

Chapter: One

Anita Desai as a Female Writer

The present research entitled, “Masculine Sovereignty and Family Relationship in Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day*” aims to explore how the male ideology and oppression of the female characters simultaneously brings disturbance and conflict in a suburban middle class family. It examines a story of Bim’s struggle and tolerance in a patriarchal society. It further depicts the cause of leaving house and conflict between their relationships. Male domination becomes apparent when Raja sends humiliating letter to Bim. Forgiveness is an unavoidable outcome of such the then Indian conservative society and its social structure.

Desai holds a prominent place among younger group of Indian English novelists. Desai’s work is part of a new style of writing to come out of Indian society which is not nearly as conservative as Indian writing had been in the past. She evokes her fictions full of personal views which have been a key to social biases.

Desai, in her novel, has depicted the independence time of India in 1947. She situates to record the crisis of Indian colonial bourgeoisie after its independence. Each of her novels is set in a social context and focuses on a life at a particular state. Her characters strive and aspire to accomplish in a complicated and unsystematic world. One of her recurring themes is the struggle of women to assert their independence in a restrictive Indian society.

The most of Desai’s female protagonists appear in the private sphere of family, home and domesticity. The protagonists face the domestic and external world. She explores the inner world of sensibility, a particular kind of Indian sensibility rather than the outer use of style. She evokes the inner feelings of women who are in

perpetual quest for meaning and value of life. The 'existential struggle' of the women who refuse to float along with current form is the core of Desai's novels.

Her characters refuse to surrender their individual selves. Their inability to compromise and surrender inevitably result in isolation and loneliness. Her women are hypersensitive and highly individualistic. Though they do not voice their protest against unpleasant surroundings and insensitive people; they refuse to yield and compromise rather prefer death and miserable life. To live in a very chaos circumstance, they suffer intensely rather refuse to be crushed.

Cry the Peacock is about Maya's life and her effort to tell her story to herself; to discover meanings to life. The novel begins with the death of Maya's pet dog, which serves a functional correlative of her own impending demise that has been forecasted by a temple official. The Peacock serves as a symbol 'signifying psychic dissolution' of the heroine. She married to a clever and successful lawyer Gautama and convinces that her husband has fewer feelings with her.

In the relation of husband and wife there is always a sense of lack. They represent the two poles: the one is excessively emotional while the other is coldly detached from human affairs. Maya and Gautama are the "two opposing selves who have adamant natures, to come into a productive and dialectical relationship and together come to term with a complex reality" (218). She seeks to be independent therefore she murders her husband and undergoes inner psychic turmoil herself.

Monisha, the protagonist of *Voices in the City* is a fictional extension of Maya. Monisha is a young woman of a sensitive and open nature and for her the setting of the novel, the crowded city of Calcutta, turns out as a prison without bars. She leaves her own beautiful house in Kalimpong and comes to stay with husband's family in Calcutta. She tries to find comfort and happiness with her husband, Jiban. But she

doesn't get anything and disappoints with him. Therefore, she is driven to her tragedy as she fails to show keen interest in the life around her. Her husband could have taken her out of shell, but he never tries to know her. The city for Monisha is a symbol of the dichotomy of existence but finally she chooses death. She, like Maya in *Cry the Peacock*, is on a quest. The conflict within Monisha as an embodiment of her quest for identity examines:

Monisha's quest for identity is a quest for the ultimate wisdom, a search for infinite solitude. The struggle within her is the struggle between her identity and of the next, existence and non-existence. Her quest for identity evokes her failure is to comprehend the essence of existence. She is an incomplete self who pines for self-completion and self-fulfillment. Alienation to her is a necessity. (Ashok 90-91)

She is unable to sustain from her own resources and shows symptoms of lacking of the usual social or ethical standards that results her final self-destruction. Her fate is that of an uprooted individual in a system of norms, at odds with her own cherished ideals. Monisha suffers acute psychic strain and disjunction of being.

Desai In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* explores an increasing complexity in Desai's artistic vision and imaginative control. Forty-five years old Sita, mother of four children and pregnant with a fifth and her husband Raman, a well-to-do factory owner, occupy a world where they are placed in opposition.

Sita acknowledges that her husband's instincts are faultless. He runs on spiritual belief and she feels comfort hiding in isolation. Due to this fear, she refuses to give birth of the child. Her refusal to bring the fifth child to birth for "fear that the outer reality would crush them out of existence, is indicative of her profound loss of inner identity which prevents her from all meaningful relationally" (Clement 224).

Sita relates her emotional fragility with the wounded eagle, which is 'too tortured and devoured' by the city crows. Unable to stay with her husband and family, Sita decides to go to the magic Island of Manori. Her return to the island is symbolically of her childhood return to the 'great womb', that can preserve her unborn baby and herself intact: where she finds her selfhood preserved.

Desai's female protagonists refuse to compromise with their partners. They would never submit to their male counterparts. Such attitudes inevitably lead them in isolation and loneliness. *Fire on the Mountain* projects the conflict between the need to alienate in order to retain one's identity and the wish to be involved in the painful struggle in life. The novel begins with Nanda Kaul's withdrawal from the world. She desires nothing; she struggles for a life of asceticism, free from all worldly desires and cares. Her alienation is self-imposed and self-willed which takes her nowhere. Her quest for stillness is prevented by the unwanted arrival of Raka, her great granddaughter. Residing in the mute milieu of Carignano, she seeks something different from all worldly values and passions. Even the sight of a postman irritates her.

In contrast, Raka is alive to the environment around her. Nanda Kaul, betrayed by her own children, refuses to involve herself a child's world again either real or imaginary. Her withdrawal and self-created loneliness is destroyed by the news of her once friend Ila's rape and murder. Now, Nanda realizes that all her life, she was neither a housewife nor a woman. This drives her into guilt-conscious death where:

The fire becomes the symbol of her guilt-ridden traumatic passion, which is ultimately annihilated. *The Fire on the Mountain* is the symbolic projection of her pent-up emotions, which erupt into volcanic flames. Ultimately, with the death of Nanda, this illusory world is

obliterated. Her crisis of identity is resolved. The fire is the desire within Nanda and her death is the symbol of wish fulfillment or self-assertion. The fire within her erupts, at length, manifesting itself in her death. (Nayak 108)

She views physical world full of selfishness and her desire for spiritualism is her ultimate goal of life. But this demises when her friend's chastity is destroyed and killed her. She sees everywhere the doom sight of life; no place for her identity.

Clear Light of Day is a novel about new woman who does not compromise with patriarch ally constructed society. The protagonist, Bim keeps her ambition ahead despite submerging in a great trail, trouble and tribulation in her life. The novel is basically about Bim's desire to be independent; to be courageous; and to dress and stroke like a man enables her to grow up both strong and confident. It is only because she has trained herself to be different from those of women i.e. weak will; dependence and shyness are alien to her perception. Bim refuses to confine herself to her role as a traditional woman that could fit for an insignificant victim or object for others' use and pleasure.

The encounter between East and West, especially represented by India and Britain, respectively is a recurring theme in Indo-English Literature. Indo-English writers view the encounter from different perspectives, and possibilities of mutual understanding between the two sides have been explored in their works. The theme is given a rich variety of treatment in poems, short stories, novels and dramatic works. Kamala Markendaya, Manohar Mialgonkar, Raja Rao and Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, are among the writers exploring the theme of cultural encounter in their works. Their main concern is the encounter caused by love, sex, marriage and the alien milieu.

They represent the problems and prospects of establishing intimate and meaningful relationships between two racial and cultural groups.

Desai in a lively manner depicts the cultural encounter in her novels. She truly captures the cultural dilemmas. She depicts the problem of the immigrants in a new culture where her protagonist serves for an order. Sometimes they succeed and most of the time the new culture, custom, and language and value systems of such society become hostile to them. Because of this hostility, they strongly feel the need of their home-the native land. Similarly, sometimes she depicts the eastern and western cultures and protagonist's attempt to survive in a navy land. Simultaneously, she furnishes the analogy of two cultures through characters located in two different cultural spaces.

Bye-Bye Blackbird, is the first novel to deal with such problems arising from cultural difference, tells the story of Indian immigrants to England, their problems and desperate longing for native land. The novel covers different aspects of the East-West encounter between the British and the Asiatic immigrants in England. Adit Seri, a young man from India, lives in England with his wife, Sarah. For few years, he has been working as a travel agent. Like his fellow immigrants, he quietly insults to native land in which he is continually subjected.

He feels a sense of cultural affinity with own native. This closeness however, does not obliterate the sense of himself own 'cultural identity'. He secretly longs for Indian food, music and friends. This longing suddenly grows intense during one of his visits to Sarah's parents and Adit. From them he feels panic and isolated in the alien land. Finally, he leaves for India with Sarah. Though he considers England a land of infinite opportunities as opposed to India that is prevailed of poverty. However

England does not accept him. He is like others, abused, insulted and humiliated all the time even by school children.

Desai's novels look at the problem from a new perspective and present the theme in yet another way. *In Custody* depicts the cultural encounter not between the East and West, rather between the Hindu and Muslim cultures. The novel is set at the time of partition of India and the problem is the preservation of the great Muslim tradition and Urdu poetry in India.

