

**“A STUDY OF FEMININE CONSCIOUSNESS IN
ANITA DESAI’S NOVELS”**

A Thesis

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Annexure IV

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It is certified that the work entitled **A study of Feminine Consciousness in Anita Desai's Novels** is an original research work done by Roshanara Sujit Shaikh under my supervision for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English to be awarded by Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune.

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I **Roshanara Sujit Shaikh** is the Ph. D. Scholar of the Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth in English subject. Thesis entitled '**A Study of Feminine Consciousness in Anita Desai's Novels**' under the supervision of Dr. Chitra Sreedharan, solemnly affirm that the thesis submitted by me is my own work. I have not copied it from any source. I have gone through extensive review of literature of the related published/unpublished research works and the use of such references made has been acknowledged in my thesis. The title and the content of research is original. I understand that, in case of any complaint especially plagiarism, regarding my Ph.D. research from any party, I have to go through the enquiry procedure as decided by the Vidyapeeth at any point of time. I understand that, if my Ph.D. thesis (or part of it) is found duplicate at any point of time, my research degree will be withdrawn and in such circumstances, I will be solely responsible and liable for any consequences arises thereby. I will not hold the TMV, Pune responsible and liable in any case.

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Research Scholar

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction –

The present study entitled ‘A study of Feminine Consciousness in Anita Desai’s Novels’ is an attempt to examine and estimate the feminine as well as feminist perceptions in this context. The aim and scope of the present study is delineated by the area of Indian English Literature.

Indian English fiction, as a mode of expression, arrived quite late on the literary scene. From the sixties up to the end of the nineteenth century only a few novels, imitating the models of British fiction by the writers like Defoe, Fielding and Scott, could be written. With the turn of the century, however substantial and powerful fiction writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao began to emerge and establish their distinct identity in the domain of fiction writing. The first half of the twentieth century was governed by the trend setting, socio-political and ideological events caused by the Gandhian movement, which had its deep impact on the fiction writing of the era.

1.2 Traditional and Modern Indian English writing and Women Novelists of the Post Independence Period –

In the post – Independence era women novelists form a distinct identity of their own. Among the women fiction writers, such as Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Shanta Rama Rao, Bharati Mukharjee, Veena Nagpal, Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De, Anita Desai occupies a unique place in the history of Indian English fiction. [Tandon, Neeru. : *Anita Desai and her Fictional world* 5] In the exploration of the inner consciousness of the psychological state of human mind Anita Desai has been appropriately compared to the powerful British fiction writer, Virginia Woolf. The above women novelists also talked frankly about women as well as the gender construct. The

female protagonists in their writings, show enough energy and bravery to question the dominant system, faith and culture in the society. They also desist from adopting the paths recommended by the western feminists. They prefer to discover their individual paths.

The feminist reflection as well as the feminist travel in the west has had a quantity of power on the women's arrangements in developing countries similar to India. The Indian women's fight for liberation cannot imitate its western foil for understandable motives.

The emergence of these women writers during this period was a great significance which promises a new ideal for the Indian fiction in English. The battle of emancipation was taken over by a few educated women themselves, who, in their effort to communicate to the world, their own bitter experiences as women as well as their ideals of social reform, turned into writers. These women writers particularly shared experiences of Indian women in general and presented them in fictional form. Women's inner self, their agonies, their pleasures are better and more truly depicted by the women novelists. Literature which was male dominated, has started reflecting the sparks that have emanated from this struggle of woman to be herself. The extent of change in her status in life and society could be assessed by reference to her image reflected in the literature produced by her. The women novelists of the nineteenth century tried to give their characters justice. (Tandon 4-5)

1.3 Anita Desai's Works and Style of Writing –

Before I deal with her novels, it is appropriate to study her biographical part, so that one could get a full grasp of women's sensibility. Anita Desai is an Indian citizen migrated to America. Anita Desai, formerly Anita Muzumdar was born on June 24, 1937, at Mussoorie, a quaint little hill station, north of Delhi, India.

Anita Desai is one of the best known contemporary Indian English novelists of our country and has attempted to accommodate the native Indian

tradition in English language. She seems to be discontented with the way of writing of most of the contemporary women novelists, as I found in one of her articles entitled *Women Writers*, she remarked “With all the richness of material at hand, Indian women writers have stopped short from, a lack of imagination, courage, the inspired criticism or the lyric response that alone have brought their novels to life”

At the age of nine, she had studied *Wuthering Heights*. Her career started with short stories, which got printed in leading Indian magazines. [Joshi. Poonam, *Thematic Preoccupation in Anita Desai's Novels*, p 13] Her first story was *Circus Cat* although she regularly wrote short stories since adolescence, Desai officially launched her career as a novelist in 1963 with the British publication of *Cry the Peacock*. It was in England that her work first got noticed. She writes in English only. Then She wrote the novels- *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-Bye Black Bird* (1968). In the late 1970s, Desai published the highly praised novel *Fire on the Mountain* and *Games at Twilight and other Stories*, her first short story collection in 1978. During the 1980s, Desai enhanced her reputation with the novels-*Clear Light of the Day*(1980) and *In Custody* (1984), both of which were short-listed for the Booker Prize, England's highest literary award In 1982 Desai published the children's work, *Village by the Sea: An Indian Family Story*

In 1993 she joined the faculty at the Massachusetts, Institute of Technology as a Creative Writing Instructor, teaching one semester each year and returning to India for the remainder. Then she published the novels *Journey to Ithaca* (1995) *Fasting Feasting* (1999) and *Diamond Dust Stories* (2000), her second short story collection. She continues to be a source of inspiration for many young and aspiring writers even today.

Desai is best known for her studies of Indian life, she has written exclusively in English in the mid-1960s. Indian novelist, short story writer, and children's author, Desai is indeed a name to reckon in the field of literature. She is one of the foremost Indian authors writing in English. She is known for her lucid, finely crafted novels and stories about life in contemporary India. Her original

characters, her distinct style of writing, and her realistic subject-line have made her writings so popular.

She is considered as the writer who introduced the psychological novel in the tradition of *Virginia Woolf* to India. Throughout her novels and short stories Desai focuses on the personal struggles of anglicized, middle-class women in contemporary India as they attempt to overcome the societal limitations imposed by a tradition bound patriarchal culture. She tries to understand closely the predicament of her female characters. Her specialty is the quest for sensibility and her writing exposes inner realities and psychic echoes of her characters. I found, most of her works are about the complexities of modern Indian culture from a feminine perspective, while highlighting the female Indian predicament of maintaining one's identity as an individual. This problem of an individual who feels emotionally and spiritually alone forms the backbone of Desai's themes in each of her novels. (Joshi 14)

As a contemporary Indian female author Desai has been identified with a new literary tradition of Indian writing in English. She finds a place in book reviews, journals, interviews and symposiums. She is a part of a new literary tradition of Indian writing in English. I think her works can be studied and analyzed remembering the psychological motivations of her novels as psychic drama through flashback, self analysis, dialogues and descriptions of places and people. She looks inside her characters, explores the facts of human experience and bears upon the central experience of psychic tensions of characters. The central theme in her novels is the existential predicament of an individual, which she projects through unsuited couples, very sensitive wives, and ill-matched husbands. The dominant themes in all her novels are "the hazards and complexities of man-woman relationships and establishing of individualism of her characters. Really, she is a mute observer perceiving everything minutely and delicately whenever she creates a typical situation (15). She employs a different kind of language to depict the inner crisis and tensions in the lives of her characters. All of her characters are existential, non political or social. She presents each of them as unanswered and unsolved mysterious. She adopts the

method of narrating the story to meet the challenging possibilities. Thus, Anita Desai is a guide-star for many bright young writers.

Anita Desai is the representative novelist of the second generation of the Indian novel. The thematic reflection broadly shifts from national or historical to the more subjective and personal, is seen in her novels. All her novels deal with the life of woman in Indian society. Generally in her novels, we find the application of Indian feministic concern and she, as a woman, has shared experiences of women in the family and in the society.

Desai depicts the Indian woman as a victim, protagonist and ultimately a winner because of her strong spirit and attitude of compromise. In her novels she has portrayed both kinds of women- strong and emotional. However her female protagonists do not give up easily.

1.4 List of Desai's Works -

A] Novels

- i. Cry the Peacock (1963)*
- ii. Voices in the City (1965)*
- iii. Bye Bye Black Bird (1971)*
- iv. Where Shall We Go This Summer? (1975)*
- v. Fire on the Mountain (1977)*
- vi. Clear Light of the Day (1980)*
- vii. The Village by the Sea (1982)*
- viii. In Custody (1984)*
- ix. Baumgartner's Bombay (1988)*
- x. Journey to Ithaca (1995)*

xi. *Fasting Feasting* (199)

xii. *The Zigzag Way* (2004)

B] Volumes of Short Stories :-

i) *Games at Twilight and other Stories*

ii) *The Peacock Garden* (1979)

iii) *Diamond Dust and other stories* (2000)

iv) *Hill of Silver, Hill of Lead* (2005)

v) *The Artist of Disappearance* (fiction 2011)

1.5 The Honors and Awards -

Anita Desai is a member of the Advisory Board of English for the National Academy of Letters in New Delhi. She is also a member of American Academy of Arts and letters. She is a fellow of the Royal society of literature in London. She has been awarded the Neil Gunn International fellowship for 1944. [Tandon. Neeru, : *Anita Desai and her Fictional world*, p 11] Her novels have drawn worldwide attention and she stands in the fore front in the world of fiction. She also received the 'Padmashri Award' from the government of India and the Taraknath Das award for promotion of Indo – U.S relations. Anita Desai has been honored for her work by national and international prestigious rewards.

Anita Desai won the Winifred Holt by prize of the Royal Society of Literature for the novel; *Fire on the Mountain* (1978) and the Guardian Award for children's literature for *Village by the Sea* (1984). She also won the 'Sahitya Academy Award' and 'National Academy of Letters Award'. Her three novels- *Clear Light of Day*, *In Custody* and *Fasting Feasting* have been nominated for the Booker Prize. (Tandon 11)

What is important is that her writing has not prevented her from looking after her family and her four children. She says. ‘I write for three and half hours in the morning while the children are away at school. Once they are back my entire time is taken with them.’ Thus maintaining a proper balance between home and literary career, she has presented an ideal image of modern New Woman.

Desai has attained an immense popularity as a novelist. She is solely conscious of her role as a woman writer and has tried her best to maintain the tradition of other women writers.

1.6 Selected Novels of Anita Desai –

For the present study the researcher has selected five novels of Anita Desai.

a) *Cry the Peacock* –

This novel is mainly concerned with the theme of disharmony in the husband and wife relationship. Here Anita Desai has dealt with a sterile woman Maya, highly sensitive and emotional, who is married to Gautama, a promising and over busy practitioner of law, who loved her in his own way. Yet Maya is not satisfied and happy. She feels that Gautama never cares for her and does not have any feelings for her. The novel gives us an impression of the marital incompatibility and unhappy conjugal life. Later Maya had pushed off Gautama from the roof top and then committed a suicide. (Gopal 19)

b) *Voices in the City* –

In this novel Anita Desai has portrayed feminine psyche mainly through the character of Monisha. She is similar to Maya that, she is also childless, sensitive and a victim of ill-matched marriage. The overcrowded house makes her uneasy. Through her character Desai has portrayed the psyche of a sensitive intellectual woman who is suffocated in a joint family atmosphere of her in-laws’ house. (25). She is also, like Maya, not happy with her husband and the result is that she burns herself to death.

c) *Bye-Bye Black Bird* –

Desai's third novel *Bye-Bye Black Bird* is an authentic study of man-woman relationships bedeviled by cultural encounters. The novel is basically concerned with immigrants abroad, their experience of alienation, loneliness and nostalgia for their past life in India. The central problem, with which the novel deals with is the problem of marital adjustment of Sarah, an English wife and Adit, an Indian husband. Sarah suffers a lot. Her main problem is to know her own identity. She faces a miserable routine life with Adit who behaves like a typical Indian husband with her. So Sarah dies a slow spiritual death through her unfulfilled desires to escape from that hectic routine life.

d) *Where shall we go this Summer? (1975)* –

In her fourth novel 'Where shall we go this summer?' Anita Desai presents an intense identity crisis of the central character Sita, a sensitive woman in her early forties. (Bhatnagar and Rajeshwar 30) Unable to live in the strife-torn present she tries to identify herself with the past, represented by her childhood on Manori island, twenty year ago. The past becomes a psychic residue in her 'personal unconscious'. Her obsessive preoccupation with it gives her the strength to leave her home, husband, two children and the urbanized life of Bombay for Manori island, where she thinks she would be live under a magic spell.

Sita's problem seems to be due to maladjustment with her husband; the home life and surrounding atmosphere. She is fed up with her husband, a businessman, whose complete lack of feeling brings her to the verge of insanity. A deep change takes place in Sita from a proud mother of four children, to a woman of rage, fear and revolt. (30-31)

e) *Fire on the Mountain* – (1977)

Desai's fifth novel 'Fire on the Mountain' won the 'National Academy of Letters Award' in 1978 and Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize in 1977. This novel is set in Kasauli, a hill station, focused on three women- Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila

Das and their oppressed lives. This novel deals with the existential problems experienced by the female protagonists. Marital discord has been presented in all its socio-cultural and psychological aspects. (Joshi 72)

The title of this novel is perhaps taken from William Golding's famous novel 'Lord of Flies', the second chapter of which is entitled 'Fire on Mountain' It symbolizes the fire which burns in the heart of an old lady, a great grandmother, Nanda Kaul, and her emotional world is the theme of the novel. Actually on the plain level, the novel may be considered the story of the agonized cries of Nanda Kaul, an old woman. Desai explores the feminine feeling and a woman's intrinsic desire to know herself in terms of not only her relationship with her family but also in terms of her individual identity and its relationship with the world.

1.7 Feminism and Anita Desai -

The term 'feminism' is an ideology which denotes female. According to the 'Oxford' English Dictionary the term 'feminism' was first used in the later part of the nineteenth century and it was defined as having the qualities of females. Feminist consciousness provides a new awareness of the woman's role in the modern complex world. (Tandon 81) According to Oxford Dictionary, 'feminine' means 'of women, womanly' (Oxford, 276). Feminist consciousness has certainly given a fresh ardour and excitement to literary studies.

The novels of Anita Desai are basically female oriented. She probes into their problems, be it of a mother, a daughter a sister or a wife. At the same time she examines the psyche of their creations and analyzes their relationship with society at large.

Therefore the present study also intends to focus on Anita Desai's female protagonists and their attempts for individual liberty.

Desai is very distinguished and distinct female novelist from the rest of her generations and other female novelists. Her novels are addressed to and deal with women. She is satisfied to dive deep into the inner working of the protagonists

and brings out the hidden depths of human psyche. She has been hailed as a pioneer of Indian feminism. She brilliantly exposes the grinding suppression of women in India. Her characters comprise women of almost all age groups. She has also touched upon a very crucial aspect of the feminine consciousness. Anita Desai has been acclaimed as a pioneer of Indian feminism. She focuses on the traumas and problems of middle-class Indian women, she has written many novels and portrayed different aspects of the human feminine psyche through them. She has written about women and most of her novels move around women characters. She has tried to search the psychological aspects of the protagonists and portrayed the complications in the man-woman relationship. (81-82) I hope the present research work will be useful and will help the readers to analyze Desai's work from this point of view. It is an attempt to show the feminine consciousness in Anita Desai's selected novels. And to examine the feminine as well as feminist perceptions. The present study tries to make a modest attempt to focus upon feminine consciousness as it relates itself to the novels of Anita Desai.

1.8 Significance of the Study -

The present research work will assist the readers to understand a distinguished Indo-Anglian novelist Anita Desai and feminine sensibility, and also consciousness in her selected novels. It will also help the readers to understand how women are growing vigilant and conscious about their rights and how they are coming out of their limited world. It will also provide a new insight and new way of looking at the lives of the women.

I am sure the present study will change the traditional mentality of the people who believe that, women should be within the house, inside the four walls. It will definitely create a great awakening in the society about the plight of the women and compel the society to think of woman as equal to man and of equal importance. I hope, directly or indirectly, the present research will contribute to the feminist cause of woman's empowerment. It will help to widen and direct our thoughts to relevant problems affecting women in Indian Society. It will also help the readers to look at the novels of Anita Desai from a different perspective, It will

also provide them with ample opportunities of doing research on the life of Indian women with the help of these novels. So I have selected the present topic for research.

1.9 Review of Related Research/ Literature -

A great deal of work has been done so far on various novelists in English. The main findings are regarding their style of writing and subject matter. A lot of work has been focused on the portrayal of oriental literature. The researcher thought it is appropriate to focus on the feminine consciousness of Desai's selected novels instead of confining only to the portrayal of woman's image that the researcher came across in the research focusing on post-colonial- literature. A Review of will be discussed in Chapter II in detail.

1.10 Statement of the Problem –

It was a time when women writers had to use fictitious names while writing anything. They had to depend on men for finance. So the story of the human race begins with the women writers. It is Desai who carries the innovative human genetic material. In the productions of the historians, 'man' was observed as the 'idol' whereas in reality, it is the woman who merits the rank of the star. However women are always marginalized in the patriarchal Indian society. Her future depends on her labour and skill; her biology, which holds the key to the destiny. The society in which we live today had set certain rules which are different for men and women. The woman has to perform the biological function of reproduction and also it is her responsibility to look after the children. So this ends all her opportunities. The phenomenon of male dominance is universal. Women in all ages, in our male-dominated society have been placed to the position of a good home makers, excellent wives and caring mothers with the qualities of service, submissiveness and sacrifice. She cannot think of herself without man. 'He' is the subject and 'She' is the other.

The exploitation of women was then diagnosed and problems of women's inequality found expression. Writers both men and women proposed solutions to

this problem. The Indo-Anglian fiction presents a picture of the changing social realities during the twentieth century. Now the scenario has changed and a woman has a place of her own. Women writers have made outstanding contribution to the field of fiction writing. Indian English women writers have come to the forefront to express their feelings and sentiments. They also focus on the women and their condition in the society.

Indian women are always discriminated against and deprived at every level be it in social participation, economic participation or domestic. They are always treated as subordinate to men. However, there are a number of programmes and policy initiatives by the government for the equal rights of women. But the result is still negligible.

In this context I would like to give the reference of the movie 'Pink'. Recently Bacchan's movie 'Pink' released which attacks and throws light on the miserable condition of women in India. A poem in this movie is really very meaningful and inspirative for women.....

तू खुदकी खोज मे निकल
तू किस लिये हताश है
तू चल तेरे वजूद कि
समय को भी तलाश है __ १

•••••
आँसू न इनको वस्त्र तू
ये बेडियाँ पिघाल के
बनाले इनको शस्त्र तू
तू खुद की खोज मे निकल
तू किस लिये हताश है __ २

"तू खूद की खोज में निकल
 तू किस क्रोध की मशाल है
 तू खूद की खोज में निकल
 तू किस क्रोध की मशाल है 3

जलाके भस्म कर उसे
 जो क्रूरता का जाल है
 तू आरती की लौ नहीं
 तू क्रोध की मशाल है
 तू खूद की खोज में निकल
 तू किस क्रोध की मशाल है 4

The poet here suggests to every woman to revolt against injustice and search for her own identity.

What Anita Desai doesshe never tries to justify the actions of the women protagonists in her fictional world but grants freedom to act in their own ways, to search for their identity. In this way she has made sincere attempts to contribute to the Indian fiction with a feminist concern.

As compared to the past, women in modern times have achieved a lot but I think, in reality they still have to travel a long way. Because still after sixty nine years of India's independence, the status of Indian woman is not too satisfactory.

Against this background, I have tried to study the social status of Indian woman in modern India and also in literature. Though there is a lot of research done on Anita Desai, in my opinion, this topic cannot be old, till the Indian woman gets equal status with men. So by selecting the present topic I have tried to throw light on the status of Indian woman as it is the need of the age.

1.11 Aims and Objectives –

The aim of the present research work is to study, discuss, identify and to interpret Anita Desai's selected novels and thereby to place them in the belief of Indian English Literature.

1. To study the novels of Anita Desai and to enhance the knowledge of English Literature.
2. To comprehend the portrayal of women characters and their socio-cultural roles.
3. To study the social and family problems of women in India.
4. To throw light on the status of women.
5. To study the social contribution of the novelist.

1.12 Statement of Hypothesis –

At present a lot of research work is done on Anita Desai separately. But nobody has attempted to study women's image from the particular angle of feminine psyche. Therefore

1. To study feminine consciousness in Anita Desai's novels will help to know her from this angle and also to understand her contribution.
2. To find out more about Anita Desai and her identity as a feminist writer and her attempts to show women's fight against injustice.

1.13 Data Collection –

The data of the present research would be in the form of the primary and secondary sources.

- a) Primary sources – The five novels of Anita Desai along with their more works would form the primary source.

- b) Secondary sources – Desai’s works published in the Articles, Periodicals, Journals, Magazines and in books and Reviews.

1.14 Scope and Limitation –

The term ‘Feminism’ means a theory of political, economic and social qualities of the sexes. It is an ideology of women’s liberation in all its approaches. The feminist movement, with its roots in the west came forth as the angry voice, having protest as the watchword. It specially dealt with the issues of woman’s position in a male-dominated society.

The Indian English writers took up the feminist issues as major themes in their works. Women have been depicted as coming out from their typical roles and searching for an identity.

In the novels there is much more scope for the appearance of feminine sensibility. Women have encouraged literature and feminine themes have been of crucial significance. She herself is a creator of literature and the cause of all action. Moreover to say, if woman is absent there is no poetry, no drama, no fiction and no tears, no laughter, ultimately no life in this world. But if we see the condition of women even today, they are struggling for their rights and social justice. The women writers have thrown light on different aspects of feminism. The present research work attempts to present the feminine consciousness of female protagonists in Desai’s selected novels. In fact Desai has written many novels but here, it is impossible to analyze each and every novel. So I have selected five novels of Desai and the study will focus on feminine consciousness in the selected novels.

1.15 Research Methodology –

The present research work would depend upon the primary sources that is the original works by Anita Desai, which would be read, analyzed and interpreted critically. By using the descriptive method, it is presented in order to find out the

ways in which Anita Desai has presented her views on the image of woman and her consciousness, by collecting the data from her selected novels. The socio-psychological factors will be used as the base, module for a study of her novels. It will discuss social status of women in India. The analytical, Interpretative and comparative research methodology will be used for the present research work. It will be discussed separately in detail in chapter no. III. In the above said methodology the provisional chapter scheme will be framed.

1.16 Chapter wise Research Plan –

The proposed research work is divided into the following five chapters.

a) Chapter I – Introduction –

The first chapter deals with the biographical survey of Anita Desai. It discusses about the works of Anita Desai and themes of her selected five novels. This chapter also focuses review of literature and other aspects related to the research like the significance of the study, review of literature, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the research, statement of hypothesis, data collection, scope and limitations, research methodology, and the chapter scheme.

b) Chapter II – Review of Literature

(Global Feminist Movement and Women’s Writing in India)

This chapter will discuss about feminism as a literary movement and how it came to India. It will take a review of global feminist movement, feminist theory and feminist writers in western countries and in India. It will throw light on feminism in the Indian context and will discuss about feminist novelists in India and about their contribution to Indian English Literature.

c) Chapter III – Research Methodology

(A Study of Socio-Psychological Factors that contribute to themes, plots and characterization in Anita Desai's novels)

This chapter will discuss about the research methodology used for present research work. Socio-Psychological factors will be used as the base, module for a study of Desai's novels. It will discuss social status of women in India. The analytical, interpretative and comparative research methodology will be used for the present research work.

d) Chapter IV – Analysis and Interpretation

(Feminine Consciousness and Social Status of female characters in Anita Desai's novels : A detailed Analysis and Interpretation of the work)

This chapter is the core chapter of the present research work. It will deal with different aspects of feminine consciousness which constitute a major part of the projected research work. There will be a detailed analysis and interpretation of feminine consciousness in Desai's selected novels. The five novels have been selected from the point of view of female characters who represent different aspects of feminine psyche.

This chapter will also discuss about the struggle of women for their identity and social status of female protagonists in Desai's selected novels. The chapter will focus on violence against women in India and different types of violence against Desai's protagonists and shows how it is a social problem. The chapter will throw light on female infanticide as a big social problem and will compare with Desai's female protagonists.

e) **Chapter V – Concluding
Remarks/Findings/Recommendations**

This is the concluding chapter. It will enumerate the inferences reached after making the study.

This chapter covers concluding remarks.

1.17 Bibliography –

The bibliography would be prepared of the

- a) Primary source [Texts/original works of the author Anita Desai.
- b) Secondary source – [The articles, reviews interviews published in various journals, magazines books etc.
- c) Webliography

Chapter – II
Review of Literature
(Global Feminist Movement and Women’s Writing in India)

2.1) Review of Related Research Work -

Anita Desai’s novels have evoked an enthusiastic response from critics inside and outside India. She is special because turning inward, her fiction grapples with the intangible. The realities of life, plunges into the innermost depths of the human psyche to fathom its mysteries, the inner turmoil and the chaos inside the mind. During the last few decades the Indian English novel has really enjoyed the golden period. The abundant growth of the novel proved that there is much more intellectual life in India. The criticism thus starts with some of the critical opinions on Anita Desai-

1) According to Adhikari, Madhumalati. “In Desai’s novels, the moral values of women are conveniently altered to suit the demands of men who treat them as their ‘objects’, ‘possession’ to be ruled and controlled by psychological insecurity nurtured in them through myths, customs and social discourses”.

2. According to Professor Lightman, Alan. “Desai’s novels are distinguished by her focus on the inner life of her characters and her concern with people previously marginalized in Indian fiction, primarily women, children and the elderly”.

3. According to Rao, B. Ramchandra. “The sense of form which is late to develop is the sign of the maturity of a literature, and the novels of Mrs. Desai are a happy example of the fusion of forms with content, of structure with texture”.

4. According to Srivastava, Jaya. “Being a sensitive woman novelist and gifted with good observations, sensitiveness, penetrating analysis and a skill to paint with word, Anita Desai created a rich gallery of characters, of both male and female”. (Shrivastava 232)

5. According to Iyenger, K. R. Srinivasa. “The explosions in Mrs. Desai’s novels occur only within narrow domestic walls. Always, always, it is the intolerable grapple with thoughts, feelings and emotions”.

6. Mrinalini Solanki observes, “Anita Desai displays a remarkable capacity for adaptation in her language and style.....”

Mostly these reviews are of the individual works. Some critics dealt with her works in general and some of them compared with the works of other novels. The novels of Anita Desai and many other feminist woman novelists, who have presented new women with changed roles in their novels provide a topic for research activity. Ample research has been done by the research scholars and much yet is to be done. The critical books and abstracts of the following papers on the writing of these novels in national and international seminars and conferences show that the writing of Desai furnish abundant opportunities and possibilities for doing research on many hidden issues and aspects in her writing.

The purpose of the Review is to take a review of the related literature. It summarized the findings and suggestions from the earlier researchers.

There are several comprehensive research articles on Desai. I have come across articles and reviews on Desai in some magazines, journals and periodicals. Some of them are as follows.-

2.2 Research Articles on Anita Desai -

1. Dr. S, Mohan. : ‘Feminist Perspectives in Anita Desai’s Novel’, *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Translation Studies*, July 2015-

In this article the writer discusses about feminism in India and western countries. He writes about Anita Desai and her four novels *Cry the Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Where shall we Go this Summer?* and *Clear Light of the Day*. He throws light on how the novelist has given voice to the revolting consciousness of the woman folk. According to him Desai’s characters are not representatives of

homogeneous category, but they are like heterogeneity of female experience. Her characters are defined by their memories and attitudes.

2. Dhaliwal, Baljit Kaur. : 'Feminism in Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock*', *Multidisciplinary Research Journal*-

In this article the writer discusses the feminism in the novel *Cry the Peacock* through the character of Maya.

3. Tibata, Jyoti. : 'Feminist Consciousness in the novels of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukharjee', *Impressions, Annual Refereed e-Journal* Jan 2012-

In this article, the writer throws light on feminist consciousness in the selected novels of these women novelists, Desai, Deshpande and Mukharjee. According to her the role of Indian woman remains only peripheral.

4. Weir, Ann Lowry. : 'The Illusions of Maya : Feminine Consciousness in Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock*', *Journal of South Asian Literature*-

The writer discusses the illusions and feminine consciousness of Maya, the protagonist in the novel *Cry the Peacock*. The writer has chosen the character of Maya for analysis.

5. Iseni, Arburim.: 'Desai's novels as post-modernist Feminist Projections', *European Scientific Journal* May 2014-

In this article, the writer discusses Desai 's two protagonists- Maya and Sita in her novels *Cry the Peacock* and *Where shall we go this Summer?* are representatives of post – modern Indian Feminism. The researcher focuses on how matriarchal community has been humiliated and tortured socially and economically. The purpose of the paper is to focus on the feminist message as articulated in Anita Desai's reputed novels.

6. Bhatkulkar, Rohini, and Dr. Khandait, N.Y. : 'Exploration of Women Sensibility in Anita Desai's novels', *MIT International Journal of English Language and Literature*-

In this article the writers discuss how Desai's novels *Cry the Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Fire on the Mountain* and *Clear Light of the Day* deal with women where they appear to be troubled and tormented in the circumstances in which they are placed.

7. Chauhan, Seema. : 'Female Characters in the novels of Anita Desai, A Psychological Study'. Abstract submitted –

The writer discusses about Desai's novels *Cry the Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Where shall we go this Summer? Bye Bye Blackbird*, *Clear Light of Day* and *Fire on the Mountain*. She also states that, Desai portrays her characters individually and on the verge of psychological breakdown.

8. Waghmare, Deepa. : 'Woman in Isolation and Existential Predicament of Woman in Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock*'-

Here the researcher tries to show the study of isolation experienced by women in male dominated society and how in the Indian society women are not allowed to play any active role in decision-making.

9. Gautam, Teena. : 'Female Predicament in Anita Desai's *Voices in the City*' Aurangabad March 2013-

In this article also the researcher focuses on the character of Monisha as the protagonist in the novel *Voices in the City*. Desai shows the predicament of women in the society. She shows how Monisha feels insulted and tortured at her husband's home and wants to finish her life. So life has become unbearable for her and she is in a dilemma. Finally the time comes when she commits suicide. Desai shows the creative release of the feminine sensibility. She depicts a

woman's search for her identity, her pursuit of liberty and protest against oppression at every level.

But, I do not agree with the writer's opinion that Monisha's suicide is a release of the feminine sensibility. By committing suicide one can not release. Rather I think, she should have revolted for her rights and here she runs away from the situation and commits suicide.

10. Khatib, Anis. : 'Eco Feminism in Anita Desai's *Fire on Mountain*', *Glimpses of World Literature ABS publication Varanasi 2015*

Here the researcher shows how Desai presents the internal conflict of the woman character rather than providing narrations and descriptions. The paper focuses on how important it is to see the decline and decay of women and nature and how it is seen that the symbolic significance of the fire to the mountain is similar to the lives of the three prime characters in the novel, Nanda, Raka and Ila. The researcher tries to analyze the interconnection between the adverse condition of women characters in the novel and the same deterioration of nature in the society.

But, here I disagree with this point as, there is similarity between deterioration of women and nature. Rather I would say, women's situation can not deteriorate. She has that much capacity, ability to rise again and struggle to achieve what she wants in her life.

11. Uddin, Md. Eftekar. : 'Gender Consciousness in Anita Desai's novels'. *Research articles Humanities and social sciences 2014 –*

In this article the writer discusses on the deplorable status of women in Indian society. He also focuses on the social, historical, religious and cultural issues in India, history of women's movement, literature by women and feminist movement etc.

12. Uddhav, Jane. : 'Women Sensibility in the novels of Anita Desai Contemporary Indian women Novelists in English' –

In this article the writer's viewpoint is that, there is very definite concern in Anita Desai's novels with the circumstances and situation of the Indian Women. He focuses on Indian womanhood reflected in the novels and radical female resistance against patriarchal society. He writes that Desai's fictional world is replete with the incidental women's problems in Indian Society and her women represent different types of womanhood – working women, housewives, social workers etc though the woman in Indian social context is still affected by the notion of womanhood, even she remains incomplete if she fails to give birth to a child and has negative feelings towards such social notions.

13. Lakhdive, Pushpa. : 'Love of Life in the fiction of Anita Desai Contemporary Indian women novelists' –

In this article the writer writes about Desai's contribution to fiction writing which added new dimension to the Indian English fiction. She also adds that the world of Desai's fiction is largely domestic one and she is interested in the lives of women in India. Their struggle is not 'Evil' in their personality but they are ready to fight with existing reality. Her characterization also reveals her keen love of life and how the nature of human beings depend on their sentiments. According to writer all female protagonists in Desai's novels have the passion for life and crave for love.

