman to escape from the feeling of alienation and racial prejudices does not help him much. He tries to adopt English manners but he is not successful due to the impact of his own culture on him. Though he pretends to love England his real colour is revealed when he is humiliated by his mother-in-law. Psychologically affected and disenchanted with England he escapes to India from where he has escaped earlier.

Suffering from racial, cultural and psychological alienation Dev feels repelled and attracted by England. Inspect of his love-hate relationship with England his economic difficulties force him to seek a job in England. The beauty of the pastoral landscape around Hampshire strengthens his desire to live in England. But he still feels alienated and continues
to be assailed by doubts and uncertainties that disturb him very much and his doubts possibly pave the way for his escape to India. Writing about the behaviour and isolation of Dev, Solanki points out:

Dev's behaviour and personality are all conditioned by the prejudices he holds for the British people and vice versa. His visit to England was goal-oriented, but the psychological conflicts arising out of his practical experience in dealing with the people disturb him. His bias is normally social and cultural. It is not based on personal differences, but the behaviour of Britishers forces him to think that racism certainly conditions social interaction. The isolation of Dev from the Britishers makes him conscious of his subordinate position, for the whites do not treat them as neighbours. It is not caste, creed or financial status, but the social and cultural differences that make people unequal. (37)

Sarah's regimented existence in her family, her parents' strained relationship and her aversion to the uninteresting life-style of the English trigger off her alienation. To escape from the feeling of alienation she marries Adit but her marriage ironically increases her sense of alienation because she is not able to forget the feeling of being culturally and racially superior to Adit. Fearing that the English will look
down upon her for having married an Indian, she withdraws herself from her friends and society and becomes psychologically alienated. Facing cultural problems in the world of Adit and his Indian friends she undergoes cultural alienation too. Tormented by her loss of identity she sadly realizes that she is nobody. Commenting on Sarah's alienation and her loss of identity Marathe and Kirpal observe:

Sarah, the English wife of Adit, is one character who suffers the most from alienation. By marrying an Indian, she has "lowered" her position among the fellow-countrymen. She remains an outsider in the Indian community because she is English. Hers is a dual loss of identity.... Her identity crisis arises out of the conflict between her identity as an English woman and her role as an Indian wife. She carries her role of Mrs.Sen a little uneasily. She is highly self-conscious of her status and spends most of her time in introspection. (65)

When Adit decides to go back to India Sarah's circumstances force her to escape with him. If her lack of adjustment in England is any indication, it is highly unlikely that she will have a sense of accommodation in India.

In Where Shall We Go This Summer? Sita's unreasonable desire of not giving birth to her fifth child stems from her rage, fear and boredom caused by diverse circumstances. Due to
her loveless childhood experiences she does not have the sense of belonging, security, satisfaction and mutual trust. With great expectations she believes that her marriage with Raman will give her a sense of security and that he will love her very much. But the indifferent attitude of Raman towards Sita intensifies her alienation. Her unusual interest in the hitch-hiker and her recollection of a divine love between a young Muslim woman and an old man give her a sense of emotional fulfilment that Raman is not able to give her and a sense of relief from her monotonous existence. As Meitei states:

A psychological clue to this particular fascination of Sita for strangers is three-fold. Firstly, to her such encounters are uncommon, and are not a dull repetition of her routine life. Hence they are vigorously stimulating to her. Secondly, they are a source of aesthetic pleasure, a means of diversion from boredom and ugliness; and thirdly, these two situations, being associated with courage and beauty respectively, give her emotional satisfaction.

(53 -54)
to her situation and unwilling to give birth to her child in the urban society she escapes to Manori island. On realizing the disappearance of the magic glory of the island she terribly feels insecure. As Meitei points out: "In her present state of defeat on the island the desire for security... grows all the more increasing" (55). That she is prepared to go with her husband to Bombay does not mean that she reconciles herself to the realities of existence. The feelings of insecurity and isolation in Manori make her escape from the island to Bombay.