Deven, the protagonist of the novel, who belongs to the Hindu culture, is a true lover of Muslim Urdu poetry. He has to teach Hindu literature written by Hindus and does so poorly and without spirit. For him, the Muslim poet Nur is an ideal poet. Deven believes his poetry contains all the enchantment and romance that he had ever experienced in his life. But he is victimized by Murad Beg and his ideal Nur. He is disillusioned with Nur's demands for money, for a contract operation, for a pilgrimage to Meca.

In the character of Siddidui, Desai "shows us the worst side of Urdu Muslim culture-its exaggeration; its eternal nostalgia for the lost glory of an early Empire" (Salim 72-73). Deven fails to interview Nur, but he feels relief and gratitude at his failure because it relieves him from further suffering. He even destroys the poetry written by Nur's young wife without even reading it. But, this poetry offers him the material for the beginning of a revival of Urdu poetry. Hindi speaking, Hindu India is now responsible for the preservation of the great Urdu culture of its former Muslim rulers.

Desai's latest novel *Fasting Feasting* treats the theme of cultural encounter by depicting two cultures through the story of a family who resides in India. The novel is divided into two parts: first part can be termed as Indian half, deals with the problems

of relationships between male and female within the family and their respective roles in traditional Indian society. The norms, values and traditions of Indian society are contrasted to the second part, may be termed as American half where their son Arun is confronting the culture, is alien and completely different from his own. The Indian half is in a way, story of Uma, the eldest girl of the family searches own Indian culture.

The censorship on girls and the premium on sons in the traditional Indian society are contrast from the free women to USA. When Arun was born as a third child, Uma was forced to give up her education to help Mama and look after him. Such a notion prevailing in Indian society contrasts from freedom enjoyed by the daughter of Patton family in the USA. Even he compares his sister, Uma, in India to this girl. He wonders but is helpless, for he cannot change the norms and values that are guiding the Indian life.

When second daughter has been born, he had already been chosen as the prediction of son. The parents lack ambition for daughters but are highly ambitious for their son. Uma, in her late 40s living with her parents, still asks permission to have a job. Her marriage was broken two times. Desai comparatively reveals such problems through Uma. In this sense, Uma represents the status of girls in traditional Indian society. As Robert Brownrigg rightly observes:

Fasting, Feasting is a novel; not of plot but of comparison. In beautifully detailed prose, Desai draws the foods and textures of an Indian small town and of an American suburb. Arun recognizes in the piteous' bulimic daughter a version of his own unhappy sister Uma and the shock provokes a reflection on these two frustrated women: but

what is plenty? What is not? Can one tell the difference? Desai's novel is a moving eloquent exploration of that question. (2)

In both, she suggests, family life is a complex mixture of generosity and meanness, license and restriction. The novel's subtle revelation is in the unlikely similarities in one dark moment.

Apart from novels, Desai has written numerous short stories and has published two collections. Her stories reveal the characteristics like her novels; the stories are marked by her clear criticism prose, her artistic vision, and her preoccupation with the 'revelation of human psyche'. Her main concern in the stories is the individual's attempt to survive in the world, where values, norms and principles are incapable of guiding the people. Though each story covers a small world but the characters and the world they occupy is the 'microcosm of the macrocosm'.

Some of her stories are set in Indian society, where Desai's keen observation examines its culture, the individual dilemmas and their efforts to attain selfhood far more realistically. She is fully conscious of her culture and choice of subject matter and its artistic treatment fully suits her consciousness of Indian society and culture. But while depicting such cultural dualities in a single story, she perfectly maintains the balance and remains neutral.

Since she covers wide range of human experiences; her stories vary in theme or subject matter. She develops and shapes them with her personal experiences in order to give the artistic truth rather than mere reality. Though, they bear different subject matter, her stories do have some short of unity and show a thematic affinity with novels. Both short stories and full-length novels, is central to the author's engagement with the forces of human nature. Like her novels, the characters in stories are incapable of making the connection between the actual and the ideal, between fact

and inspiration. Throughout the stories, while depicting the moods of her characters, “she can pass hilarity to sorrow and back again to a sense joy of the perceptual moment as nimbly as the birds without making her reader notice such quickness” (Clement 232). She does so to make the reader fully engaged in her literary world where all our fantasies achieve through characters’ role.

Desai’s first collection of short stories *Games at Twilight and Other Stories* shows that her achievement as a short story writer is equal to the mastery of the craft of novel. Each of the stories is a perfect designation of poetic-prose, containing authentic world and picture of Indian life that ranges from the life of middle class in a village to the life of upper middle class in a metropolis, and from the characters of different age, sex and groups. Uncertainty is one of the often-recurring themes in the collected stories. The twilight in the opening story is symbolic of ‘gloom’, which ultimately serves as the setting for the entire narrative.

Diamond Dust, the second volume contains nice radiant new stories. These collected stories are a splendid addition to Desai’s distinguished career as a novelist. In this collection, stories are different in plot and treatment of characters, but they do have thematic unity or homogeneity regarding the novels and previous collection of short stories. In this collection, Desai continues her peerless exploration of the tension between social obligation and personal independence, the complex dynamics of families and the clash between the old and the new. More than this, in this book “Old relationships stir up buried resentments, a beloved dog causes havoc, a businessman away from home sees his own death, and freedom springs in surprising way.

Throughout her novels, children’s book and short stories, Desai focuses on personal struggles and problems of contemporary life that her Indian characters must cope with. She depicts the cultural and social changes that India has undergone as she

focuses on the incredible power of family members, paying close attention to the trials of women suppressed by Indian society. Desai is a genius for the portrayal of her country so vividly with the way the eastern and western cultures have blended there.

In *Clear Light of Day*, she focuses on the Indian society that search for selfhood; pleasant life incites the disturbance of family bondage, social values and norms. The pathetic orphan protagonist, Bim suffers in a poorly lived family in old Delhi. Her brother Raja leaves her and dwells in Hyderabad enjoying the prosperous life. Bim not only has to live himself but also has to take care of her mentally retarded little brother Baba so difficultly. She does everything in patience. So when his brother Raja sends her an insulting letter she does not protest rather quest for her identity at the same rented house. Even after parents' death, Raja as an opportunist seeks a good time to escape from poverty stricken house. After Tara abandons, she again seems to be a pitiful character though she does not lose her hope.

Thus, disturbance, disintegration, indifference, selfishness and conflict are ever seen issues of poverty-stricken family. The male's identity dominates the position of women at their space and neglects their all values as if it is a good chance to take. Therefore, to depict such condition of women during and after partition of India, the study focuses on feminist perspective.

Chapter: Two

History of the Partition of India and Women's Position

The enterprise of feminist historiography of the partition of India is to underscore the feminist perception of violence. This violence was carried out upon women during a catastrophic event of partition violence of India in 1947. The partition of India has left a lasting impression of monstrosity and horrific emotional threats upon those people who had experienced the partition violence directly or indirectly. The killings, rapes, kidnappings, lootings, banditry and barbarism made the Indian sub-continent, suffer in a great extremity; but the partition and its pervasive violence are not as such discussed in the history books of India. At the success of independence, the partition violence has been normalized.

The female historiographers like Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, Kamala Bhasin, Deepika Bahri, Kavita Daiya break the tradition of gendered history by revising the partition history of 1947 from the perspective of feminist cum subalternist subjectivity. They mentioned every minute detail of partition violence and its impacts seen to females. They further elaborated that by the name of chastity or family honour women were badly treated. Though 1947 was marked as the period of India's Independence, the bloody ethnic and communal riots of partition often overshadow the importance to independence because of its much more direct impact on the lives of people.

Within the space of two months in 1947, more than seventy-thousand women were abducted and raped. Countless children disappeared. Homes, villages, communities, families and relationships were destroyed, yet, more than half a century later, little is known of the human dimension of this event. (Butalia 274)

As far as women's experiences at the time of partition are concerned, the realist representation was made, but such a representation praises the patriarchal construction and defends the communal dictatorship over women rather than showing the real tragedies of female victims.

Since female writers discontent with such a gendered history, they seek their direct involvement in the Indian partition process. These female writers challenge the so-called realist representation of women experiences; explore how women and their experiences are constructed by the discourse of gender and nationalism.

Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin in *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* have also exposed the politics behind the exclusion of women's suffering during partition violence. They describe partition "as a watershed event for it causes the killing of mass populations, particularly women" (5). But such a massive violence remains absent in the documented history. An emphasis on the hostility between the religious communities and state affairs indicates that partition was tragic. It was an imitable politico-religious movement for national and secular identity.

They argue that along with the factual data of the misery and the plight of the victims should also be included in the history of partition. Familial violence have not been documented the true history of rapes and murders merely for honor. The patriarchy treated the women's body as a territory either to be conquered by the man of the other communities or to be protected by their own families. Menon and Bhasin investigate historians' indifference towards this familial and communal violence upon women's sexuality, comment:

Official and even historical accounts of partition, she is the unfortunate outcome of sectarian and separatist politics, and as a tragic accompaniment to the exhilaration and promise of a freedom fought

for with courage and valour. They have looked at the causes and consequence of the division of the country, analyzed the details of the many 'mistakes' and 'miscalculations' made examined the genesis of the call for a Muslim Homeland, and so on. (121)

The partition violence later for secular countries brought pain and suffering in women. Women, on the one hand, were adversely affected by partition violence and on the other by patriarchal norms and values. Such violence made difficult to separate personal experience from corroborating facts.