14. Sharma, J.N. : 'A Study of marital relations in selected works of Anita Desai', 2013

The writer discusses on the married life of Desai's female characters in her novels and throws light on their marital relations.

15. Nazary, S. : 'Alienation, Maladjustment and the Search for Identity', *Caes journals* 2012 –

In this article he focuses on the characters in Anita Desai, Ruth Jhabvala, Sehgal and Shashi Deshpande's novels and how they struggle for self identity.

16. Jajja, M.A. : 'The Representation of women in Anita Desai's novels' 2013

The writers throw light on the female characters and their struggle in Anita Desai's Novels and analyze the female characters.

17. Thakur, K. : 'The concept of man woman relationship in 'Cry the Peacock', *Indian research journal* – 2012.

In this article the researcher discusses on the concept of man-woman relationship in Desai's novel 'Cry the Peacock' and focuses the marital relations between Gautama and Maya.

2.3 Ph. D. Thesis on Anita Desai –

1. P, Jayaseela. : *Socio-political realities in the novels of Anita Desai and Kiran Desai, A comparative study* (15 April 2014) -

The purpose of the study is to explore the socio-political realities in the novels of Anita Desai and Kiran Desai. It throws light on how Desai is able to delve deep into the problems of characters. It explores how the protagonists fall victim to marital disharmony.

2. Shah, C. B. : *Desai's views on English as a medium of creative writing*.

The researcher tells about Desai's views on English language as a medium of creative writing. He states that Desai's language runs smoothly and expresses the inner world of her selected characters impressively. Her lyricism appears as a mere flourish of words for their alliterative potentiality. Her power of rhetoric consists in lyricism and its repetition of words tries to achieve the rhythmic beauty of a lyric.

It is true that, still after sixty nine years of India's Independence, the status of Indian woman is not too much satisfactory and the same is pictured in the novels of Desai. Still there is need to study such topics and to show the society about it. On this basis I have chosen Anita Desai's novels and the present topic for my research.

Beside this, there are several articles on Anita Desai, focusing different aspects. From the above reviews, it is clear that, there is too much writing available related to the present study though the aspect and presentation is different. Anita Desai and her novels have been widely studied by literary critics who have studied the novels with particular interest from their own point of view. This is also a proof of the greatness of her novels. So the researcher thinks it is high time to study her works reflecting a variety of women's issues and social status. In my opinion there is still a need for conducting research on the present problem because though there are some articles on the present research topic, there is no research work done focusing on the particular topic of the present research work in a comprehensive way.

While writing on feminine consciousness in Anita Desai's novels it is necessary to study and to take a review of Feminism as a movement and also to study other feminist writers, feminist literature in India and also in Western countries.

Anjali Hans writes on "Feminism as a literary movement" -

2.4 Feminism as a Movement -

Anjali Hans writes in her article "*Feminism as a Literary Movement in India*" that - Feminism is a movement which advocates granting the same political, social, and economic rights to women as those enjoyed by men. Throughout the world, women have been deprived of their basic socio-legal rights by a patriarchal order. In the domain of patriarchal culture, woman is a social construct, a site on which masculine meanings get imposed and masculine desires enacted. The factor which changes a girl into a woman with finality is not simply her anatomy, but the process of social conditioning, which influences and moulds her psyche to desire and pursue traditionally accepted, and encouraged feminine roles only. To change the conventional image of women constructed by the orthodox society, it is necessary to discourage the habit of defining woman as a essence whose nature is determined biologically and whose sole identity is to

produce human species. The twentieth century has witnessed a growing awareness among women regarding their desires, sexuality, self-definition, existence and destiny. Women's efforts to seek their independence and self-identity started a revolution all over the world, which was termed by analysts and critics as 'Feminism'. In the early stages of the revolution, the feminists were condemned by the patriarchal society for adulterating the minds of women with the idea of liberation from their suppressed state and encouraging them to avoid the blind subordination to the established traditional dogmas. However, soon it blossomed into different countries. Their expository and creative writings have significantly encouraged and shaped the feminist struggle to empower women and help them transcend their deprived status. Successive writers have raised women's issues by expostulating and examining their subordinate situation in the contemporary society. In their work, they have supported and propagated matters related to the suppressed state of women, which greatly contributed in bringing about a change in the social milieu. A discernible recent shift in feminist literature is from the representation of women's victimization to that of their resistance. Although the feminists and feminist writers have been successful in procuring the legal rights for women, yet much has to be done at the social level. Different countries having different religions and culture have a new tale to recite about the plight of the modern women, their dilemmas and conflicts, and their efforts to achieve self-identity and independence. The contemporary writers are still striving to provide liberation to the female world from the weak socio-cultural constraints and oppressive myths of their respective countries. (1)

The contemporary women's movement is generally considered to have arisen in the early Nineteen Sixties; by the end of the Nineteen Sixties the new women's movement began to recede. 'The New Encyclopedia Britannica' defines the women's movement as a social movement concerned with changing the roles of women. As the women's liberation groups spread rapidly in the Nineteen Sixties and Nineteen Seventies through the U.S. many European countries, Australia, and Japan's, specific issues differed from country to country; yet basic

concern continued to be the same every where (The New Encyclopaedia Britannia 1974, 732)

Marxist Understanding – Since the contemporary women’s movement is so enmeshed with Marxist rhetoric, it is necessary to locate the notion of feminism within a broad Marxist perspective. Feminism as an ally of Marxist thought has always been a subject of controversy. On the one hand, it can be argued that feminism – seen as women’s equality with men – is essentially a doctrine of liberalism and English tenement, owing little to revolutionary Marxism. On the other hand, it has been claimed that liberation of women from oppression and exploitation can only be achieved as a part of human liberation, which only social revolution can bring about.

Historically one can identify quite distinct tendencies in feminism. In England and the U.S. the longest tradition is that of a democratic, liberal feminism directed towards obtaining equal rights and opportunities for women. In the Nineteenth Century, the focus was on removing educational and professional barriers. The feminist movement in Great Britain has been inspired more by Utopian, Socialism, Maoism and anti-colonialism. Politically it has been less influenced by the Marxist – Leninist tradition.

2.5 Feminist Movement From 17th to 20th Century. –

The beginnings of women’s increasing protests against male dominated culture can be traced back to the Seventeenth century, though it is not the beginning of feminism. The growth of early capitalism, puritanism and new ideas of reason and science, led people to see various questions in a new light. These forces also caused doubts, to be expressed about the nature of the relationship between men and women. In the meantime there were basic changes in commodity production and they began to affect the position of women in the structure of work and in society.

Changes in industrial organization affected women’s position in the structure of work. Their position was progressively weakened. The entry of

women into trades was closed and their limited education made their entry into professions impossible. In the Nineteenth century, the most decisive and irreversible changes in the status of women were initiated. The industrial revolution with its technical, economic and social upheavals, led to transfer of production from home to factory.

The industrial revolution affected middle and upper class women in a different way. The shift of productive activity from home to factory led to a realization of their economic uselessness, thus incurring loss of self respect on the part of middle class women.

Among working class women leading a sub human life, the temptation to accommodate rather than to resist was strong. They were not, in fact, submissive but their resistance erupted in crime or sexual immorality. The revolt against 'their' world was a personal one.

Collectively, their protest is seen in the Eighteenth Century Food riots, the traditional manner in which the poor tried to re-assert a pre-capitalist moral economy.

Ethel Snowden noted in 1913 that the roots of the modern feminist movement lie in the loss of work by women. The founders of the movement were women of the educated middle class with only one or two women having aristocratic connections. After more than sixty years of agitation, the movement included women of every class and condition.

The resistance of these working class women was in fact against the new kinds of industry and trade. They were not connected with the feminist consciousness, which was developing amongst a few privileged women.

In a nutshell, while women of the upper middle class claimed political freedom, right to work and improved educational facilities, working class women drawn into large-scale industry began to demand improvements in the conditions

of work. They wanted protection. The middle class women were fighting for equality and the working class women were fighting for better treatment.

2.6 Developments in Feminist Thought From French Revolution to the end of the Second world-war.-

It is necessary to note the developments in feminist thought and movements separately in some of the countries.

1) France :-

In France, the feminist aspirations of the privileged and underprivileged women encountered each other for the first time in the French revolution.

The women from the toiling classes and peasantry in Normandy rioted over prices. On the other hand the women of the upper middle classes resented the rising 'romantic woman cult'.

They pointed out women's problems to the men in a petition to the Assembly in 1789. A few middle class women took up the cause of liberty. Some even proposed a 'Declaration of the Rights of women, demanding abolition of all masculine privilege.

But with all this, the French Revolution did not change the lot of women. However new ideas did continue to emerge. Eminent women like Mme De Stael and George Sand fought their own individual battle for freedom. The working class women too, were expressing the new aspirations of women. The connection between the emancipation of women and the idea of a new society for the poor continued to be discussed in France.

2) Great Britain :-

In 1792 in London Mary Wollstonecraft published *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which is considered as the beginning of Feminism in Britain. Wollstonecraft's work reveals a crucial break with earlier women's consciousness.

Her work has the limitations of her times and her argument is couched in terms of the religious and moral ideas of the individual worth and dignity of women.

William Thompson in *An Appeal of the one-half of the Human Race* : (1825) raised points that were to become essential parts of feminist thinking. Thompson was the first English author who linked the liberation of women with a socialist movement against capitalism. He touched upon a variety of subjects like economic independence and security for women, communal responsibility for upbringing of children, social support during pregnancy and the right to work. By Eighteen Forty, it was clear that the women's movement in England would follow two different paths of developments. One path represented the situations, aspiration and contradictions of upper class women. The other stream represented the world-view of working class women.

3) The United States :-

In America, too the Puritan revolution stirred some exceptional women to think about the rights of women. Between Sixteen Twenty and Eighteen Twenty Ann Hutchinson, Mary Dyer, Bradstreet and many others gave expression to women's aspirations. In the early Nineteenth century, much of the women's rights actively rose out of their involvement in the antislavery movement. The women's rights movement had its political origins in the slavery abolition movement of the Eighteen Thirties. They understood that the issues of freedom for slaves and freedom for women were interlinked. Margaret Fuller's book, "Women in the Nineteenth century", published in Eighteen Forty Five, gives an account of the psychological and cultural effects of women's oppression. It provides an index to the importance of the Woman question in the American Society of those days.

The women's movement throughout the Nineteenth Century thus saw two tendencies. There was no practical theory of revolutionary feminist action or organization for fighting on several fronts. There was continuous pressure on women to compromise. Since there was no theory to which any specific problem

could be referred, women had to make choices with nothing but their own feelings, to guide them.

2.7 Decline of Feminism Between 1920 and 1960 -

The onset of the First World War saw the end of the woman's movement in Europe. This event forced feminists to take strong stances.

The collapse of feminism between 1920 and 1960 has many explanations. An American writer, and activist and Feminist writer Betty Friedan says that the feminists had destroyed the old image of woman, but the hostility, prejudice and discrimination still remained. Kate Millet says that the first phase of feminism ended in reform rather than revolution.

2.8 The Woman's Movement from 1960 to 1975 -

By the beginning of the 1960s a series of developments emerged and the rebirth of the woman's struggle became inevitable. Firstly women were a third of the labour force. The number of working women was twice the pre-war figure. However they were being forced into low-paying service and semi-skilled jobs. Secondly a generation of women found their children grown and "a life of housework and bridge parties stretching before them like a waste land".(William Thompson 1825) Thirdly, the civil rights movement was sweeping thousands of young men and women into a moral crusade, which was to transmute into the new move.

Women had begun to take jobs in a big way consciously to make careers within a decade of the Nineteen Sixties, Fifty Two percent of the women between Nineteen and Fifty Nine years of age were employed. Almost Ninety Percent of women over Forty were working.

Students, middle class married women and working women began to participate in the new women's movement. The new feminist movement reached its peak in the latter half of the Nineteen Sixties and the first half of the Nineteen

Seventies. By the end of the Nineteen Seventies it had spent its full force. Many feminist groups were formed in all major and many smaller cities. Around this period, New York and Los Angeles together had two hundred such groups. On the crest of the New Feminism the senate passed the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in March Nineteen Seventy Two. A conference was held in July Nineteen Seventy Five to mark the first organized attempt at bringing women together who were socialist feminists. (17,22)

2.9 What is Feminism ?

- 1) **Hole and Levine** think that feminism by definition challenges the status of woman. It questions the political social and cultural institutions, ways of thinking and the very articulation of those thoughts (Hole and Levine 1975, 225)
- 2) According to **Michele Barrett**, Feminism seeks to change not simply men or women or both as they exist at present, but seeks to change the relations between them.
- 3) **Sheila Rowbotham** points out two possible interpretations-- the ideal and historical. The first is a conception of a society where the roles of the dominator and the dominated are reversed and women take over the superior status. Feminism in the second sense is more sedate.
- 4) **Rosalind Delmar** has described feminism as the political movement of women produced by the contradiction between men and women. According to her, the Anglo-American movement produced that can be called 'liberal Feminism' which tried to manipulate the possibilities of the political system of the ruling class to gain new rights for women.

2.10 Seven Key Thinkers on Feminism -

There are seven key thinkers who wrote on feminism

i) Simone de Beauvoir :-

Simone de Beauvoir occupies a unique place among feminist theorists. Her major work, *The Second Sex* is already considered a classic study of women's condition. In this book she worked out an answer to the question of how social circumstances might limit the freedom of the individual in oppressed groups including women. In her book she wanted to talk about herself but to do so she should first have to describe the condition of women in general. She began to look at women with new eyes and found surprise after surprise lying in wait for her. Then she thought it is necessary to examine thoroughly the reality i.e. the physiology, the history and finally to study the evolution of the female condition.

The book brought the greatest satisfaction to the writer. As she puts it, she had no illusions about changing woman's condition but she helped the women of her time to become aware of themselves and their condition. She says in the first place men profit from women's subordinate position in many ways. Beauvoir wants to expose the one-sided view that the subordinate position of women is natural, just and advantageous to all men and women.

Secondly she wants to awaken women to their true status and possibilities as complete human beings. According to her, women are themselves responsible for their state of affairs.

ii) Kate Millett :-

Kate Millet is the first major author who voices the aspirations and principles of radical feminism. As a committed feminist she traveled all over the United States to mobilize college women. She acted as a reporter and took a leading part in the first feminist conference on prostitution in Nineteen Seventy one. Her ideas of radical feminism bring to the fore the difference between the old and the new. Millet's book *Sexual Politics* concerned itself primarily with the abolition of male supremacy in both its social and personal manifestations.

Millet's approach is pragmatic. Attempt to prove male superiority or dominance on the basis of physiology or biology, according to Millet, have been unsuccessful. Her conclusion is that "because of our social circumstances, male and female are really two cultures and their life experiences are utterly different and this is crucial" (186)

Like all radical feminists, Millet too urges as a basic truth that women constitute an oppressed class and denies that women merely take on the class status of their husbands and fathers. The Radical feminists agree that Kate Millet's 'Sexual Politics' was the first post- Nineteen Sixties attempt at an overall synthesis of the woman's liberation position. Her work remains a major statement of the contemporary women's movement against patriarchy. She must be considered as the first feminist thinker who dared to put the issue of patriarchy and its feminist context on the agenda of serious social science investigations.

iii) **Betty Friedan :-**

Betty Friedan's first book *The Feminine Mystique* published in Nineteen Sixty Three brought her instant recognition. More importantly, the book initiated a resurgence of American Feminism. She describes how American women came to realize the woman's problem by the beginning of the 1960s. She felt that the problem had lain buried, unspoken for many years in the minds of American women. Women were considered to be simply different - the question of their superiority and inferiority was not argued at all. However by the beginning of the Nineteen Sixties, countless American women experienced a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction when they repeated routine housework. Friedan found that each one of them was not talking about problems with the husband, the children or the home. They suddenly realized that they all shared the same problem-- the problem that has no name.

She asserts that she understood the problem first as a woman long before she understood its larger social and psychological implications. To Friedan, however the problem was totally new. She finds some clues. Firstly, it was not the

career woman who suffered from the problem-it was the common American middle class woman with conventional ideas of fulfillment. Secondly, even higher education does not make women aware of women's rights. Even then women suffer as housewives and mothers. Thirdly, Friedan notes that if maternity or sexual satisfaction is the answer to women's description, American women are producing more and more children and are getting much deeper satisfaction (Friedan 25-26, 135)

After careful field investigations, Friedan came to the conclusion that a growing body of evidence "throws into question the standards of feminine maturity by which most women are still trying to live" She concludes that this problem is the key to new and old problems, which have nothing to do with the loss of femininity or having higher education or the demands of domesticity.

iv) Juliet Mitchell :-

Juliet Mitchell is a socialist feminist writer. She attempted to define her position on the problem of linking Marxism with feminism as early as in Nineteen Sixty Six. She finds a normative ideal of the emancipation of women in the treatment of woman's role in the thoughts of Marx.

She compares the dependence of women on men with that of the workers on the capitalist, and finds women, an oppressed minority. She argues that traditional socialism is in error in exaggerating the role of private property in subjugating women.

According to Mitchell, women's life is governed by woman's conditions (a) production (b) reproduction (c) sexuality and (d) the socialization of children. The biological differentiation of the sexes and the division of labour was treated as an interlocking necessity. According to her, woman's lesser capacity for violence is as much responsible for her subordination in the division of labour as is her much exaggerated physical weakness. A woman was taken to be less good at hunting and such other tasks, and was therefore, relegated to domestic labour.

In the preface of her book *Woman's Estate*. She notes that the family and the psychology of femininity are crucial in considering the specific features of woman's situation and oppression in contemporary capitalist Society. It is within the development of her feminine psyche and her ideological and socio-economic role as a mother and housewife that woman finds the oppression which is hers alone. As woman's specific oppression defines her, any movement for her liberation must analyze changing this position.

Mitchell's comments on the analysis of the woman problem in orthodox socialist theory, are more interesting. She points out that the problem of women's subordination and their liberation was recognized by all great socialist thinkers of the 19th century. It is, therefore, part of the classical heritage of the revolutionary movement.

Mitchell argues that feminist consciousness and the development of a socialist analysis of the oppression of women are of simultaneous necessity. Her second book "Psychoanalysis and Feminism" is considered one of the most crucial theoretical feminist contributions to this date. It has made a profound impact on all subsequent schools of feminist thought. This book marked Mitchell as a major feminist thinker. (Bhagwat Vidyut, 278)

v) Julia Kristeva :-

A key concept throughout *Julia Kristeva's* work has been that of 'thresholds' especially the permutable boundary between the conscious and unconscious. Kristeva, however argues that for a self to opt out of symbolic order is to opt out of history. She chalks out three positions, which she associates with the historical development of the women's movement in the Twentieth century. She characterizes the first stage of the women's movement upto Nineteen Sixty Eight, of the radical feminine as identifying with paternal modality. The second position is identification with maternal modality that characterizes the post Nineteen Sixty Eight women's generation – the construction of an idealized myth of maternal femininity. Kristeva believes that the desire to return to an imagined

semiotic order – a form of radical separatism – is a dangerous position for an individual woman as well as for feminism as a movement.

For Kristeva, repressed desire is not to be identified as the inevitable force for freedom; the possibility of revolution exists only in language and in subjects operating on the threshold between control and disruption, between the unconscious and the social. Kristeva suggests that, women, because they are always marginalized within the social order, are more likely than men to become generating spaces for a new order of meaning. (Kristeva 1986.)

vi) Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn :-

These writers write in their book *Making a Difference* -

In a world defined by men, the trouble with women is that she is at once an object of desire and as object of exchange, valued on the one hand as a person in her own right, and on the other, considered simply as a relational sign between men. At the intersection of two incompatible systems, woman appears as the embodiment of an impossible duality. Levi Strauss's contention that woman is both a person and a sign, a human being and a depersonalized, subjectless structure, clearly indicates that the discussion of women's relationship to language of woman and in language will take different paths according to whether woman is understood as being a person or a sign.

As a person, woman is a transcendental being, a consciousness and a voice 'Taking her part in the duet, she is endowed with individual characteristics which determine her value as a member of society Her experience of life is contingent upon her psychological make-up, her individual circumstances, as well as society's expectations and limitations linked to age, sex, creed and so on. Nevertheless, since sex is one of the essential and irreducible differentiating factors among individuals, women and men, in general, may experience situations in a markedly different manner. For proponents of the biological argument, sexual differences explain the distinctive features of a feminine or a masculine nature.

It is therefore not surprising that the study of perceptual differences between women and men has elicited the interest of feminist scholars both in the social sciences and in the humanities. In literature, this has led feminist critics to collect and study the works of women authors in order to recover 'a female tradition' The female literary tradition comes from still evolving relationship between women writers and their society.

Feminist critics have tried to understand how social restrictions have shaped women's lives and their relationship to art and literature and they have then proceeded to validate women's perceptions of life by restoring their writings to public view. By retrieving works written by women and by giving these works the kind of visibility and authority hitherto accorded to men's literary productions, feminist critics have established the corpus of a female literary tradition.

Feminist consciousness has given a new ardour and excitement to literary studies. By studying the status of women in literature and the works of women authors, feminist critics have unveiled some of the biases at work in traditional approaches to literature -- namely the fact that literary genres, situations and characters have often been defined according to a masculine perspective. Yet an unfortunate consequence of the critics' efforts towards a separate, but equally valid, literary tradition is that they leave some unquestioned prejudices, which create the authority of tradition in the first place. Among those notions which remain unchallenged are the assumed 'universality' of human experience and the 'reflection' of experience in literary representation. Besides a belief in possibility and desirability of equality, many feminist critics embrace the learning imparted by traditional humanism and consequently take for granted that, as human beings, we all share basic universal values, and that although women's and men's experience of the world may be different, we have a common view of experience, a collective understanding of language and literature -- in short, that, we share an unquestioned 'common sense'

vii) Kaplan Cora :-

Kaplan Cora in her article, "*Pandora's Box : Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism*", points to split in feminist criticism, between liberal humanists, who take psychosexual experience as more meaningful for women than social oppression, and socialist feminists, who foreground social and economic elements in texts and view fantasy and desire as anarchic and regressive, while the liberal humanists fail to interrogate the idea of unified female subject as ideology. She says, socialist feminists tend to stigmatize the literary representation of feeling as bourgeois. Kaplan argues for a criticism which can come to grip with the relationship between female subjectivity and class identity – which deals with the unconscious processes of subjective identity, as at the same time, structures through which class is lived and understood. (Cora 146)

Feminist criticism now marks out a broad area of literary studies, original and provocative. With maturity, the most visible, well defined and extensive tendency within feminist criticism has undoubtedly brought in the white, middle class, heterosexual values of traditional literary criticism. As she says, feminist criticism will enter an unequal dependent alliance with any of the varieties of male-centered criticism. It does not need to, for it has produced and all too persuasive autonomous analysis, which is in many ways radical in its discussion of gender, but implacably conservative in its assumptions about social hierarchy and female subjectivity. (147)

Needless to say, this strand of socialist thought passes a problem of feminism, which has favoured three main strategies to deal with it. In the first, women's psychic life is seen as being essentially identical to men's, but distorted through vicious and systematic patriarchal inscription. The second strategy wholly vindicates women's psyche, but sees it as quite separate from men's, often in direct opposition. This is frequently the terrain on which radical feminism defends female sexuality as independent and virtuous between women. The third strategy has been to refuse the issue's relevance altogether – to see any focus on psychic difference as itself an ideological one.

Instead of choosing any one of these options, socialist feminist criticism must come to grips with the relationship between female subjectivity and class identity. This project, even in its present early stages, poses major problems for the tendency. While socialist feminists have been deeply concerned with the social construction of femininity and sexual difference, they have been uneasy about integrating social and political determinations. With an analysis of the psychic ordering of gender, socialist feminism still finds unlocated, unsocialized, psychic expression in women's writing, hard to discuss in non-moralizing terms.

On the other hand, for liberal humanism, feminist versions included, the possibility of a unified self and an integrated consciousness that can transcend material circumstance is represented as the fulfillment of desire, the happy closure at the end of the story. The psychic fragmentation expressed through female characters in women's writing is seen as the most important sign of their sexual subordination, more interesting and ultimately more meaningful than their social oppression.

Literature is itself a heterogeneous discourse, which appropriates, contextualizes and comments on other languages of class and gender.

The class subjectivity of women and their sexual identity thus became welded together in nineteenth-century discourses. By focusing on the issue and image of female sexual conduct, questions about the economic and political integrity of dominant groups could be displaced. Women, as we have seen, were explicitly excluded from these political practices, but as, we have also seen, attempts to naturalize that exclusion were never wholly successful. Feminism inserted itself into the debate just at the point where theories of innate difference attempted to deny women access to a full political identity. (Greene and Khan 165)

2.11 Feminist Theory -

Feminism – Feminism is a diverse, competing and often opposing collection of social theories, political movements and moral philosophies, largely concerning

the experiences of women, especially in terms of their social, political and economical inequalities. One institutionally predominant type of feminism focuses on limiting or eradicating gender inequality to promote women's rights, interests and issues in society. Another opposing type of modern feminism with deep historical roots, focuses on earning and establishing equity by and for women vis-à-vis men, to promote those same rights, interests and issues, regardless of gender considerations.

The most well-known types of feminism are – liberal feminism, social feminism, radical feminism and post modern feminism.

Haralambos and Holborn discuss about types of Feminism in the book '*Sociology, themes and perspectives*' -

- (a) **Liberal feminism** seeks no special privileges for women and simply demands that everyone receives equal consideration without discrimination on the basis of sex. Liberal feminists would seek to remove barriers that prevent equal access for women to Information Technology jobs, not only to provide economic equality but to provide access to higher-paying jobs for women.
- (b) **Socialist feminism** rejects individualism and positivism. Social feminism believes that technology and the social shaping of technology have often been conceptualized in terms of men, excluding women at all levels. Socialist feminist reform suggests that the allocation of resources for technological development should be determined by the greatest benefit for the common good.
- (c) **Radical feminism** maintains that women's oppression is the first, most widespread and deepest oppression. Radical feminism rejects most scientific theories, data and experiment not only because they exclude women but also because they are not women centred. Radical feminism suggests that, because men, masculinity, and patriarchy have become

completely intertwined with technology and computer systems in our society, no truly feminist alternative to technology exists.

- (d) **Post-modern feminist** theories imply that no universal research agenda or application of technologies will be appropriate and that various women will have different reactions to technologies depending upon their own class, race, sexuality, country and other factors. This definition of post modern feminism parallels the description of the complex and diverse co-evolution of women and computing. In contrast to liberal feminism, post modernism dissolves the universal subject and the possibility that women speak in a unified voice or that they can be universally addressed thoughtful analysis of the social constructivist perspective on gender and technology, reveals some of the issues embedded in its assumptions.

Thus feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical ground. It encompasses work done in a broad variety of disciplines, prominently including the approaches to women's roles and lives and feminist politics in Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, Gender studies, Feminist literary criticism and Philosophy. Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality. Much of feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's rights, interests and issues. Themes explored in feminism include discrimination, objectification (especially sexual objectification) oppression and patriarchy. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/feminist>)

2.12 Feminism in India -

Feminism in India is a series of movements aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political rights within Indian society. Like their feminist counterparts all over the world, feminists in India seek gender equality : the right to work for equal wages, the right to equal access to health and education, and equal political rights. Indian feminists also have fought against culture and

specific issues within India's patriarchal society, such as inheritance laws and the practice of widow immolation known as Sati.

The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases : the first phase, beginning in the mid nineteenth century, initiated when male European colonists began to speak out against the social evils of 'Sati'. The second phase, from 1915 to Indian Independence, when Mahatma Gandhi incorporated women's movements into the 'Quit India' movement and independent women's organizations began to emerge ; and finally, the third phase, post independence, which has focused on fair treatment of women at home after marriage, in the work force and in the political sphere. Despite the progress made by Indian feminist movement, women living in modern India still face many issues of discrimination. India's patriarchal culture has made the process of gaining land-ownership rights and access to education challenging. In the past two decades, there has also emerged a disturbing trend of sex-selective abortion. To Indian feminists, these are seen as injustices worth struggling against.

As in the west, there has been some criticism of feminist movements in India. They have especially been criticized for focusing too much on women already privileged and neglecting the needs and representation of poorer or lower caste women. This has led to the creation of caste-specific feminist organizations and movements.

In India, women's issues first began to be addressed when the state commissioned a report on the status of women to a group of feminist researchers and activists. The report recognized the fact that, in India, women were oppressed under a system of structural hierarchies and injustices. During this period, Indian feminists were influenced by the western debates being conducted about violence against women. However, due to the difference in the historical and social culture in India, the debate in favour of Indian women had to be conducted creatively and certain western ideas had to be rejected. Women's issues began to gain an international prominence when the decade of 1975-1985 was declared as 'United Nations Decade for Women'.

Historical circumstances and values in India have caused feminists to develop a feminism that differs from western feminism for e.g. the idea of women as 'powerful' is accommodated into patriarchal culture through religion, which has retained visibility in all sections of society. This has provided women with traditional 'cultural spaces'. In India the individual is usually considered to be just one part of the larger social collective. Survival of the individual is dependent upon co-operation and self-denial for the greater good is valued.

Indian women negotiate survival through an array of oppressive patriarchal family structures : age, ordinal status relationship to men through family of origin, marriage and procreation as well as patriarchal attributes. Examples of patriarchal attributes include dowry, siring sons etc. kinship, caste, community, village, market and the state. It should be however noted that several communities in India, such as the Nairs of Kerala, Shettys of Mangalore, certain Maratha clans, and Bengali families exhibit matriarchal tendencies. In these communities, the head of the family is the oldest woman rather than the oldest man. Sikh culture is also regarded as relatively gender-neutral.

The heterogeneity of the Indian experience reveals that there are multiple patriarchies, contributing to the existence of multiple feminism. Hence, feminism in India is not a singular theoretical orientation; it has changed over time in relation to historical and cultural realities, levels of consciousness, perceptions and actions of individual women and women as a group. The widely used definition is "An awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family and conscious action by women and men to change this situation."

There have been intense debates within the Indian women's movements about the relationship between Western and Indian feminisms. Many Indian feminists simultaneously claim a specific 'Indian Sensitivity' as well as an international feminist solidarity with groups and individuals worldwide. The rise of liberal feminism in the west in the 1970s focused deeply on demand for equal opportunities in education and employment, as well as ending violence against

women. To a large extent, the emerging feminist movement in India was influenced by western ideals. These called for education and equal rights, but also adapted their appeals to local issues and concerns, such as dowry related violence against women, sati, sex selective abortion and custodial rape. Some Indian feminists have suggested that these issues are not specifically 'Indian' in nature but rather a reflection of a wider trend of patriarchal oppression of women.

For most Indians, the term "feminism" means nothing, except a microscopic number of highly westernized, elite people. Neither does that particular term have any equivalents in any of the Indian languages. If anything, the term has acquired many negative connotations in recent years. Most urban English-speaking Indians are familiar with the term "feminism," but their understanding of it remains vague and veiled too. There is a general skepticism about its usefulness. Among the urban literate, the awareness of feminism is largely confined to what is perceived of as the moral corruption of women abroad, a result of their outlandish freedom to think and say, and choose what they want out of life. The conservative structures and Indian panorama of seeing things have not so far allowed it to become a widely apprehended phenomenon. For most Indian males, feminism is an offensive word, which they feel, has tremendous negative effects on the minds of Indian women. Since the Indian woman has always been a considerably more conditioned product, totally custom-made and usually forced into a mindless acceptance of male dictates, possibility of a reasoned, open-minded approach to the concept of feminism has been at best sporadic.

Of course, Indian society has always been highly hierarchical. The concept of equality as a correlative of the concept of individual freedom is alien to Indian society. In reality, Indian history reveals an almost opposite experience. Western educated Indians were inspired to reflect upon their own value system and to examine the inequalities, injustices and oppressions of their own culture.

The special feature of Women's movement is that it was initiated by men. Hence, the struggle did not acquire the overtones of gender warfare as it did in the

West. None of this means that the situation of women in India is satisfactory or acceptable. Practices such as the denial of re-marriage to upper caste Hindu widows, polygamy, and dowry, similarly made illegal, still continue. Worse yet, some of these practices have gained strength in new forms. The widespread incidence of bride-burning and dowry deaths reflect the traditional practice of dowry in a new and ghastly form. Thus, in spite of constitutional and legal provisions aimed at facilitating their status as equals, women continue to suffer. Moreover, most Indian women are unlikely to be able to make the fine distinction between sorrow and oppression. Their lives are ruled by the single word “compromise”. They are too confused to decide their priorities in their lives. For example, in the recent times, women are too confused to choose between “career” and “homemaking” and their incessant efforts to make both ends meet only degrade their capabilities and potentialities.