In Fire on the Mountain Nanda Kaul's frustration, alienation and agony are generated by her husband's infidelity and the apathetic attitude of her children towards her. Because of her frustrating experiences she strongly develops an aversion to human contacts. Unwilling to continue to adjust any longer, longing for solitude and willing to avoid all relationships and responsibilities and forget her painful past she escapes to Kasauli. But she is not able to get away from the painful memory of her past. As Solanki points out:

The bitter reality of her life still has a tight hold on her mind and thoughts. This planned and wilful rejection of the world does not help her obliterate the painful memory of the days when, the Vice-chancellor went to drop Miss David home. It haunted her even in isolation at Carignano. (97)
Disturbed and angered by the arrival of Raka at Carignano, Nanda Kaul is afraid of being betrayed by Raka, who is a victim of a loveless father, who completely fails to give her affection and emotional satisfaction. Losing her faith in life, Raka becomes psychologically alienated and escapes from human company by developing a fascination for the places of devastation. Perplexed by Raka's strong sense of independence and her incomprehensible behaviour, Nanda Kaul begins to admire and love her. But Nanda Kaul's efforts to develop a good rapport with Raka fail miserably. She is disappointed by Raka's inadequate responses.

Ila Das suffers mainly due to lack of a sense of adjustment. As she is not appointed as principal, she feels hurt and to save her honour, she resigns her job as a college lecturer. Getting no help from her family, she undergoes a lot of sufferings. With great difficulty, she becomes a welfare officer. As a welfare officer, she involves herself in helping poor villagers and her involvement helps her escape from the bitter memories of her past. It is an irony of fate that she is raped and murdered by Preet Singh. The news of the tragic death of Ila Das shocks Nanda Kaul and causes her death. Disliking human contact and longing to be lonely, Raka expresses her anger and unhappiness by setting the forest on fire.
Bim, Raja, Tara and Baba in Clear Light of Day are neglected by their parents and they, therefore, feel alienated. The timely arrival of Mira-Masi helps them very much. With care, love and affection she gives them security and emotional satisfaction. Wishing to lead a selfless life, Bim, who is a brilliant and gifted student in her school, has the ambition of becoming a heroic figure like Florence Nightingale and Joan of Arc. But the sudden death of her parents leaves her with the responsibility of looking after the family.

Tara's adverse circumstances at home and school force her to escape from her family. Worried about his bleak future and attracted by the wealth of Hyder Ali, Raja deserts Bim, goes to Hyderabad and marries the only daughter of Hyder Ali. Feeling alienated, cheated and disappointed by the betrayal of Raja, Bim becomes sorrowful and helpless. The cruel letter of Raja fills Bim with anger, bitterness and hatred that lead to her emotional degeneration. When Tara, who has returned from a foreign country to attend the marriage of the daughter of Raja, invites Bim for the marriage, she remembers the letter of Raja, becomes furious and refuses to come.

Tortured by the problems posed by the insurance business Bim is determined to sell the shares. Worried by her inadequate salary she wants to send Baba to live with Raja. In her moment of weakness Bim vents her long suppressed feelings upon Baba.
Feeling tormented for having scolded Baba she realizes that her love for Baba and Raja is inadequate and resolves to forgive Raja and apologise to Baba. Moved by the last words of Aurangzeb and touched by Tara's expression of regret, Bim is prepared to reconcile herself to the realities of human existence and to love Raja and others. Commenting on the love of Bim and her achievement of wholeness, Panigrahi observes:

The flaw in her love was that of egocentricity which had prevented her from appreciating the otherness of others. With the realisation of the inadequacy of her earlier vision of reality as an assertion of the will, comes its modification -- a quest for the love of others which demands a transcendence of the will. She achieves this spiritual wholeness by consciously choosing to bridge the rift with others which also enables her to find her own social relevance. (78)

Distressed by the miserable condition of their family, Hari and Lila in The Village by the Sea are determined to save their family. Getting no help from their parents they find it very difficult to manage the family. Forced by the socio-economic factors and optimistic of his bright future Hari runs away to Bombay to earn money. Understanding the significance of self-help and independence he resolves to work very hard. Prepared to face the challenges of existence he accepts the
difficult job of washing the kitchen utensils in Sri Krishna Eating House.