They further claim:

But when we start looking for social histories or for accounts that try to piece together the fractured reality of time and event itself for a non-official perspective, a perspective from margins, as it were we encounter a curious void. Perhaps it has been too painful, too difficult to separate personal experience from corroborate fact, too hazardous, at least for there who tried to record it, to claim 'objectivity'. Indeed, so far only some 'fiction' seems to have tried to assimilate the enormity of the experience. (123)

When partition histories are analyzed from the perspectives of the margins, a visible gap can be detected. The question of such events is recorded and by whom counts a lot. Gender ideology is the factor that Menon and Bhasin find to be the main cause for such representation.

In this way, partition violence of India included the familial and communal violence in which women always remained essentially at the receiving end as primary victims. The nature of such familial violence was so patriarchal that the death or

killing of their fellow women was glorified as martyrdom or an act of bravery or of supreme sacrifice for saving their purity and honor.

In the same way, the history of violence has been treated in the “historiography of modern India as aberration and as absence, aberration in the sense that violence is seen as something removed from the general run of Indian History” (Pandey 35). Though on 15 August, 1947, India celebrated with joy of its first day of freedom, but the sense of joy was mixed with pain and sadness. Then where is the description of pain and sadness of people? It has been lost in the history.

In India, there is no institutional memory of partition. The state has not seen fit to construct any memorials as that of the First World War (1914-18) and the Second World War (1939-45). These two great wars are recurrently recalled in Western Europe and Japan through the erection of major national movements. But there is not surprisingly, no equivalent for partition in India. There is nothing at the border that marks it as a place where millions of people crossed, no plaque or memories at any of the sites of the camps, nothing that marks a particular spot as a place where partition memories are collected.

Partition really was the dark side of independence. Under the so-called veil of independence, hundreds of thousands of people got traumatic experience. They lost their relatives, homes and so on but these all remain unrecorded in the national historiography. ‘Unity in diversity’ is no longer the rallying cry of Indian nationalism.

On the contrary, all that belongs to any minority other than the ruling class is challenging singular and local not to say all difference appears threatening intrusive “foreign” to this nationalism (45). As in the history writing, so in films and fiction, Indian intellectuals tended to celebrate the story of independence struggle that in dwell the agonies of partition. Partition has been represented, here moreover in the

likeliness of a natural disaster in which human actions play little part far from the run of daily life. This is also the live that respectable, academic nationalist historiography has followed.

In Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India

Gyanendra Pandey addresses the truth of the traumatic, genocide violence of partition and discuss how several different techniques are employed by national historiography to avoid partition violence. One is to declare such violence non-narrate able regarding victimization as the other side of history. Another disciplinary device that is widely used to distance such fearful movements of part is that of transforming the history of the event into history of its cause of origins, which thus helps to represent violence as other side of history. Another way to “make the violence non-narrate able is to localize at in time, as an unusual occurrence like a natural calamities, which requires no historical explanation” (97). Over all the division of India to Pakistan leaves some part of the lively history that occurred in history. It only covers religious part that makes to partition of India and other part undocumented.

As that of above-mentioned points discussed by Pandey, national historiography of partition of India also employed that technique to veil that severe reality of partition violence. Pandey does not support the so-called official records of partition of India, as it does not capture very carefully each event brought out by partition and its aftermath. He seems to be in favor of dismantling and deconstructing the officially sanctioned historiography, which externalize one truth at the expense of multiple facts of truth. In a sense, he is in favor of revising and reconstructing the true historiography of partition of India (103). His notion of revising partition history further brings all events in a very new perspective.

Desai by capturing each and every aspects of partition of India in her widely acclaimed novel *Clear Light of Day* has stood as a revisionist historian. In the novel, by trying her best of unfold multiple dimensions resulted from the most wolfish barbaric and sundering event, she is trying to rapture the so-called official rhetoric, which is very narrow outlook, logo centric and essentialist in nature.

Beerendra Pandey, in his article *A Paradigm Shift in the Representation of Violence in Partition*, advocates about the bloody partition which had taken place on the partition of war in which at least one hundred thousand women are said to have been abducted and raped by all the three parties' involved-Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. The representation of the gendered violence, which remains effaced in the history textbooks of both India and Pakistan receives a central treatment in partition fiction by women writers, "especially the survivor" (105). The gendered history only seeks the identity of males and their contribution during partition violence but the innocent and submissive females's torture emerges into pettiness.

Pandey stresses that historians can get clue about neglected aspect of the reality of partition from the creative writings of the women survivors. He claims:

Drive home the point that is times of external war or civil war, it is women who are inevitably singled out for particularly humiliating treatment-molestation, rape, abduction or forcible marriage- and it is they who have to suffer for the amplified ignominy. Women's bodies are considered by Indian men, Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, as the repository of men's honour. 'Power rape', the raping of women to demonstrate and defeat rival men in patriarchal societies, is quite common in many parts of India, as indeed in many other areas of the

world. The rape of a woman is akin to the rape of the community to which she belongs. (106)

Exploitation and second sex through patriarchal belief lead females as males assistant to recover their remaining roles. Pandey further depicts that the feminist reconstruction of partition violence has received central attention in the revisionist historiography of 1947 by women writers such as Ritu Menon, Veena Das and Urbashi Butalia who focus on the double subordination of women through abduction and recovery, rape and murder.

The revisionist feminist history, in the works of Beerendra Pandey, “has developed a third subaltern eyes, that glosses over accepted social mores and eminent personalities of the day for the working-class women’s version of what history and society look like from a woman’s point of view” (120). The spotlight falls on investigating how far the gendered identity is subordinated to the needs of the religious or the ethnic community, and what this means for a concept such as secondary citizenship. Honor-whether family or national -turns out to be the major factor in the subordination of women to the status of secondary citizenship.

Urbashi Butalia, a feminist critic of partition violence being completely dissatisfied with the depiction of partition lives of ordinary people, questions:

Why had historians not even attempted to explore what I show as the ‘underside’ of this history, the feelings, emotions, the pain and anguish, the sense of loss, the silences in which it lay shrouded and was this just historiographical neglect or something deeper- a refusal on the part of historians to face up to violence so driven with pain and grief that there needed to be some distance before could confront it?

(275)

She strongly unveils those so called historians who only judged male's struggle giving up the subaltern side of history.

Stressing on the fact that historians could not bring objectivity of partition violence because, their families were also involved in it. Death, displacement, dislocation, loss of home and family-these were close "to the lines of many historians" (175). Showing the exclusive nature of historians Butalia asserts that many historians have spoken of how selective amnesia and memory are at the root of the relationship between human beings and their history, that a historiography as a technique to "dissipate anniversary and cultivate memory. For these reasons she wants the feminist historiography to view the partitions violence.

Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin; the two feminist critics also become critical to the official and historical accounts of partitions violence. They state that the historical accounts see partition "as a tragic accompaniment to the exhilaration and promise of a freedom fought for with courage and valour" (11). Placing themselves the side of non-official perspective from the margins, they say that void seems to exist in those accounts because the real and the entire traumas of the victims are not objectively recorded.

That is why, they question the authenticity of such recording individual bias, political stance, ideology, class, gender, and all become factors that are critical to any analysis or representation. They further opine that reverberating still in the general consciousness is to make enterprise more treacherous. But without such an attempt they argue:

They myriad individual and collective histories that simultaneously run parallel to official account of historical moments, and are their level almost inevitably get submerged; with them many also be submerged

the countering of accepted and acceptable-versions to be buried eventually in the rubble of what Gyanendra Pandey has called the “aberrations” of history. (13)

The story 1947, they say is gendered narrative of displacement and dispossession of large scale and widespread communal violence and of the changing position of family community and national identities as people were “forces to accommodate the dramatically altered reality that now prevailed” (Menon and Bhasin 120). 1940s partition violence made them to seek their identity in very changed scenarios. It is not only to exhibit female existence in family and society but also their emerged role in national issues.

Deepika Bahri, the next feminist critic, in “*Telling Tales: Women and the Trauma of Partition*” also talks about the females victim of partition and their pain and suffering but did not who are in fact, “forbidden from speaking of it, their bodies have been covered, the memories stored always, the stories stifled” (85). She explores how the narrator of the parathion novel is able to successfully understand and represent the experience of abducted women without any first-hand knowledge of these things herself. She asserts about the immolation and death of females who lost their valuable lives either by family or by Hindu, Muslim or Sikhs’ severe inhumane behaviour done to them.

Jill Didur, in “*Lifting the Veil: Reconsidering the Task of Literary Historiography*” bringing under his focus the ideas of Bahri argues that it is equally important to be attentive “to the limits of the narrator’s understanding, given the fragmented and indirect status of partition memory and the power exercise in and through the practice of writing history?” (447). He argues that a narrator's prospective

offers a sensitive and careful telling of a story on the behalf of those who have not been allowed to tell it.

Citing the stigma associated with ‘abducted’ women’s experience Bahri doubts that testimony can be useful for ‘retrieving’ women’s memories of these events when by all accounts, what remains of women’s experience, of personal violation are either “a contract of silence or reference so oblique as to be little more than metaphorical abstraction” (263). Bahri further claims, Bahri characterizes that metaphor city of indirectness of these accounts as placing a ‘veil’ between the ‘reality’ of these women’s experience and the historian.