(Wikipedia the free encyclopedia, feminism in India)

2.13 History of Feminist Movement -

Unlike the western feminist movement, India’s movement was initiated by men and women joined in later. The efforts of these men included abolishing ‘Sati’, which was a widow’s death by burning herself on her husband’s funeral pyre, the custom of child marriage, banning the marriage of upper caste Hindu widows, promoting women’s education, obtaining legal rights for women to own property and requiring a law to acknowledge women’s status by granting them basic rights in matters such as adoption.

The 19th century was the period that saw a majority of women’s issues coming under the spotlight and reforms began to be introduced. Much of the early reforms for Indian women were conducted by men. However, by the late 19th century, they were supported by their wives, sisters, daughters, protégées and other individuals directly affected by campaigns such as those carried out for women’s education. By the late 20th century, women gained greater autonomy through the formation of independent women’s own organizations. By the late

thirties and forties a new narrative began to be constructed regarding 'women's activism'. This was newly researched and expanded with the vision to create 'logical' and organic links between feminism and Marxism', as well as with anti-communalism and anti-casteism etc.

During the formative years of women's rights movements, the difference between the sexes was more or less taken for granted in their roles, though functions, aims and desires were different. As a result, they were not only to be reared differently but treated differently also. Over a course of time, this difference itself became a major reason for initiating women's movements. Early 19th century reformers argued that the difference between men and women have no reason for the subjection of women in society. However, later reformers were of the opinion that indeed it was this particular difference that subjugated women to their roles in society, for e.g. as mothers. Therefore, there was a need for the proper care of women's rights with the formation of women's organizations and their own participation in campaigns, their roles as mothers was again stressed, but in a different light: this time the argument was for women's rights to speech, education and emancipation. However, the image of women with the mother as symbol underwent changes over time - from an emphasis on family to the creation of an archetypal mother figure, evoking deep, often at images. (3,4)

a) First Phase (1850-1915) :-

The colonial venture into modernity brought concepts of democracy, equality and individual rights. The rise of the concept of nationalism and introspection of discriminatory practices brought about social reform movements related to caste and gender relations. This first phase of feminism in India was initiated by men to uproot the social evils of 'Sati' to allow widow remarriage, to forbid child marriage and to reduce illiteracy, as well as to regulate the age of consent and to ensure property rights through legal intervention. In addition to this some upper caste Hindu women rejected constraints they faced under Brahminical traditions. However, efforts for improving the status of women in Indian society were somewhat thwarted by the late 19th century, as nationalist movements

emerged in India. These movements resisted colonial interventions in gender relations particularly in the areas of family relations. In the late 19th century, there was a national form of resistance to any colonial efforts made to 'modernize' the Hindu family. This included the age of consent controversy that erupted after the government tried to raise the age of marriage for women. (4)

b) Second Phase – (1915-1947) :-

During this period the struggle against colonial rule intensified. Nationalism became the pre-eminent cause. Claiming Indian superiority became the tool of cultural revivalism resulting in an essentialising model of Indian womanhood. Gandhiji legitimized and expanded Indian women's public activities by initiating them into the non-violent civil-disobedience movement against the British Raj. He exalted their feminine roles of caring, self-abnegation, sacrifice and tolerance; and carved a niche for those in the public area. Peasant women played an important role in the rural satyagrahas of Borsad and Bardoli. Women's organizations like 'All India Women's Conference (AIWC) and the National Federation of Indian women' (NFIW) emerged. Women were grappling with issues relating to the scope of women's political participation, women's franchise, communal awards and leadership roles in political parties.

The 1920s was a new era for Indian women and is defined as 'feminism' that was responsible for the creation of localized women's associations. These associations emphasized women's education issues, developed livelihood strategies for working class women and also organized national level women's associations such as the 'All India Women's Conference'. AIWC was closely affiliated with the Indian National Congress. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi it worked within the nationalist and anti colonialist freedom movements. This made the mass mobilization of women an integral part of Indian nationalism. Women therefore were a very important part of various nationalist and anticolonial efforts, including the civil disobedience movements in the 1930s.

Women's participation in the struggle for freedom developed their critical consciousness about their role and rights in independent India. This resulted in the introduction of the franchise and civic rights of women in the Indian constitution. There was provision for women's upliftment through affirmative action, maternal health and child care provision, equal pay for equal work etc. The state adopted a patronizing role towards women. For e.g. India's constitution states that women are a 'weaker section' of the population and therefore need assistance to function as equals. Thus women in India did not have to struggle for basic rights as women did in the West. The utopia ended soon when the social and cultural ideologies and structures failed to honor the newly acquired concepts of fundamental rights and democracy. (4)

c) Third Phase - Post 1947 :-

Post independence feminists began to redefine the extent to which women were allowed to engage in the workforce. Prior to independence, most feminists accepted the sexual divide within the labor force. However, the feminists in the 1970s challenged the inequalities that had been established and fought to reverse them. These inequalities included unequal wages for women. In other words, the feminists' aim was to abolish the free service of women who were essentially being used as cheap capital. Feminist class-consciousness also came into focus in the 1970s, with feminists, recognizing the inequalities not just between men and women but also within power structures such as caste, tribe, language, religion, region, class etc. Now in the early twenty first century the focus of the Indian feminist movement has gone beyond treating women as useful members of society and a right to parity, but also having the power to decide the course of their personal lives and the right of self determination. (5)

2.14 Feminism in Indian English Literature -

Feminism in Indian Literature as well as the broader perspective of feminism in India, is not a singular theoretical point of reference, it has metamorphosed with time, maintaining proportion with historical and cultural

realities, levels of consciousness, perceptions and actions of individual women and women in mass. Feminist writers in India today proudly uphold their causes of 'womanhood', through their write-ups. However not only in contemporary times and in British India times, feminist literature in India has existed in India from the Vedic period, with the gradually changing face of women coming to light in every age, with its distinctiveness.

The feminist thought and the feminist movements in the west had some influence on the woman's movement in developing countries like India. Feminism is a movement that advocates granting the same political, social and economic rights to women as those enjoyed by men. Throughout the world, women have been deprived of their basic socio-legal rights by a patriarchal order. The Twentieth century has witnessed a growing awareness among women regarding their desires, sexuality, self-definition, existence and destiny. In the post Independence India where education of women had already commenced, the New Woman also had begun to emerge. Education had inculcated a sense of individuality amongst women and had aroused an interest in their human rights. It was then that the feminist trend in Indian literature had appeared on the horizon. Feminism in Indian literature, as can be most commonly conceived is a much sublime and over the top concept, which is most subtly handled under restricted circumstances. The mid 1950's and 1960s mark the second important stage of Indian English writing, when writers like Arun Joshi, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Jhabvala, etc come out with their works that changed the face of the Indian English Novel. They have opened up a new vista of human nature and man-woman relationship. (*International Research Journal of Applied and Basic Sciences* 2013 – available online at www.ivjabs.com. "Feminism as a Literary Movement in India")

Dr. Jaya Shrivastava writes in the book *Defining Feminism*, that :
"Feminism is by no means a monolithic term. If one seeks a common strand in a number of its varieties, it is the critique of the patriarchal modes of thinking which subordinates women to men." (18)

Feminism in India is a by product of the western feminist movement but it got sustenance from our freedom struggle under the dynamic humanitarianism of Mahatma Gandhi, independence, spread of education, employment, opportunities and laws for women's rights. The availability of the western feminist theory should not lead us on to its indiscriminate application because cultural context must be considered first. This is inevitable because we have a different history, different ethos, different forms of social satisfaction and patriarchal domination.

For ages gender inequality has been there in both the western as well as the eastern world. But in recent times gender discrimination unfortunately has assumed a pervasive and systematic form. As the society marches onward, the gender factor exerts a greater pull by highlighting the disadvantages of women. Even economic independence does not guarantee emancipation from male dominance. Rather the economically independent, educated emancipated modern woman finds herself burdened with even greater shackles. The girl child even in the educated families, continues to suffer due to gender discrimination while the educated housewife's lot is no better. The increase in the number of bride burning and dowry deaths is a sad commentary on their lot too. In the so-called civil societies crimes against women are on the increase. All the feminists are indignant at the deprivation and suffering inflicted on women indiscriminately and disproportionately. But their aim is not and should not be just to fight for their rights or to claim more space for women in the social structures. Feminist literature is a spectrum of many colours and shades, prominent and strident. Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai, Namita Gokhale, Uma Vasudevan. Tehmina Durrani are memorable exponents of feminist consciousness. [Shrivastava, 18-19]

2.15 Feminism : An Indian Perspective -

Feminism in Indian literature, as can be most commonly conceived is a much sublime and over-the-top concept, which is most subtly handled under restricted circumstances. With advancement of time, however, feminism has been accepted in India, setting aside the patriarchal domination to a certain extent. Leaving aside the activists and crusaders of the political and social scenario,

perhaps massive work on feminism is also accomplished through Indian literature. Yet, prior to taking a more intense look into feminist literature in India, it is necessary to grasp the essential concept of the term 'feminism' in the country's context beginning from its inception. The history of feminism in India can be looked at as principally a "practical effort". (Hans. www.irjabs.com 1762)

The feminist movement has brought about widespread changes within the western society and brought women on par with men in several fields. Although it started in the west, the feminist movement during the last century has spread to other parts of the world. With the end of colonialism the western concept of feminism has spread to third world countries like India and many African nations. As such today, everywhere women related issues are being taken up by governmental and Non Government organizations. Feminism is no longer a fight for rights of women or against gender bias or against sexual discrimination. Women today want to know and realize their full potential as persons and human beings. As such, feminism today stands for seeing the world through a woman's eyes and from a woman's perspective. (1763)

2.16 Feminism with Special Reference to Indian Women and Indian English Literature -

The feminist movement, with its roots in the west, came forth as the angry voice, having protest as the watchword. It dealt with the issues of woman's position in a male dominated society.

In case of Indian women their age-old culture comes as an obstacle in their taking a front seat in the feminist movement. Traditionally Indian woman is bound to follow the role that is assigned to her keeping her in the background. She has for centuries served as daughters, mothers, and sisters, but now the effect of the western counterparts has brought the Indian women's protest in the limelight, coming forward to fight for their rights of equality.

Indian women fighting for their rights argue that the present system of patriarchal gender relations looks upon women as mere puppets, rubber stamps or

proxies of their counterparts. This may promote gender equality, but instead of improving the status of woman in the family or society, it gives birth to new forms of exploitation or oppression of women.

The feminist struggle was intensified in Europe and America in the late Nineteen Sixties. Numerous critical studies on the feminist movement came into existence by the end of the century. These critics attacked the patriarchal attitudes and challenged the traditional and accepted male ideas, supported women writers and questioned the numerous prejudices and assumptions about women made by male writers.

Indian English writers took up the feminist issue as major themes in their works. Women have been depicted as emerging from their stereotypical roles, searching for an identity and striving to create a place for themselves.

The closing years of the twentieth century have distinctly shown a decline in the acceptance of the feminist ideology. A change in the attitude of women can be seen in society. Women in every sphere have come into their own during the last two decades. In all spheres of life they are coming up by their skill, strength and hard work. Being assertive they are clear about their desires and drives. Their economic independence is changing equations, perceptions and outlook of both men and women. Economically and professionally sound, they are choosing to be at the top of even their sex lives, understanding their needs and problems, taking personal decisions and struggling against their male counterparts.

Thus the Indian literary scene has undergone a tremendous change in the last two decades. Women writers have overcome the shackles of the feminist movement.

In the book, *Feminine Psyche* the author Neeru Tandon says that –

“During the strong wave of Nineteen Seventies and Nineteen Eighties Feminism concentrated on transforming the intellectual fields and playing a significant role in analyzing ‘feminine psyche or consciousness’. In fact feminism

or feminist consciousness has transformed the perceptions of women towards life, men and towards themselves too. It may be taken as pro-woman but not necessarily as anti-man. In consequence, feminist thought emerges as ‘humanist thought’. (1)

Feminism is a diverse collection of social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies. Many feminists focus on studying gender inequality and promoting women’s rights, interests and issues. Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. Feminism is also based on experiences of gender roles and relations. Themes explored in feminism include patriarchy, stereotyping, objectification and oppression. Feminist activism is a grass root movement that seeks to cross boundaries based on social class, race, culture and religion. It is culture-specific and addresses issues relevant to the women of that society. (2)

In the present scenario, it has become necessary for a woman to redefine her new role and determine its parameters to herself and to the society in every walk of life and perhaps revolutionize the concept of womanhood itself. (2)

According to the writer a woman can be defined by her consciousness under circumstances dependent upon her society and her psyche is the product of social constructs. A woman must be ‘feminine’ and restrict herself to a woman’s place and respect herself in this role. The main tragedy is, if patriarchy considers a woman inferior, the female psyche is not different from this. She considers herself inadequate. She should remain passive, content pleasing to her man. Here comes the role of feminism. (4)

Feminism is thus to break the andocentric hegemony, which makes women feel that their own sense of reality odds with the ‘reality’ they are expected to confirm to. Feminist writers refuse to accept the images of women as portrayed by male writers. They are of the view that women characters portrayed by men in literature lack authenticity. Feminist literary critics argue that if one studies stereotypes of women and the limited roles women play in literary history, one

would not learn what women have felt and experienced especially about their psyche or mental functioning, but only find what men have thought women ought to be. (5)

2.17 Feminism in Indian Context -

Literature therefore has always been an effective vehicle of fundamental change. To a large extent, the popularity of feminist ethics in India has also been generated by the 'new' image of women presented by literary writers in their works. The abolition of certain evil practices against women in the preceding centuries had also created a much needed awareness in the society for imparting a better status to women. It was during the British rule in India that many relevant changes were made in order to improve the pathetic condition of women. The Viceroy Lord William Bentinck banned Sati in 1829. Social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy had also supported this move. Similarly, remarriage of widows was sanctioned in 1856 and in 1929 a law was passed prohibiting child marriage. The most difficult task in India at that time was to educate women, because only a few women belonging to the families of zamindars were able to receive basic education. Many teachers, as well as social workers, considered it a necessity and started many educational institutions for women. In the 1850s t Ishwarchand Vidyasagar started many primary schools in the villages of Bengal. Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayanand, also propagated women's education. John Drinkwater Bethune established the first women's college in India in Calcutta in 1849. In 1851 a great social reformer of India, Mahatma Jotiba Phule came forward to educate the scheduled caste girls in Pune. Mahatma Phule and his wife, the first Indian woman teacher, Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule, both took a lot of efforts to give education to the girls and to make them literate. They sacrificed a lot for it and started a school for girls in Pune. Since then there has been no looking back, as women also started clamouring for education towards which they had been indifferent for ages. These attempts provided the much needed impetus and Indian woman took a hesitant step towards social emancipation. Many great Indian women writers appeared on the scene who represented the

educated group of Indian women. Toru Dutt, Cornelia Sorabji, Shevantibai Nikambe, Krupabai Santhianathan and Smt. Swarnkumari Ghosal are some of the prominent women writers of this time.

Feminism is defined as a cultural, economic and political movement that is focused towards establishing legal protection and complete equality for the women. In Indian writing, feminism has been used as a modest attempt for evaluating the real social scenario where women are concerned. There are several novels in English literature in India that portrays the actual status of the women in Indian Societies. However, the modern age women have realized that they are equally competent like men and they are not helpless unlike in the past when men were considered as the sole bread earners. In today's age, women too have become direct money earners for many households. Today's contemporary Indian English novelists are writing for the masses using the theme of feminism, which not only interests the readers but also affects them.

Feminism does not particularly talk of equality and rights of women but it is more about compassion, respect and understanding from the male counterparts. The main cause for the dissatisfaction of the women in today's society is the superior attitude of the men throughout. The women have suffered in silence and feminism talks exactly about that. Indian English novelists have frankly highlighted this concept. Authors like Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Kamala Markandya have actually used the various aspects of the male dominated society as their main theme.

To understand and sympathize with the sensibility of feminism it is important to observe that Indian feminists present an altogether different picture sequence. The long and painful suffering of women, the bitter struggle for the exception of the idea of equal pay for equal work, the continuing battles on behalf of woman's right to abortion and the practice of birth control are some of the visible marks of the gender inequality that has persisted and that woman had to fight for inspired by the commitments they had made under the circumstances. The feminist situation in India possess a dissimilar dispensation. Indian society

has always been highly hierarchical. The several hierarchies within the family with reference to age, sex and ordinal position, congenial and fine relationship or within the community referring to the caste lineage, learning, occupation and relationship with the ruling class have been maintained very strictly. (Feminism in Indian context : An Introduction. Wikipedia free encyclopedia) (12)

Due to historical and cultural specifications of the region, the feminist movement in India had to think in terms of its agenda and strategies. In the Indian context several feminists have realized that the subject of women's invasion in India should not be reduced to the contradictions between men and women. The woman in order to educate herself and advance needs to empower herself to confront different institutional structures and cultural practices that subject to patriarchal domination.

Various feminists and writers aim at liberation of women from male domination and promotion of their rights by peeping into their inner psyche. They demand a humanist attitude towards women. We know that the study of the feminine psyche is an attempt to reinterpret their status in the world. (13)

2.18 Feminists in India -

Indian writing in English is now gaining ground rapidly. In the realm of fiction, it has heralded a new era that has earned many laurels both at home and abroad. Indian woman writers have started questioning the prominent old patriarchal domination. Today, the works of Kamla Markandaya, Narayan Sahgal, Anita Desai, Geetha Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai and Manju Kapur and many more have left an indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English. (14)

a) Shashi Deshpande :-

Feminism in its literary sense is the physical and psychic emancipation of women from the cruel traditional clutches of man. Since time immemorial in the world, particularly in Asian countries and in India the social custom and creeds

have overall control of man. Shashi Deshpande has earnestly been accepted as a significant literary figure on the contemporary literary scene. (14)

Shashi Deshpande's novels represent the contemporary modern women's struggle to define and attain an autonomous selfhood. Her female protagonists are at great pains to free themselves from stultifying, traditional constraints. The social and cultural change in the post- Independence India has made women conscious of the need to define themselves, their place in society, and their surroundings. (15)

Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De are the most accomplished contemporary Indian women writers in English. Deshpande depicts her woman as an emergent woman of the modern industrial age, who wants to achieve authentic self identity without changing the culture and tradition of the society. Her novels present women belonging to Indian middle class, who are brought up in a traditional environment and struggle to liberate themselves and seek their self-identity and independence. On the other hand, Shobha De realistically portrays the image of the upper class woman in India. Her novels deal with the themes such as Family, Marriage, Patriarchy and Quest for Identity. She always tries to give her female characters their own identity in the society by making them bold and confident. In the writings of both Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De, they describe the 'self' of woman in the society.

Female quest for identity has been a pet theme for many a woman novelist. Shashi Deshpande has also been one of such writers and she makes an earnest effort to understand the inner dimension of the female characters. For the portrayal of the predicament of middleclass educated Indian women, their inner conflict and quest for identity, issues pertaining to parent-child relationship, marriage and sex, and their exploitation. (15)

b) Shobha De :-

Shobha De, a supermodel, celebrity journalist and the well-known author stands as a pioneer in the field of popular fiction and ranks among the first to

explore the world of the urban woman in India. With her extraordinary ability, she presents very sensitive aspect of human life. Her way of narrating every aspect of human relationships is wonderful. Really, she is frank in narrating the incidents and situations with a touch of open heartedness. The most famous Indian woman novelists along with De are Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Bharti Mukherjee, and Shashi Deshpande. Among these women writers, De is entirely different. She has given importance to women's issues and their psychology dealt with psychology in her style of intimate understanding. Her novels indicate the arrival of a new Indian woman, eager to defy rebelliously against the well-entrenched moral orthodoxy of the patriarchal social system. Eager to find their identity, in their own way, her female characters break all shackles of customs and traditions that tie them to their predicaments and rein in their freedom and rights. They are not against the entire social system and values but are not ready to accept them as they are. Her female characters are modern, strong and take bold decisions to survive in society. This secures her a position in literature as a feminist novelist. (15)

c) Manju Kapur :-

The other, noted novelist under the study is Manju Kapur; she is a professor of English at Miranda House in Delhi. Her first novel, *Difficult Daughters* received the 'Common Wealth Award' for the Eurasian region. Her novel '*A Married Woman*' which is a seductive story of love at a time of political and religious upheaval, told with sympathy and intelligence. It is the story of an artist whose canvas challenges constraints of middle-class existence.

Her protagonist Astha wants to a break her dependence on others and proceed on the path of gaining full human status that poses a threat to Hemant and his male superiority. She finds herself trapped between the pressure of the modern developing society and the shackles of ancient biases. She sets out on her quest for a more meaningful life in her lesbian relationship. She canonizes and comments on her feminine sensibility, by raising the social issues related to women. (17)

In her writings, Manju Kapur has emphasized on the issues of patriarchy, inter-religious marriage, family bond, male-female bond and co-existence of past and present. She has depicted her women protagonist as a victim of biology, gender, domestic violence, and circumstances. (17)

d) Sara Joseph :-

Sara Joseph is the forerunner of the feminist movement in Kerala. She is an artist and activist of the present generation. She was born in 1946 at Kuriachira in Thrissur. She was married at the tender age of 15 when she was in class IX. However, she was allowed to attend her classes even after marriage. Sara Joseph initiated her artistic career by writing poems, which she did as a ninth standard student. One of her poems was published in the *Matrubhumi* weekly. She could write poems even after her marriage and all together 15 poems were published. (19)

The patriarchal culture considers women as an 'object'. The word 'Charak' for instances, is used in Malayalam to refer to a woman as a commodity to be used sexually. Such derogatory terms have been used by the society for the objectification of woman. Sara Joseph strongly disapproves the so-called fashion shows by woman. It is part of Patriarchal culture, where women become mere sex objects in front of others. At the other extreme, the male dominated society would always encourage woman to keep up her femininity. (22)

e) Arundhati Roy :-

The other famous and renowned novelist under the study is Arundhati Roy, born in 1961 in Bengal and grew up in Kerala. She trained herself as an architect at the Delhi school of Architecture but abandoned it in between. Roy seems to be iconoclast in "*The God of Small Things*". The stylistics innovations make the novel unique and this variety brings vitality and exuberance to the novel. (22)

The international community knows Arundhati Roy as an artist with her debut novel *The God of Small Things*. It bagged the coveted Booker Prize for fiction in 1997. Roy is the first non-expatriate Indian author and the first Indian woman to have won the prize. This novelist and human rights activist was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004 for her work in social campaigns and for her advocacy of non-violence.

Now, women in India have started questioning the age-old patriarchal domination. They are no longer puppets in the hands of men. They have shown their worth in the field of literature both qualitatively and quantitatively and are showing it to them today without any hurdles. Today the works of Kamala Markandaya, Nayan Tara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Shobha De and many more have left an indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English. (23)

The Novelist Arundhati Roy is a staunch social activist. She uses English language as a resourceful tool for social reformation. We know that, the long history of Indian tradition has witnessed the subordination of women. They are humiliated suppressed and considered as a property whether in the hands of the father or in the hands of husband. The 'Sati' Pratha, 'Bal Vivaha Pratha' are witnesses for showing the women not only as marginalized but as puppets in the hands of man. As a writer of *God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy attacks age old attitudes which turned women into domestic prisoners. She unfolds the injustice inflicted upon woman. For her valuable contribution Roy won the prestigious Booker prize for her very first novel, *The God of Small Things* published in 1997. The novel unfolds the aspect of Indian Patriarchal System, which suppressed woman in the name of tradition and culture.

f) Vasumati Dharkar :-

In Marathi, Vasumati Dharkar published a number of stories from the 1930s to 1950s in which she has depicted the strong woman's characters of their time. The major themes of these women writers were oppression and exploitation

of woman in what is often called a patriarchal society and this has been a major theme in Indian fiction. (23)

Feminist writers in India today proudly uphold their cause of 'womanhood' through their writings. The literary field is most free to present feminism in Indian literature in the hands of writers like Amrita Pritam (Punjabi) Kusum Ansal (Hindi) and Sarojini Sahaoo (Oriya). Who wrote for a women's rights in Indian languages. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, Leela Kasturi, Sharmila Rege and Vidyut Bhahwat are some other group of essayists and critics who write in favour of feminism in Indian English Literature.

The Indian poet Meena Alexander's poetry challenges such misconceptions by focusing on matrilineage. It celebrates female creativity and pays tribute to woman writers, artists and other influential and strong women 'ancestors' who have struggled successfully to strengthen this lineage. The countless women burnt in their homes are depicted in *Brief Chronicle by Candle Light*, who finally choose to disappear from the bonds of marital and social rules and demands.

Thus Feminism displays a sense of personal courage. The term 'Feminism' is an ideology. According to the Oxford English dictionary, the term 'Feminism' was first used in the latter part of the 19th century and it means having the qualities of females. The meaning of the term has been gradually transformed and now it means a theory of political, economic and social equalities of the sexes. In general feminism is the ideology of women's liberation since intrinsic to its approaches is a woman who recognizes herself and is recognized by others as a feminist.

The feminist consciousness is the consciousness of victimization. As a philosophy of life, it seeks to discover and change the more subtle and deep seated causes of women's oppression. It is a concept of 'raising of the consciousness' of an entire culture. Feminism must be viewed as a rapidly developing major critical ideology or system of ideas in its own right. In ultimate analysis feminism emerges as a concept that can encompass both an ideology and movement for

sociopolitical change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women's subordination within any given society. As a philosophy of life it opposes women's subordination to men in the family and society, along with men's claims to define what is best for women without consulting them.

Feminism is a global and revolutionary ideology and as such calls for a definite stance, a set of firm and exact attitudes. The ideology is political because it is concerned with the question of power.

A feminist is one who is awakened and conscious about a woman's life and problems. Feminist consciousness is the experience of certain specific contradictions in the social order. A feminist apprehends certain features of social reality. In terms of its fundamental significance and impact on literary studies during the second half of the 20th century, the feminist theory matches the major conceptual developments like Marxism and Psychoanalysis.

In Indian writing, Feminism has been used as a modest attempt for evaluating the real social scenario surrounding. Today's contemporary Indian English novelists are writing for the masses using the theme of feminism, which not only interests them but also affects them. (Hans 1767)

This chapter presents an overall view about feminism as a movement in western countries and also in India. The study shows feminism as a struggle for equality of women, an effort to bring women on par with men. The agonistic definition of feminism sees it as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist aggression. This study reveals the growth of Indian Feminism and its development. Indian women writers have placed the problems of Indian women in general and they have proved their place in the international literature. Thus a researcher takes a review of global and Indian Feminism.

Chapter III
Research Methodology
(A Study of Socio-Psychological Factors that Contribute to
Theme, Plot and Characterization in Anita Desai's Novels)

3.1 Research Methodology -

The present research work would depend upon the primary sources that is the original works by Anita Desai, which would be read, analyzed and interpreted critically. By using the descriptive method, it is presented in order to find out the ways in which Anita Desai has presented her views on the image of woman and her consciousness, by collecting the data from the selected novels. It will be discussed separately in detail in chapter no. III.

The analytical interpretative and comparative methodology will be used for the present research work. Social status of women in India will be also studied and analyzed. The Gender Inequality in our society will be studied and socio cultural manners of Gender construction will be analyzed. There will be visits to the various libraries for the collection of applicable and related information and visit to several mothers in the society. In addition discussions would be done with the persons who have done a parallel kind of study. Besides the internet is also used to update the information.

3.2 Research Modules used for a Study of Desai's Novels –

The researcher is using following socio-psychological factors as the base for the study of Desai's novels.

3.3 Social Status of Women in India -

Social status of women in pre and post independent India will be studied and through it there will be detail analysis of social status of Desai's female protagonists. In India the female population is fifty percent of census near about.

But still there is narrow minded attitude existing in the society. In old days women were tied up within four walls of the house for performing household duties that is “Chul and Mul”. (Cooking and Rearing children) ‘Status’ means the rank or position of an individual in a group. The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful.

[[http://www.studymode.com/essays/social-Injustice's of women in India](http://www.studymode.com/essays/social-Injustice's%20of%20women%20in%20India)]

a) Ancient India :-

According to scholars, in ancient India women enjoyed same rights as men in all aspects of life. We come to know from works by ancient Indian Grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana that women were educated in the early Vedic period. The notable women sages Maitreyi and Gargi are mentioned in the scriptures such as the “Rigveda” and “Upnishadas” .

[[http://www.studymode.com/essays/social-Injustices's of women in India](http://www.studymode.com/essays/social-Injustices's%20of%20women%20in%20India)]

b) Medieval Period :-

In the medieval period, the position of Indian Women in society changed, when there was ban on child marriages and marriages of widows. It became a part of social life in some Indian communities.

In Indian subcontinent the Muslim conquest brought ‘Purdah’ to Indian society and ‘Jauhar’ was practiced among the Rajputs in Rajasthan.

Though in the fields of politics, literature, education and religion, women often became prominent. Razia Sultan became the only woman monarch to have ever ruled Delhi. The Gond queen Durgadevi ruled for fifteen years before losing her life in a battle with Mughal Emperor Akbar. Chandbibi defended Ahmednagar against the powerful Mughal forces of Akbar in 1590. Jahangir's wife Nur Jehan also effectively wielded imperial power. [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women-in>

India] Because of her ability as a warrior and an administrator, Shivaji Maharaj's mother Jijabai became the Regent.

c) Status of Women after Independence :-

The status of women has changed since Independence. Women start getting opportunities in education, employment and political participation. They began to participate in media, art, culture and sports, service sectors, science and technology etc. Many of them are working as Doctors, Scientists, Engineers, Police officers etc. [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women in India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_India)]

According to India's constitution, women are legal citizens of the country and have equal rights with men. But there the male dominated society can not accept it. [<http://www.academicjournal.com>] For centuries women have not been treated as equal to men in many ways and they have to suffer immensely. They still have to face several problems in our society. They are still regarded as belonging to the 'Weaker Section'. The earning women also do not have full freedom to spend their money as per their wishes. They are not completely free from the hold of custom. Even women in Indian society have been victims of ill treatment, humiliation, torture and exploitation. In this male dominated society, violence against women is unfortunately increasing.

(Narasinha *Women and Human rights*)

3.4 Gender Inequality -

I think it is necessary to understand the problems of Indian women through feminist approach. The gender equality is another challenge before the Indian society, and there is a need for a strong movement to fight for the women's rights and make it sure that they get all the rights which men have. Gender construction plays a big role in the family of Indian society based on patriarchal values, so male and female children are brought up in different ways. The male domination in women's life is a natural phenomenon in a patriarchal society.

Differences between men and women are determined by biology, on the one hand and society on the other.

- i) Sex marks the distinction between men and women as a result of the fundamental, biological, physical and genetic differences between them.
- ii) Gender roles are set by convention and other social, economic, political and cultural forces.

Some people believe that the only important difference is that, women can bear children and men cannot. Whatever the case, the wide variation in the position of women in different societies demonstrates that unlike sex, gender roles are by no means fixed by nature. The position of women in the society is far from being of academic interest alone. Women are gaining ground in health and education but still have a long way to go in sharing political and economic opportunities. They continue to suffer high levels of violence and abuse.

Gender inequality is not only a biological difference but also a social construct. Now a days the world seems to be gender insensitive, as there are incidents of dowry-death, malnutrition, subordination, exploitation in the socio-political systems. Gender inequalities are not associated with any particular race; this evil has traveled in space and time from the primordial time to the present day. The human civilization itself is ignoring the vital half of its race that is woman and we know that woman is a mute sufferer of endless miseries. They have no choice and no voice as if it is their duty to accept everything that comes their way. They have been treated as socially subordinate to men.

3.5 Socio - Cultural Manner of Gender Construction –

The socio-cultural manner of Gender Construction in India will be studied and through it there will be a detail analysis of Desai's female protagonists in Chapter IV. In fact the gender is a construct, means it is never determined by nature or birth itself. What is determined by birth is sex. We see the gender is constructed socially, culturally and by the concerned situations. When we think of

gender as constructed socially, we came across the family first and the child deals first of all with its mother. It then confronts the other family members, neighbors, groups and the society gradually during its growth as a human being. It is seen that at each of these levels the gender is constructed systematically and intentionally or unintentionally.

It is true that the patriarchal ideology is responsible for the gender construction in our society to a large extent. So the gender construction starts at home with the choices made by the parents, family members and relatives. These choices might be in the case of name of the infant, its toys, clothes, colors regarding its objects and so on. This process of gender construction is constant and pervasive. Hence dolls are bought for girls by their parents, relatives, neighbors and others. And also the colour preferred for their objects is pink or red. On the contrary the toys selected for the boys are different including cars, balls, bats etc.