In the absence of Hari, Lila, who is hopeful of attaining prosperity in the future, works day in and day out to run the family. Realizing her honesty and sincerity the de Silvas and Sayyid Ali help her very much. Luckily her drunken father realizes that he is responsible for the poor condition of his family and the bad state of his wife. Determined to take care of the family and to look after his long neglected wife he takes a strong decision not to consume toddy.

Encouraged by the advice of Panwallah to change and learn, Hari learns the craft of watch-mending in his leisure hours. Hari's experiences in Bombay help him become a man of maturity and confidence. Feeling like a new person he returns to his village with some amount of money to rebuild his hut, to start a poultry farm and to set up a watch-mending shop. The patience, optimism and perseverance of Hari and Lila saves their family which is on the verge of disintegration. Making a comment on the maturity of Lila and Hari, Jamkhandi says:

Lila... matures as does Hari. If Hari becomes a man with a profitable skill by going to Bombay, Lila develops a managerial sensibility even as she stays at home. That Lila can fend for herself is certain and this is asserted by Bela when she tells Hari
that Lila and the girls looked after Sayyid Ali Sabib and themselves. By pitting Lila's development with that of Hari's, Desai makes a subtle comment on the strengths and capabilities of Indian women. Given the opportunity and favourable circumstances, the Indian woman can be as assertive and as enterprising and as productive as the Indian man -- and she can accomplish this without relinquishing her leadership role in the home. (46)

In In Custody Deven, whose existence is marked by defeats and disappointments feels that life has trapped him. His desire to become a notable person in the literary world and of satisfying the ordinary needs of Sarla cannot be fulfilled. Economic and familial factors have developed in him the feelings of helplessness and inferiority complex. Angered by the unhelpful attitude of Sarla and his economic hardships he hates himself. His inability to control and teach his students effectively in the college in Mirpore makes him unhappy. Since he feels alienated both at his home and college he is craving for an opportunity to escape from his tragic existence. He feels immensely happy that the expected opportunity comes in the form of an interview with the Urdu poet, Nur living in Delhi, for whom he has high regard.
Though Deven is happy about the interview, he experiences only disappointments and difficulties in Nur's house. Deven, who is under the impression that Nur will be leading a pure life gets terribly disillusioned on seeing the nasty existence of Nur. The process of interview is not smooth either. In the first three meetings, with Nur, he is not successful in conducting the interview. But the horrible experiences he gains in the three meetings give him many chances to know the tragic state of Nur and the harsh realities of existence.

Only in the fourth meeting does Deven complete the interview with tremendous difficulties. But the interview turns out to be a failure. Realizing that he is cheated by Murad and fearing that the failure of the interview will pave the way for dismissal from the college he implores Siddiqui to help him but in vain. Forced to settle a bill on room-rent in connection with the interview Deven appeals to Murad to advance him some amount of money for his contributions to Murad's magazine but the latter refuses to give money.

Abandoned by all Deven realizes that it is futile to expect help from others, that there is no escape from the difficulties of life and that he should depend only on himself to solve his problems. Encouraged by the aesthetic experience that makes him feel that he has become the custodian of the spirit of Nur, Deven is determined to face boldly the realities
of existence. Writing about Deven's realization of reality and achievement of self-discovery Solanki observes:

Deven's shuttling between Mirpore and Delhi is a significant journey from ignorance to wisdom. His escapades into the world of fantasy reveal the true significance of things in life. In a way his travels from Mirpore to Delhi prove to be trips of self-discovery and recognition of reality. (168)