Bahri argues that in absence of “direct testimony, fictionalizes and second-hand accounts have attempted to capture the elusive experiences of women during this turbulent time” (449). The perception that women have memories to these events that they are focused to suppress, stifle or store away and the literature can somehow liberates these stores from hiding runs through out as her discussion.

She seems to be acknowledging the fact that the sexually contaminated women during the violence are unlikely to testify about their experience, so Bahri concludes that literary historiography should unveil, uncover liberate from silence and oblivion these women’s stories.

Spivak in *Can Subaltern Speak?* argues that chronological and continuous accounts of history, need to “acknowledge the silence between bits of laugh age...a silence filled with nothing but noise that disrupts the continuity of historical narratives in any context” (448). Her idea is that literary representation of history foreground the gaps between and within different perception of reality and thus offers a uniquely disruptive view of hegemonic histories, that is why to understand the reality of

abducted women experience, s/he turns her attentions to the gaps in order to understand the power relation that informs its construction.

Regarding Urbashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*, it would seem this is true, but that every family has an equally horrifying story to hide. The facts about partition are easily found. Most political histories of the event tell us, that within months of the sub-continental division in August 1947. A million people were dead, 12 million displaced, and 75,000 women raped or abducted. What is much less easy to recover are the voice and subjectivities of people and women who lies behind the fact (101). From three decades of feminist historiography, we know that a recorded life history can be treated as a straight forward representation of experience. The process of recovering voices in other words is never simple.

It was made even more difficult in the Indian instance by the fact that, unlike the Jew is Holocaust of World War II, the partition of Indian did not allow for a clear distinction between victims and the immoral of violence. Commenting on the unwillingness of her respondents to remember, Butalia wonders if this might be a reason 'Why people did not wish to remember it publicly, perhaps within their families where the "ugly" of this history could be suppressed?' (101). Masculine figure made the females out of the history so they were valueless in Indian society.

The usefulness of both *The Other Side of Silence and Borders and Boundaries* lies not simple in their retrieval of the historical experience of subaltern people who have been marginalized by mainstream history. They also bring into the public archive memories, which have been actively suppressed by the community itself. As Raja points out:

The so-called honor, killing of women, children and old people in the name of protecting them from rape corded conversation: the double

dislocation of many women who were forcibly recovered from their inter religious marriages to their Cont-Indent out-time abductors and restored against their wishes to their own communities for rehabilitation; the not significant number of women who were raped by men of their own communities at a time when popular rhetoric drew upon a monistic conception of 'us' Vs 'them'. (103)

None of this is exactly revelation; but neither is it the staple of partition history nor even necessarily the staple of oral narratives about partition violence. While Intra-familial violence constituted as martyrdom sought willingly by the women, is readily admitted by men who have killed and lived to tell the tale.

Other stories such as those of women resisting rehabilitation or being subjected to sexual violence by the men being touched as their guardians require a painstaking piecing together from historical documents memories as well as oral narratives.

Kavita Daiya, in her article "Honorable Resolutions" mentions the abduction and rape of women which are barbaric forms of violence that prevailed in the period of transition. Daiya argues:

There is one point, however, to which I should like to draw your attention, and this is the question of rescuing women who have been abducted or forcibly converted. You will realize that nothing adds to popular passion more than stories of abducted of women, and so long as there women are not rescued, trouble will simmer and might baize out. (Qtd. in Daiya 231)

Nehru's letter constructs women as victims and objects of both religious communities and the communities and the colonial state; it fails to grant any voice and agency to

the particular desire to the “abducted” women themselves, presenting them as victims to be rescued.

In the last decade, feminist and subaltern studies historiography has shown how anti-colonial nationalist discourse in India was gendered. These studies “demonstrate that while Indian nationalist supported and indeed demanded right to vote in election and equal political rights for Indian women patriarchal nationalist discourse in the pre-as well as post-independence era” (233). Aness Qidwai’s memories reveal that Nehru’s position was reflected in the official ideology and the, The Recovery Operation of 1948 in the new Indian and Pakistani states: abducted women were represented as “properties” belonging to particular national communities.

This determined that all abducted women should be rescued and returned to their rightful owners. The official estimate of the number of abducted women during partition was 33,000 non-Muslim women in Pakistan, and 50,000 Muslim women in India. Meridian Sarabhi, who figured prominently in the plans of the India and Pakistani governments to “recover” abducted women, asserted that the official account of abducted women in Pakistan was ten times than the 1948 official figures of 12,500. Over the course of eight years in all about 30,000 women were “recovered”.

Regarding recent feminist historiography, she argues that during partition, abducting women from the other community became a common way to dishonor the Muslim/Hindu others. The appropriation of women from the other community was a “way to affect the collective honor, religious sentiments and the physical reproduction of that community” (232). Often these abducted women were forced to convert. They ended up marrying their abductors.

The program of the two government to exchange women lead to the continued discursive production of abducted women as objects, as religiously marked Hindu or Muslim subjects according to their family origin and ultimately, as symbols of the patriarchal nations honor. As Ritu Menon and Kamala Basin have shown in their pioneering work on the experience of Indian women during partition: “family community and state emerge as the three mediating and interlocking force determining women’s individual and collective destinies” (234). One again recasts them as keepers of national honor and markers of boundaries: between communities and countries.

It is significant, however that many women, who had been abducted, resisted his forced government to send back to own country and refuse to return to their original families. They had been settled into new lives that children and family did not want upheaval and displacement again. Moreover, they recognized that they would be “stigmatize and cast out as dishonored and impure if they were to return” (233). The dualities of condition settle them into new world where they quest their identity.

In thoughtful pieces that drawn out the problems of writing a “non-imperious” history of partition, Urvashi Butalia has acknowledged the complex responsibility of the intellectual to the refusal of most abducted women, when interviewed, to remember and speak of their experience of abducted or sexual violence. While Menon and Bhasin have written about the legal and political discourse around this “recovery” of abducted women, the memory of the violence of abducted remains today both an object of horrified curiosity and site of silence unnarrativized in south Asian history (11). The feminist historiographers write partition history by highlighting the experience of pain of suffering of women recollected in the heart of traumatized women especially of means of abducted rape and murder.

By using the tool of data collection, tape recording, field observation and taking interviews with the partition victim, the feminist writers have emerged partition literature that caused a major upheaval in the partition history disrupting all the other relationship in the patriarchal community. Raising the question of gendered violence from perspective, they approach the question of identity, country and religion, and of the intersection of community, state and gender. Besides, they evaluate the state's responsibility to the refugees in general and women refugees in particular, as articulated in the policies and programs of the government.

Their feminist intervention concerns with issues of identity politics and twists the complex relationship of post-colonial state with religious communities. In the aftermath of communal conflict that helps to rewrite the partition history from the side of feminist historiography. In so doing, the feminist critics blend the subaltern subjectivity with their feminist consciousness. They do not simply raise the issue of the women subalterns. Therefore, feminist historiography of partition subverts the masculinity approach to the history of 1947, and seeks to restore women to history and to restore the nation's history to women so that women could be brought into focus of inquiry, a subject of the story or an agent of the narrative.

Thus, during pre-independence, the grant of independence, and the partition of the country and the post-independence period, the contemporary Indian society was based on masculine chauvinism. The poor families of that time were suppressed on the one hand by their own family member's i.e. male members and on the other by the then social norms and values made within the shadow of colonialism. The depiction of female character in *Clear Light of Day* is also result of same patriarchal or male chauvinistic society.

Chapter: Three

Masculine Sovereignty and Family Relationship in Anita Desai's

Clear Light of Day

Desai's *Clear Light of Day* exposes the domination of woman by males in a patriarchal society. It depicts the vulnerable condition of women at partition violence in India during the late 1940s. The novel revolves around the domestic upheavals of Hindu bourgeois family in Old Delhi, a family forever transformed by the ideology of a religiously inscribed nationalist movement. Desai presents two "Daughters of independence" whose lives seem singularly unchanged despite the rhetoric of independence that gave rise to two nation-states.

Clear Light of Day is not offered as a systematic body of Desai's works, nor it suggests that all bourgeois women's writings from India must be read as primarily engendered by the discourse of colonialism and nationalism. Desai's text strategically sees the rise of nationalism, the disagreement between Hindus and Muslims, and the partition and the death of Gandhi in the construction of its narrative. The post-colonial critic can provide a subtle reading of the complex function of gender in the topology of this particular positional novel. Hopefully, this analysis will suggest to feminist postcolonial critics the importance of dialogic readings of other bourgeois Indo-English texts which can wrest nation "from the context of easy allegorization" (Surleri 14) and provide more comprehensive examinations of the structural function of gender in the political discourse and performance of colonialism and post colonialism.

Most critics of *Clear Light of Day* address the links between an individual life and the history of India. It is set against violent domestic upheavals in the Das family amidst the historic background of an Indian nation born in the wake of a deeply disruptive partition. The narrative is the present or more specifically, a summer in the

1970s when Tara, the younger sister, returns to the Old Delhi on one of her regular visits from Washington. Tara's husband, Bakul, is a functionary in the Indian diplomatic corps.