The difference between men and women are the products of culture rather than nature. The roles are definite and rigid for boys and girls and the choice of these roles is not natural but based on the bias. It is fixed in the minds of both the sexes that they have to perform certain roles. In this way, the gender considerations get internalized in the children and they remember it forever. The image of father is associated with threat whereas the image of mother is associated with sympathy. This is seen when we see the reaction of somebody to the fearful event; saying 'Bap re' while saying 'Aai ga' in the case of sad events in the Marathi language.

The same thing we can see about the clothes they wear. Though nowadays the women in India have started to wear a variety of attires which are not different from male attire means the pants or jeans of girls are specially designed for girls. Moreover the ladies' two-wheelers, handkerchiefs, watches, goggles or spectacles, bags, money purses are also different from that of boys.

It is significant to focus on how the subjugation of women is reinforced. Broadly speaking, women are held subordinate to men. But in fact women are powerful human resources in development of the nation and unfortunately their contributions go unnoticed and neglected as they have to play different roles like a daughter, wife and mother. She gets stuck in a unique social frame-work, that is to cook and produce children. She has to do all the household and domestic duties. And this is nothing but a gender role difference in the socio-cultural context. Women are to look after children and to do their work. As we all know that sex is biologically determined whereas gender is absolutely a social construct. The status of women has to be determined on the basis of social and political ideology and the role that woman is obligated to play in economic and public affairs.

3.6 Violence Against Woman -

The violence which is practiced in Indian society will be studied and through it violence with Desai's female characters will be analyzed in detail.

The term violence against woman refers to many types of harmful behavior directed at women and girls because of their sex and unequal status as compared with men in society. The effects of violence can be devastating to women's reproductive health as well as to other aspects of her physical and mental well being. In addition violence increases women's long term risks with a number of other health problems including chronic pain, physical disability etc.

Surinder Khanna discusses about violence in *Violence Against Women and Human Rights* The history of violence against women is tied to the history of woman being viewed as property and a gender role given to be subservient to men and also other women. Violence against women is a technical term refers to violent acts which are primarily or exclusively committed against women. Such a type of violence targets a specific group with the victims' gender as a primary motive.

According to the United Nations General Assembly, violence means "violence against women" is an act of gender based violence. In such type of

violence, women are threatened and tortured physically and mentally in public or private life by men.

Violence against women is common and partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Giving the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys, social sanction. Manifestations of violence, include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns attempted, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation, emotional threats and control over speech and actions. These expressions of violence take place in a man-woman relationship within the family, state and society. Using these parameters of acts of violence Desai's protagonists will be studied by the researcher, in detail in Chapter No. IV.

3.7 Female Infanticide -

The status of women in India can be understood when we see the practice of female infanticide. The Researcher will study it to analyze the social status of female characters in Desai's novels.

I feel sorry to say, that, we can see the status of woman in India through the practice of female infanticide. Unfortunately it happens in our country. In India pre-birth selection and consequent infanticide is a common occurrence and the preference is always for a male child. The girl child is killed before taking birth and there is nothing more shameful than this. It is true that the girl child is the first and foremost need of humanity, because her survival is essential for the continuation of the species. To kill her means to kill coming generations. But unfortunately in our society this right is not given to a girl child. Because, the patriarchal system considers that a female child is a liability to family and society.

The SAARC countries announced the year 1990 as "SAARC" year of the Girl Child and to observe "Decade of the Girl Child" from January 1991, so as to create the right environment to secure a rightful place for female children. But

there is no improvement worth mentioning during these years. It is tragic that the mother also supports in the act.

I have met several such mothers in the society who had to kill their baby daughters. Two examples are give here. They say

- 1) I kept it alive for a month; but everyone in the family including my husband put pressure on me, saying, you already have two daughters, why are you keeping this one too ? Then I had to abort it.
- 2) Another one said, Already I had three daughters. So why should I give birth to one more daughter?

So this is the status of a girl child in Indian Society. Male child is considered as an asset and female child as a liability. This discrimination against the girl child by family members shows the attitude and mentality of our society. It is our cultural heritage that a boy is always superior to a girl. The mother prefers the male child and thus strengthens the chain of injustice. Every girl child born in an Indian Family suffers from some kind of exploitation and if there is a boy child in the family the ill-treatment is given to the girl child. The root problem of discriminatory treatment given to girl child lies in the status of women in our society.

3.8 Role of Woman in Modern Literature -

The role of woman in modern literature will be observed and studied to analyze Desai's female protagonists which will be discussed in Chapter IV in detail.

In modern literature gender issues have been a topic since ancient times, Greek poets such as Sappho and Homer also wrote on female sexuality, marriage and emotional bonds between women and their families. [<https://www.enotes.com/topics/women-modern-literature>] In the Victorian period, writers began to write more on women. And a topic on women and their rights became a major social issue; they published. At one end there was the

newly emerging liberated woman who honestly demanded her right to education and the single life but at the other end she was generally ill-treated by a respectable society so could not easily develop her career. In modern times, situation is changed and women can get the education also the literature has concentrated on the changing roles of women.

The post modern English literature concentrates on the various dimensions of the society in India. It realistically portrays the traits of characters in the fictional genre of English literature. The Indian English novel has shown amazing growth during the last seven decades or so. It has shown a variety of themes as well as maturity in skill since the mid-1930s, when the big trio of the Indian English Novel Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao appeared in the scene. In modern Indian English literature, the plight of Indian woman is described by various writers. They present the real struggle of Indian woman in the orthodox Indian society. Fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment of the seven contemporary Indian writers in English. It presents an insight and understanding into the dilemma which modern women are facing in a traditional society, where dual morality is the accepted norm.

In many literary works, a woman is focused upon. Indian writers in English have also started acknowledging the status of Indian woman in a male dominated society. The woman of India reflects the society she lives in. Surveying the history of the status of Indian woman, we find that woman once enjoyed considerable honour and freedom in both public and private fields. But with the centuries rolling by, the situation changed adversely for woman. For instance, child marriage and Sati have been replaced by female infanticide.

3.9 Social Status of Woman in Literature -

In the literature women are the mirror of the society. From the classical literature to the modern literature the portrait of women were presented differently by the male writers. In the 18th century women were nor allowed to write any book, they had to adopt the male name. So a majority of writers were men and the

portrayal of women in literature was one sided. The portrait of women is neglected right from the beginning till the Twenty first century in the literary world as well as in other fields. In literature medieval stereotypes of women were quite paralyzed. The women had no any status even in it. She was bound by tradition even she was educated. The portrait of women looked minor in the literature of different languages e.g. Marathi, Hindi and so many. She is the 'other' from the male point of view.

The researcher has used above research modules and socio psychological factors as a research methodology to study the feminine consciousness and social status of female characters in Anita Desai's novels.

Chapter No. IV
Analysis and Interpretation
(Feminine Consciousness and Social Status of Female Characters
in Anita Desai's Novels : A Detailed Analysis and Interpretation of
the Work.)

This chapter is the core chapter of the present research work. It will deal with different aspects of feminine consciousness which constitute a major part of the projected research work. It will also discuss about the struggle of women for their identity and social status of female protagonists in Desai's selected novels.

4.1 Feminism -

Feminism means granting the same rights to women as those enjoyed by men. Feminism does not particularly talk of equality and rights of women but it is more about compassion, respect and understanding from the male counterparts. Throughout the world women are deprived of their social and economic rights. Twentieth century has witnessed a growing awareness among women regarding their desires, sexuality, self-definition, existence and destiny. Women's efforts to seek their independence and self-identity started a revolution all over the world which was termed by analysts and critics as 'Feminism'. The contemporary writers are still striving to provide liberation to the female world from the debilitating socio-cultural constraints and oppressive myths of their respective countries. In post-Independence India, where education of women had already commenced, the new woman also had begun to emerge. Education had inculcated a sense of individuality amongst women and had aroused an interest in their human rights. It was then that the feminist trend in Indian literature had appeared on the horizon and women came into conflict with the double standards of social law through the ages and the conventional moral code. (Hans 1762)

Before analyzing Anita Desai's Feminist concerns in her novels, it is essential to glance through the annals of present times in India and feminist perspectives in the Indian context.

4.2 Gender Oppression and Feminist Perspectives in Indian Context -

In a country like India where there is regular trafficking of women, where female fetuses are killed, where five year old girls are raped, where a mother does not have medical facilities to give birth to her child, where a wife has no power to take any decision without asking about it to her husband, where girls, brides are burnt due to dowry system In such an Indian scenario, one really wonders how an Indian woman is living ! (Eftekar 1)

We have to consider Anita Desai's novels in such a social context or in such a transitional state of Indian feminism. Her novels deal with middle and upper-middle class society. Considered as a whole, her novels reveal a progression in the psychic awareness of women about their position in a society. However her novels like, '*Cry the Peacock*', '*Voices in the city*', '*Where shall we go this Summer?*' and '*Fasting Feasting*' explore the issues of gender from the Indian socio-historical perspective.

Anita Desai writes about women who have had the privilege of receiving education. But as her novels reveal, educational qualifications and degrees do not impel women to create their space in the outer world.

4.3 The Struggle of Women for their Identity in Some Feminist Writing -

In *The Second Sex* Simone De Beauvoir expresses her views about struggle of women. The post-modern English Literature concentrates on several dimensions of the society. It reflects various social aspects and shows a variety of themes. In the modern Indian English Literature the struggles of Indian women in the orthodox Indian society are put forth by the novelists.

Post-Colonial Literature is a part of cultural studies. It is called as the literature of resistance. It studies cultural, political and sociological situation of the people. It analyzes the unjust power relationships as manifested in cultural products like literature, film and art. The colonial discourse favours domination of the strong over the weak. Feminism is a part of post-colonial literature as it opposes all sorts of domination of man on woman. Post colonial literature fights for the weak and demands justice for them. It voices the plight of marginalized minority groups, subaltern sections of society and women. Post-colonial feminism has attracted the attention of the world to the problems of the women throughout the world. In the west, the post-Freudians, with a prominent stress on primary activity further hastened the feminist spokespersons to give a call for the liberation of women. Needless to say, nature primarily depends on femininity in its choice of evolution and progress. For an introspective analysis, the traditional women's conditions in the context of family as well as society had turned to be that of a slave without any independent and individual sanction of freedom for her feelings, emotions and desires.

The feminists, having felt the humiliation of male domination and aggression of men for centuries, discovered for themselves a unique opportunity to give outlet to their suppressed feelings for equality. This naturally hastened the ideas of supremacy of reason, justice, freedom and equality. The social and cultural scenario started advancing on these lines. Though feminism grew as an ideology alongside the concept of Humanism. Feminist writings evolved as a literary genre at a larger stage. Many women writers have contributed to this genre of literature. In the twentieth century, writers like Simone de Beauvoir of France and Virginia Woolf of England made conscious analysis of the patriarchal traditions and conventions, which defeat the ultimate purpose of woman in being woman. The feminist liberation movement started with the writings of these women. Beauvoir very powerfully expresses the need for woman to encounter the system of patriarchy.

“Masculine claims are contradictory; authority no longer works. Woman must judge and be critical, she cannot remain a mere docile echo ----what she is

able to agree with, in her husband's way of thinking, she should agree with only through an independent act of judgment she cannot borrow from another her own reasons for existing. (Beauvoir 208)

It is observed that Indian women's interest had been crushed by the multi-cultural conflicts and polarities for which the country had become a ground for the last several years. In a rigid social structure of India revolting against any accepted values would mean risking an existential conflict with the society as a whole. Thus with the awareness of the comparatively free existence of women, on the other side of the globe. Indian women felt themselves to be like caged animals. It is necessary to break the stronger social taboos around themselves and for this, women needed extra energy in the Indian context.

Modern feminist liberation movement took its initial roots in the revolutionary tracts and fictional writings of Simone De Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf. The work of women writers has given a distinct dimension to the total picture of women in family and in society.

Intertwined with the national identity of Goddess, Indian woman became an epitome of motherhood, self sacrificing, religious, modest and benevolent and as a representative of nation, religion, God and the spirit of India, culture, tradition and family.

If we see, Indian woman is revered as Maa Durga; but unfortunately the difference is that, she is there to procreate, protect and care but not to insist, not to demand and claim as per her wish. In India we come across many such families where a woman lives in her husband's family in a proper way, rather I will say she lives in a 'Kaida' she lives and does not run away, does not go anywhere without her husband's or his family members' permission. She cannot do the work as per her wish. All the time she lives under pressure what we say, 'dabav'. And if she does any wrong work in the house, she has to listen to lectures by the husband and his family members. Moreover they expect, she should be moulded as water flows into a bottle and occupies its place. If a wife lives according to her husband's

desires and does whatever he wants, then she is a good wife that is a 'pativrata'. This picture of an Indian Woman is not changed totally. Feminists have traced all types of oppression against women. Woman is victimized everywhere ; as a daughter in a parent's house, as a wife in her husband's house and as an employee in her office where she works. In post-Colonial studies, the term 'subaltern' is used for a subordinate position.

The woman 'Ammu' in the novelist Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* is a subaltern character as women has been always subaltern across cultural boundaries. Nearly all women characters in the novel suffer from male dominance and injustice. Feminist writing articulates the dialogue of the oppressed and subaltern. In Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of Rights* (1792) Oliver Schreiner's *Women and Labour* (1911) Virginia Woolf's *A Room of one's Own* (1929) and Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) are the classic books in which problems of women's inequality are focused upon.

Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler are important and radical thinkers in this regard. Beauvoir in her book, *The Second Sex* while expressing her views from both the socio cultural and linguistic point of view says "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman....." So it is assumed that women are made to accept the subject position expressed by the label as 'Feminine' (210)

Another Indian English novelist Githa Hariharan, likes to call herself as an 'activist' rather than a feminist. In the novel 'The Ghost of Vasu Master' her women characters are trapped between traditions, old values and myths and have become the victims of gender discrimination in a male dominated society.

Today the women writers are talking about sex, and are expressing their feelings boldly. The novelist Manju Kapoor's novel *A Married Woman* is a 'search of self' where the heroine of the novel is searching for her own identity. The novel deals with women's issues in the present context. Kapoor's experiments are with the new themes such as gratification of sex from the women's point of view along with the politics of the day.

Both men and women use the same medium of expression. However the way they see the world is different. Moreover it is a feministic plea that women are always underrated. Women in Indian Society have to play traditional roles like a submissive wife, a procreative agent, an incarnation of sacrifice and so on. The women are marginalized by the male dominated society. The feminists also believe that society is organized in such a way that it works in general to the benefit of men.

4.4 The Rise of Feminism as a Movement -

The rise of feminism as a movement on the Asian continent began with the crucial question that portrayal of women by male artists must be deficient. There has been a tendency among the Indian women novelists writing in English to share this view. There has emerged a group of women novelists who try to give their own side of the story from their own point of view.

Women writers of all ages have a natural preference for writing about women characters. Anita Desai is no exception in so far as she has written by and large about women characters and no wonder if most of her novels move around women characters. Although she is preoccupied with the theme of incompatible marital couples yet we come across different kinds of women characters in her novels.

Desai occupies an unassailable place in the galaxy of Indian English Women Novelists. She is one of the strongest voices of women writing in Indian Society. Every novel of Desai is unique in itself. Her novels are concerned with the emotional world of women revealing a rare, imaginative awareness of various deeper forces at work and a profound understanding of female sensibility. Anita Desai has dealt with a variety of issues related to the feminine sensibility. The uniqueness of Desai's fiction lies in her treatment of feminine sensibility. The issues, which have been treated largely in her novels are love, marriage, divorce, social taboos and inhibitions, cruelty and violence towards female characters.

The novels of Anita Desai are basically female oriented. They probe into their problems, be it of a mother, a daughter, a sister, or a wife. In the patriarchal system, the woman lost her importance, she became just dependent and inferior. Their status in life and their identity is defined in terms of their relation to others; father, husband and son. The woman is known by her passivity and obedience and if she rebels against her situation, it automatically renders her abnormal or neurotic.

The Indian woman is forever, dominated by and dependent upon a male member of her family. Her life centers on these relationships. If the affiliation with any of these individual is broken; she becomes mute because she has no nervous control over her emotions. Ultimately this breakup drives her to either nervous breakdown or to a neurotic state of mind. This neurotic state of mind can be an attitude of compromise or moments of rebellion as presented by Anita Desai's woman characters.

Desai depicts the Indian woman as a fighter, a victim, a heroine, and ultimately a winner because of her indomitable spirit and attitude of compromise. Many protagonists of Anita Desai's novels are seen as neurotic, psychotic and abnormal.

4.5 Desais Selected Novels -

1. *Cry the Peacock* :-

In the book *Anita Desai : A Critical Perspective*, Dr. Prakash Joshi writes about Maya. He says every novel of Desai is unique in itself. Her first novel '*Cry the Peacock*' is a winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award, which was published in 1963. It is a psychological novel, which explores the sensibility and inner working of the heroine Maya married to Gautama, a lawyer who is twice her age, living under a morbid fear of death. Desai focuses on the detached relationship between Maya and Gautama. She has described the failure of marriage between Maya and Gautama.

Maya in *Cry the Peacock* is a spoiled and pampered daughter of a wealthy Brahmin and is married to Gautama, an older man, an insensitive, pragmatic and rational lawyer who fails to understand her sensitive nature. She suffers from father-obsession and looks for the typical father image in her husband. Childless with an uncaring husband, she is lonely and loneliness is the bane and burden of her psyche. Maya's tragedy is that there is no one to share her feelings. Temperamentally, they are opposed to each other. The ever widening gap in communication between the husband and wife is felt throughout the novel. (Gupta 13-14)

Cry the Peacock is Anita Desai's maiden novel. It portrays Maya, a most sensitive woman suffering from neurotic fears and marital disharmony. Maya intends to live life to its full but as soon as she moves away from her father, the harsh realities of life baffle her. The novel begins in a gloomy atmosphere with a description of Toto's death, the favourite dog of Maya. This incident upsets her so much that she finds it impossible to bear the psychological strain. The sad demise of Toto produces a frightening sense of dooms day in her life. The novel is thus a psychological study of this hypersensitive, obsessive young lady, suffering from father fixation. She is obsessed by a childhood prophesy of disaster, kills her husband in a frenzy, turns mad and finally commits suicide. There is something in the theme of the novel, which connects it with the hidden aspects of Indian life and reality. Maya's relationship with reality passes through three phases, the first is that of her childhood, where she is protected within a limited world; the second is her life with Gautama when she makes unsuccessful attempts to go back into her past and equally unsuccessful attempts to reach out to others, the third and final phase is her total surrender to the world of her fears and insanity. (26)

Maya who was brought up tenderly by an affectionate father whose house provided the bliss of solitude. She is a sensitive woman suffering from neurotic fears. The memories of her past are always acting as a comforting relief to her wounded psyche. She has been so protected and loved that her husband later on accuses her of living her life as a fairytale, and not being able to deal with the harsh realities of life. A protected daughter of a wealthy Brahmin, Maya is

suffering from marital disharmony and acute father fixation. Maya's marriage to Gautama is more or less a marriage of convenience. Maya, a pampered child of Raisahib, is brought up in an atmosphere of luxury. Gautama and Maya's father were friends. They have similar ways of thinking. Gautama always used to come to Maya's father and one day her father proposes that she should marry him. So we come to know that their marriage is based on the friendship between her father and Gautama. (27)

Maya fails to grow out of her childhood. Her neurotic growth, development and crisis are painted throughout the novel. Her life is linked with her father's individual attention and affection and consequently, she is incapable of leading an independent existence. Her thoughts are solely fixed on her father. Gautama is not a loving husband, but merely a father substitute. Maya's psychological tragedy lies in this inadequate transference from the father to the husband. (27)

Here I have observed that the girls or daughters who grown up in a very loving atmosphere at their parents' house cannot adjust with a husband like Gautama. I think Gautama is not bad but he does not give that much attention which Maya expects from him. So always finds a difference between a father's love and husband's love. In her father's house she was a princess, all the time cared by her father. She does not find such care in her husband's house. What Maya wants and expects from Gautama is his love, care and affection for her which she does not receive from him. Her expectations from her husband are not fulfilled and that is the reason for her disappointment.

a) Maya as a Neurotic :-

The novel opens with the death of Maya's pet dog, Toto on whom she has been lavishing all her affection. Since she is a childless woman she loves her pet just like a mother. To lessen her suffering, she needs the assuring warmth of Gautama's company, which she does not get. She rushes to the garden tap to wash the vision from her eyes. This hysterical and whimsical response is in total

contrast to Gautama's casual attitude. Gautama fails to respond to the feelings of Maya's young heart and to remove her father fixation. Maya's tendency to depend on her father and then on her husband in a clinging relationship shows that she constantly needs psychological support. Her neurotic condition has worsened by her recollection of a prediction by an albino astrologer in her childhood. When she was unmarried, an astrologer had predicted the death of either herself or her husband in the fourth year of their marital life. She is all the time haunted by the prediction. On the other hand Gautama has no faith in astrological predictions. Maya never establishes effective rapport with Gautama as he is unsentimental. She wants to escape from reality whereas Gautama desires to live in it. She considers Gautama's theory of detachment as the negation of life and consequently feels miserable. Gradually, when Gautama devotes more and more time to his work, Maya becomes a complete introvert. Gautama has hardly any time for her, being extremely wrapped up in his professional preoccupations. He is detached, sober and industrious. Maya, because of her introverted nature, cannot be one with her in-laws. Her consciousness takes her back to the time spent

In her father's house. Gautama feels that she is neurotic, petulant, immature, a small pampered child, unable to cope with the hard facts of life. The gap between the two intensifies Maya's neurosis especially as they have entered the fourth year of marriage. This communication gap between them leaves her lonely to brood over the morbid thoughts of the albino astrologer's prophecy. (26)

She says -

“And four years it was now, we had been married four years..

I know the time had come. It was now to be either Gautama or I”

(Desai 170)

b) Myth about Peacock's Cry :-

Besides the prophecy of the astrologer another factor that influenced the Maya's psyche is the myth about the peacock's cry.

The novel is about Maya's cry for love in her loveless relationship with Gautama. The Peacock's cry is symbolic of Maya's cry for love and understanding. Like her peacocks are creatures of the exotic wild and will not rest till they have danced to their death. For her they represent the evolutionary instinct of the struggle for survival. The marital discord results from the temperamental disparity between Gautama and Maya. It was a match between two different temperaments and there was not a single link in their physical or mental outlooks to bring them closer. The matrimonial bond that binds the two is very fragile and tenuous, 'neither true nor lasting' but broken repeatedly and the pieces were picked and put together again as of a sacred icon.

The cry of the peacock symbolizes Maya's agony for love. The repeated cries of the peacock and the cries of the neurotic Maya are symbols to denote the inner self of the protagonist. She weeps for them as well as for herself. The cry of the peacock is a symbol of Maya's life in death and death in life.

The peacock's dance acquires a personal significance for Maya's life and it shows her the future course of life as she views her marriage with Gautama as a deadly struggle. She hungered for his companionship and spent sleepless nights. She could not accept this unsatisfactory life.

Marital relationships are established with the explicit purpose of providing companionship to each other. However this element of companionship is sadly missing in the relationship between Maya and Gautama.

c) Marital Discord in Maya's Life :-

The Maya-Gautama relationship lacks the fundamental element of understanding. They fail to come closer because they hold their separate worlds of emotion and reason. They could not think beyond these limited visions of life.

Even after four years of marriage they could not develop any common interests. As a result the distance between them only widens. Maya feels herself a misfit in Gautama's world as she considers it artificial.

She wants to break out of his hell because she wants to survive. There is a lack of communication.

As Maya feels :

“How little he knows my suffering or of how to comfort me Telling me to go sleep.

While he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me”

(Desai 14)

Poonam Joshi says in her book *Thematic Preoccupation in Anita Desai's Novels* that, communication gap is the greatest hindrance in maintaining harmonious relationships.

What the researcher found about Gautama and Maya's relationship is that, Gautama is always busy and involved in his world and not thinking about Maya that she also needs his company, not only physically but also psychologically to fulfill her expectations. So naturally there is a communication gap between them.

Their marriage is largely a kind of social arrangement without emotional attachment. She has a keen perception of natural beauty while Gautama is insensitive. Gautama's failure to know Maya's demands indicates his failure as a husband. He is unable to understand the psychology of motherless, childless Maya. Maya wants Gautama to love her because his love would give meaning to her existence. It is a loveless desolate world, where she searches for an identity. When one day Gautama gives her a flower, Maya tells him. “Do you know, I should not mind dying now” Gautama feels that marriage gives social emotional protection as well.

Maya thinks Gautama is cold and lacking in feeling, preoccupied with his work, efficient but indifferent to her presence, knowing nothing of what concerned her. Maya desires to go to the South to see Kathakali dance but Gautama abruptly turns down the proposal on economic grounds. Maya wants to enjoy life to its fullest but Gautama being a practical and calculative person weighs happiness in terms of money.

Maya feels that she is helpless and is imprisoned in her own house. This is clear from an incident when Gautama and his male friends recite Urdu-poetry in the garden. She is joyful and wants to join them. When Maya went there and joined them, he did not notice her. He turned his back towards her and stood talking to her friends. So Maya thinks “In his world there were vast areas in which he would never permit me, he could not understand that I could even wish to enter them” (41)

The relationship between Gautama and Maya is brought with problems and unhappiness as Maya is not happy with her present life. Desai has painted Maya as one does not realize that the world is not what she imagines.

d) The Turns and Twists of Maya’s Mind :-

The turns and twists of Maya’s mind constitute the major portion of the narrative in the lengthy middle portion of the novel and are conveyed through the stream of consciousness technique that Anita Desai uses. Her use of language with its devices of description, reflected in dreams and nightmares is specially effective in revealing Maya’s disturbed mental state and conveys graphically the complex states of her consciousness.

The struggle between attachment and detachment as survived philosophies of existence is played out in the battlefield of Maya’s mind, taking the form of external questioning and internal uncertainty and causing her intense anguish. She reacts hysterically and exaggeratedly to most events of the outer world, which impinge painfully on her consciousness.

e) Maya as a Rebel Women :-

Maya is thus an extremely sensitive character, a portrayal of a woman who has failed to come to terms with domination and the patriarchal order. Though she lives in the male world surrounded by male dominance, she refuses to identify with it and revolts against it in her own way. As the story unfolds, she seeks her mother in the natural landscapes and gardens, gets solace in it, but her inner feelings and deepest desires would not be rejected. Though Maya is an affluent housewife with all the necessities of a comfortable city life fulfilled, yet she is neither happy nor satisfied, nor is she the ideal, content housewife who compromises with her situation and thus suppressing her self identity and feminine desire in her heart till she dies.

Maya is a rebel woman who fails to identify herself with her husband Gautama's world and finds herself alienated from the affection she got from her father and besides her total economic dependence on her husband makes her feel rather insecure and powerless. There are other traits in Maya's character, which transcend the idea of Feminism. She is in search of new vistas for a woman's world, a space in which she is on par with man akin to the dance of the peacocks who destroy each other in spite of being madly in love. Maya thinks of her married life with Gautama as a deadly struggle in which one is destined to kill the other. Rebuffed by her husband, Maya is torn between her love of life and her fear of death. She is deeply stricken with the sense of loneliness and insecurity.

(Bilquees Dar, 89)

The matrimonial bonds that bind the two are very fragile and tenuous, the growing tension between them reaches its climax when Maya kills Gautama and then commits suicide.

In this novel Desai deals with assertion of women's rights. So, Maya's identity as a woman is given priority over a man's. But after killing her husband she does not seek the freedom that she craved for. Her madness has a symbolic significance that a woman cannot go to the extent of killing her husband in order

to be happy. At the same time, Desai has tried to answer an implicit question for the whole mankind that human beings cannot live without feelings, love and emotions.

Maya's increasing desperation makes her more assertive and vocal about her feelings. She feels that Gautama, by associating love with destructive detachment and rejecting it, has effectively rejected her love. This provokes her into open rebellion and rejection of his platitudes of detachment and attachment.

She refuses to let him talk, or to subdue her passionate beliefs with his rational logic, as he has always done. All her suppressed instincts and emotions find a violent release now through her flood of words, and ally with a rising sense of panic and the feeling of being betrayed to stress her realization of her irrelevance to his life. This confrontation becomes the turning point of her relationship with him, making his irrelevance to her own life apparent to her.

Thus Maya's overwhelming sense of fear becomes the catalyst for her growing need for assertion in forcing her to reexamine her relationship with her physical and emotional world.

Anita Desai sensitively projects the tilting balance of Maya's mind, dominated by its anxieties and fears, desperately seeking a way out of this dead-end of existence. Totally insecure with no one or nothing to save her from death is rebelling against what fate has ordained for her. She has to fall upon her own resources to circumvent death. Though conceived as a neurotic character, Maya is also associated with a heroic rebellion, with an intense attempt to unequivocally understand her own priorities and live a meaningful life. Madness becomes a meta-language for her rebellion and helplessness and provides her a means of consciously defying her fate. Her strong yearning to live provokes her into action, on to the path of murder and perhaps suicide and gains no positive end, but the novelist describes her mental 'growth' and ironically endorses her attempts to gain control over her unhappy existence.

Maya's happiness is illusory or short-lived but is gained through an arrogant acceptance of her self with its emotional needs. Her choice of rebellion is meaningful in itself and provides a heroic stature to Maya. Her story highlights the clash between her desire for communication as a wife, and her desire not to lose her identity as an individual.

Vijayalkshmi Seshadri comments in her *Study of Woman Characters in Indian English Literature* that the journey to selfhood and freedom becomes a central quest in contemporary female writers and this motif of self exploration rids the female figure of all the existing stereotypes and turns her into a questing protagonist. She also sees 'Maya' as typifying the individual's quest for some sympathy in the face of individual misery. Hence, Maya in *Cry the Peacock* becomes a representative of both the female and individual predicament.

In my opinion, the novel echoes in the cry of Maya, the desire of a married woman to be loved with passion. Through Maya's character Desai's main concern is to study human existence and human predicament, her exploration being a quest for self. Maya's alienation is solely responsible for her tragedy. At last she found meaning by killing Gautama and by committing suicide. Anita Desai presents the theme of women's sensibility and how they suffer on account of emotional and physical repression and become victims of male dominated social and cultural order. '*Cry the Peacock*' is a unique example of the feminist point of view.

f) Maya as the Representative of Post-Modern Feminism :-

Anita Desai has tried to unveil the inner truth of the post-modern age through the female protagonist cum heroine, Maya with a view to awakening the neglected, tormented, inferior women of the Indian bourgeois society. In the male dominated society, Maya hardly manages to get adjusted with her family, her husband, Gautama, a misogynistic lawyer who is much older. Through Maya, Desai wants to expose the psychological conflicts and agonies, alienations and abnormal treatment and mannerisms of the protagonist along with the dreadful fright, culminating lunatic traits and the suicidal act. Through her novel, Desai

focuses on the fears, sufferings, solitude, inner melancholic mode and suppressed optimism of the Post-modern feminism of India. It is observed that the cardinal reasons of marital discord and loneliness of Indian women is age-difference, difference in maturation, Indian philosophy and mental relationship between husband and wife. The very mindset of the Indian female community that they are supposed to be weak, inferior, and docile and so on adds to their vacuity.

She wants to get rid of her nothingness through getting mixed with birds, animals, and a space that humans fail to compensate in Maya's stormy life. Maya may be regarded as a different being from traditional and conventional norms and principles. Actually, she never supports the idealistic sense of an ideal wife in the middle class family of Gautama. Her economic dependence upon her husband makes her feel insecure, helpless and powerless because she regards herself as the ruled to the ruler's gaze. The novelist wants to focus on Maya as a post-modernist female with a view to unchaining her solitary life; Maya wants to search for a purified world where she will get equality.

The tale of Maya's existence seems to be one of the three-fold patterns of facts that may be concluded as: deprivation, alienation and elimination gradually. Firstly, Maya is deprived of brotherly as well as parental care and affection. Secondly, she is alienated from her father figure husband and at last, she brings about the elimination from life and her own self from familial responsibility and duty. Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock* portrays the life of drudgery led by the female protagonist Maya who seems to suffer since she is married to a man, who fails to realize her fractured identities. Regarding the psychological agonies of Maya, Dr. Sanjay Kumar's comment may be accepted in this regard:

“Maya's fear is aggravated as she fails to relate to Gautama her husband. Between the husband and wife; there exists a terrible communication gap as both of them seem to live in different worlds.” (Kumar 22)

The Researcher is not agree with this but begins to feel that, if Gautama had tried to come out from his own world and give some time to his wife Maya

and if Maya too had expected less from her husband, she would have been happy in her life.