Desai, who is an artist of a high order is not satisfied with the traditional way of writing a novel. In order to effectively portray the enduring conditions of human existence she employs suitable techniques and devices in her novels. Desai has used the English language remarkably elevating her narratives to lyrical heights. While writing her novels she does not depend on theories of the novel. On the other hand she relies on her vision and instinct. As Desai herself says:

I think theories of the novel are held by those of an academic, or critical turn of mind, not the creative. A writer does not create a novel by observing a given set of theories -- he follows flashes of individual vision, and depends on a kind of instinct that tells him what to follow and what to avoid, how to veer away from what would be destructive to his vision. It is these flashes of vision, and a kind of trained instinct, that leads
him -- not any theories. (Ram, "An Interview with Anita Desai" 100)

Having no faith in a preconceived plot, Desai likes pattern and rhythm used by E.M. Forster. Being divided into unequal parts many of her novels have no familiar beginning. They are written in the third person narrative, first person narrative and the stream of consciousness technique. Unlike other Indian English novelists, Desai mostly chooses characters affected by psychological problems. Most of the characters of Desai are women and she writes convincingly about them. A remarkable aspect of her characterisation is that she connects most of the characters with external things to effectively bring out their real nature and conditions. Whereas a majority of her female characters are sensitive and complex, almost all the male characters are insensitive and apathetic. Introducing a number of minor characters, Desai makes them play different roles that greatly help in the evolution of the plots of her novels.

Desai introduces a large number of symbols and images. Increasing the aesthetic value and enriching the textural density of her novels they provide scope for many interpretations. A close study of her novels shows that they have "botanical, zoological, meteorological, nature and colour imagery..." (M. Prasad, "The Novels of Anita Desai: A Study in
Imagery" 54-55). Desai significantly uses the technique of contrast to make her characters more effective. She employs the technique of objective correlative to reveal the feelings and emotions of her characters and to portray the modern civilization. She makes use of a large number of similes in her novels to illustrate her point. She utilizes the device of flashback for various purposes in her novels. Maya resorts to memory flashback to escape from harsh realities; Nirode to regret his irresponsible actions; Adit to escape from his unbearable feelings of alienation. In the case of Sita this technique is employed to reveal her sense of insecurity that leads to her social alienation. Nanda Kaul remembers her past that has made her unhappy.

The technique of irony is employed to portray the contrast between what is implied and what the reality is. Unaware of the unhappiness of Maya caused by Gautama's loveless attitude towards her, his mother is under the impression that her son has wisely married Maya. Whereas Nanda Kaul leads a tragic life others think that she is like a queen. Through the characters of Ila Das and Hugo Baumgartner, Desai displays the irony of fate. By projecting the change in the attitude of Adit and Dev towards England, she brings out the irony of circumstances.

A remarkable aspect of the fiction of Desai is the powerful presence of Nature that beautifully enriches the
texture of her novels. Making a comment on Nature in the novels of Desai, Saxena rightly observes:

Nature is a familiar presence in Desai's novels. Her feminine sensibility imparts an edge and dimension to her view of nature. Her love for and obsession with nature is not superficial. It is deep-seated in her mental make-up and is part of a larger vision which guides her novels.... It ... helps in dissolving the dark gloom which envelopes her fiction. ("View of Nature in Anita Desai's Novels" 191-192)

Nature is used to console Maya who is suffering agonies and it is utilized as an instrument to invite Nirode to visit his mother. Desai makes use of Indian scenery to increase Adit's disenchantment with England and the beauty of the English countryside is employed to intensify Dev's enchantment with England. Sarah's transformation is revealed through a description of Nature. Whereas Nature helps Sita have a sense of protection it helps reveal Nanda Kaul's inner wish. Desai reveals the tragic state of Bim in terms of Nature. The cordial relationship between Mira and the Das children is beautifully brought out in terms of Nature. Nature helps Deven become hopeful and optimistic. The colourful description of Nature in The Village by the Sea creates a rural atmosphere.
The device of fantasy is suitably used in the novels of Desai. Whereas Maya, Nirode, Monisha, Sita, Raja, Bim, Tara and Deven resort to fantasy to escape from difficult situations, Nanda Kaul uses it to win Raka's love. Desai's remarkable prose style has the qualities of lyrical splendour, picturesqueness and lucidity. She makes use of long as well as short sentences with a number of adjectives in her novels. The devices of parenthesis, repetition and interrogation are employed to enrich her prose style. Commenting on Desai's effective use of the English language and her long and short sentences Srivastava says:

Among the Indian novelists experimenting consciously with the English language, Anita Desai has a unique place.... Anita Desai has raised it to lyrical heights, showing, as it were, that Indians are capable of writing in a language which can compare well with the best in the English-speaking countries. Her sentences vary, now short, now long, now endlessly gushing forth like jets of coloured water sprouting from the syringes of Holi revellers, flowing disjointedly or in a stream. She polishes her sentences, chisels her phrases and converts the rough-hewn stone into a piece of art. (Introduction XLii)
Though Desai has used effective novelistic devices and techniques in her novels, they suffer from a few limitations. As Desai does not give much importance to external details, the plots of a few of her novels are thin. Most of her characters do not change and grow. Since many of them are brooding most of the readers do not like them. Most of the themes recur again and again. As Desai is mainly interested in serious writing she does not attach importance to humour in many of her novels.

Portraying human existence as it is, Desai effectively presents its many aspects. While depicting human life she offers a balanced view of it. Praising Desai as a perfect artist and pointing out that she tries to hold a mirror to human existence Solanki aptly observes:

As a consummate creative artist, Anita Desai shows tremendous potential and vitality. In her writings she not only offers an expose of human life in its shocking shallowness or outward show, but also provides, down deep, a philosophical probe or basis to sustain our life. She emerges neither as a downright pessimist nor an incorrigible optimist. All along, her earnest endeavour is to hold a mirror to life, and in the process, to unravel the mystery of human existence. (185)
Desai brilliantly delineates human conditions and problems through the characters in her novels. Almost all her characters experience psychic tensions, frustration, alienation, anxiety, fear, despair, agony and anguish. In moments of crisis most of them feel too terrified to face the difficulties of human existence. In their struggle for survival some of them, like Maya and Monisha, meet with tragic ends. Some of them, like Adit, Dev, Sarah, Sita, Nanda Kaul and Raka, resort to escapism. Others like Bim, Hari, Lila and Deven achieve affirmation and regeneration. While presenting life, Desai does not fail to show the aspect of meaninglessness of life. In the death of Gautama, Hugo Baumgartner, Nanda Kaul and Ila Das, she demonstrates the absurdity of human existence. Through her regenerated characters she emphasizes that one should compromise with life if one wants to survive in this world.

The novels of Desai can be compared with those of Shashi Deshpande. Their characters are forced to sacrifice their personal aspirations for the sake of their families. Their novels portray how the female characters undergo a lot of mental torture due to various circumstances. That their female characters have to retain their marital bond inspite of their inharmonious relationship with their husbands is effectively presented. If any marriage is considered successful in their novels, it is only the result of a compromise unwillingly made by the woman.
The novels of Desai have scope for prospective scholars. One might work on Desai's feminist outlook. Though she refuses to accept that she is a feminist, her novels have unconsciously contributed to feminism. She poignantly portrays how Maya in Cry, the Peacock, Monisha in Voices in the City, Sita in Where Shall We Go This Summer? and Nanda Kaul in Fire on the Mountain suffer in the male-dominated society. Desai effectively presents how Lila in The Village by the Sea and Bim in Clear Light of Day look after their respective families with a great sense of responsibility without any support from male members. One might work on the complexity of human relationships and alienation in her novels.

Desai is a living writer. One cannot guess what direction her future writings might take. The last word on a great writer and that too a living writer can never be said. Great art is complex and elusive. Great artists are multi-faceted and the possibility of interpreting such writers is never exhausted. Anita Desai belongs to this category.