Though Bimala, the elder sister, is a teacher of history at a local women's college, her life seems arrested, still circumscribed by the old boundaries that include the Das house and garden and the home of their next-door neighbors, the Misras. Her companion, other than the members of the Misra family, is the silent, psychologically scarred younger brother. Baba, whose only source of solace and entertainment is the reverberating sounds of 1950s western song, played on a scratchy gramophone.

If during the independence movement issues concerning the rights of women included within the immediate nationalist platform, after independence, the difference between the genders was effectively held to shore up patriarchal power and to establish the firmness of national purpose. The initial demands of freedom for women generated certain changes in the status of women at the personal and political front. But the alliance between the discourse of nationalism and that of the women's question was filled with contradictions and ambiguities.

Indian women got the right to vote and faced much harder for the passage of a Hindu code. It would reform the areas of personal law such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, women as store house of an untainted, unchanging Indianness. Later that became the sign of the imaginary feminized nation whose chastity had to be safeguarded by virile nationalists against Western penetration. This difference between woman as sign and equal personal and political participants in a nation-state produces a negotiable confusion for them who are constantly struggling to be one and act the other.

Desai highlights this violence in the character of Bimala, who is the head of a household without being either wife or mother. She is not a person with humble plea and can participate as an equal in conversation with men. She claims that she loves pet animals more than any mother could love her children.

Furthermore, and she smokes, a vice that distances her from conventional women. In some ways, she resembles an Indian version of the unconventional English intellectual woman, attracting by being handsome, not beauty. Tara married a young diplomat, acknowledges her husband "... an active, organized woman who looked up her engagement plans and programs for the day ahead ... then walked her way through them to retire to her room at night with the triumphant tiredness of the virtuous and the dutiful" (21). Tara does not desire to change her life for Bimala, but there is an element of self-unwilling that refuses to be held at bay when she watches Bimala holding court:

Tara was pricked with the realization that although it was she who was the pretty sister... it was Bim who was attractive. Bim who ... had arrived at an age when he could be called handsome. All the men seemed to acknowledge this and to respond... Tara did not smoke and no one offered her a light. Or was it just that Tara, having married, had rescinded the right to flirt, while Bim, who had not married, had not rescinded? No, it was not, for Bim could not be said to flirt... Bim never bothered. (34)

Bim never bothered to be else or to please anyone. At least this is what Tara believes is true. We are privy to Bim's discontent; love ever, to her sense of feeling trapped in Old Delhi where nothing changes.

History has already happened, living a life that stands still, as exciting narratives take place elsewhere- “London, New York, Canada, the Middle East, and closer to home, New Delhi” (5). Despite Tara’s assertion that she and her family need to come back periodically to be in touch with “eternal India,” which will continue long after “Nehru, his daughter, his grandson... pass into unconscious,” along with other post independent government malpractices such as bribery, corruption and poverty (35). She is frustrated and frightened by Bim’s refusal to distance herself from the past. “Why did Bim allow nothing to change? Surely, herself Baba ought to grow and develop at last, to unfold and reach out and stretch.

But whenever she saw them, at intervals of three years, “all was exactly as before” (12). Raja’s materialistic passion along with dream to live him Hyderabad made her out of contact for three years.

It is her obligation that she could not move out of the house leaving her mentally retarded brother Baba. It is not so easy to be independent as Raja does through his masculine power. But what Tara perceives as Bim’s desire is to remain rooted in the past constructed by Bim as the inevitable hidden difficulty of the role she has been forced to play. In 1947, when the Indian nationalists were struggling to generate the narrative of a united Indian nation, Bimala was dramatically overtaken by incidents beyond her control. With the death of the parents, her brother Raja’s tuberculosis, and the widowed aunt Mira-masi’s gradual retreat into alcoholism.

Bim by default has to take over the reins of the Das household. A bold youthful challenge against the inevitable marriage pot that determined the lives of women- “I won’t marry... I shall never leave Baba and Raja and Mira-masi... I shall work - I shall do thing... and be independent” (140) - takes an unwilling and of

threatening turn as Raja leaves to become a surrogate son of a Muslim family and Mira-masi dies the horrific death of a hallucinating alcoholic.

Bim is the eldest of all the four children who suffers various psychological strains. Others got escape from the hunting Das home but she chooses to stay single there in the family home, “my students tell me it is a great cemetery, every house a tomb. Nothing but sleeping graves” (6). She dwells bitterly on her fallings of abandonment and the impact on her country’s recent history. The desire is to be independent; now overtaken by the need to nurture Baba and Mira-masi and Raja. It didn’t co-operate to her at any moment. She is elevated by her only suitor, the Bengali doctor, as a self-sacrificing domestic goddess.

Thus, instead of a being Florence Nightingale, Bimala’s lack of desire for a suitor is revised as a desire to be the female archetype. Doctor Bishwas argues:

“Now I understand why you do not wish to marry. You have dedicated your life to others- to your sick brother and your aged aunt and your little brother who will be dependent on you all his life. You have sacrificed your life for them” (97).

She as a strong willed manner doesn’t show immediate response but she finds this speech “horrendous... so leadenly spoken as if engraved on steel for posterity” (85). Bim, her force to assume the mantle of responsibility for the family even though that would traditionally have been the selfless duty of her brother Raja. The abrupt change in circumstances of her life in her family not only possesses a threat to her high aspirations but simultaneously breeds identity crisis.

She is unable to reconcile her aspirations to the circumstantial change around her. Her repression of the doctor’s last visit is intimately connected to her denial of

this attributed status. In her overwhelming need to break the news to Raja, she abandons any pretense at being an interested, petty girlfriend and rushes off home.

There, once the initial shock and grief over the news has died down, Raja turns to Bimala and asks, “And your tea-party, Bim? How was it? Has Mrs. Biswas approved of you as her daughter-in law?” (94). Bimla is horrified and angered at Raja’s obvious assumption that she wishes to be somebody’s daughter-in-law and that she could possibly be interested in as shallow a person as Dr. Biswas.

Her initial anger, however, gives way to laughter as she brushes off Raja’s words as a brother’s natural desire to torment his sister. It is much more difficult for her to erase Dr. Biswas’s words given his idealization of her as a female “sati savitri”. Hence her need to suppress the last encounter: “There was no more time, one that she never admitted and tried to remember” (97). She as a poppet regarded by her own brother and by Dr. Biswas made her commodity which is to be sold in the market and could be refunded in case any damage.

The narrative of bourgeois morality and respectability that supports the nationalist discourse constantly seeks to protect its boundaries by domesticating and restricting the economy of power operable in the non-normative. Nationalist ideology “absorbs and sanctions middleclass manners and morals and plays a crucial part in spreading respectability to all classes of the population” (Manovir 9). Thus, Bimala’s sexuality, an aspect that is highlighted in an incident in which Bakul, Bimala’s brother-in-law, bends to light her cigarette, is denied because it is abnormal and dangerously freed not being directed at any one man.

Clement has criticized Desai’s fictional world by calling it vulnerable world. “the world of Anita Desai’s fiction is a world in which things fall apart, a world where the individual and the group alike are in need of a centre to put the broken fragments

of reality back together again” (237). *Clear Light of Day* hints at the possibility of reconciliation of the individual self with the wider world beyond.

Bimla, the enlightened and emancipated heroine of the novel chooses to stay single to take care of her retarded younger brother, spurning the offer of help of the others including the offer of marriage of their young family doctor, “In the course of the narrative, the highly sensitive being of Bimla is weakened and paralyzed by the seething violent conflict both within and without” (239). Desai not only presents the experimental lostness of an individual but they also probe the causes of such condition, “true indentify of oneself, of one’s potentiality is possible only in an environment of open, healthy mutuality” (238). The novel is all about human relationship a though it is rather their absence that is at the heart of the thematic impulse of the characters and are denied the opportunity to evolve from being a victim of fate, of physical constitution and robust force in one’s life.

There was that little sensual quiver in the air as they laughed at what she said. And a kind of quiet triumph in the way in which she drew in her cheeks to make the cigarette catch fire. Then threw herself back into the chair, giving her head “a toss and holding the cigarette away so that a curl of smoke circled languidly about her hand” (36). The reason behind this is that Bimala refuses the advance of the doctor. He has no other recourse but to inscribe her disdain for his negotiations as a defense against anything. It might dissuade her from following her natural call to be the angel of her father’s house.

Tara, unwilling to understand or accept the implications of Raja’s obsessions with Hyder Ali’s family, made silence. Mira-masi’s gradual deterioration gravitates towards the Misra household and encounters with Bakul. He asks Bimala for her sister’s marriage and leaves for foreign supports. Bakul signifies the typical “modern”

Indian man who believes that the true sign of progress is the right balance of tradition and modernity. He courts Tara at the club but respectfully comes to the house to ask for her hand in marriage.

Bimala's response is cutting in its sarcasm: "I'm head of the family now, am I? You think so, so I must be... I do not think you need to ask anyone-except Tara. Modern times, Modern India, Independent India" (81). Bakul feels as a desirable suitor by this unexpected, dismissive gesture. He realizes that even though a "modern" man might initially be attracted by the likes of Bimala, having her, as his wife would prove hazardous to his authoritative presence.