Maya's disappointment at Gautama's lack of sympathy and understanding is hardly realized. She never confides in her anxieties, but her husband tries to help her to tackle the situations. He fails to pacify her because she does not alter. The novel, *Cry the Peacock* conveys an impression of marital incongruity and unhappy conjugal life.

Suresh Kohli, a writer and a literary critic, says about Desai,

“No other writer is so much concerned with the life of young men and women in Indian cities as Anita Desai is.” (34)

For a woman, the traditional stereotype is one that cares and gives to others, even to the point of neglecting herself. The feminist inspiration has produced women characters that do not lose their identity, but assert the necessity for an independent identity. In the feminist fiction, we find women who are highlighted to be making efforts to mould their lives to be themselves, even to the point of disrupting their conventional bonds/ relationships in a traditional society. But in portraying Maya as a character born of feminist inspiration, Desai is apparently ambiguous of her own, because Maya fails both in creating an identity for herself and in leading a stable life. The psychological problem and the agony of Maya's life are accurately impacted in the significant fable of the peacock's mating ritual.

In the novel, *Cry the Peacock*, Anita Desai has given the feminist message of the post-modernist female generation through creating the protagonist cum heroine Maya. Through the small world of wife and husband, Desai has drawn a universal feminism where she also has pictured a basic difference between patriarchy and matriarchy. But in the post-modern period, we may find the situation a little better. In fact, the Indian authors have tried to truncate the ever growing feminist questions through the form of literature. We see that Desai has tried to equalize the difference between male and female characters. According to

many critics of Desai, Maya is the embodiment of the Post-modernist feminism of the Indian bourgeois community, culture and society.

2. *Voices in the City* -

Desai's second novel *Voices in the City* a winner of Sahitya Akademi Award dwells on the theme of existentialism and quest for meaning of human existence. Desai has emphasized on the droning obscure bargains of her protagonist, Monisha's mind. Monisha too struggles to find her own self. She wants to free herself from the boundaries of the traditional Hindu family. She feels lonely in Calcutta and lives in her own world. She is tired of her routine life and finds life meaningless.

a) Married Life of Monisha :-

In a book *Anita Desai : A Critical Perspective*, Dr. P. M. Joshi expresses her opinion that, Desai depicts a touching picture of the life of a depressed, married woman Monisha, the sister of Nirode in *Voices in the City* (1965). There are four female characters in the novel but Anita Desai has portrayed feminine psyche chiefly through the character of Monisha, who closely resembles Maya of *Cry the Peacock* in many ways. Monisha is just like Maya in the sense that, she too is childless, sensitive and a victim of an ill-matched marriage. It seems the Maya-Gautama tragedy is re-enacted in the Monisha – Jiban marriage. Like Maya, Monisha also suffers from morbid feelings about death. She too lacks love from her husband and suffers from feelings of emptiness within as well as without, but unlike Maya, she has learned to suppress her emotions. Maya pushes Gautama off the roof so as to protect her world of affecting abundance but Monisha sets herself afire to reach the core of intense feeling. She is married against her wishes into a middle class family, so grossly unsuited to it. Monisha's husband is too busy with his middle rank government job and has no time for his wife. Like Gautama he too, never shares his wife's feelings. She is tormented by her indifferent husband and loneliness. This unsuitable alliance is evocative of the suppressed atmosphere

in which Monisha lives neither for her husband nor do her in-laws sympathise with her. (39)

In the novel we first of all see faulty adjustment in the marriage of Mr and Mrs Ray, Nirode's parents. It was a marriage of convenience. Nirode's father priding himself in his family name and fame and his mother on her tea-estates and a house. Both of them have developed extreme anger and hatred towards each other. Their marriage was something of a financial settlement. They had the children Nirode, Monisha and Amla.

b) Monisha as a Victim of ill – matched Marriage :-

Monisha, Nirode's elder sister is childless and is a victim of an ill-matched marriage. Monisha and Jiban imply the most usual and painful example of conjugal conflict. Monisha's sister Amla puts it very sharply when she asks, "Aunt, why did they marry?". (Desai 196). And the aunt can not reply.

Amla's words signify an acute and heart rending agony. They had nothing in common between them and were married, because he belonged to a respectable, middle class Congress family which was safe, secure and sound. Her father thought, "Monisha ought not to be encouraged in her morbid inclinations and that it would be a good thing for her to be settled into such a solid, unimaginative family as that, just sufficiently educated to accept her with tolerance." (196)

Monisha changes after marriage from a sensitive, mild, quiet sensible girl into a barren, distant, apathetic, neurotic, diary writing woman, which she herself hates. She is happy neither with her husband nor with his family members. Her ill matched marriage, her loneliness, sterility and the stress of living in a joint family with an insensitive husband push her to a breaking point. Her life is what she narrates. "My duties of serving fresh chapattis to the uncles as they eat, of listening to my mother-in-law as she tells me the remarkably many ways of cooking fish, of being Jiban's wife." (146)

Monisha feels trapped in Calcutta and in the house with the thick iron bars : she says "I am so tired of this crowd." (237)

Monisha's arrival in Calcutta reveals the pains of her unfulfilled motherhood. She sees her big house shrunken, drawn together like a boil about to burst, symbolic of hollowness. Her relationship with her husband is marked only by loneliness and lack of communication. She is always obsessed with a feeling that her life is entirely meaningless. She finds her life a virtual imprisonment. She alternates between hope and despair in her husband's joint family, which greets people with formality rather than smiling faces. Monisha's world of pain, plight and psychic life is closely related to the women who are like female birds in cages. She wants to be herself and not to compromise.

The over-crowded in-laws' house makes Monisha uneasy. She has a private room of her own but it is of no use, as the women of the family never realize that she may sometime need privacy. Her sisters-in-law off and on enter her room without any hesitation and discuss endlessly about her sarees, and other things. Her in-laws talk about the reasons why she cannot have a child. Monisha's marriage instead of incorporating her whole self into it, triggers off emotional shocks and conflicts. Jiban, Monisha's husband is the prisoner of a conventional culture in which a woman's most important roles are, besides child bearing, cooking, cutting vegetables, serving food and brushing small children's hair, under the authority of a stern mother-in-law. He clearly favours the static and stable social structure in many circumstances and considers his wife worthless in consequence. Monisha basically craves for solitude that she should be alone so that she could perform better. She builds a wall of fantasy around herself and, therefore, loses the ability to live in the moment. Her obsession is to live a quiet and solitary life so that no one has the power to hunt her.

Monisha's early married life was happy and easy going. So in her married life, she feels suffocated in routine responsibilities as a wife. She is suffocated with growing needs of her family and always adjusting to everybody's needs.

Monisha feels nostalgic about her mother's place in Kalimpong. It is Monisha who becomes an unshelled snail when she is unjustly accused of theft by her mother-in-law and others. Hence she remains in exile in both her families and seeks her true identity in the deepest darkness of the space to which her heart truly belongs.

Because of her intellectual nature she is not much interested in religion. Even though she reads '*Bhagvad Geeta*' she writes in her diary : She says, "If I had religious faith, I could easily renounce all this but I have no faith, no alternative to my confused despair, there is nothing I can give myself to, so I must say, "Such a life cannot be lived- a life dedicated to nothing – that is just in protection from death.'"(202)

Desai has revealed Monisha not as an individual woman but as a representative of all women who face the problem of adjustment in their married lives. Monisha, being submissive by nature withdraws herself from her family. She indirectly suggests to her sister Amla, not to choose her path of submissiveness but to rebel, which she is not able to do. She is uncertain about her own self being imprisoned in her own world. She is merely an observer who has no right to act according to her own desires. She herself says in these words -

"Why am I so sad? What am I so afraid? I am different from them all. They put me away in a steel container, a thick glass cubicle, and I have lived in it all my life, without touch of love or hate or warmth on me. I am locked apart from all of them, they cannot touch me, they can only lip-read and misinterpret. This life enclosed in a locked container, merely as an observer." (237)

She understands a married woman's place in the family to be that of an unpaid servant or slave. She thinks more and more in her loneliness, being an educated lady, she yearns for independence of thought and action.

Monisha knows that she has to choose between death and mean existence for freedom and she does not take time to decide her way. She feels that she cannot live cheerfully in Calcutta where she becomes diminutive gradually.

She thinks “I grow smaller everyday, shrink and lose more and more of my weight, my appurtenances, the symbols of my existence that used to establish me in the eyes of this world”. (Desai 137)

Her suicide is the silent mutiny towards her meaningless life which she has been living patiently for a long time. As she asks herself, “Is this what life is then, my life ? Only a count drum that I shall brood over forever with passion and pain never to arrive at a solution. Only a count drum is that, then life?” (122)

c) **Quandary of Monisha :-**

Quandary means a situation that presents problems which are difficult to solve. A person finds himself or herself in a most awkward predicament. In the Indian society women have no freedom to take their own decisions or to act freely in any way. They are totally ignored and neglected, their views do not keep any importance for the men. In such a situation Anita Desai tries to show the predicament of women in the society. In the novel, Desai shows how Monisha feels tormented and tortured at her home. She goes through severe pain and wants to finish life. Life has become unbearable for her, she is in a dilemma and finally the time comes when she commits suicide.

In the article *Female Predicament : Quandary of Monisha* in Desai’s *Voices in the City*, Teena Goutam writes that - Moreover Desai shows the creative release of the feminine sensibility. The young characters of Desai show the unrest, desire for the liberation of women. The recurring themes of her novels are identified as woman’s struggle for self-realization and self definition. She depicts a woman’s search for her identity; her pursuit of liberty and equality, and her protest against oppression at every level. In her article ‘A secret connivance’ Anita Desai criticizes a deep rooted form of suppression in India and complete dependence of women on men for their livelihoods.

Monisha, the protagonist of the novel has been shown as the victim of quandary and loneliness. She got married in a middle class family to a dull husband. She was not able to adjust properly and does not identify herself with her

in-law's family. She considers her husband's house a prison. She does not belong to it. Her husband feels secure in this cage and thinks that the house is a symbol of safety and shelter but Monisha feels herself as a lonely and cold person. She does not want to mix with her in-laws' family.

It is quite impossible for Monisha, socially to live in a big joint family with so many traditional bindings. Her parents force her into a marriage with a man, who is not suitable to her taste and temperament. After marriage her life is limited to cooking and washing, which hurts her pride. She is not like other women, for her the choice is between the meaningless life and non existence and she prefers non existence here. She feels safe in the belief of her own significance. She lives in an ivory tower of her pride and cuts herself off from family life. It is true that in Indian society a woman gets respect only when she becomes a mother, she gains status only as a mother. For Monisha to feel superior to others is not enough but she wants to make her image perfect. The negative healthy intense desires made her incapable of accepting the challenges of life. She wants to remain solitary and work alone.

Monisha has two selves : the glorified and the actual. Her actual self is tired, weary and sick and the glorified is greedy. To convey the two selves of Monisha, Anita Desai employs the metaphor of the city, Calcutta. This city has also two faces : rapacious and weary. Monisha's real self is suffering. Physically she is trapped behind the criss-cross bars and the windows and psychologically her real self is shut behind the urgent need of her glorified self. Isolation suits her nature. She never considers her husband's house as her own house. She feels self important in her room. She finds herself as an alien in her husband's house and treated as an outsider. Monisha's life in Jiban's house, has a monotonous routine and the love which she craved for is not to be found in Jiban. Moreover she was childless and it adds to her loneliness. She remarks "what a waste, what a waste it has been, this life enclosed in a locked container, merely as an observer and so imperfect I have not given birth, I have not attended death" (Desai 235)

She finds life meaningless. The circumstances around Monisha lead her to cut herself off from the outside world. For her, life becomes neglected because she fails to achieve those things she had longed for. She thinks she has lost all rights to exist, as she could not give meaning to her life. After the charge of theft it is impossible for her to mingle with the Jiban's family. She cannot mix with Jiban's family members. In the night she enjoys communication with a vast dark emptiness. The aggressive behavior of her in-laws makes her fearful and disturbs her psychologically. In the light of the reality, she is not able to bear the vision of herself. She finds herself unable to experience life. Here 'self-hate' turns into 'self-destruction'. She surrenders herself to death. In the battle of existence and death, death wins. She finds that death is the only path for her salvation.

Here a researcher found the real struggle of an Indian woman for her identity. Monisha tries to make a search for her identity, she wants to have a life full of liberty, and she does not want to be dominated by her husband. Anita Desai depicts the miserable plight of Monisha, she depicts her desire to come out of this plight but finally she failed and commits suicide. Monisha's plight depicts not only her individual state but also the state of so many daughters-in-laws who live in the lock-ups of their husbands. Actually Monisha presents the typical social situation of several daughters-in-law in India who have no voice in their houses though they suffer and bear endless torment and pinching behavior of the husband's family members. In Indian society, Monisha's death is a subject of great social significance. She suffers because she was a woman, she was a daughter-in-law, she was a wife. It is so because the destiny of being male or female is determined by the society.

A researcher strongly wants to say here that there is a need for cultural space for a woman to form her own social and national identity. She has her own personality, which must be shaped positively. She must have her own space and in this novel Monisha does not receive this space to create her identity. Gender difference is a ubiquitous note found in feminist readings that has to be exposed in the context of social reality.

d) Monisha's Suicide as an Attempt to Rebel :-

Her suicide is an attempt to rebel against the meaningless death – like isolation. Her death is an attempt to give meaning to life which she is not able to achieve when she was alive. Her suicide gives her the freedom, which she could not enjoy. It is the existence she sought for a long time. It is an exercise of her choice. But a researcher thinks suicide is not a solution or an attempt to rebel against her situation. On the contrary Monisha should have fought against the situation and should have broken all the bars of injustice for her identity.

Married against her wishes and in her childless condition afterwards, she finds it difficult to lead her life in loneliness and alienation. She lives on other's mercy and struggles for her existence. Unable to find meaning to her existence, she prefers to die. So she may find it in another life. The end of her search of her existence is at last comprehensible. Her reaction is violent but common. She welcomes death than a mean existence.

To confront her isolation she starts writing a diary, though she does not like women who keep diaries. Monisha creates a composite picture of a woman leading a marginalized existence in India.

As we know that, after marriage, freedom of a woman becomes limited. As in most of the cases, a married woman is not permitted to meet her old friends or even relatives freely. In a conservative Indian society she cannot go out alone anywhere. Even though a lady may be educated her advice is not sought in any matter and cannot make decisions. She has to compromise and give up her self esteem. Thus the question of fulfilling her desire never arises and the end is similar to that of Monisha.

The significance of the theme is concentrated on the character of Monisha. Desai focuses on her trials and tribulations, tortures, and torments so as to portray her loneliness, despair and spiritual and mental emptiness in clear light. In many respects she resembles Maya who is also childless, sensitive and a victim of an ill-matched matrimony. Monisha suffers hell and untold oppression at the hands of

her in-laws. She is a very sensitive, intellectual tied in a very hostile condition. She has no peace or happiness at all because her husband is indifferent, unresponsive and insensitive. He does not understand her feelings or agony. He does not care for her at all. The result is that she becomes a neurotic and commits suicide. "Her body was braced against fire then comes odour of kerosene when the blouse and sari were soaked, she lowered the tin. Her arms relaxed a moment, recollecting their strength. She might keep the matchbox steady, in order to strike the match. To her astonishment, the very first match struck fire. She brought it close to her face. The oil soaking her garments responded with a leap of recognition then a smoke loud noise, the pain! there all over with her arms, she wrestled with it, she fought it, she screamed 'No' ! No! No! screamed, screamed. Fell unconscious". (Desai 240)

The fate of Monisha has a universal significance because she characterizes the destiny of many such Indian women.

Thus Anita Desai's sensitive depiction of her female characters restlessness, frustration and rebellion shows her alignment with their aspirations. Monisha's detachment also stems from a rejection of the prescribed feminine role in a rapidly changing society. Her predicament at one level, makes a statement for the plight of the educated, urban woman, conscious of her own identity, imbued with her individual aspirations and seeking a life outside the traditional domestic boundaries. In the rejection of her immediate environment she takes on a representative role, because she wants to have an ideally free sense of individuality, which clashes with the conventions of society.

I think this is a true picture of the Indian cultural system in which woman is subjected to humiliation throughout her life. But again here I want to say that, to make an end of one's life is not a solution on it. However Monisha should have shown her abilities, and superiorities to her family members instead of committing suicide.

3. *Bye Bye Black Bird* -

Desai's third novel '*Bye Bye Black Bird*' written in 1971, which is also a winner of Sanitya Akademi Award explores the issue of identity in terms of individual, social, racial and national identity. Adit, Dev and Sarah suffer from fragmented psyches because they tend to define themselves through a limited sense of self and external reality.

In the book, *The Novels of Anita Desai : A Feminist Perspective*, a writer R. K. Gupta informs that - The novel explains a story of love in the background of the immigration. The title of the book is directly connected with the theme and signifies that London has said good bye to one black bird Adit, but has offered a cuckoo's nest to another, that is Dev. The novel presents the difficulties of adjustment there and of those who return to the motherland, often complicated by interracial marriages. The strain of maladjusted marriage continues in this novel also in the form of the social problem. (102)

The novel is divided into three parts viz, Arrival, Discovery/ Recognition and Departure. It presents the story of two Bengali youths – Adit Sen and Dev and later of Adit's English wife named Sarah. (102)

a) **Sarah's Identity Crisis after Marriage due to Inter -Racial Marriage :-**

Adit marries an English girl Sarah and by doing so he incurs the anger and racial clashes of the whole society. It is not only Adit who suffers most on this very account but his wife Sarah too.

After marrying a black or brown Asian, Sarah has broken all the social codes of London. It is just because of ill-matched marriage, she is ever subject to taunts and scoffed at by not only her colleagues but even of young pupils of the school where she serves as a clerk. In spite of her precautions she cannot escape the riddle, which is now part and parcel of her life. She does not know where she belongs and she is fed up with putting on faces. (106)

R.K. Gupta further says that Sara's identity crisis has been described more than once in the novel, which makes her alien, the question always haunts her mind. Who is she? We find two examples in Chapter II of the novel. After her marriage she faces an identity crisis. She has become nameless.

Sarah is a British girl with a British mentality and has pride for her land and culture though she accepts and adopts Indian culture. She becomes a completely new woman on every ground.

I feel that in an unknown land, Sarah needs the security and company of her husband Adit. But, even he becomes careless about her and behaves like a traditional and typical Indian husband. It is Sarah who lives in an unknown land and faces all the problems even as she bears her husband. Really it is very hard to sustain her life in such a situation. Sarah becomes the victim of the male-dominated society in India and struggles for her own identity.

In the later authorial comment on the novel we find an obvious illustration of Sarah's identity crisis. If a girl marries in the same culture it is very easy to adjust to her a new home and family. But inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-racial marriages cause hardships and adjustment problems which are not easy to conquer. Sarah has married a person who is inter-racial and whose race was once ruled over by her own. In spite of 'Progress' and 'modernity' old prejudices die hard. This is the problem due to which Sarah is homeless in her own native country, which is a great irony. After a perusal of the novel, we find that even though socially Sarah is not cheerful on account of the racial prejudice of her people. Yet she presents a token as a wife. She very sensibly takes care of things. We feel appreciation for this alien lady who understands her husband, his family and country, which she would accept once in India.

Through Sarah in *Bye Bye Black Bird* for the first time, Desai has taken a working woman as a character in her novel through whom she describes the problems faced by working women in a hostile society. Being a foreigner Sarah is different from the other women portrayed in the novels of Anita Desai, yet her self

controls, the sense of sacrifice and her attempts at compromise are appreciable. Apparently Sarah may be a pathetic creature, suffering from alienation yet her courage and stoicism in trying to adjust, are qualities to be admired. Sometimes she wonders who she is, after marrying Adit – is she an English lady or the Head's Secretary in the school for English Children, or just Mrs. Sen, the wife of Adit. But it is her strong will power, that often comes to her rescue. She does not allow tensions to crop up between Adit and herself.

b) Adit as a Typical Indian Husband :-

Though Adit and Sarah's upbringing and their lifestyles are different yet they manage to live together. They are not happy as husband and wife. As Sarah's life splits into two parts, she always feels loss of her personality. Being married to an Indian man she is cut-off from the society in which she lives and also from that where she is going to live in India. She wants to live a happy life without any discrimination. She feels free among the strangers where she is not identified as Indian or British. She also avoids meeting her old friends and never talks about her Indian husband to anybody. Her loneliness is not inborn like Maya or Monisha but it has risen out of her circumstances. She has no complaints against her marriage with Adit. She wants to live happily.

Sarah happily agrees to leave England with her husband. She tries to keep her husband happy. She even prepares Indian food for her husband though she does not relish it. Adit likes to treat Sarah as if she were a Bengali. He tells her "you are like a Bengali Girl" Bengali Women are like that reserved, and quiet". (Desai 78).

He sometimes forces her to wear a sari and prepare Indian Food, which Sarah readily does. She too likes to visit India to meet Adit's parents and know about India. She never involves herself in any controversies where she thinks her husband would be angry. Adit is shown as a typical Indian husband who believes in having control over his wife as he once says, "These English wives are quite manageable really, you know. – very quiet and hardworking as long as you treat

them right and roar at them regularly once or twice a week.” (32) Even the important decision to leave England is taken by Adit alone and Sarah happily agrees to leave England with her husband – like a true Indian wife. This shows that Adit though living in England has an Indian mentality and never consults Sarah, his wife, in taking the important decision to leave England and to separate from her homeland. Their relationship makes the proverb ‘East is east and West is west, they can never meet’ false.

Sarah is a Britisher, she is described as a typical Indian woman who obeys her husband and never revolts against him. Adit and Sarah though of different races and cultures try to live together without any conflict. But still their relationship is complicated as Adit, never seeks her advice or suggestion in any matter. Even the important decision of leaving England and coming to India forever is taken all alone by Adit and Sarah obeys her husband’s decision. Their reactions are also dry and dull. Adit is a typical Indian husband who leaves no opportunity to stamp his supremacy. She even refuses the promotion in her job in order to go to India with her husband, Adit. Sarah always moves like a pendulum between Mrs. Sen and Sarah her own self.

The main difference between Maya, Monisha and Sarah is that Sarah is working and she has an outdoor life, which is not possible in Maya’s and Monisha’s case. Sarah gets some change by moving out, though she does not like to talk much with her friends. This is the reason for Sarah not losing her mental balance and not going to the extent that Maya and Monisha did. Sarah does not want to remember her past. She is free only among strangers, where she is unidentifiable.

Sarah’s problem is human. She wants to be a real person, whether English or Indian. She is fed up with sitting on the fence. She tries her best to remain a sincere wife seeing to it that her marital life is not destroyed.

The feeling of loss of identity makes Sarah wonder whether she is Mrs. Sen or Sarah ? Her self is divided between two contrary roles, as Mrs. Sen. She

grinds spices for a curry, which she does not want to eat, hears Indian music, which she does not understand and as head secretary, she performs her duties sincerely and efficiently. She is mocked at for her Indian likings, and while performing these roles she neglects herself. Sarah stands between the poles—India and England. She is weak but possesses a steady voice ; She becomes a victim of psychic and social alienation, yet signifying the twentieth century man's attempt to forget a historical situation, which he did nothing to create and could do little to alter.

Dr. Prakash Joshi discusses in his book *Anita Desai. A Critical Perspective* about Sarah that - Sarah is different from other characters. She is almost an exile in her own land but unlike others she never withdraws. The novelist herself says, Sarah's loneliness is different from other heroines because she chose it deliberately. Sarah loves Adit, an Indian immigrant. But she wants to hide her relationship from her own English people. Here we find that Sarah though in an advanced country, is still weak and submissive. She lives a life of cultural exile in her own country. She feels displaced in England by marrying an Indian in the sense that, she is a victim of values; she faces the problem of aloneness. Married to an Indian she tries her best to adjust herself in her own society. Adit and Sarah have entirely different cultural backgrounds. Adit even though living in a foreign country, but being an Indian male dominates Sarah. She likes to keep pets but her love for pets is hated by her husband Adit and thus she feels suppressed and loses her identity not only in India but even in her own country. (Anita Desai, *Bye Bye Black Bird*. (53)

Sarah feels alienated and suffers a lot. Her main problem is to know her identity in precise terms. She leads a miserable routine life with an Indian husband. Adit behaves like a typical Indian husband who is least worried about the convenience of his English wife. Sarah has lost her identity and appears submissive and voiceless. She experiences an extreme kind of loneliness after marrying an Indian. She boldly accepts the consequences of her choice with regret. She performing her domestic as well as official duties with great patience. But she suffers a great deal because of her crisis.

In my opinion in the age of globalization several new social problems occur in the life of global citizens of the world. It is a beginning of a new era, which is related to the world culture and its results and problems in human life for those who cross the boundaries of their own nations. Here two cultures are experienced by Sarah and through that trauma her life and her character changes, that is metamorphosis of her inner psychology and character. This novel presents a picture of a married life in which one is from native soil and the other is from western culture. Their failure married life is the result of lack of understanding and coldness in their relationship. Sarah feels alienated. I think, actually loneliness is the manifestation of outer and inner circumstances of human life. Sarah becomes the victim of Indian culture and her inner psyche.

Thus Sarah the chief female character in the novel is painted as a lifeless character. She is a reserved and sensitive woman. She dies a slow, spiritual death through her intense unfulfilled longing.

4. *Where Shall We Go This Summer ?-*

In her fourth novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* which is also a winner of Sahitya Akademi Award (1975) Anita Desai presents an intense identity crisis of the central character Sita, a sensitive woman in her early forties. Unable to live in the strife torn present, she is in the throes of identifying herself with the past, represented by her childhood on Manori island twenty years ago. The past becomes a psychic residue in her “personal unconscious”, the backdrop of her life, and her obsessive preoccupation with it gives her the strength to leave her home, husband, two children and the urbanized life of Bombay for Manori island, where she thinks she would be able to live under a magic spell.

a) The Marital Discord as the Subject Matter :-

Anita Desai’s chief concern is human relationships and she explores the disturbed psyche of the modern Indian women. The protagonist Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is a nervous, middle aged woman who finds herself

isolated from her husband and children because of her emotional reactions to many things that happen to her.

In this novel Anita Desai again chooses marital discord as the subject matter and highlights the inability to expose one's soul and expresses freely one's dread and agony, which effects in breaking off communication between husband and wife.

In a book, *Thematic Preoccupation in Desai's Novels*, analyzing Sita's married life critically, Poonam Joshi says that - The marital disharmony is depicted which draws attention to the strong emotional nature of the protagonist Sita. She is unable to adjust in the "aged-rotted flat" of Raman, her husband. Her weird childhood leaves her unprepared, to adjust to life in a joint family. In order to show her frustration she behaves in an outrageous manner like smoking openly and talking in a sudden rush of emotion. Unlike Monisha she is bold enough to declare war against conventionalism and accepted facts of life to eat and prepare something to be eaten.

Her life does not change even when she shifts to her own small flat with her husband and children. She continues to be infuriated by her husband's traditional values and his total lack of self responsiveness as he was "Not an introvert, nor an extrovert – a middling kind of man, he was dedicated unconsciously to the middle way." (Desai 47). She becomes alienated because her husband is always absorbed in his business and their children were growing up and busy in building their careers. That situation becomes intolerable which can prove to be destructive as Desai says – "She herself looking in it, saw it, stretched out so vast, so flat, so deep" (33)

b) Sita as Embodiment of Indian Feminism :-

Sita is a married woman and has four children but is a picture of misery and dejection. She feels herself to be an encaged bird in a house, which offers her nothing but a crust of dull tedium, of hopeless disappointment. Her unhappiness in married life finds expression in the emotion of contempt for the friends and

colleagues of her husband. Her cruel childhood, stricken with deprivation, doubt and despair, has had a negative impact upon her psychology. She feels enslaved within these doubts and struggles to free herself. A series of situations and incidents project the seething tension, the compulsion and withdrawal of Sita's festered soul. The doubts, the unsolved questions, that seethe within her and prey upon her mind, turn her into a hypersensitive and depressed individual, with a certain element of mental de-arrangement. Sita reacts abnormally and suffers from psychological hesitation. She develops a haunting fear that there is a contradiction around her. There is a clash between the conscious individual and the narrow satisfied world around her. Sita's smoking is a trace of silent rebellion, of self assertion, an effort to be herself and to show the world, that she has an identity of her own, whereas in reality she is actually crumbling down. Gradually, all the problems and complexities of her heart magnify in dimension. Like other protagonists of Anita Desai, Sita is repelled by everyone, but she remains like an encaged bird.

She can never attain peace and solace, whether she is in Bombay or in Manori. Her condition reminds one of a person who shifts from one posture to another with a vain expectation of removing untold sufferings and conflicting senses.

Sita senses that if reality cannot be controlled then fancy would be the only alternative. She therefore, decides, to live in a world of imagination. The search for identity leads to the great protection of Manori Island – an escape of a sensitive individual. (**Arburim 657**)

c) Married Life of Sita and Raman :-

Sita and her husband Raman remind us of the legendary names of the Ramayana. They are very much opposite to the immortal characters of Rama and Sita. Raman and Sita have incompatible temperaments and attitudes to life. The irreconcilable couple – Raman and Sita are defined with the same problem of husband wife discord. This novel too deals with the conflict in the family of

Raman and Sita because of their failure to adjust with each other. Both of them differ in their attitudes to life. One is matter of fact, practical and the other highly emotional.

Poonam Joshi says that - Sita, the heroine suffers mental agony like Maya or Monisha in this powerful work of fiction by Anita Desai, represents the predicament of a lonely married woman who aspires to triumph over the chaos and suffering of her rather unusual existence. This is a deeply engrossing and disturbing novel with an inner fury, which reflects the problems of life in this modern society. Sita represents a world of emotion and feminine sensibility while Raman is a man with an active view of life and the sense of the practical. Sita is a nervous, sensitive, imaginative, irrational middle-aged woman with volatile and poignant reactions to many things that happen to her, she always wants to escape reality and does not want to grow up and face the responsibilities of adult life. He represents sanity, rationality and an acceptance of the norms and values of society. Raman is a middling kind of man prosaic, passive and phlegmatic.

Like all other earlier novels of Desai, they too are like two opposite banks of a river. Their attitude towards life is different. She wants freedom in the middle of nature. She finds her life futile and hollow. Raman's approach towards life is realistic. He is unable to understand the violence and passion with which Sita reacts against every incident. His reaction to his wife's frequent outbursts is a mixture of puzzlement, weariness, fear and finally a resigned acceptance of her abnormality. He cannot comprehend her boredom and frustration.

Raman's prose and Sita's passion only emphasize the distance between the two.

When Sita thinks of their marriage, she feels all human relationships were a 'farce', 'bored', 'dull', 'unhappy' and 'frantic.' When Raman comes to Manori Island, Sita feels happy. She thinks he has come to take her back but when he informs that Maneka has written a letter and he has come to take her back for her admission she is further disappointed. She feels that she is a woman unloved,

bitter and jealous. As a result, there is marital discord and tension exists between spouses. (142)

d) Identity Crisis of Sita :-

Anita Desai presents an intense identity crisis of the central character Sita a sensitive woman. Sita's problem seems to be due to maladjustment with her husband, the home life and surrounding atmosphere nauseating her. She is fed up with her husband a businessman, whose complete lack of feeling brings her to the verge of insanity. And a deep change takes place in Sita, from a proud mother of four children, sensual and emotional to a woman of rage, fear and revolt for control had slipped out of her hold. A close examination of the whole situation, however will reveal that Sita's is more a psychological problem than resulting from unfulfilled wishes. Tragically her dreams of getting love and affection from her husband end in a nightmare.

I think this happens in many cases, husbands always behave indifferently and do not realize what wives expect from them. Raman is a businessman, all the time busy in his work without thinking about Sita's feelings. So she does not get love, care and affection from Raman. In fact there is no close psychological attachment between husband and wife. What Sita expects from Raman he does not understand, hence can not fulfill Sita's expectations.

The point at issue is that her husband ignores her instincts and while she wants him to treat her in a gentle and tender way, this is what he cannot do. As a result, in the long run the husband-wife relationship is dragged into difficulties that come out in the form of identity crisis for both Raman and Sita who stand for binary oppositions. Raman is a creature of society, more or less an introverted personality and a pessimist. She not only hates Raman for his lack of feeling but also makes fun of the "subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness" and the routine manner of her husband's family. As a reaction against these, when she speaks, she speaks with rage and anguish and with "sudden rushes of emotions".

She has resolved to go to Manori island as a kind of self exile in her search for identity in silence and in her revival of the past, away from home and civilization.