Clear Light of Day common digs out of the historical drama of the partition violence of 1947 beneath its fictional drama. The partition of India is not a simple event leading to the formation of two nations-India and Pakistan. While talking about partition of India, pervasive violence comes at once. From the killings, rapes, kidnapping, looting and banditry, the "Indian subcontinent continues to suffer from psychological wounds, etched by partition. Arguably before the Indian partition, the twentieth century had not experienced such a massive and excruciating migration of people" (Salim 10). From the birth of the nations, communal riots exploded up from the remote villages to the cities.

Hindus, Muslim and Sikhs slaughtered each other by stopping trains to and from India and Pakistan and go around the throats of the passengers. They raped women and murdered children in the fields; Property was seized from migrating groups. Civil tension continued mounting for several months.

Women's bodies were targeted as the battlefield during the partition of India and its horrible violence. In fact, in a world raven by ethnic and communal conflicts in which women are not only the victims but also the weapons of war. From

Bangladesh to the Balkans, Peru to Liberia, Rwanda to Somalia, the ravaged bodies of women has become envelope of living objects on whose soft bodies victors and losers alike release their anger, enact fantastic and celebrate victories. This means during the partition violence both losers and victors regarded female's soft body as an object of wrath. In the male-dominated society like India, if a raped woman speaks of her shame could accept the fact that she can no longer occupy any available and acceptable social space. A woman raped can no longer belong to any of the known categories of virgin, wife or widow thus effectively erased from the social register.

In the history of partition violence that if women from any religion were raped and impregnated, then families simply rejected them with the view to maintain their so-called honor. Many of them had been forced to die at the hands of men and own in their hands poisoned, squeezed or burnt to death. They even put to the sword, drowned etc.

In fact, the violence against women during riots bring to savagely and explicitly. The familiar forms of sexual violence charged with a symbolic meaning serves as an indicator of the place that women's sexuality occupies in an all-male patriarchal arrangements. The most predictable form of violence experienced by women, is sexual abuse, assaults and torments perpetrated by the men of the other.

During the partition violence, hundreds and thousands of women had undergone same experience. Thus was the day of partition of India especially for the woman. The novel focuses on the plight of Das household because of Raja's determination not to participate in the nationalist censure of the Muslims. Raja's interest in Mogul culture and his fascination with Urdu language and literature becomes concentrated on the imposing figure of Hyder Ali, the Muslim landlord.

His defense of the Muslims against the rapid violence and existentialism makes him aloof from all. On the one hand the novel comments Raja's and Bimala's nonpartisan politics and at the same time it also criticizes Raja's native idealism.

When the boys at Hindu College found that Raja was one Hindu who actually accepted the idea of Pakistan as feasible, they changed from charmed friends into dangerous enemies... When he spoke to them of Pakistan, as something he quite accepted, they turned on him openly called him a traitor, drowned out his piping efforts at reasonableness with the powerful arguments of fanatics. They so much wanted him [Raja] to join them. He was as desirable as a member of their cause was in his idealistic enthusiasm, his graceful carriage, his incipient heroism. (57)

Raja's involvement to Urdu poetry and poet gradually leads him to the affection with Muslim culture and Pakistani feelings that results him as a traitor. His Heroism remains nascent and he is forced to spend the worse day of the partition and with tuberculosis, too weak to do anything. Raja's bravery is expressed only in his fantasies.

When one of his terrorist friends places a guard outside the Das house to monitor Raja's contact with his Muslim neighbor for a moment, he thrilled at the idea of his importance, his dangerousness. He saw mob at bay. The very thought made him break into a sweat. Just as Raja's weak body prevents him from imagining the unimaginable calamities that the partition heralds, the narrative too seems unable to speak the unspeakable endured by millions. Hyder Ali is found to be safely settled in the Muslim haven of Hyderabad; Raja recovers from his tuberculosis and is keeping with his romantic liking marriage to Hyder Ali's daughter.

However, Raja can deny the division of India and Pakistan and set himself up, as the exemplary Indian in independent India by moving to Hyderabad and marrying Hyder Ali's daughter. He renounces all his responsibilities as the eldest son in Old Delhi and settles in Hyderabad. Raja's passion with masculine figure and presence of Hyder Ali is greatly distinguished from his relationship with his own father, who is presented as aloof and unapproachable.

It is not that Raja's father is feminized. But his prolonged absences from the household and his impenetrable self-absorption prevent the strength of the paternal signifier as the Law of the Father. By contrast, Hyder Ali becomes for Raja the elevation of masculinity in relation to which his Hindu family appears as deprived of. This specific pain of two cultures undermines the usual binary gendered opposition of colonizer and colonized as male and female. The alliance between Raja and Hyder Ali assumes east that is not related by Raja's marriage to Ali's daughter.

Of course, Raja's eventual departure of Hyderabad and his marriage to Benazir is equally motivated by Hyder Ali's immense wealth. Raja discards one cocoon like existence form to other. Raja's love of Muslim culture, afloat by the uninviting reality of a burning Delhi and a chaotic country split into two. It allows him dramatically to abandon all domestic duties at the death of his father. He refuses to worry about a few cheques and files in father's office, as everyone becomes a refugee.

Clear Light of Day as light of day shows main characters submerged in the nostalgia of glorious past. Desai is showing a sad history after partition and its violence. Desai is also foregrounding the domestic upheavals in the Das family and a bit to the Misra family. At the backdrop of national upheavals in 1947 women were badly affected by the partition of the country. Similarly, in the novel due to partition

of the family, the writer is showing the suffering of the women in the family rather than men. Either in the case of Bim or in the case of Misra sisters and Widow Mira Masi, all are struggling with the problems arisen from the partition of the family.

Desai's *Clear Light of Day* is a general story of women's emancipation in the light of the independence of India and her simultaneous dimension. The emancipation, however, is not easy. The desire for resolution of domestic upheavals, articulated as it is by Bimala. She throughout the novel has struggled against any dissolution. Women encounter in trying to break away from the image of women is no differently perceived: by the father, the husband, and in a way more troubling by the brother and the son. Finally, Desai is unwillingly to be called feminist even though she highlights women's emancipation, she does not dramatize easy solutions of the difficulties of her protagonists.

Tara and Bim attempt to reconcile their childhood dreams with their adult lives and work to resolve the lingering guilt of past family conflicts. Their struggles with autonomy and independence are echoed in the backdrop of the newly partitioned nation. Raja and Bim, declaring they will grow up to be a hero and heroine. They laugh at Tara when she says she will grow up to be a mother.

Yet Tara, "the quiet, retiring one whose childhood is marked by passivity, fear, and isolation is paradoxically, the one who chooses to escape" (Parekh 277). Tara does grow up to be a mother, but also a modern woman. Tara chooses to marry in order to escape the confines of her house and family, "[saving] herself from all that their Old Delhi house represents decay, decadence, insanity, illness, and stasis" (Parekh 234) Tara appears to be a modern woman, traveled and cultivated, far removed from her childhood timidity and passivity. Yet this independence has been

taught to her, arguably even forced on her, by her husband Bakul. Perhaps, Tara is not truly autonomous if her independence involves obeying her husband's wishes.

Bimla, the central consciousness in *Clear Light of Day* whose self is wounded and called just only Bim; suffered by the callous behaviour of her parents and her brothers, very often compares her relation and their memory to mosquitoes. Desai reflects it as follows:

The memory came whining out of the dark like a mosquito ... the mosquitoes that night were like the thoughts of the day embodied in monster form, invisible in the dark but present everywhere ... they had come like mosquitoes- Tara and Bakul, and behind them the Misras and somewhere in the distance Raja, and Benazir - only to torment her and mosquitoes like sip her blood. All of them fed on her blood, at sometimes or the other had fed. (151-53)

Bim does not get any support either by Raja, Tara or by any figures. Her life is full of dark and she has lots of responsibilities including Baba to take care being independent. Tara's elder sister, throughout their childhood proved to be the more assertive and strong-willed sister. Yet she never moves out of their childhood house, and as an adult is responsible for taking care of Baba essentially becoming a mother figure to him. The unbearable pain made her out of conscious so she depicts Tara, Bakul and Misra family as her sucking blood.

She teaches at a college and manages to earn a living, but also is part of the domestic sphere and she attempted to escape. As a teenager, she emphatically declares her refusal to marry:

I can think of hundreds of things to do instead. I won't marry ... I shall work- I shall do things, she went on. 'I shall earn my own living and

look after Mira-masi and Baba and-be independent. There'll be so many things to do. (140-41)

Her refusal to marry and be independent is criticized by Raja. She wants to live freely but that is not easy as Raja does.

Although *Clear Light of Day* focuses on the Das family, their struggles and fragmentation even are echoed in the larger narrative of the newly partitioned nation. Tara and Bim both suffers with this tension of past and present try to struggle redefining themselves and move beyond the confining house and childhoods. This endeavor is reflected in the national struggle of women to attain a new political and social role in postcolonial India.