The clash of identities between Sita and Raman that takes an unhappy dimension has other interesting points of focus. At the root of the husband – wife conflict there is the theme of tradition versus modernity. By temperament and upbringing, Sita's roots are in the tradition represented by her father on Manori Island. Her sudden encounter with Bombay following a hasty marriage to Raman threatens the very roots of her existence. For Raman, Bombay stands for modernity. The only thing that represents tradition is Sita's memory of the past. Her suffering is caused by factors psychical in origin. The betrayal of her unconscious inclination to preserve and uphold traditional values of an integrated life in the face of chaotic values of modern city civilization is at the root of her unhappiness and loss of identity. She suffers from nervous disorder being herself faced with this void, emptiness, irreparably continuing to exist even after her marriage resulting in her loss of identity, self confidence and inability to reassure love to her children. This is aggravated by her husband's mechanical and matter of fact attitude towards her with no warmth of feeling, understanding or attachment. No wonder, Sita is completely alienated from the world around her and starts living in a world of dream and fantasy and make believe under the stress of a serious psychological confusion.

Where shall we go this summer? is a subtle psychological study of human personalities, which are at war. At a deeper psychological level Sita's quest for identity is an outcome of the husband-wife conflict. The strange insensitive nature of Raman causes serious problems to the mental life of Sita. She is torn between a desire to have that husband-wife intimacy and a shocking lack of it.

e) Sita and her Children :-

In the article, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* A psychoanalytical Study, Dr. M. Mani Meitel focuses on Sita's Life and her Children. He writes that - Anita Desai's creation of 'Sita' is an example of a repressed person. She hates

her husband for not understanding her, dislikes her children for they are insensitive, and so on. During the journey on the sea Karan excitedly calls the sea weeds 'Snakes', which enrages her. Of all the children, she dislikes Menaka most because she cuts flower buds, tears her Sunday water colours, calls her father onto the island, to save her from the boredom of the island. Sita feels she is betrayed by her children who turn to their Father. At heart she also recognizes her husband, his disposition, his courage. But even then her unhappiness is that her husband comes there to take Menaka on receiving her letter and not to take her. All her life she has been searching for a father figure and Raman is far from being so. Her agony is that her insensitive husband remains unchanged, dull and impotent so far as his response to her is concerned. A sudden sense of his getting old and grey and not wanting to have another child mark his unattractive role as a husband, physically and emotionally. Sita remains isolated in the background, while her children and husband share their life and experience together. Her realization that hers was a farcical marriage unnerves her because her husband does not know the 'basic fact of her existence', her soul's existence, her instincts' existence. The more she thinks, the greater is her shock. Once more she becomes hysterical and to an introverted person this is bound to happen. She lives in a world of phantasies. Her entire life is woven in this strange manner inscrutably. But at the height of her frustration and self-defeat, things come around. The island is no more hospitable. The house is dirty, dusty, dark food is not available on the island. It is in the midst of this gloomy atmosphere that she remembers her Bombay house. (Anita Desai, *Where shall we go this summer?* 38)

The concluding part of the novel however has a different tone and this is an essential artistic development in the whole structure of the novel. Sita who has been unable to come out of her egotistical self now gets an apocalyptic vision. Earlier she was unable to compromise with her husband, but now she can see things in a circular form, and ring, making the moment's experience something permanent. She finds that all her life is false, and her immediate experience is real marked by a vision of revelation. The reign of chaos is over; there is unity. Like an artist she gather things, binds things, packs things in complete understanding

and harmony. All elements of negation vanish into thin air, and Sita's journey takes on a positive note. As her mind is moving, whirling round and round, Sita is in full agreement with the natural rhythm of life. She is ready for the birth of her child in the womb, she sees the vision of herself in the nursing home, doctors, nurses, labour pain, garments of the infant in her stream of consciousness with a mixed feeling of pain and pleasure during childbirth.

But as Desai writes, "She has escaped from duties and responsibilities, from life and the city to the unlivable island. She had refused to give birth to a child in a world not fit to receive the child. (139)

I think it is the real and natural feeling of a woman, rather a mother, when there is a child in her womb and the time of birth comes, she forgets all the things that her frustration, her anger, dissatisfaction about the husband and prepares herself to give birth to her child.

But Sita, as a wife is against any compromise. She is bold enough to declare war against traditions and practices of life. There is a struggle between 'Yes' and 'No'-that is Raman's order - 'You must' and Sita's answer - 'I can't'. Here I see Sita lives as she wishes but her intelligent awareness and sharp sense put her in trouble. She is a capricious victim of circumstances and always feels that she is isolated from her family. Her husband and children neglect her and they had all betrayed her. So she tries to search for her own identity.

f) Sita's Fascination for her Father and Arrival at Manori :-

After her marriage too, Sita has been cocooned with memories of her own childhood magic, she feels overwhelmed by the tedium of life in a small enclosed area in the Bombay flat. Her retreat to the island of Manori assumes a symbolic significance because it is one of the few assertive steps she takes in giving meaning to her life on her own terms in accordance with her confused understanding of life.

In the novel we come to know about Sita's father. Like Maya in *Cry the Peacock*, Sita also grows up in the shadow of her father and also has father fascination. For Sita her father was a saint cum magic healer. So she moves to the Manori island with the memory of her father. For Sita her father was a legend in his lifetime as he brought water from the well to the people of the island. Her father had a glorious life style on the island. He had brought more profitable ways of farming. She feels that the island will wipe out the evil spell and her unborn child will remain within her womb forever. She does not want her child to be trapped in the wretched, violent and painful conditions of human life. She is not able to recognize the personality of her father. She is not able to decide whether her father was a swindler or a genuine spiritual-still she respects, appreciates and thinks highly of him.

On Manori, Sita hopes to find the missing link between the incomprehensible contradictions of life and reconcile the disturbingly desperate aspects of her experience, however limited it might be. She takes the decision to go to the island of Manori in order to keep the baby and prevent it from being born. Sita's father could apparently succeed in his search for self fulfillment on the island because of his proactive approach to the people on the island. Sita's coming face to face with certain immutable facts of existence becomes the beginning of her proactive, instead of merely reactive relationship with the life around her.

Manori serves a therapeutic purpose in allowing Sita to be cleared of the frenzy and anxiety that hitherto governed her consciousness. It offers her 'release' but cannot be a permanent refuge or protection. Lacking her father's strong personality, the futility of her attempts to recreate the magical illusion on the island is conveyed not only through the perceptions and recreations of the villagers and her children but by her own awareness that courage is demanded equally.

She knows her limitations and also knows that her husband has a great capacity and her daughter has great talent. So towards the end of the novel Sita

reconciles with the situation and decides to go back to Bombay with her husband and children.

Desai described her as, -

“Tired, disheveled and vacant as she was

Like a player at the end of the performance,

Clearing the stage, picking the costumes,

In equal parts saddened and relieved” (152)

In my opinion, Sita struggles for her own identity but at last compromises with the uncertainty of life that life has no full stops. It just confuses her, leading nowhere. Desai’s modernistic perception and her consciousness about the harsh realities that surround a woman’s life are revealed here.

In her search for identity, Sita does not kill her husband like Maya nor does she kill herself like Monisha. She compromises with her situation and this compromise is a ray of hope in Sita for her positive approach towards life. She realizes that to escape from convention is not a solution to the problem of life, and she cannot change the flow of life. She ought to have courage to face the situation of life. So when Raman prepares to leave for the mainland, she mends her ways and follows him.

I think this is an optimistic view against negativism. Sita makes a balance between her inner self and the outer world. She realized that, “her time on the island is over, the play over the stage had now to be cleared” (p 152) Her return allows her to see the face of reality in this world of illusion, and there can be no running away from reality.

The novel presents a deep crisis of identity in the modern world, a crisis, which has become a major theme of modern Indian English fiction. While projecting this, the book achieves the status of being a masterpiece through the portrait of Sita. At the end of her stay at Manori she comes out as a different

personality who is no more disturbed by the concept of time, past, present and future, all are melted into one. Now she is a supreme commander of life, absorbing all the incongruities of her surroundings, her husband and her children. Looking forward to the future she becomes a benign mother, an understanding and sympathetic wife. Thus she goes out of the hard shell of one individual identity, making herself a complete personality in duality. However it is Sita's triumph not Raman's; the only thing she thinks is that at such a moment should her husband deserve that triumph. Sita's identity crisis is over. Her identity is one of impersonality. This corresponds with life when it is worth living. Life is a continual process of sacrifice, adjustment and compromise. Her desire to return with Raman to the land signifies her return to life, community and society.

5. *Fire On The Mountain* -

Anita Desai's fifth novel *Fire On the Mountain* published in 1977 in London, has confirmed Desai's reputation as one of the best Indian English novelists. It won the Royal Society of Literature's Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize and coveted 1978 Sahitya Akademi Award. The Statesman appreciated it as an outstanding novel, sharp and refined, descriptive as well as symbolic.

The novel focuses on the violent, pathos-filled, existential struggles invariably engulfing the lives of the characters, the worst sufferers being the female characters. Marital discord has been presented in all its socio-cultural and psychological ramifications.

The title of the novel is perhaps taken from William Golding's famous novel, *Lord of the Flies*, the second chapter of which is entitled *Fire On the Mountain*. It symbolizes the fire which burns in the heart of an old lady, a great grandmother, Nanda Kaul and her emotional world, which is the theme of the novel. In this novel the title refers to the worlds of Raka, the great grand daughter of Nanda Kaul, who says at the end of the novel.

"Look Nani, I have set the forest on fire. Look, Nani,-look---the forest is on fire." (Desai 158)

The words are expressive of Raka's resolve to destroy a world where a woman cannot hope to be happy without being unnatural. Anita Desai makes use of the flash-back technique in describing the central theme of the trauma of a housewife in the novel. The novel centres round the character of Nanda Kaul.

a) The Agonized Cries of Nanda Kaul and Marital Discord in her Life :-

Anita Desai probes the feminine sensibility and a woman's inherent desire to know herself in terms of not only her relationship with her family but also in terms of her individual identity and its relationship with the world at large. *Fire on the Mountain* also deals with the theme of lack of communication and lack of understanding in marital life.

Poonam Joshi in her book *Thematic Preoccupation*, describes Nanda Kaul's married life - Nanda Kaul, the Vice-Chancellor's wife who has chosen the house at the top of a mountain in Carignano in the village of Kasauli, as she wants to take shelter away from the disturbances of family and society. Nanda Kaul and her husband do not have a warm relationship. He has cared little for his wife and family. Her married life with the Vice-Chancellor was full of long suffering with only the duties and responsibilities of her position without any love attached to it. She is disillusioned with her selfish, infidel husband. He only treats her simply as a useful thing.

Nanda Kaul could not belong to the family and her position is no better than a house keeper. She played the role of hospitable hostess all the time for her husband, who wanted her always in silk, at the head of the long rosewood table in the dining room, entertaining his guests. She is always busy caring the family and doing the duties of mother, housewife and hostess that in the evening of her life she is happy in her isolation even though it is partly intentional and partly conditional. Outwardly, the Kauls are an ideal couple for the university community whereas their relationship is all barren from inside. According to Nanda Kaul, he was a coward that he could not marry a Christian lady because he could not dare to break social conventions.

Desai explores deep into the problematic life of Nanda Kaul, who, besides being the wife of a Vice-Chancellor leading a luxurious life, is satisfied by it. Outwardly Kauls were an ideal couple but from inside it was all empty, the whole social role and socializing was a mere sham. Her life with her husband was “lacking in composition and harmony”.

The writer has focused on the plight of Nanda Kaul, who is deceived and deluded by her husband. There is lack of understanding between them and by temperament they are different. These are the main reasons for the marital discord of Mrs. Kaul.

Desai explores the feminine feeling and a woman’s natural desire to know herself in terms of her individual identity. Mr. Kaul carried on a lifelong affair with another woman and has cared little for his wife and family. Nanda Kaul could not belong to the family and her position is no better than a housekeeper. Her husband is responsible for this. She lives undisturbed by human company. She likes loneliness more than anything. She has cut herself off from human concerns entirely. Her desire to be lonely and isolated is seen in her apathy to receive her great grand daughter. She is tired of being the wife of a renowned person like a Vice-Chancellor, mother and grandmother. Her mental exhaustion and world weariness provokes her to detach from all relations and responsibilities. It is not her delight but for a dejected sheltered life.

Mrinalini Solanki rightly remarks : “Her option for total isolation is not related to the spirituality of Indian thought. She does not opt for this isolation willingly, but circumstances have left no other way out for her.”

(Mrinalini, Solanki. ‘Anita Desai’s Fiction : Patterns of Survival strategies’. New Delhi. 1992 30)

I agree, this is a fact, when any woman, as a housewife is always engaged in household duties and does not give time to herself, she becomes fed up and wants the isolation from all those things and typical routine. Also like Maya’s and Sita’s husband, Nanda’s husband is also very busy in his duties and does not give

time to his wife and cannot care for her feelings. So isolation was the only way for her.

The novel describes the hollowness into which Nanda is forced. Her married life was not peaceful. It was not all love and earnestness but the dreadful disloyalty of her husband provoked her to a life of silence. The children were alien. Nanda Kaul withdraws into a private world of self-willed isolation. She does not have any feeling for her husband. Her relation with her husband was just outward, no inner feelings were involved. The novel gives an impression of her happy life with her husband, but the last page of the novel reveals that the whole story was a white lie. She had concocted her life to Raka.

The life of Nanda Kaul has been disgusting and tired. She felt happy when the responsibilities came to an end as she felt, "She had been so glad when it was over. She had been glad to leave it all behind, in the plains, like a great, heavy, difficult book that she had read through and was not required to read again." Nanda Kaul's solitude is described through many representations. Desai said that "She had suffered from the disorder, the fluctuating and unpredictable excess. She revealed in her life's bareness, emptiness to add to her own radiantly single life." (Desai 32)

Even though she has many children and grand children, she suffers from isolation within herself as well as in the outer world. She regards herself as a dejected and estranged woman. She does not want any disillusioned emotional bonds. She is used to live in isolation that she cannot adjust with other people. She is even unable to adjust to her own great grand children.

Dr. Prakash Joshi throws light on the suffering of Nanda Kaul in his article *Fire on the Mountain : Existential dilemma*. He presents a study of the intense suffering of a housewife who takes shelter in seclusion. The lifelong faithlessness of Mr. Kaul to Nanda Kaul and the phony situation compel her to confirm this separation. Nanda Kaul has conceded this after passing through psychic suffering and the bitter experience of a marital life. This wedding is veritably based on

physical lust and circumstantial ease for Mr. Kaul who does not love her as a wife. She plays a role of gracious hostess all the time and enjoys the comforts and the social status of the wife of a dignified person. Nanda Kaul becomes mother, grandmother and great-grandmother of many unwanted, and unloved children. Her life as the Vice-Chancellor's wife though packed and full of social activity, was truly aimless. There have been too many guests coming and going all the time, leaving little privacy for her. She passes her life in arranging the dinner table as a hard working hostess. The novelist presents the suffering of a housewife through the following words :

“The old house, the full house, of that period of her life when she was the Vice-Chancellor's wife and at the hub of a small but intense and busy world, had not pleased her. Its crowding had stifled her There had been too many guests coming and going, tongas and rickshaws piled up under the eucalyptus trees and the bougainvilleas, their drives asleep on the seats with their feet hanging over the bars. The many rooms of the house had always been full, extra beds would have had to be made up, often in not very private corners of the hall or veranda, so that there was shortage of privacy that vexed her. Too many trays of tea would have to be made and carried to her husband's study, to her mother-in-law's bedroom, to the veranda that was the gathering place for all. Too many meals, too many dishes on the table, too much to wash up after. They had so many children, they had gone to so many different schools and colleges at different times of the day, and had so many tutors, friends, all of different ages and sizes and families.” (31-32)

Really Nanda's life is full of only household duties and there is no space for her.

Anita Desai is a novelist of the human heart, an artist shaping the inner crisis of her characters. She is concerned with the personal tragedy of individuals. She is hardly interested in social life and political events. She explores the interior layers of her protagonist's mind and brings to the surface various shades of inner crisis.

b) Nanda Kaul at Kasauli :-

Poonam Joshi focuses on the relationship between Nanda Kaul and her Children. She expresses in her book *'Thematic Preoccupation in Desai's Novels'* that - The relationship between Nanda Kaul and her children is also intriguing and unappreciative. Nanda Kaul feels that her own children and grand children do not care for her. They have let her down. She is of no use of them after the death of her husband. Having been rejected and discarded all her life by her husband and children, Nanda Kaul decides to spend the remaining days of her life in a deserted lonely house in Kasauli, fed up with the endless demands of her long life of duties and obligations.

Nanda Kaul decides to live in the Simla hills of the distant Himalayas at Carignano in Kasauli – a hilly resort. The arrival of Raka, her great grand daughter, will be a danger to her self-imposed seclusion, yet she cannot deny the request of her daughter Asha, to allow Raka to come after her long illness. Then one day Raka comes and embraces Nanda Kaul with love. She looks at her grandma with curiosity. Mrs. Kaul finds in Raka a perfect model of what she once aspired to be herself. She says. "You are more like me than any of my children or grandchildren. You are exactly like me Raka." (52)

After a lifetime of dutiful service to her family, Nanda Kaul purchases a house in the isolated hill country of Kasauli and lives out her days in peaceful seclusion. Her tranquility is disturbed, however, the great grand daughter Raka arrives at her doorstep having been forced out of her home by her parents' marital problems. Actually the novel deals with the elegiac life of Nanda Kaul, later joined by Raka's character. The novel brings forth the utter fatalism as reflected in the marginal and challenged life of the protagonist, Nanda Kaul.

Desai unfolds the past of Nanda Kaul, who had only to contend with insults, betrayals, resulting tragically during the passage of time before she retreats to Kasauli after the retirement. She could never excuse her husband for his extramarital relations. As a mother of several children, Nanda Kaul found it

difficult to accept her miserable solitude in her old age. The novel further explicates the alienation of Nanda Kaul and her grand daughter Raka. The loneliness and isolation of the two have been presented in it. Raka is an abnormal child. She likes to wander alone in the ravine without informing her great grandma. Raka is an unwelcome intruder into Nanda Kaul's life. Raka never enjoys the company of the grey old ladies like Nanda Kaul and her peculiar friend Ila Das. Their talks bore Raka to the extent of depression. Raka sets the forest on fire towards the end of the novel. The fire created by her is the result of her existential anguish to destroy the old and meaningless to make the new.

c) Nanda Kaul's Crisis for Identity :-

Desai's protagonist Nanda Kaul presents an unforgettable, pathetic portrait of old age. Her life is a life of loneliness and isolation. She does not want to involve herself in any responsibility anymore, for all she wanted was to be alone. She likes to be free from all irritating involvements and withdraws into Carignano, her hillside home Kasauli. In this house she hopes to live a single life. In her agony she says:

“Have I not done enough and had enough ? I want no more. I want nothing” (Anita, Desai. *Fire on the Mountain*) (p-37)

In fact Nanda is fed up of her life as a housewife. She wants her own space. Like Maya, Monisha, Sita and Sarah she also struggles for her own identity that she has lost in Mr. Kaul's big house, which is always full of people.

Nanda Kaul has done too much for her husband. Her cry is nothing but a cry in despair, a prayer which goes unheard and unanswered. She has withdrawn herself physically from her duties and responsibilities, irritations, joy and sadness. She can neither escape her past, nor help the present, nor predict her future. Her past keeps babbling in her mind and the memories create a series of pleasant or unpleasant feelings. She lived here alone because that was what she was forced to do. She finds a senseless compromise between inner and outer experiences. She is sick of her past, but the past including the memory of her husband's infidelity

keeps assaulting her. Nanda Kaul hangs between her decisions and indecisions. She becomes conscious of her loneliness and there is a crisis in her life. The inner crisis of her life is gloomy but it is the truth of life. This crisis serves as a mirror of the hollow self she has created. She has been a giver all her life holding back only the hour of stillness every afternoon. Here is a love impoverished heart, or rather a heart burning with feminine jealousy against Miss David the Mathematics teacher, with whom her husband led a life of romance. Whatever she got in her marital life as children and security of social status is gone with her husband's death, she is now unwanted.

There are tall pine trees outside her garden. She looks at them, pines a way exactly conscious of what she is waiting for; she is awaiting the inevitable end to all human existence, death. She is haunted by the existential angst which has led her to conclude that human life is basically a lonely struggle against the odds of life.

Nanda Kaul lives undisturbed by human company. She likes loneliness more than anything. She has cut herself off from human concerns entirely. Her desire to be lonely and isolated is seen in her apathy to receive her great grand daughter. She is fed up of being the wife of a renowned person like the Vice-Chancellor. Her mental exhaustion and world weariness provokes her to detach from all the relations and responsibilities.

But one day her great granddaughter Raka comes to Carignano to Nanda Kaul's house to stay with her for some days. Nanda and Raka both live in fantasy and at the end Desai brings a kind of harmony between Nanda and Raka. When Nanda hears the news of her friend Ila Das's murder, she receives a deep shock and the police officer tells her to come to the police station to identify the body. But Nanda has ceased to listen to it and she cries with distress and then Raka comes there and saw Nanda Kaul on the stool with her head hanging. She was no more.

The novel tells of the hollowness into which Nanda is forced. The disloyalty of her husband provoked her to a life of silence.

d) Third Female Protagonist in the Novel - Ila Das :-

Poonam Joshi discusses about third female protagonist in her book *Thematic Preoccupation in Anita Desai's Novels* that - Ila Das, a childhood friend of Nanda Kaul is another intruder into the quietness of Carignano. Her role is marginal as compared to Nanda Kaul and Raka. Yet Anita Desai has projected another aspect of the existentialist philosophy through her character. In her life there is misery. She calls Nanda Kaul on the phone and informs her of her proposed visit to Kasauli to meet Raka. Her life is full of adversities. She was a university lecturer. She represents the poor class educated woman who can take up any job as a means of support. She finds herself fighting a lonely battle against a monotonous crowd. She remains faithful to her occupation. She succeeds in stopping child-marriages. She wages a heroic battle against the directives of the society. Finally, she pays a price for her convictions and refusal to compromise. She is raped and murdered by Preet Singh who takes his revenge on her.

Thus Desai shows her characters in a different way. Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila Das depict women in different situations in seclusion. Desai examines three important aspects of thought through her protagonists. Nanda Kaul is in alienation and existential angst. Raka symbolizes the individual's quest for meaning. Ila Das stands for the external conflict. One common ground for these three characters is that they are women who live in loneliness both out of choice and compulsion. Nanda Kaul stands for detachment, Raka for indifference and Ila Das for attachment to self. Desai has examined the dilemma of these three women in Kasauli and analyzes the crisis and psyche of women in isolation.

The novel *Fire on the Mountain* depicts the predicament of women in a society that fails to satisfy their desire and fulfill their hope. The novel depicts a world, which is not made safe for women. Therefore there is need for women to understand each other. The novel clearly shows the dilemma of women in a

society that has become a fit place, not for living but for dying. That is why when Raka comes to Nanda Kaul to tell the about fire, She saw Nanda Kaul on the stool with her head hanging, the black telephone hanging, the long wire dangling. Nanda Kaul is no more.

With this novel Anita Desai emphasizes on female freedom as a myth. She likes to suggest that the myth of masculine superiority is preserved in the area of physical strength. The condition of women in the pre-independent India was worse and more pathetic than in the contemporary period.

4.6 Protest of Desai's Protagonists in their Married Life -

Thus I found Desai's protagonists, Maya in *Cry the Peacock*, Monisha in *Voices in the City*, Sarah in *Bye Bye Black Bird*, Sita in *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* and Nanda in *Fire On the Mountain* are quite dissatisfied in their marital relationships. They face tension due to the discord between the individual and the surroundings. In Desai's novels, the parent-child bond is never satisfying. The parents are over possessive, or the child experiences total rejection. Unfortunately in some of Desai's novels, the children are left with a single parent- as in *Cry The Peacock* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* For example, Maya and Sita - their relationship with their parents does not satisfy their emotional needs.

Thus Anita Desai shows her protest against unhappy married life in the fake world through her female characters. Desai, in particular has concentrated on problems of women and projected them in diverse roles as sober and submissive like Monisha and Sarah. In these novels a woman is described from different angles - sometimes rebelling against her husband like Maya and Monisha and at times submissive and obedient to her husband like Sarah. Though in all her novels the heroine suffers from loneliness but the reaction to loneliness in all her novels is different. Maya pushes her husband from the roof, Monisha sets fire to herself, and Sarah and Nanda remain silent and subservient to their husbands. Monisha, Sarah, Sita are depicted as typical Indian women by Desai. Maya, Monisha and Nanda fail to arrive at any compromise. The women are actual living beings of

flesh and blood in her novels. There is change in women's condition from bondage to freedom, from indecision to self assertion, and from weakness to strength. The novelist tries to give equal status to women and shows in the process that man should rise above in the prejudice of considering them as the weaker sex. Her novels portray the struggle of the female psyche for identity.

I would like to focus on the fact that, the uniqueness of Desai's novels lies in her treatment of feminine sensibility. She talks of women who question the age-old traditions and want to seek individual growth. They try to reconsider, to be known in a new context and find the significance in life. Desai writes mostly about the depressed plight of women suffering under their coldhearted and thoughtless husbands, fathers, and brothers. Desai has shown that, a man marries for the sake of social norms and it is the woman who suffers. In this world, man is dominant. He keeps woman just as a showpiece. Gautam, Jiban, Adit, Raman and Mr. Kaul-- these husbands never think of their better halves- Maya, Monisha, Sarah, Sita and Nanda as more than a commodity. Desai tries to show that the woman of today has a new face. She does not like to remain within the four walls of the house to say only 'yes' and 'no' to her husband and to look after the members of the house. She also wants to move freely like a bird, to share her likes and dislikes with her partner and to attain love and care as an independent creature. They want love from their husbands. Craving for love from their respective better halves drive Maya and Monisha towards insanity and suicide. By portraying Maya, Desai has shown that instead of sitting idle and obeying her husband, she wants to travel and go into the outer world. So Maya pushes Gautama from the roof in revolt against her husband. And so she wants to live life according to her own will. Maya, Monisha, Sarah, Sita, Nanda want their own distinctive position apart from their husbands.

The feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir denies physiological sex difference. In fact she has different experiences as a woman. In this context, the question of individuality and freedom naturally arises as a result of male domination. None of them can be called superior or subordinate. Both are same, equal. Both have their own individuality and freedom. They are also equal in

terms of their rights. This never leads to the question of superiority in a so-called male dominated society. Beauvoir considers men and women as natural. According to her, human beings should be treated as human to bring about gender equality in our nations. Who is dominant or subordinate? A male or female, the question takes us to an intellectual debate where the quality elapses with social and economic imbalance in the country. Who makes difference? Is it male or female domination?. And why is the difference made? It needs to be clarified. That is why, 'Save a girl child' is a cry of all nations. The destiny of being male or female is determined by the society. The woman needs her space to create her own social and national identity. Jasbir Jain opines in his book *Gender and Narrative*. "In traditional societies women have been constrained by social constructs and have been vertically divided into family units, relating to the outside world through their men being governed by their positions or lack of communication. And how have they defined themselves related to society. These and a host of similar questions came in one's mind" (Jain 12)

The women novelists in Indian fiction in English occupy a prestigious position. Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy are prominent in this field. The work of these women writers has given a distinct dimension to the total picture of women in the family and in society. More and more women writers came forward to explore the causes of suffering. A variety of shades, colours, visions are reflected when we go through the writings of these women writers. They have portrayed their responses and reactions. Their novels have female protagonists and they particularly deal with their inner selves and tried to reflect their inner feelings. But after all women suffer a lot in a male dominated Indian society.

I would like to focus here, it is the fact that the Indian woman today faces the conflict between the restraints placed upon her by tradition and the need to assert herself. She also faces the conflict between traditional ideals and their own desires. In a critical venture when a woman tries to seek her identity, she tries to define herself by saying "I am a Woman". Through centuries, the Indian woman has tried to create her own space within a patriarchal society. Though educated,

enlightened, demanding more from herself and life; conscious of an identity, apart from that which links her to a male, she is faced by a number of age-old beliefs.

Feminism in literature is essentially concerned with the representation of women in society. Desai explores the disturbed psyche of Indian women, laying emphasis on the factor of loneliness. However Desai's women do not give up the strife so easily. She focuses on gender roles of women seen through the lens of female activities. Her characters – Maya, Monisha, Nanda are like wooden creatures, subject to suppression and male domination only. The transformative power of Anita Desai's novels lies in her taking up the task of revealing the process of self awareness at work in the feminine psyche. Most of her women characters registered a protest against the circumstances, which oppressed them. Desai's entire fiction traces the changing image of women in the face of existential dilemmas. These female protagonists assert their right to exist not as shadows of their male counterparts but as independent human beings with a will of their own. In fact this is the real aim of any feminist.

I found, Desai's novels are addressed to and deal with women. The primary concern of feminism is to declare that a woman is a being. She is not subordinate to man. Rather she is an autonomous being. She is capable of trial and error, finding her own way to salvation. We come across such women characters in Anita Desai's novels who are consciously trying to come to terms with themselves as individuals.

Their voice is now gradually becoming audible and there is definitely a protest in their own voice. There is a clear tone of resentment and a pressing demand for freedom. The new woman has raised her voice against the atrocity and injustice done to her. The modern woman protests and dares to pronounce her convictions. And it is their voice of protest. Anita Desai as a focused feminist has presented three kinds of females in her novels. - In the first group there are such females who are hypersensitive and plunge into dark dismal depths of neurosis like Maya in *Cry The Peacock*. The second group portrays women characters who silently suffer the strain of life and become idealists or commit suicide like

Monisha in *Voices In The City*. While the third group discloses women who discern new and important discoveries about themselves resulting in a sobering effect on them and they find a sense of fulfillment in their relation to the world.

Anita Desai's women characters display a sensitive and subtle awareness of the forces working to repress them and question the inequalities of such systems. There is an incipient feminist consciousness present in the anger of Maya and Sita and the studied indifference of Monisha and Nanda.

4.7 Anita Desai's Treatment of Feminism -

We have seen that, from the ancient period, the social structure of an Indian woman is full of many ups and downs as well as ifs and buts. The harsh reality of man's domination over woman has made her a victim of discrimination. Anita Desai, has truthfully portrayed the plight of women in society and their marathon struggle for seeking the sense of identity in a male dominated conservative framework. Desai wants to say that, woman is not a mere toy or an object of pleasure or means of gratifying the man's baser passion but the noble and richest part of man's life. The patriarchal society bluntly violates all these principles of equality and controls the power structure of the society. The presence of such blunt violations are felt when gender discrimination causes numerous problems to the women. They are the custodians of cultural values and social norms imposed by the dominant patriarchal culture. Desai shows that, the typical patriarchal psychology has considered the woman as merely an object made for the pleasure and satisfaction of man. Feminine consideration has no value in male dominated society, where entire social, religious, cultural and family affairs are handled single handedly. Women get opportunities and freedom upto some limit but, they have no choice to live their life as they wish to. The patriarchal culture and social taboos do not let the women enjoy their lives freely.

The focus of my writing is, how the colonized condition of the women in a domestic world under the burden of the husband and his family members and the

voice raised by the new woman as a resisting strategy is reflected in Desai's novels.

Desai's earlier novels *Cry the Peacock* and *Voices in the City* deal with the case of the depressed housewife in two different ways. Maya is pushed beyond endurance to insanity because of her husband's inability to relate to her and Monisha has to suffer due to her in-laws. Maya turns insane and Monisha chooses death. We see such events are very common in Indian middle class families.

Desai has created a feminist discourse of literary writings showing signs of seething discontentment, hatred for the patriarchal norms. Desai has a typical style of her own to register protest against patriarchal norms.

Anita Desai, undoubtedly, occupies a supreme position amongst contemporary Indian feminist novelists. With her poignant, hypersensitive knowledge, erudition and inner psychological power concerning the natural and real everyday affairs of familial, societal, economic dealings as minutely impacted in her major novels. Her novels symbolize the feminism. Through her novels, Desai has unveiled the grim as well as mysterious truth of human psychology, especially women's questions in most of her novels of our postmodern era. As a self-conscious social critic and reformer, Desai has divulged the unnoticed images of the inferior and hatred feminine community of her age. Feminism is one of the top most issues of her fictional world; she has pictured a paradigm of the whole women's community with a view to spreading the message of the second sex. Her fiction dealt with feminine sensationalism and vivid themes, which are innovative and concerned with the miserable plight of the weaker working class of women's untold affliction, agony and psychological, conflicting senses under the unconscious and unwise, inconsiderate husbands, fathers and brothers. Desai wanted to highlight the matriarchal struggle, self-freedom, and self-identity and self-power against the male dominated world, where she has universalized the feminist message with the inner gaze.