Bishnupriya Ghosh argues that Desai's "analysis of gender and politics thus extends into a critique of India nationalism which excluded gender issues from its political rhetoric's of liberation and rejuvenation" (3). Tara and Bim's complex struggle with autonomy and independence occurs against the backdrop of the newly partitioned nation. Desai's writing subtly criticizes the experience of powerlessness, and the novel ultimately extends to demand a new role for women in postcolonial India, moving beyond traditional domestic roles to a new level of political and social empowerment. Behnaz Alipour Raskari argues:

The most common themes in her novels are the complexity of human relationships, particularly the man-woman relationship. She writes mostly about the miserable plight of women suffering under this insensitive and inconsiderate husband, fathers and brothers. So man-woman relationship brings characters into alienation, withdrawal loneliness, isolation and lack of communication that frequently occurs in her novel. (1)

The extract shows that in most of Desai's novels, protagonists are alienated from the world, society, families, and parents and even from their own selves because they are not average people but individuals. When these characters have to face alienation they become rebels. He further describes:

In *Clear Light of Day*, Desai treats other form of man-women relationship. Bim carries a childhood image of her brother Raja—romantic, poetic, dreamy—whereas Raja is rational, pragmatic and materialistic. She gets angry about Raja as she feels that he does not reciprocate towards her feeling normally because during childhood they had close emotional relationship which she feels as an adult Raja is shunning. (3)

Both Bim and Raj want to be the heroine; and the hero when they grow up and go away into the big world, away from their old parental home. In this way, they have greater mental and temperamental affinity with each other than the brother and sister. Both of them are bold, independent and possess a strong impetuous spirit. When Raja is sick Bim takes care of him with love and devotion thinking that he would take her father's place the day when he recovers.

However, to her utter distress when Raj gets well, he decides to go away to a distant place. "I will go-go to-to Hyderabad, Hyder Ali Sahib asked me to come...I have to begin my life sometimes; don't if you don't want one to spend all my life down in this done, do you?" (95). And Raja runs away to Hyder Ali and marries Benazir, his daughter. Then he leaves Bim along with Baba in the crumble house. Raja renounces his responsibility towards Bim and Baba entirely.

So, their relationship changes Tara, too later on understands the significance of time and comes to realize how human relationship- even the intimate relation

between a brother and a sister- changes with the passage of time. Raja never recalls the old days, the love and sacrifice of Bim, her taking care of his health. Bim is treated most cruelly by her brother. Utterly neglected and treacherously deserted, Bim looks painfully on how the passage of time has ravaged the old relationships of childhood and created a changed pattern relationship in the family.

After a long span of time, Bim decides to patch up with Raja who was probably not ever conscious of the hurt as his letters have caused Bim. She removes herself of the intense hatred for ultimately and she realizes “No other love had started so far back in time and had had so much in which to grow and spread” (96), than she felt for family. She wakes up her dreamy world of past in the clear light of day to mend her relations with her brother. Likewise, Rakesh Patel in his analysis claims:

Anita Desai beautifully describes the state of the Delhi city.

Sometimes, the whole city seems to be dead and the houses are referred to in the novel as the “tombs”. The house of the Das family seems to be deserted and therefore Bimla does not prevent Baba playing his gramophone loudly because she thinks that the silence of the house is more dreadful. For her, the noise produced by Baba’s gramophone gives peace to her. (1)

The extract depicts that the description of Delhi is symbolic to tombs. The city is described as being dead. Again, the house reflects the mentality and sickness of the entire Das family. In other words, nobody in the Das household enjoys life, all merely exists. The sickness and disorder pervade in the mind of the family members. The relationship of Tara and Bim to each other and to others is at the center of the novel. Tara is still submissive and obedient to her husband, but her attitude toward her sister has been changed.

She no longer looks up to her with complete admiration; but gradually questions the wisdom of their actions. Bim had been the outgoing, competent one in the family; but she is worn down with responsibility. She is particularly bitter toward their older brother Raj who had married into a highly successful Muslim family. Tara's visit forces Bim to face some of the old resentments she has harbored with the clear light of day.

Much of the conflict in India during the time of Desai's *Clear Light of Day* centers upon religious tensions between the Muslims and Hindus. Desai, while mentioning the events that were caused by the religious tensions, neglects to address the religious issue in any great. By studying the language usage in Desai's novel similarities can be drawn between certain aspects of the Das sibling's relationship and the political situation in India. Urdu and Hindi, the native languages of India, divided the Das siblings as well as India in a time of turmoil, while English was able to unite them.

The partition of India parallels the partition within their family and creates fissure in their familial ties. It disintegrates their family, becoming a powerful image of their feelings of estrangement. She becomes a victim of circumstances. The abrupt change in the circumstance of her life and her family not only poses a threat to her high aspirations, but also simultaneously breeds identity crisis. She is unable to reconcile her aspirations to the circumstantial change around her. After her parent's death and Tara's marriage, she is left alone to nurse her ailing brother Raja, attend to the aged, alcoholic and invalid aunt and look after her mentally hindered brother Baba. It is these burdens and responsibilities that shatter her marital bliss and destroy her conjugal identity. With the passing away of aunt Mira, she feels forlorn.

In school, the Das children were forced to learn different languages, (as the political situation in India changed) before the partition, Raja was allowed to choose which language, Hindi or Urdu that he wanted to study. As Desai tells us, “Urdu had been the court language in the days of the Muslims and Moghul rulers and had persisted as the language of the learned and the cultivated” (47). Official use and of aristocratic norms could view through Urdu language during the flourishing of Moghul empire. It was its climax time to develop so Raja is interested in a new culture or ruling culture.

By the time Bim and Tara go to school, they were forced to study Hindi because of the political turmoil of the time. “Hindi was not then considered a language of great pedigree; it had little to show for itself in its modern, clipped, workaday form, and its literature was all in ancient, extinct dialects” (48). However, the languages used in Desai’s novel represent the conflicts in the Das house as well as in India.

The novel traces the tensions of a Hindu family reunited in the family home, where one sister, Bim, who has stayed there caring for Baba represents Indian culture, while the other sister, Tara, represents more Western values. At one level, Baba represents the lacking of judgment and detachment from postcolonial negotiation of power, i.e. that one can somehow remove oneself from such negotiations.

At one point, in the first part of the novel, Tara persistently asks Baba if he is going into the office to perform duties. Later that day, when one of his records develops a skip, he rushes off the property only to witness a man beating a horse and to return, disoriented and deeply upset, “as if he were an amputee” (15). In many respects, he is, “that which is absent and to explain why Bim has not changed and to explain why Tara disgusts from those silences and shadows representative of Old

Delhi decadence” (12). Then, it is through his body (his silence, his compulsions, his ghostly presence) that the two sisters attempt to negotiate a balance between old and new India.

Towards the end of the novel, Desai momentarily reconsiders the idea of Baba as fixed in his difference from sisters, offering a fleeting hope of connectedness in place of differentiation. In this scene, Bim brings Baba his tea and feels an immense, almost irresistible yearning to limb, silent and immobile together. She needs only to lie down and stretch out beside him to become whole and perfect. Instead, she went out (166). Baba who is silent in the novel fully dependent to Bim. It is Bim who has to take responsibility of the house and to search her own identity.

Twinkle B Manovir stresses on family relationship in *Clear Light of Day*.

According to him:

In the novel *Clear Light of Day*, family relationship has not been brought home to the readers that the relationship between her Tara and her husband Bakul has not been going on smoothly. Tara had to realize every moment of her life that with Bakul. She lived in a disinfected land with its set of rules and regulations, its neatness and orderliness. What [...] Tara and Bakul there is nothing in detail. It can be said that family relationship does not seem to form a very significant part of the novel. (19)

Tara, she has some sort of relation with Bakul because she is married to him since Tara is not satisfied with that relation, what she felt was that the way of life, which her husband follow, was devoid of human sentiments.

The tentative reconciliation is created via acknowledgement of past memories and the articulation of shared familial bonds. But Baba’s silence places him outside

this reconciliation and ultimately, he serves as an object outside by which the sisters establish their renewed ties. Desai recognizes the temporal nature of that unity and reconciliation- as Tara reminds Bim, “It’s never over, Nothing’s over, ever” (174). Unlike his sister’s mobile, stable, struggling to negotiate the changing nature of postcolonial India and their roles within it. Baba ultimately is cast in stone, fixed and excluded from the dialectic of nationhood.

Tara and Bim both struggle for autonomy, achieving it in various degrees; Tara marries to escape Old Delhi and attains more personal independence while Bim’s education and self-sufficiency grant her certain level of freedom. Their struggle with autonomy and independence comes against the backdrop of the newly-portioned nation.

Bim, protagonist in *Clear Light of Day* decides to face life's challenges alone. She encounters an identity crisis; her strong will power and determination come to her help. The novel is set in Old Delhi and it speaks of a period soon after India's Independence and the communal riots that followed and as Nabar argues, the novel exhibits “a neo-colonial attitude ... a class conscious which is sufficiently present in the Indian context” (16). It is not more than class conscious and clash as bourgeois and proletariats do in course of time. As in the novel Raja represents haves group and Bim and Tara represent haves not. The main characters in the novel, Bimla, often referred to as Bim, Raja, and Baba, as children, have gone through distressing experiences at two levels, at personal level and at social level.