I have observed that, Anita Desai, in her psychological novels, focuses on the minute and subtle images of a tormented, tortured, toiled, trodden and self-frustrated femininity preoccupied with her inner heart, soul and mind, her sulking depression, melancholy, pessimism, self-storming pragmatics surrounding the atmosphere of mankind. The existential predicament of female world contradicts the masculinity. Though her female protagonists or 'femme fatale' figures, Desai makes a fervent appeal and plea for a radiant dawn for the whole female community. The novelist discusses the vivid and clear-cut problematic features of temperamental incompatibility, conjugal chaos and conflicting dilemmas and ever growing hatred and despised disparity between men and women. In her novels most protagonists are segmented and alienated from the world, society, family, parents, and even from their own selves, because they are not average people but individuals, who are hardly able to cope with patriarchy, unable to keep abreast with this setup, rather they drift into their own sequestered world where they spin their great expectations, ambitions, dreams, which automatically disappears into the realm of oblivion.

Her novels are presented through the feminine sensibility and pragmatic sense. Desai aims to examine the natural, social and fanciful bonds that unchain the women's issues and in this way she is concerned with the destiny of the domesticated woman in the typical Indian society of the postmodern period. The theme of the martial unhappiness and sorrowful heart and a maladjusted marriage-bond cause depression and alienation in the minds of women as reflected in her popular novels.

Anita Desai pictures the glaring portrayal of the women's quests by fostering the profound and deeper universe of her powerful protagonists. Anita Desai has magnified with the comprehensibility and intelligibility which brightens her aestheticism through her novel's-worlds.

It is found that, Desai presents a kaleidoscopic image of the profound minds of her women personalities. Existential predicament of her protagonist due to various factors is her main issue in her novel. Desai makes known to us the

unconscious motivations of the human psyche, the problem of human relationships, the protagonist's quest for identification in all her novels. Women, in Desai's fiction embody the author's quest for psychological insight, awareness and harmony. They are the focal point of contact between the writer's consciousness and the world from which women have deviated. Her women, therefore, have to face the conflicts, make efforts to break away, to assert their individuality and think whether their decision to do so is the right one, how to resolve the identity crisis and emerge from the trauma.

The purpose of my writing is to focus on the feminist echoes as articulated in Anita Desai's famous novels, *Cry the Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Bye Bye Black Bird*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* *And Fire on the Mountain*. My intent is to examine critically how in the post-modern era Indian women writers in English have highlighted women's questions, demanding the rights. They have raised a fiery voice and initiated an inner revolution against the traditional order, system and gender discrimination with a view to achieving human rights. Considering the 'femme fatale' characters of Anita Desai, one of the most renowned Indian writers writing in English, especially the powerful and domineering female protagonists of her novels who draw our attention to her work as exemplary instances of post-modern feminism.

I found that Desai explores patriarchal oppression through the embedded code of social imagination with regard to the desirable image of woman the "Sati-Savitri-Parampara'. Women are physically and sexually too repressed to find their subjectivity. Desai's novels explore the neurotic explosions due to sexual repression in women. It is also seen that, as a feminist critique, Anita Desai's novels seek to analyze how the category of women as the subject of feminism is produced and retrained by the power structures through which emancipation is sought. Her works interrogate the prevailing patriarchal set up through women's consciousness and raise questions on the intellectual and psychological dimensions of Indian male consciousness. Her early novels depict gender and feminist concerns in middle class Indian Society with some authenticity.

I would like to say that Anita Desai is a prominent Indian Woman Writer who raised her voice against the socio-cultural system of Indian male-dominated society and favours to female freedom and empowerment. The study finds that Desai, while depicting the psychological plight of female characters in her novels, makes clear that Indian feminism is quite different from the western one and shows how authentically Desai represents the deplorable status of women in the Indian patriarchal set-up.

4.8 Social Status of Female Characters in Anita Desai's Selected Novels -

The female characters – **Maya, Monisha, Sita, Sarah** and **Nanda** are generally neurotic females, highly sensitive, involved in a world of dream and imagination and alienated from their surroundings as a consequence of their failure or unwillingness to adjust with the reality. They often differ in their opinion from others and travel to find the meaning of their existence.

The author N.R Gopal says in his book '*A Critical study of the Novels of Anita Desai*' that, Anita Desai is a master crafts woman in situating characters in a particular social set up and valuing him or her in the light of the whole network of relationships that he or she finds herself entangled in. The individual in Desai's novels is cross referred by social forces. What is a society after all? Society consists of individuals and the individual is a part of society and we all live in a society and as a social factor we need each other. It is a different matter that some individuals do not go well with the society for a number of reasons. There are social reforms, religious leaders and political leaders who rebel against perverted social values and customs in order to make society better. There are writers who uphold accepted social values in their fiction creating conformists. But there is a group of writers who are non-conformists, whose characters do not conform to social values. Anita Desai is one of those writers who are more interested in creating characters who are 'Nay-Sayers' speaking about the two kinds of characters who can be described as Aye-Sayers and Nay-Sayers, she has said.

“There are those who can handle situations and those who can’t. And my stories are generally about those who cannot. They find themselves trapped in situation over which they have no control” (47)

And in support of her above view, she has quoted the following lines from the poem by C.P. Cavafy in *Where shall we go this Summer?*

“To certain people there comes a day when they must say the great yes or the great No: He who has the ‘yes’ ready within him reveals himself at once, and saying it crosses over to the path of honour and his own conviction. He who refuses does not repent. Should he be asked again, he would say No. again. And yet that No-the right No-crushes him for the rest of his life.”(48)

If we see Anita Desai’s characters - No all are ‘Nay-Sayers’ but one may be unhappy in society but there is no escape from society. One may fight with society but one will always remain a part of it. Desai specializes in creating the ‘Nay-Sayers’ in her novels and such characters are bound to come into conflict with society. They do not fit into their socially allotted slots, they are no mere cogs in the machinery called society. Thus they are misfits as social beings. There is a host of such characters. One’s personality and life is most affected when the society imposes certain norms on the characters and demands conformity to them and when they don’t conform, society demands a pound of flesh. Monisha in *Voices in the City* is an example of such a non-conformist. The tension between her individual being and several other beings is so great that she breaks down, pushed to the wall and being a sensitive woman, she is compelled to commit a suicide. Society is an abstract concept and hence it operates through the members of society, be they husbands and in-laws or other persons. Society exercises its influence and control on the individual through social values. And when those values are perverted the influence becomes suffocating and life-sucking, making the individual, a psychological cripple, living in the land of reality and fantasy.

Anita Desai is not merely a domestic novelist, writing only about family and man-woman relationship but at times goes beyond the limits of family,

exploring and portraying of social prejudices and perverted social values that affect the individual. There may be various kinds of such social biases and values that affect the individual. They may be communal or socio-political.

4.9 Domestic Violence -

There is domestic violence in families due to various reasons. It includes not only inter-spousal violence, but also violence caused by other family members, which Monisha has to tolerate in the novel *Voices in the City*. Her situation is a typical picture of Indian joint family and as if she is a representative of numerous young brides in India who have to bear endless torture and humiliating behaviour of the husband's family members, she says.

“Look at me, my equipment, my back wardrobe, my family, my duties of serving fresh chapattis to the uncles as they eat, of listening to my mother-in-law as she tells many ways of cooking fish.” (Desai 111- 112)

Monisha's husband, Jiban's posting was at Calcutta and she has to live with her joint family. Her mother-in-law was a typical Indian mother-in-law, who pokes her nose in each and every matter of her son. Monisha was tolerating her mother-in-law from the very first day of her marriage. So she says — “while placing her hand on my head in blessing, also pushes a little harder than I think necessary, and still harder and go down on my knees to touch her feet.” (109)

Monisha has to behave as per her mother-in-law's, wishes. She can not talk with her husband freely. Indirectly the old woman threatens Monisha, and she is always ready to obey the old woman's instructions. Even one day Monisha was accused of theft by her mother-in-law and without thinking she says, “Money has been stolen, you know Jiban's money. After all you were the only person who was in the room” (317) This treatment by the mother-in-law is a type of domestic violence.

The protagonist Maya in *Cry the Peacock* has also faced domestic violence. Though she does not live in a joint family, in the second part she

remembers some of the incidents with her mother-in-law. In fact Maya feels happy with the arrival of her mother-in-law as it breaks her loneliness but her mother-in-law is also a typical Indian mother-in-law, who expects from Maya that she should work according to her wish. She does not care whether Maya is happy or not. She only wants money from Maya's father. She even forgets about her son's death. And when Maya forces her to stay with her she does not listen to her though Maya even begged and flung herself at her knees. She too like Gautama fails to understand the condition of motherless and childless Maya. She always tries to show superiority over Maya saying that her son is a great lawyer who married a girl like her. At last Maya remains lonely and neglected as nobody, not even a woman understands her. Thus Maya is also a victim of domestic violence.

Violence against women in India is not just a present issue but it has rather deep-seated traditional roots in culture, which we can see in the novels of Anita Desai. A majority of women in India suffer from the burden of injustice. They have always been ill-treated and deprived of their right to life and personal liberty as provided under the constitution of India. They are always considered as physically and emotionally weaker than males in Indian Society. The present scenario of domestic violence against woman plays a vital role in the society. Nanda Kaul's situation in *'Fire on the Mountain'* is also not very different. Her husband does not care much for her and she is only doing her duties of a house keeper and the hospitable hostess all the time for her husband.

Sarcastic remarks in the presence of outsiders, imposing severe restrictions on wife in decision making processes, making frequent complaints against her, to her parents, friends, neighbours are the forms of psychological violence. Several Indian Women are victims of domestic and psychological violence.

This is what I want to focus on that Maya in *'Cry the Peacock'* becomes a victim of domestic violence. Gautama, her husband insults her in-front of his friends. This is clear from an incident when Gautama and his male friends recite Urdu-poetry in the garden. Maya is happy and wants to join them. But when she went there and joined them, Gautama did not notice, rather neglected her. He

disliked her joining them. So he turned his back towards her and continued talking to his friends and insulted her.

a) Monisha as an 'Indian Bahu' Caged in the House :-

The protagonist Monisha fails to adjust herself to the suffocating atmosphere in the joint family of her in-laws and the result is an unhappy end by burning herself. Woman as daughters-in-law in a typical middle class Indian family is not at all a happy social being. All her ambitions, talent and potentialities are reduced to being a mere housewife and she can do nothing beyond her household duties. Anita Desai has very effectively described the position of a 'bahu' caged inside the house in an Indian society. And she has no value, no status in the society. Monisha the protagonist herself writes in her diary...

"I think of generations of Bengali women hidden behind the barred window of half dark rooms, spending centuries in washing clothes and kneading dough. Lives spent in waiting for nothing ..." (120)

Monisha's family has many members. It is a joint family. Monisha lives a life that she depicts as non-existence and the consequences of the mental tortures, are described in her diary. She has lost contact with the outside world because of her confinement in the house. She has no contact with the society, so cannot share her feelings with anybody. Her loneliness and stress push her to breaking point and she commits suicide. Monisha has presented a typical social situation of several brides in India. So Monisha's death is a subject of great social significance. She is not able to cope with modern society. *Voices in the City* is perhaps Desai's first novel of social atmosphere and locale. She successfully captures the spirit of the surrounding, place and social values.

Another female character in the novel is Amla, Monisha's sister. The nature of Monisha and Amla is same. Both of them rebel against traditional middle class society. Desai has her own separate approach to female problems in Indian social life. Some of her protagonists have the idea of happy life but on the whole it is not happy. The identity of a woman has not been openly realized in

Indian social life. This attitude is the cause of her suffering and miserable life. The society expects that a woman must adjust herself with the changing family ways and surroundings.

4.10 Violence Against Woman as a Social Problem -

Rehana Ghadially discusses about violence on women that - Most societies exhibit violence in one way or another. Violence against women is a social problem. Women in Indian Society have been victims of ill-treatment, humiliation, torture and exploitation. For centuries women were not treated as equal to men in many ways. Violence against woman is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. It takes place in a man-woman relationship within the family, state and society.

I found such violence as a social problem in the case of Maya - Maya's life appears to her as an endless tedium with nothing significant taking place at any time. She is never the centre of importance nor she is instrumental in any social event. The sphere of her social activities is so severely restricted that she seems to feel suffocated within it. But by Indian standards her life situation appears to be ideal. Because she has a secure home, an earning husband and a well defined future. And such a woman has also a good status in the Indian society.

But I do not agree with this concept of satisfaction or happiness for women. It is not sufficient for a woman to get a good home and an earning husband. Apart from all this a woman should get freedom, to do something as she wishes. Her happiness is not depend upon amenities in the house or on the salary of her husband even if he provides everything to his wife. However she expects love, affection and care from his family and if she does not get it, how can she be happy?

The same thing happens in Maya's case. Maya's expectations are different which were not fulfilled by Gautama. The novel abounds in incidents that show

how her longing for outdoor life is constantly frustrated mainly by Gautama. She wishes to go to Darjeeling and also to watch Kathakali ballets but Gautama does not take any interest in it. That is why at the time of his Urdu friends' party when Maya wishes to join it, Gautama not only shatters her hope of participating but also drives her home. He does not like her mixing with others. At most places she appears to reel under the pressure. She is scared of not only society but of her own conscience.

Is this not a kind of domestic violence? I think it is Maya in *Cry the Peacock* is a victim of domestic violence and this is a social problem, which cannot be seen. Maya is tortured silently by Gautama and is given a subordinate status by him, not paying too much attention to the likings of a wife, is a kind of violence which takes place in Maya's case.

Some other female characters in the novel are Pom and Leila who are Maya's friends. Pom wants to move away from her-in-laws with her husband. She is the typical culturally uprooted woman of India who swarm the big cities. Maya's other friend Leila is a teacher of Persian in a girl's high school married to a man in spite of knowing his disease. Her attitude towards life is fatalistic. Whatever marriages are referred to in *Cry the Peacock* are not contented marriages in the real sense of the term.

Whatever human relationships are presented in this novel don't represent harmony. Maya is deeply shattered by the hypocrisy and disgust exposed through other marriages around her in the society. And so at last she becomes neurotic. In Desai's case, the novel is not a sociological phenomenon, rather it is psychic and her female protagonists try to discover meaningfulness in life. They are not usual, average, and normal women in the society, but different from others. They are alienated from the world, from society, from families, from parents, and even from their own selves, for they are not average people but individuals.

Jawaharlal Nehru said that, "You can tell the condition of a Nation by looking at the status of its women" means one can understand the status of that

nation and it is true that in India where almost half of the population is women, they have always been ill-treated and deprived of their right to life. Women are always considered as physically and emotionally weak than the males, where at present women have proved themselves in almost every field of life affirming that they are no less than men due to their hard work, whether at home or at the working place. But offences against women which reflect the pathetic reality, that women are just not safe and secure anywhere. In fact woman plays a vital role in the society but she has not received that level of love, affection, respect which she gives to others.

It would not be an exaggeration, if I say, "From the cradle to the grave, women are objects of violence for those nearest and dearest to them."

The girl's first right is the right to remain alive after birth and not to be killed quickly in her first few hours or killed slowly by neglect. Female infanticide still continues, which is evident from the falling ratio of girls to boys. People do not show much concern about the problem of female infanticide. So the inequality starts from birth rather even before the birth of a girl child.

Moreover to say, Indian culture is predominantly with male dominated, in which the place of women always remains secondary. Her identity in society only remains as a girl. For example, in her childhood, her toys are different from boys and her games are only the games of a girl. So the difference starts from childhood and further develops into a secondary position.

Women in literature, through the centuries, have been based on the mythic models from Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas. Manu Smriti is assumed to be responsible for degrading women to an inferior status; but the codes of Manu are replete with contradictions. There is one section that has made great impact and disallows any freedom for a woman.

“Pita Rakshati Kaumaree,
Bharataa Rakshati Yauvanee;
Putroo Rakshati Vardhakyee,
No Stri Swaatantyam Arhati”

[A.J. Sastri : *Manu Smrithi*, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1983, 3)

It means that the father protects the women, during childhood, the husband during her youth and the son during her old age, a woman does not deserve freedom.

Apart from all this women need to get out from these shackles. There is need to get free from this male dominated society and gender inequality. There is need to change the attitude of the male-dominated society. Now the time has come to create an atmosphere of Gender Equality. Women have to be treated as a necessary part of society. There is need to concentrate on a very serious problem like saving girl child and educate them and also give them good status, equal to men, in the society. For that women’s empowerment plays a very important role.

The issue of empowerment of women came up when United Nations declared the year 1975 as ‘International Women’s Year’ Government of India celebrated the year 2011 as ‘Women Empowerment Year’. But still women have to face several problems. Various programmes like ‘Balika Samridhi Yojana’, ‘Mahila Samridhi Yojana’ were implemented and seen as the steps towards empowerment of women in India. ‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’ campaign was also launched by the Government. There is need of creating awareness about all this for the empowerment of women. The earning women also do not have the full freedom to spend their money in accordance with their own wish or they cannot take decisions on important matters.

Thus, Indian women are not completely free from the hold of the customs. It appears that the societal approach towards women, their role and status has not

radically changed. Hence, bringing about more and more legislations to ensure better opportunities, to grant more rights and concessions is of no benefit, unless there is a basic change in the people's attitude towards women.

Here, in this respect I would like to focus on how Monisha is harassed by her family because of her childless state. Actually both Jiban and Monisha are childless but who becomes the victim of harassment? Only Monisha, because she is woman.

a) Monisha's Harassment Due to Her Childless State :-

In Indian society a woman more or less proves herself through her ability of giving a birth to a child. A woman having a child is invited by the society for any celebration, function or rituals.

In *Voices in the City* Monisha is regarded as a less of woman because she is unable to give a birth to a child. She is childless and can not share experience of maternity or things of children with other women who are mothers. This is a social and artificial morality which is hidden behind this pseudo – naturalism. We know, what is the status of a childless woman in her family and in an Indian society. Her in-laws talk about the reasons why she cannot have a child. Meena Shirwadkar discusses Monisha's suffering due to her childless state in her article *Image of woman in the Indo-Anglian Novel*. She laments further that the generative cycle of life for a woman ends on a note of indignity as she is unable to assert herself before others, in society and in the interpersonal relationships based on individual whims. Jiban, Monisha's husband is the prisoner of a conventional culture in which a woman's important roles are, cooking, cutting vegetables, serving food, brushing small children's hair, under the authority of her mother-in-law. Jiban clearly favours the static and social structure in any circumstances in which a woman has no status. So he considers his wife worthless. Monisha builds a wall of fantasy around herself and therefore, loses the ability to live in the moment. Her desire is to live a quiet life away from society. She creates a composite picture of a woman in the Indian patriarchal society. This society

allows only a marginalized existence to its woman. After marriage, freedom of a woman becomes limited. As in most of the cases, a married woman is not allowed to meet her old friends or even relatives freely. In a conservative Indian society a woman cannot go out alone anywhere. Even though she may be educated, no body asks her advice in any matter so the Indian daughter-in-law has to compromise with everything though she dislikes it and give up her self esteem. Thus in an Indian society her status is negligible and the question of fulfilling her desire never arises and the end is similar to that of Monisha in '*Voices in the City*'. This novel is perhaps Desai's first novel of social atmosphere and locale. She successfully captures the spirit of the surroundings, place and social values.

a) Maya's Isolation From Society :-

In the novel *Cry the Peacock* we see Maya, the protagonist, is highly sensitive and emotional who is married to Gautama, a busy, prosperous, middle aged lawyer; who is too engrossed in his own affairs to meet the demands, of his young wife. His sensibilities are too rough and practical to suit Maya, because she is the pampered child of Rai Saheb, and is brought up in an atmosphere of luxury. She lives to use her own worlds, like 'a toy prince in a toy world'. She does not mix with the society, as she gets everything in her father's house. So when she married Gautama, he tries to keep her happy and cares for her in his own way, but Maya is never satisfied and happy. In fact marriage is considered as a social institution in India and marital relationships are established with the purpose of providing companionship to each other. However, the element of companionship is sadly missing in the relationship between Maya and Gautama. The novel exposes an unhappy conjugal life and Maya lives a lonely life though married. Gautama feels that marriage gives social security to a woman whereas Maya needs emotional protection as well.

Society plays an important role in handling human relationships in Indian English fiction. According to Desai, differences and disputes are a part of life and they are found in the man-woman relationship. In the Indian society gender discrimination plays a prominent role. Classification in society also contributes to

the oppression of women. These conflicts have many negative results. Many women suffer from identity crisis. Most of the female protagonists are driven to the point of suicide, while others become neurotic.

Prof. Sudhakar Jamkhandi emphasizes the fact that Desai is able to illustrate that “the sensibility of the Indian housewife, a victim of society’s malicious tradition, is significant and that the effect of self centeredness or self pity is harmful in the husband and wife relationship.

[Sudhakar Jamkhandi : ‘The Artistic Effect of the Shifts in Points of View in Anita Desai’s *Cry the Peacock*’, *The Journal of Indian writing in English*, Jan 1981, 4]

In *Cry the Peacock* the marriage of Maya and Gautama is largely a kind of social arrangement without emotional attachment Maya feels she is helpless and is imprisoned in her own house. She wants to go and mix with others in the society. But Gautama dislikes it. So Maya thinks: In his world there were vast areas in which he would never permit her and could not understand that she also wants to join others and share her things with the others in the society. Desai has painted Maya who does not realize that the world is not what she imagines. Maya keeps on remembering her childhood days and the treatment of her father. She is obsessed and feels that no one else in the society loves her as her father did. Nowhere in the novel does Desai suggest a solution to the problem which Maya faces. She always feels alone.

Desai’s third novel *Bye Bye Black Bird* depicts the condition of Indians who have gone to England for better prospects. The novel describes the experience of all immigrants. Adit, an Indian boy marries an English girl Sarah. Their relationship has been depicted minutely through social environment related to racial discrimination. Though the lifestyles of Adit and Sarah are different they manage to live together. Sarah’s life is split into two parts. She always feels loss of her personality. Being married to an Indian man, so she is cut-off from the both societies –the one in which she lives that is the society from which she comes

from and also from that in which she is going to live in India. She feels free among the strangers in the society where she is not identified as Indian or British. She never talks about her Indian husband to anybody and avoids meeting her friends and relatives. Her loneliness has risen out of her circumstances.

Adit, Sarah's husband seemed to have so much to give her – so many relatives and attachments in the society. So she happily agrees to leave England with her husband – like a true Indian wife. She tries to keep her husband happy. She even prepares Indian food for him. Sarah is a British girl and described as a typical Indian Woman who never revolts against her husband and obeys him.

Desai has also shown Sarah as a lifeless doll without any feelings and insight. Sarah is culturally alienated from her society because of her marriage with Adit, who drives her to keep to the lonely path. To hide her secret, she remains cut off from her own society and becomes aloof. After the marriage she becomes lonely and loses her wish to participate in living. She feels empty. But Sarah is not lonely, socially. Because at home there are Adit, Dev and their social circle. In school, she has her colleagues. But Sarah is lonely in a crowd. She cannot enjoy the company of her countrymen. She refuses to work and wants to escape socialization by hiding. She wants to be 'unidentified', unnoticed and does not want to come out of her shell. She wants to become nameless. She has shed her past name and identity. She is also struggling for her existence in her own society that is England. She feels that her identity is divided into two and she asks herself a question-where was Sarah?... she wondered if Sarah has any existence at all... She is sandwiched between the two societies. The English society also cannot accept a marital relationship between a white girl and her black husband, for, according to them 'East is east and west is west and they can never meet.' Even her colleague speaks in very harsh words "if she is that ashamed of having an Indian husband, why did she go and marry him? (Desai 42)

Sarah never complains about any thing either to her husband or parents. She also faces social, cultural and racial problems in India. She does not mix her external and personal worlds. At the time of the departure from England, Sarah

feels sorry to see that, 'It was her English self that was receding and fading and dying, to which she must say good bye'.

b) Sarah as a Victim of Social Alienation :-

I think even though socially Sarah is not very happy because of racial prejudice of her people, yet as a wife she takes care of things. We have a warm, understanding wife in Sarah. Her social being may not be satisfied and contented but her family being is contented. The experience of disinheritance and futility has not percolated in our Indian life, but it has pierced into the life of a significant segment of our society.

The novel is not about Dev and Adit as much as it is about Sarah who has withdrawn from the world of her childhood. Sarah is fascinated by Indian life and culture, which results in her marrying an Indian, Adit. Her union with Adit, alienates her from her own society. She has to pay a heavy price for marrying Adit, as she has to change her name, identity. The young man's culture is adopted by an English lady, who rejects her own country, culture and society.

Dr. Prakash Joshi throws light on Sarah's condition and says that - Sarah stands between two poles-India and England. She becomes a victim of social alienation. She is not liked by her own countrymen for having married an Indian. She wants to hide her relationship from her own English People. She faces the problem of loneliness. Married to an Indian, she tries her best to adjust herself in her own society. When people discuss about India, she intentionally avoids the discussion. The novel depicts the Indo-English encounter involving love and marriage. The novel also depicts the social isolation problem and prospects of establishing meaningful relationship between the two racial and cultural groups. Sarah has to face many difficulties to adjust in an Indian society. She has a problem with wearing a saree and jewellery while attending any ceremony outside the house. She feels very awkward in such clothes. The large part of the novel deals with the social isolation of Adit and Sarah. In fact Sarah loses her own identity among her own people in her own country, in her own society. And now

while coming to India with Adit the same thing is happening. Thus, a close textual analysis reveals decisive influence of the socio cultural factors on the ultimate destiny of the characters in the novel. The novel deals with alienation of an English lady Sarah married to Adit, an immigrant from India. She bows down her head for committing a mistake by marrying an Indian, in her own society. She is treated as an outcaste in her own land. The strains of inter-racial marriage are so much on her that they affect her day-to-day life. She becomes a victim of the anger of her own society. She suffers most on this account.

Sarah, the English wife of Adit Sen has to live in a dual world, the two social worlds that do not meet the two incompatible cultures. She gets herself alienated from her own English society through her marriage and when she comes to India, there also she remains as an outsider in the Indian community, because she is an English lady. Indian women do not mix with her. Thus Sarah does not belong anywhere neither to England nor to India. She does not get any importance or status in both the societies. Sara's dilemma is not that of finding new roots but it is that of uprooted-ness and hence, deeper. She finds herself an alien and a stranger. She withdraws from society. In her conversation and in her general social intercourse she behaves as if she has some secret to keep, which she does not want to open. Sarah is in a confused state of mind as if she never belonged to the English society nor to Indian society due to her inter-racial marriage. The society does not accept her either in England or in India. Her condition is uncertain in both the societies.

c) Sarah's Social Identity Neither English nor Indian :-

In *Bye Bye Black Bird* alienation at different levels forms the theme of the novel. It explores the lives of the outsiders seeking to build a new identity in an alien society. After marrying the black Asian, Sarah has broken all the social codes of Landon. Her ill-matched marriage is ever a subject of taunts and scoffing in the society. She cannot escape the riddle, which is now part and parcel of her life. She does not know where she belongs and she is fed up with putting on faces in the society. Joanna Kirkpatrick points out that. "Identity in a caste society has a

fixed sense of social placement". If a girl marries in the same culture, it is very easy to adjust to her new home, family, neighbors etc. But Sarah's marriage is inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-racial which causes hardships and the adjustment problems in the family and out of the family, in the society. This is the problem, by which Sarah is homeless in her own native country. We find that even though socially Sarah is not happy on account of the racial prejudice of her people, we all praise this alien lady who understands her husband, his family, his society and country. Even with all her adjustments and acceptance, Sarah remains an outsider in her own chosen world. She was nobody. Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume. Her feeling of alienation from her own self, family and society is related to her own subconscious awareness. The strains of inter-racial marriage are so much on her that they affect her day to day life. When she goes for shopping she avoids going to the stores of Laurel lane where she lives, because there, people ask her many questions and her shopping would easily betray her link with India. So she prefers going to a big department store where she would remain an anonymous buyer and none would know her Asian connections. But in spite of all her precautions she cannot escape the game which is now part of her life. Her problem is human. She wants to be a real person whether English or Indian. She is fed up with sitting on the fence.

Desai's fourth novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*(1975) is the shortest novel which adds to her achievement as an Indian novelist in English. The novel is relevant to the existing world. In this world, there are many people who are suffering emotionally. They think that life in some other society would have been better. In this novel also she has dealt with the theme of existence and search for identity through her protagonist, Sita as a woman, wife and mother. She is very emotional and introverted. She suffers from her inability to accept the authority of the society. She is a hypersensitive young wife torn between the desire to abandon the boredom and hypocrisy of her middle class and the realization that the bonds that bind her to it, cannot easily be broken. Sita is tired of the life she wishes to escape from, the life of middle class society. She is fed up and disappointed with the society. She is not able to adjust her own self to the

society. As Prof. B. Ramchandra states “The novel may, thus, be seen as a parable on the ability of human beings to relate the inner with the outer, the individual with society.

The desire to come out of society is indeed great and Desai has expressed the desire of a woman in beautiful words. This lonely married woman is extremely disappointed about her sticky situation. She tried hard but could not get a positive solution to the confused life. She struggles to free herself from the chain of routine life and wants to escape in illusion.

In portraying Sita, Desai wants to give a message to the society that life inspite of the contraries has to be lived as “the existent lives in constant interaction with other existents or existence is being with others” In the beginning Sita opposes society life but in the end she realizes the difference between necessity and the wish. She wants to bear the child and return with her husband Raman. It depicts her return to the society.

Raman and Sita’s attitudes are different towards life. Sita finds her life futile and hollow. Raman’s approach towards life is realistic. He is unable to understand the violence and passion with which Sita reacts against every incident. Desai’s novels are certainly thoughtful of social realities. She goes deep into the forces that condition the growth of a female in this male dominated society. She observes social realities from the psychological perspective without posturing herself as a social reformer. Sita is the victim of a broken family. Her children do not pay any attention to her. Her husband is also occupied and fails to fulfill her hope. The novel is a sort of explanation of the various problems in the society and life. She cannot mix with the society. Desai makes artistic and symbolic use of the house imagery. The house here is linked with the pale and melancholic psychic life of Sita.

a) Sita’s Life in Bombay :-

In Bombay she lived in a flat on a height, but now isolating herself from the hubbub and commotion around, she retreats to the house built by her father on

Manori Island. Sita's problem seems to be maladjustment with her husband, the home life and surrounding atmosphere nauseating her. The suffering of Sita is caused by factors psychological in origin. The betrayal of her unconscious inclination to preserve and uphold traditional values of an integrated life in face of the chaotic values of the modern city civilization is at the root of her unhappiness. The world presented in the novel deviates from the institutional values, dogmas and old certainties. In her moments of joy and sorrow she has none to share hence she keeps herself away from relatives and society.

b) Sita's Alienation from Society :-

Sita suffers from nervous disorder being her self faced with this void, emptiness continuing to exist even after her marriage resulting in her loss of identity. No wonder, Sita is completely alienated from the world around her and starts living in a world of dream and fantasy. She wants to go to Manori. The Island of Manori symbolizes Sita's lonely life in her own family and the society. Sita's return to the island suggests both renewal and regeneration. She goes back the island where Sita's father had created a distinct social identity for himself and his followers.

As a contemporary writer Anita Desai considers new themes like alienation and detachment and knows how to tackle them in a brilliant manner. She explores the anguish of individuals living in modern society. A concerned social visionary, Anita Desai is a keen observer of the society and the position of the women in the contemporary society draws her special attention. Most of her protagonists are alienated from the world, from society from families, from parents because they are not average people but individuals.

c) Sita's Stay at Manori :-

The central character Sita in this novel, feeling the frustration of the suffocative four walls, develops a haunting fear that there are enemies around her. There is a clash between the sensitive individual and the world around her. Her untidiness before her husband is the result of an underlying desire to prove that

she does not care for anybody in the society that has not cared for her. Her outbursts against society, her boredom are only a pretence to hide her failing strength from the society. Like other heroines of Desai, Sita too withdraws from everyone in the society but she remains restless. She can never be at peace with herself whether she is in Bombay or in Manori. But gradually her stay at Manori has refreshed her and she can now look at the society realistically. But she is a mother bound by her motherly responsibility. Since her children had no scope on the island of her desire, she could not hold herself permanently there. She is forced to return to her worldly obligation and duties. Sita chooses her own exile from her husband and her domestic world. This also indicates that the Indian wife hardly has any choice apart from her learning to accept her situation. Her return to her husband's house has been seen by some critics as a personal failure for both the character and the novelist. Her return to a normal world defined by traditional, social norms. Desai's women characters' compromise is inevitably a reflection of the ambivalent position occupied by women in the newly emerging social scenario.

In Desai's fifth novel *Fire On the Mountain*, the principal characters as well as the situations have been designed to dramatize and demonstrate these fundamental truths of human existence.

The author R. K. Gupta says in his book *The Novels of Anita Desai – A feminist perspective* that, “this is the only novel of Desai in which nature plays a vital role on the level of symbolism, imagery and metaphor”. It has to be assumed that she makes effective use of this technique to depict different characters. The title has its symbolic meaning. It also points out the nature symbolism. The ‘fire’ and the ‘mountain’ both are natural occurrences. The fire is known as an instance of manmade, to be more specific, Raka made it and the mountain is itself natural.

d) Nanda Kaul's Alienation From Society :-

Gupta further explains Nanda Kaul's alienation from society. Nanda Kaul, widow of a Vice Chancellor, lives in a house called Carignano at Kasauli. She is

compelled both by choice and circumstances to live in alienation in an old house on a hill station, away from society. She lives in the world of fantasy. She is leading a lonely life, and is attended by an old servant Ram Lal. She wishes to be alone throughout her very busy life as a wife and as a mother of several children. She desires to pass the rest time of her life peacefully in solitary confinement away from society. She gets very angry even at the sight of the postman coming to her house, and tries to conceal herself from him in the garden, wishing: "To be a tree, no more and no less, was all she was prepared to undertake" – These lines indicate the inner feeling of Nanda Kaul to become a tree. It symbolizes that she wants to live a free and solitary life having no attachments to anyone. She finds the emptiness of Carignano which is the emblem of the vacuum and emotional barrenness of her life. She has withdrawn herself from all movements and echoes. She had led a busy life as the Vice-Chancellor's wife, looking after several children and grandchildren and arranging get-to-gathers. But now she, as a widow, is living in isolation in a secluded bungalow in Kasauli with her male servant. She wants no contact with the society and outside world. She wants to live alone because Nanda did not just played the role of wife in her life. She is deceived and betrayed in her marriage. Raka remembers the unsatisfactory married life of her parents. Nanda could not overcome the trauma of her married life. The infidelity of her husband caused such a deep anguish in her heart that she has lost her faith in human relationships and so she distrusts all attachments in the society. Such women do not mix with other women or people in society either also. They keep away from them. So Nanda Kaul wants to live alone at Kasauli and despairs human company. She suffers from a sense of lonesomeness and lives in the 'lonely house'. She does not want that anybody should distract her privacy. She is disillusioned with everything and wants nothing to do with any of the people in her life. She is used to living in isolation that she can not adjust with other people. She is even unable to adjust to her own great grandchildren. She lives undisturbed by human company. She likes loneliness more than anything. She has cut herself off from human concerns entirely.

Mrinalini Solanki remarks in her book *Anita Desai's Fiction :Patterns of Survival strategies* that, "Nanda Kaul's option for total isolation from the society is not related to the spirituality of Indian thought. She does not opt for this isolation willingly, but circumstances have left no other way out for her. Her long involvement with the people and the affairs of the world gave her neither satisfaction nor a sense of belongingness. Therefore she likes to live away from society". (Solanki 35)

In our Indian society men cannot tolerate women who go forward or do something without men. The woman is always seen in relation with man, as daughter, wife, and mother. About marriage, the Indian woman is not free to choose her life partner. She has no choice, no life of her own. Thus the marriage according to J.S. Mill "is the worst form of slavery for woman". In traditional society, only those women can be ideal who blindly and unthinkingly accept the role assigned to them. The feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir says, in her book *The Second Sex* that 'Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by societies' (445). In marriage women are subjected to various forms of oppression and inferiorization. In the patriarchal order, marriage privileges men and disadvantages women. It reduces woman to a total surrender of her body and self.

Anita Desai deals with the issue of repressed female sexuality with reference to Indian Woman. Even in the mythological stories women had to bear the burden of female sexuality. Sita in 'Ramayana' had to go through the fire ordeal to prove her sexual chastity. This is the example of woman's physical punishment because of the burden of female sexuality and its power to incite desires.

Desai's novels tackle feminine consciousness with reference to a variety of women oriented issues and show a reaction to the issues of women in India and oppression of women, which is based on gender discrimination. Her novels being the expression of womanhood go beyond individual borders mirroring the details of emotions and experience of the tortured and oppressed femininity.

4.11 Marriage as the Aspect of Indian Womanhood –

‘Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society’ says the feminist Simone de Beauvoir. Desai concentrates on the predicament of modern woman in this male-dominated society and her destruction at the altar of marriage. We consider marriage as a social institution. But female protagonists of Anita Desai are the victims of marital disharmony and she has presented it as it exists in the Indian male dominated society. But very often, a marriage in Indian society becomes successful because of the woman’s grace, love, wisdom, sense of understanding, tolerance and sacrifice.

Another important aspect of Indian womanhood reflected in the novels of Anita Desai is that, connected with the married woman. In fact, what is meant by marriage? Marriage is a social institution, which is traditionally offered as the ultimate destiny for a woman by Indian society. A young girl must have to marry with somebody in their appropriate age. Single women have no image while married women have prestige in the Indian society.

We see - all the brothers in Desai’s selected novels In ‘*Voices in the City*’ Monisha and Amla’s brother Arun, go to London for higher education. Maya’s brother Arjuna in ‘*Cry the Peacock*’ and Sita’s brother Jiban in ‘*Where shall we Go this Summer*’ – all these brothers of Desai’s female protagonists move out of house for education or to make their own lives. But the girls, on the other hand, do not have any alternative except marriage and they got married with the men whether they like them or not. Indian women tend to enter into marriage because it is the socially acceptable thing to do. In Indian society it is considered that marriage is the only means of financial support for woman and of integration in to the community.

But we see, what is apparent in large number of cases? - It is the passivity of Indian women with regard to marriage. Therefore, Anita Desai touches on the manner, at various points, where most Indian women enter into marriages. However another aspect which emerges in her novels is the – inequality of the

woman's position vis - a - vis the man's, within marriage. And as we know the Indian society is largely male oriented; the attitude of the men towards their wives are like that of superior beings towards lesser creatures.

Maya in '*Cry the Peacock*' is most talked about character whose attitude towards life is expressed in her marital relationship with her husband Gautama. As we have seen Gautama is practical and unresponsive man, on the contrary Maya is extremely sensitive and passionate woman. Their marital relationship is only a mechanical fashion. Where we do not find any type of harmony of thought. Maya is perfectly healthy and normal woman. We find in her character, - characteristics of normal female with good social status. But unfortunately she is driven into instability and murdered under pressures.

She says – “It was broken repeatedly and repeatedly and the pieces were picked up and put together again, as of sacred iron with which out of the prettiest, superstition, we could not bear to part.” (Desai 40).

This statement is the point of mark regarding the marriage. In fact the neutral, cold and unresponsive attitude of Gautama becomes clearer. So this unmatched, spousal, marital relationship drives Maya to physical depression. She wants to be free from the slavery chains based on the traditions and customs. She revolts against the traditions of society and social order.

She says – “All order is gone out of my life, all formality, there is no plan, no peace, nothing to keep me with the pattern of family or everything living and doing” (Desai 195)

Mays's character represents the disturbed psyche, state of mind of modern Indian woman and attempts to keep a balance between needs and aspirations. Her character is a powerful figure as a protester against social systems.

Monisha In '*Voices in the City*' grows more Shrunken. Her boundaries of life Shrink with marriage and household duties such as cutting vegetables and cleaning the house etc. Rarely she meets anyone outside the family.

She says –

“I will be invisible yet.” (Desai 139)

Even when her sister Amla comes to her house, she sits in Monisha’s mother-in law’s balcony and Monisha is then brought there to meet her.

In *‘Fire on the Mountain’* also Nanda Kaul has lack of privacy in her married life. Upper-class women’s experiences about marriage are not different than poor women’s. Only the difference is that, upper-class women live in chained-luxury. And the married women from the poor sections of Indian society live with many children in crowded quarters. However they are busy in their household work and have no privacy. On the whole, however, the need of privacy in a married woman’s life which is focused in Anita Desai’s novels is a very real. Another important aspect of the Indian women’s married life is that, her life becomes all the more limited, having often not pursued the education. Here Anita Desai wants to focus how the less educated woman is the less important. She has no value, no space in her own family, home and in the society also. Other aspects, seen in the novels of Desai, in the life of Indian married women are – traditional marriage does not invite woman to go beyond the man, but shuts her up within the limited circle of her life. Her horizon limits to her house only, mainly in the kitchen. Sita in *‘where shall we go this summer’* is sensitive, over-emotional middle-aged married woman, who is aliened from her, husband Raman and refuses to give birth to her fifth child. She can not tolerate the violence around her and decides to search a space for her peaceful life. She always wishes and expects her new vision of life. Hence she had escaped from the duties of her married life, routine life, city to the Island.

Largely, characteristic of lot of married women in India is seen in the character of Sita in *‘Where Shall We Go This Summer?’*. As we have seen, Sita finds that her life has been largely limited to the small enclosed area of their flat and her family leaves her in dim light, empty shell. Her husband Raman rarely hands over her newspaper and goes out for his work in the factory which Sita is

ignorant about. She spends all her time in the balcony, smoking, looking at the sea and waiting for Raman. It means that her married life is only for waiting. Raman hopes Sita will be comfortable in her next pregnancy. However Sita tells him that she is not pleased, but frightened about her pregnancy and says –

“Its not easier, Its harder-harder

Its unbearable” (Desai 32)

She weeps in reply to Raman. Therefore I found that, instead of accepting the conventional idea that – women welcome the pregnancy and motherhood, Anita Desai registers the possibility of the Indian women having quite negative feelings towards pregnancy. Also in India, we find, the unhygienic conditions in the hospitals and inhuman medical staff and the whole painful experience of child birth may prove that – many women would not really care to repeat it. So Raman is shocked at the fact that Sita’s happiest memory is not her pregnancy, children, home, family but of loneliness and away from home at a quiet place. She says,

“Children ?” Children only mean anxiety, concern, not happiness, what other women call happiness is just-just sentimentality. (Desai147).

The condition of women in the pre-independent India was worse and more pathetic than in the contemporary period. With the dawn of independence, the position of woman has changed. However in social life, the status of women has not improved. Modern Indian women are not completely independent. They still have to depend on men. I think it is true that woman has no escape in this male dominated society.

4.12 Struggle of Woman for Her Identity -

Since years, we know that in an Indian society, woman is seen only in relation to man, she has no life of her own. The concept of marriage means a holy, permanent union and a sacred thing in her life. To have a husband is the greatest blessing for a woman even if he is evil. Society recognizes woman only by the

name of her husband. Unfortunately a single woman has no status in society. Indeed, Woman in India is entrapped into the inescapable cage of “being a woman, wife, daughter-in-law, mother etc”. As if a woman has no life outside her married life and even she cannot exist outside the boundaries of her married life and motherhood. According to the traditional Indian views, woman doesn't appear to have her independent existence in society. She must be a male appendage in order to have a role and so as a good housewife, she tries to become an expert in managing everything to organize her own life. In fact the basis for a happy marriage is the feeling of sharing equality. But in patriarchal society, equality is not possible because all the good qualities are attributed to men and the qualities associated with women are considered to be inferior. Therefore, the husband is always superior to the wife. He is everything, Lord, Master Owner etc. in the house. And the wife is a ‘wooden puppet’ in his hands. Nobody in the family wonders whether she is happy or not. Moreover they expect the happiness from her. For years on end, the Indian women, daughters- in-laws, mothers have been living in this way only. This is the social status of Indian women in India and they tolerate it because they are women.

I think Desai's female protagonists – Maya, Monisha, Sita, Sarah and Nanda struggle for their identity.

Many writers have reassessed man woman relationship from a gender perspective to uncover the ideological implications. Gender is a purely social or cultural construct while sex is biological. It is not possible to alter the biological phenomenon but social or cultural construct can be changed with a little effort. Many writers have expressed their resentment to notice the discriminatory patriarchal social order and have successfully shown us the various issues related to the miserable plight of women. The status of women in the society, we see today, is marginalized on account of patriarchal social and cultural system on the one hand and on the other hand, there is discriminatory attitude ‘towards women. Patriarchy is something that cannot be separated from the structure of Indian society. There is always the power of man or husband in the family and the head of the family is always a man. Really, the power that a male head enjoys over his

family members in Indian society is unquestionable. Since he is the head of the family, the freedom is hardly given to the other members of the family especially to the women. Being the head of the family and more powerful than others in the family, all the important decisions are naturally taken by the man, about the children's education, marriage, any type of purchasing in the house etc. Anita Desai through her novels, has brought to our notice the discrimination and injustice done to women in our society. She effectively depicts the gender discrimination and social consciousness through her novels. She presents the dilemma, and agonies of women in a male dominated Indian society.

In Indian culture, women are regarded as Goddess, but in reality they are not given proper consideration or importance. At the very outset this discrimination is noticed.

I would like to throw light on this scenario that, in our Indian society, a male child is considered as an asset and female child as the liability. What this discrimination against the girl child shows is the attitude and mentality of the society. It is our cultural heritage that a boy is always superior to a girl and the daughters are always neglected. During early childhood boys are cared for and looked after more than girls. The mother also prefers the male child and thus strengthens the chain of injustice. There is a thought behind selecting the male child, that, he will carry forward the family name and generation. Every girl child born in an Indian family suffers from some kind of exploitation and the ill-treatment is very much noticeable. Consciously or unconsciously all the privileges are offered to the son. Why does all this happen? The root problem of discriminatory treatment to the girls lies in the status of women in Indian Society. Women always have to play a secondary role to men. Males are seen as the providers and the role of girls is neglected. This ill-practice is still present in some parts of India, that men are superior and powerful so they should get the best and on demand, whereas women are inferior, they are less important and treated as subordinate.

In the cultural heritage of India the boy gets more attention and the girl child is neglected as compare to boys. Her birth is a kind of burden on the family. She is not welcomed by the family as she is liability because of the dowry system in Indian Society. Therefore status of woman in Indian Society is subordinate and secondary to man. Her role is supporting. Social norms, economical condition and culture are responsible for the ill-treatment of women in Indian Society. Manusmriti and Dharma Shastras have laid down specific rules for the conduct of women. But in my opinion, the psyche or mindset of the human beings in society, must be changed for the balanced and healthy growth of women in our society. It is necessary to create an atmosphere of Gender Equality. Women must be treated as a necessary part of society. Equality does not imply that, men and women are the same but it means that they should get equal value and equal treatment in the society. Only then will there be a good social status for women in India. In Sanskrit it is said that,

'यत्र नार्यस्तु पुज्यन्ते, रमन्ते तत्र देवतः'

It means that where the women are respected, God lives there....

For centuries women were not treated equal to men in many ways. They were not allowed to own property. Though we have come out of those dark days of oppression of women, I think there is a need for a strong movement to fight for the rights of women and to ensure that they get all the rights which men have or in other words a movement to empower women. It's the right time for men and women to stand shoulder to shoulder.

As the literature is the mirror of society, we see, the social status of female characters in Anita Desai's novels is like that of society. It is found that, her female protagonists also have to struggle for their identity and status. The study of isolation experienced by women in a male dominated society is a significant modern trend. In the Indian Society, women are not allowed to play any active role in decision making. They are always ignored. In such a situation Anita Desai tries to focus on the existential predicament of women in society.

The author Neeru Chakraverty says in her book *Quest for self-fulfillment in the Novels of Anita Desai* that Desai's sensitive depiction of her female characters' frustration and rebellion shows her alignment with their aspirations. Monisha's detachment also stems from a rejection of the prescribed feminine role in a rapidly changing society. Her predicament, at one level, makes a statement for the plight of the educated, urban woman, who is conscious about her identity filled with her individual aspirations and seeking a life outside the traditional society. Amala, has access to this wider life while she herself can only brood on unarticulated desires.

Desai's women characters' awareness of their limited lives is associated with an inherent rebellion against their socially defined roles. In the rejection of her immediate environment she takes on a representative role, because she wants to have an ideally free sense of individuality which clashes with the conventions of society. Thus she gets frustrated and becomes a quiet rebel. Her frustration and rebellion are socially underscored.

Thus, Anita Desai has not limited herself to the domestic sphere only but at times, she goes beyond the limits of the family portraying social prejudices and perverted social values that affect the individual. It is her sense of involvement in the social life of India along with her sensibility. She can not remain indifferent to the problems of the world or society in which he or she lives. Desai also deals with the changing contemporary situation and presents various social aspects and problems through her fiction. So, we find that her fiction fulfills the requirement as we find the details of Indian social life. All the varied experiences of people are woven together into a meaningful and effective design.

I can say that her novels are certainly reflective of social realities and she presents a real picture of society in her novels. She constantly highlights her character's tender instincts as crushed by the dehumanization of society. Desai portrays women as not totally cut off from families and society but she shows her women's protest against monotony, injustice and humiliation. And woman in her

novels is not a mere goddess or a robot but a self-realizing individual in the society. Desai's concern is not with society or social forces only. Rather she is more concerned with individuals and their interaction with social values.

As we have seen Anita Desai's protagonists are unhappy with society in general and cannot communicate with the social milieu on one pretext or another, they feel disturbed by the violence in society and became upset. Society demands compromises from them.

I want to say that, Desai's protagonists – **Maya, Monisha, Sita, Sarah and Nanda** etc. are all social misfits and withdrawn from society. Most of her characters are victims of a strained relationship with society. Desai creates characters who are non-conformists and do not get attuned to the social values and relations. In fact her characters are mere cogs in the machinery called society. They feel observed and trapped when society imposes its norms on them and demands conformity. Desai has dealt with several types of severe social pressures. She has visualized society, from the viewpoint of solitary individuals.

Thus the novels of Anita Desai are critical essays on man's relationship to society. Her protagonists possess an individuality. They discard the commonplace conformity and stick to their own vision of life. Desai wants to attract attention towards the subordination of women to men in Indian society. She wants to show that women's status as compared to men is not ordained by God, rather it has been determined and conditioned by society and is therefore always open to fresh determination as the social order revolves. The role of inorganic forces of society brings newness in Desai's fiction.

Desai's female protagonists Maya, Monisha, Sita, Sarah and Nanda have been shown suffering because of their failure to reconcile with their social surroundings and social obligations as they cannot mix with society and the social forces remain a riddle to be solved by her characters.

Anita Desai focuses on the problems of women in India. She has her own separate approach to female problems in Indian social life in general. She does not think that marriage is a farce as all human relationships are. In most of the male dominated families the concept of marriage as a union of two different minds has not been realized. It is true that, women's individual identity has not been openly accepted in Indian social life. She focuses on the incredible power of family and society, paying close attention to the trials of women suppressed by Indian society.

We have found that most of Desai's protagonists are alienated characters. They find themselves as incapable beings who cannot fulfill the expectations of society or the roles given to them. In her women centered novels – *Cry the Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Where Shall We Go this Summer?*, *Fire On the Mountain*, she has depicted the passion of psychological conflicts experienced by women, when confined within the framework of the so-called ideal womanhood. This so-called ideal of womanhood, which is interpreted by society affects the identity of women. Maya's suicide, Monisha's self-destruction, Sita's escape to Manori, Nanda's withdrawal to the isolated Carignano, give evidence to the fact that, this so-called ideal womanhood creates clashes within and inspires them to go against the existing system.

Desai's novels are certainly thoughtful of social realities. She shows the condition of women in a male dominated Indian Society. She observes social realities as a social reformer and shows the social status of an Indian woman. She writes about women in the urban middle class. Her novels reveal a progression in the psychic awareness of women about their position in society.

Desai compares the life of women belonging to the East as well as to the West. She observes that the life of women in India is slow and empty but in the West it is hurried, busy and crowded. But she also states that both types of lives of women in the East and West cannot give full satisfaction to the heart of women. Marriage is a social institution and plays an important role in the building of the

structure of society. In her novels, Desai raises a strong voice of protest against the male-dominated Indian society and against man made rules and conventions.

A close study of Desai's novels reveals her deep insight into the plight of Indian women, who feel smothered and fettered in a tradition-bound, male-dominated society. She delineates her women characters in the light of their hopes, fears, aspirations and frustrations, who are aware of their strengths and limitations, but find themselves thwarted by the opposition and pressure from a society, conditioned overwhelmingly by the patriarchal mindset.

Anita Desai highlights in her novels, the inferior position and the subsequent degradation in a male-dominated society. Desai's women protagonists are victims of the prevalent gross gender discrimination. Her stories are female centered and give an intimate insight into the psyche of the middle class Indian women, who feel oppressed by their patriarchal socialization. She provides new ideals for better man-woman relationships, thereby broadening the scope of woman's existence in society. She prescribes a balance between tradition and modernity, as a working philosophy for the contemporary woman. To her, tradition is the value of harmony and co-existence that symbolize the Indian way of life. Desai feels that, woman must venture out of the familial framework to give full expression to her identity and status in society.

Desai's novels are a realistic depiction of the anguish and the conflict of the modern, educated, middle class women. Caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand and self expression, individuality and independence on the other, her protagonists feel lost and confused and explore ways to fulfill themselves as human beings.

The quest for identity of Desai's protagonists' gets largely accentuated due to their frustrating experiences born of the prohibitive nature of the Indian patriarchal society. In her novels, the male characters Gautama, Jiban, Adit, Raman and Mr. Kaul display different aspects of patriarchy and oppression. Her

protagonists are the victims of the Indian patriarchy and after initial submission, resist the oppressive situation, thereby reflecting the author's view that a woman must assert herself within marriage to preserve her identity.

The novels of Anita Desai divulge her association for the upliftment of women who are the worst sufferers, highly repressed by social norms or marital discord. Desai has very sensitively and honestly studied women and their consequences and the various social and cultural prohibitions under which the Indian women are struggling in their impoverished conditions.

Desai shows how the culture of India and the patriarchal system suppress the voice of Indian females. And how the illogical customs and rituals force the Indian women into the secondary position in the structure of society. They have to suffer for their violation of accepted norms of society as Maya, Monisha and Nanda suffered and death is the only way for such women. A study of the social status of Desai's characters will thus help to widen and direct our thoughts to relevant problems affecting women in Indian Society.

It is said that, when a woman moves forward, the family moves, the village moves and the Nation moves. When women are economically empowered, all of society benefits. The gender gap in many countries is closing fast and rapid progress has been made in recent decades. But in no society women are as free as men. They continue to suffer high levels of violence and abuse and in many countries they are treated differently.

The researcher thinks, freedom depends on economic conditions and if a woman is not economically free and earning, she will have to depend on her husband or someone else and it is true that, dependents are never free. However, unfortunately, woman, the creator, the mother, the wife, the beloved and companion of man's misery is struggling for her identity. Hence in order to improve the social status of women, it is essential to ensure social justice to women. But social structure in India needs to undergo changes. It is necessary to

create awareness in society. But for that we have to start with ourselves and it is possible when transformation in our mind occurs, society will change. It is true that every person fights a battle of his/her own, hence from childhood, girls need moral support to fight for their rights. There is need to create confidence in them. Ironically female feticide takes place in a country where people worship various forms of Goddesses and where females are considered as Mata Laxmi's incarnation and are worshipped and people touch their feet for blessings. Such are the double standards of our society. In fact, Indian women are discriminated against and deprived at every level of the society.

It is a fact that for centuries women have been accused of being lustful corruptors of men. The women who moved outside the parameters of established norms have been steadily degraded, insulted and ridiculed by men. The women who try to enter different doors are always kept away by the social barriers and rigid men of society. This is an indication of the oppression of centuries they have been facing in Indian Society. Men always think of women as vain, stupid and barbarian, enjoy their oppression and feel that they deserve it.

This is why the researcher wants to focus mainly on the question of identity crisis of women in a patriarchal society where Maya, Monisha, Sarah, Seeta and Nanda are really searching for their own identities. Because in Indian society woman becomes a minor object and the male is the centre. But why is woman always marginal ? And man the centre? Why did Maya and Monisha commit suicide? Why did Sarah adjust with her husband's culture? Why did Seeta choose her own exile from her husband and domestic world? And why Nanda cut herself off from human concerns entirely? - because they all are Indian daughters-in-law. But cannot adjust either with husband or with his family members and when the adjustment was impossible, they selected their own ways either committing suicide or going away from them.

This chapter focuses the feminine consciousness in Desai's selected novels and the treatment given to women and their predefined roles in the society, as

Desai has portrayed her female protagonists. The researcher also focuses on the problems like injustice, inequality, ill-treatment suffered by female protagonists. India claims to be a country of freedom and of equal rights, But women, ironically in this free country are still struggling for their freedom and safety of life. Women suffer through the orthodox customs and rules decided for them in a male dominated society. They bear the harsh customs of society, which are different from that of men. Desai shows these injustice and inequalities towards women through her protagonists Maya, Monisha, Sara, Sita and Nanda. The researcher wants to focus on how the fake morals of society of which we just make a show, are imposed only upon women, as if it is women's responsibility alone to bear and follow them. Indian society, despite being educated suffers due to the rigid outlook of people which consists only of orthodox views and practices, whereas Desai's female protagonists become the victims of male dominance. Whatever happens in the society, gets reflected through literature and through the media. Thus we see these social prejudices regarding women's most appropriate roles in a given society.

Chapter V

Concluding Remarks / Findings / Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion -

The present chapter deals with the concluding remarks depend on the observations, discussions and interpretations on the selected novels of the novelist Anita Desai.

The thrust of the study was *Feminine Consciousness in Anita Desai's novels*. It has been mentioned by many reviewers and critics that Anita Desai is a leading and prime Indian novelist. So I have selected her novels for research. The thesis is only a modest attempt to deal with Desai's novels and thereby to understand them.

The present study focuses on the following points -

- 1) Desai's Life and Works and themes in general.
- 2) The greatness of Anita Desai as one of the foremost Indian novelists.
- 3) Feminine Consciousness and Socio-cultural roles of Desai's women characters.
- 4) Social and family problems of women.
- 5) Status of women in India.

The present research work seeks to observe the selected novels under analysis from feminine point of view.

The five novels have been selected for the research work from the women's characters, point of view, who represented different aspects of women's spirit and discussed about the struggle of women for their identity. The chapter

mainly focused on Anita Desai's treatment of feminism and feminine consciousness of Female Protagonists in her selected five novels.

In the present research work, I have made an attempt to study Anita Desai's novels from the viewpoint of feminine sensibility. It has been observed that, Anita Desai is essentially a leading feminist, whose works are full of artistic skill. I have found that, the unique feature of Anita Desai is that, she cannot adequately explore and express the inner, true significance of things through the medium of language in its literal form, rather she uses characters, situations, dialogues, atmosphere and images to suggest it.

It is observed that her novels are generally engrossed women who are, highly sensitive and involved in their dreams and thoughts. They differ in their opinions from others and set on a long journey of their survival. So that they suffer of their relationships more than others do.

In the present research, an attempt has been made to analyze and evaluate the nature and scope of the issues faced by sensitive female characters in the novels of Anita Desai. It is observed that, they find it difficult to compromise in the present unemotional and involuntary male dominant society.

The researcher has found that Desai's novels excessively disclose witness of her awareness of several problems in relation to female which she has attempted to tackle from the psychic point of view.

Desai showed the chaotic structure of Indian woman's life. She laid emphasis on the disappointments, frustration, and twisted visions of Indian woman's life, which resulting in the fragmentation of her personality.

It is observed that, Desai's, concern in women's consciousness in her novels allows us to see the Indian women enough from their inner souls. She has powerfully focused the conflicts experienced by Indian women as they stay away politically and socially and also live in male dominated set-up. It has seen that, a

social status of Indian woman is not quite satisfied and still she has to fight to acquire it.

It is observed that, Indian woman is forced to draw a genuine self image given to her by the patriarchal structure. So when the crisis occurs, the image is shattered and she gets disappointed. So she wants to discover her self image which will last long enough and get her success. This is a new awareness which makes the conflicts more intense. The result is that, the Indian women who never complained against the existing systems and traditions have started interrogating the legality of these accepted things. They even started to revolt against the existing power structures, both internally and externally.

It is also found that, it is real life that we witness in the novels of Anita Desai with all its violence, frustrations and simple pleasures. Somehow it is seen that the image of woman is like that of a bird. She has wings and knows that it can fly, but does not. In the same way, she is aware of her abilities and she knows that she can expose them openly, but somehow she does not. She always remains silent, which indicates that the customary rules of male dominated society still have dominance over women. The study under taken by present research work leads us to draw following inferences –

5.2 Major Findings -

1. On the whole, the novels of Anita Desai occupy a place in Indian English fiction for their richness and sophistication.
2. The study of Desai's novels in the preceding chapters reveals that her outstanding achievement lies in her sustained use of the interior world of a human being.
3. Desai's novels focus on the inner climate of sensibility and her main purpose is to represent and focus psychic states of her women protagonists and some critical state of their lives.
4. The study explores the place of women in contemporary society.

5. Desai adds a new dimension to Indian English fiction by concentrating on the exploration of the troubled sensibility.
6. Desai's novels are basically women centered and she depicts the Indian woman as a fighter. She has discussed a very important aspect of the feminine consciousness.
7. Anita Desai is full heartedly conscious of her role as a female writer and has tried her best to maintain the tradition for other women writers.
8. To understand the problems of Indian women through a feminist approach is not only an academic discourse, but also a critical analysis of issues related to women in India.
9. The gender equality is another challenge before the Indian society. The position of women in political power is somehow better. The social status of Indian women is not much satisfied. So liberal approach of feminism is the only approach which motivates women to bring change in them with the support of rational thinking.
10. If we wish to project our country as a civil society, then we have to define the position of women in our society and bring gender equality in all walks of life.
11. The fight is against traditional attitude that chained women, it is not against men. Therefore men must rise to accept and recognize that women are equal partners in life and they are human beings primarily.
12. Woman plays very prominent and important role in the family and society. But in return she can not receive that much love and respect from others.
13. The present research work emphasizes on feminine consciousness.
14. Desai's female protagonists attempt to preserve their stability and importance in the family and in the society.
15. Desai rapidly acquired the image of being a strong spokesperson for female autonomy. So her female protagonists resist the demands of society and turn out to be rebels.

16. Desai's female protagonists-Maya, Monisha, Sarah, Sita and Nanda Kaul struggle for their own identity.
17. In Desai's novels, life is depicted as it really is, life of the upper middle class.
18. The emotional world of womankind is closely examined by Desai and pictured in her novels.
19. Desai's novels are certainly reflective of social realities from a psychological perspective.
20. In the present research, an attempt has been made to analyze and evaluate the nature and scope of the issues faced by sensitive women characters in the novels of Anita Desai.
21. The plight of introspective, hyper-sensitive women is depicted in Desai's novels.
22. An important aspect of feminism is the search for identity which is undertaken by the female characters in Desai's novels.
23. This search for identity makes the women aware of their existential predicament. In Indian society, woman has no life of her own without man.
24. It is found that Desai's novels deal with the feminist consciousness and they discuss variety of women oriented issues and show their reaction to the Indian women's issues.

From the above discussed points we understand, the role of women in modern India as well as in literature. Anita Desai has chosen the problems and issues faced by the women in male-dominated society, as the main theme of her selected five novels. Her women protagonists are thoughtful about their conditions. Their protest is not for the equality but for the 'rights' of individual. Desai has strongly presented the clashes experienced by Indian women in general. Her novels deal with mainly psychological and social problems faced by an Indian married woman in today's materialistic society. She is a puppet in the hands of her

husband. What Anita Desai shows in her novels is a real picture of the society and there are many **Mayas, Monishas, Sitas, Sarahs and Nandas** found in Indian society who are in search of their own identity.

It is clear that the situation of Indian women is quite wretched and unsatisfactory and there is need to change it. The best thing is that the Indian feminists put forth the tragic situation of Indian women. Then what is the need? --
----- The need is to deconstruct Indian patriarchal structure and rise above the limitations. Men should give equal treatment to women and understand their problems. Through this process, a new image of woman will be created. Then, the priorities of society must be uphold the issues of women, maintaining a balance with the socio economic Indian scenario.

And to conclude I would like to say, it is necessary to end discrimination and move forward with vision and hopes of respectful life where both men and women will be treated as same.

5.3 Some Suggestions / Recommendations for Further Research Work -

The researcher has worked on the present topic and has given above conclusion. But researcher thinks that the present study is not the final statement about the topic. Rather, this topic may be seen, studied, from perspectives too -

- 1) The application of the psychoanalytical theories may give a remarkable output.
- 2) Application of Eco-Feminism can also be explored.

The suggestions regarding the scope of the research of the present topic, will be certainly useful for the up - and - coming researchers. I hope my attempts shall be useful to the new researchers interested in the study of Anita Desai's novels.

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