At the personal level, they have faced parental neglect and at the social level, they have witnessed the confusions following the Indian freedom struggle and the Second World War. Bim’s parents are too preoccupied with maintaining their aristocratic image in the social circles and they spend most of their time playing

Bridge and socializing in the Roshnara Club in Old Delhi. The children watch the goings and comings of their parents with fear, unpleasant and curiosity. The last of the siblings Baba, rather a late arrival in the family, is an autistic child.

The parents bring a distant relation of the mother, Mira masi, to take care of the children. But the children learn to take care of themselves; at least the two elder ones, Bim and Raja. They turn to support to the younger two Tara and Baba. As children, they used to play their favorite game of what they want to be in life and Raja and Bim always want to be hero and heroine while Tara wants to be a mother knitting for her children. Aunt Mira becomes too close to her in moments of fear. After the death of their parents, Bim becomes their mother figure, looking after Baba and taking care of Raja when he is down with tuberculosis.

As she grows up into a young, the leadership qualities in her help Bim to face the hard realities in life. Early in life, Bim has decided to be independent in life by perusing education and by deciding not to marry. When Tara does not find anything unusual or wrong about the Misra sisters getting married while they are still studying in college, Bim reacts passionately, “I don’t know why they are in such a hurry to get married,” she said. “Why don’t they go to college instead” (120). She further reinstates her priorities in life, ‘I won’t repeat Bim adding, “I shall never leave Baba and Raja and Mira-masi...”’ (126). Bim is a woman with strong belief. She is not the kind of person to be bogged down by the conventional society.

Anita Ghosh in her study on the *Modern Indian Women Novelists* makes this observation. Desai points to a kind of feminist emancipation that lies in not limiting women to their “traditional roles but in expanding and awakening them to several other possibilities. This kind of life, a part from being invigorating also forces them from dependence on men” (252). Bim is quite clear about what she wants to do with

her life. She never tries to retain anybody with her for giving her company, neither her sister Tara who goes away with her husband Bakul nor her brother Raja. He chases his ambition to build his future and fortune with the Hyder Alis in Hyderabad.

Bim accepts her responsibilities in her life gracefully even though her hands are full with her mentally challenged brother Baba, and treads the long and tiring journey of life alone. But her long years of loneliness and struggle have taken their toll on her life.

When Tara visits her sister after a lapse of several years, she finds her a changed person. In place of the confident and dominating personality, Tara finds a tyrant and at times a highly-strung up individual who does not hesitate to be impolite to her brother -in -law, Bakul. The changed personality of Bim is opposition to any changes. Bim's refusal to make changes in the household can be viewed in the light of her changed perception.

Her subconscious is trying to cling on to the joyful moments of her childhood when she was always in the company of her siblings. Bim does not seem to realize the fact that she is living on a myth by refusing to make any changes in the house even as her personality changes, her perception changes and also her physical appearance changes.

Bim compares the old house in Old Delhi to a tomb in a great cemetery. "Old Delhi does not change. It only decays. "My students tell me it is a great cemetery every house, tomb. Nothing but sleeping graves..." (13). Bim feels ancient like Old Delhi and she thinks only of death and decay. It is as though years of toil and loneliness have taught her to take up a negative attitude. Bim's insensitivity is further manifested in her showing lack of hospitality to Bakul. She shows more care for her

pets than to her brother-in-law Bakul, when she is pouring out milk in her cat's saucer. She is conscious that there is not enough milk left for his morning tea.

Bim makes sarcastic remarks on herself as belonging to the group of “old spinsters” and “love-starved spinsters” and these make Tara filled with a sense of guilt. She wants to belong to the secluded world created by her. She shuns Tara and Raja from her world. Life has taught her to be tough. The only person who knows her burden very well is Raja and he not only deserts her but he also betrays her.

His letter allowing her to stay in their house by paying the same rent, wounds her ego. Bim's world remains smaller into her college and her home with her dependent brother and her pets. No one else matter to her. She no longer believes in relationships.

Even though Bim is relieved of the fact that the disturbing period of her youth has passed because for her, post-independence India and the communal unrest meant more than external disturbance. It has led into her inner world like the “first terrible food of lie” (72) -a part of herself weeps at the loss of her youth, the unchanged loss. When Bim tells Tara that she would never want to be young again, “An invisible cricket by her feet at that moment began to weep inconsolably” (73). Bim cannot accept the changes in Raja and Tara. She observes with disbelief and irritation the new-found strength in Tara. Similarly, she cannot take in the changed physical appearance and the lifestyle of Raja.

Bim is conscious of her identity confusion even though she is pretending to take things lightly. She becomes impatient when Tara tries to justify her act by saying she has left only the rotten parts, Bim remarks, “I do hate waste” (85). Her hands shake with anger. Bim's depression takes her to the brink of neurosis. Bim, with her

dominating nature, has unconsciously added anger to her trait to overcome her anxiety and the feeling of insecurity caused by loneliness.

With the death of Mira Masi and unexpected sudden departure of Raja, Bim becomes only disappointed but she never became bitter and angry upon them. She learns that although there will always be family scars, the ability to forgive and forget is powerful among life's sorrows. The growth of Bim's self is not yet to complete and this way her mind starts thinking about the past and the present. She is highly impressed by these two lines or sentences:

Many were around me when I was born
 But now I am going alone ... "and" ...
 Strange that I came with nothing into
 the world, and now go away with
 this stupendous caravan of sin. (167)

Bim's desire to be independent, to be courageous and to dress and smoke like a man enables her to grow up both strong and confident. She refuses to confine herself to her role as a traditional woman, showing an insignificant victim or object for others use and pleasure. Women in our society are still trained from infancy to entertain, to pleasure and to serve men and she is no exception of such tendency to her family.

Bim finally realizes the seriousness of her situation. She now wants to get herself out of this unfortunate situation. This realization is a good sign in Bim and it gives the answers to the questions that have been haunting her or many years. They were really all parts of her, inseparable. So many aspects of her, she was of them. So that the anger or the disappointment she felt at them was only the anger and the disappointment she felt at herself- "Whatever hurt they felt, she felt. Whatever diminished them diminished her. Whatever attacked them attacked her" (157).

Familial bondage shares equal feelings whatever has happened at any time. Therefore she realizes the value of family ties and wants to knit relation in a new way. The forgiveness of humiliating letter was sent by Raja is the result of knowing intimate family value in course of time.

In her near-neurotic state, her strong will power and unfailing strength have only come to her rescue. She wants to forgive Raja for his unforgivable letter. It dawns on her that Raja has always been achieving his heroes in his life and in his poetry and that, he has his imitations. Bim's realization is that she is part of the world of her brother and her sister, that was all part of her, helps her to come through her identity crisis. Therefore, time has at last freed Bim from the grip of fear of loneliness and she is the independent self again ready to continue her journey through life.

Thus, the novel depicts female's struggle and tolerance in a male guided society. The causes of family disintegration and conflict are the results of contemporary Indian social norms and values grown within colonialism. Desai presents masculine chauvinism based on contemporary society and its impacts to the poorly lived family. The novel focuses on the male ideology and oppression to the female characters, which simultaneously brings disturbance disintegration and conflict in a suburban poorly lived family.

Chapter: Four

Reconciliation in *Clear Light of Day*

Desai's *Clear Light of Day* is a story of Das family's struggles and fragmentation in the newly- partitioned nation. Tara and Bim as the representative of women of partitioned India engaged with the tension of past and present and struggle to redefine themselves and move beyond the confining status of their house and childhood. In this novel, Desai basically focuses on the then Indian society where in search of selfhood; pleasant life incites the disturbance of family bondage, social values and norms.

The pathetic protagonist Bim suffers a lot in a middle class family in Old Delhi. But her brother Raja leaves her and dwells in Hyderabad enjoying the prosperous life. Bim not only has to live herself, but also has to take care of her mentally retarded little brother Baba with difficulty. She does everything patiently. When his brother Raja sends her an insulting letter, she even does not protest, rather quests for her identity at the same rented house. The male's identity dominates the position of a woman at their space and neglects their all values. Bim, as a protagonist represents the victim of male dominated society.

Likewise, Tara as a child always feels inferior to her brother and sister and even after her marriage to Bakul. She struggles at school and games times. She has never been truly happy with her husband and feels a lot of guilt that she left her sister to cope with the family after she had gone. However, their struggle with autonomy and independence are echoed in the backdrop of the newly partitioned nation.

The novel opens with Tara's visit to the childhood. She is the youngest sister, somewhat ambitionless, who got married and escaped from her family's many conflicts during the country's partition. Her relationship with her elder sister, Bimla,

is strained and tense. Bimala is an ambitious and dissatisfied on college teaching job stayed behind to look after her mentally handicapped brother, Baba.

Raja, her older brother who married into a rich family, leads a very glamorous life in Pakistan. During his daughter's marriage he calls to Bim to join in Hyderabad. Tara is to convey message that Bim is keen to see Raja to his parental home. And she forgets the previous humiliating letter that she got from Raja addressing that he would not increase the rent and she could live with Baba. The attitude of forgiveness towards brother reunited their family bonds once again. The siblings' history mirrors that of India's with regards to the partition. There are lost opportunities, pains, sacrifice, and always an underlying tension due to what could have been. In short, Desai in the novel exhibits the masculine dominated family relationship. The females especially during the partition of India are dominated, on the one hand by patriarchal socio-cultural values and on the other by partition-violence.

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