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**ANALYSING INTERWOVEN THEMES IN ANITA DESAI'S  
CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY**

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**Abstract:**

*Indian English Literature is very prosperous as it has occupied various forms of literature. The present paper deals with the Clear Light of Day written by Anita Desai in 1980. Anita Desai is a well-known writer in Indian English Literature. Anita Desai's Clear Light of Day intricately navigates the complex terrain of familial relationships and individual identity against the backdrop of postcolonial India. This paper delves into the thematic depth and variety of themes of the novel examining the characters' profound struggles to reconcile the past with the present. 33 years after the Indian subcontinent's Partition, Anita Desai's novel Clear Light of Day, was published. It focuses on markedly 'female' experiences of Partition, wherein the importance of national history is within the framework of gendered family history. What role such familial (social) memories play within the larger canon of 'Partition narratives' will be analysed exemplarily through the novel in this paper. Looking at how the family house is depicted in Clear Light of Day is important to mark out its chronotropic value, i.e. the house contains as well as evokes spatial memories and triggers the mnemonic processes of the female protagonists that eventually facilitate the overcoming of past conflicts. Finally, the narrative technique of internal focalization, repeatedly deployed in the novel, will be scrutinized to reveal the inner turmoil and the personal (traumatic) experiences of the female protagonists. This research article explores the multifaceted layers of themes presented in the novel, dissecting its themes, character dynamics, and narrative techniques.*

**Keywords:** *Prosperous, Partition, Chronotropic, Multifaceted, etc.*

**Introduction:**

Anita Desai is one of the most promising, the most consisting, the most thought-provoking, and the most innovative of all women's novelists in Indian English Literature, was born in 1937 to of Bengali father and a German mother. She has come to light with many novels with a special colour of psychological exploration, familial issues, human relationships, and



conflict in the life of the women's characters. Influenced by the psychological novels of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and D.H. Lawrence she sets a new trend in the history of Indian English novels that is 'Psychological novel'. Srinivasa Iyengar remarks "Anita Desai added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian woman novelists of English fiction. In her novels, the inner lives of the characters are as important as their out lives and their environment." Her serious concern is with the journey within her characters which are prominently female. She has concerned herself with the inner conflict and anguish of her female characters. She describes the emotional tension that goes in the heart of her female characters. Basavaras Naikar in his article 'Marital Disharmony in Anita Desai's Novel's praises her 'of all the contemporary Indian novelists Anita Desai is, perhaps, the most perceptive and consistent explorer of the inner life especially that of Indian women'. Several novels by Anita Desai explore tensions between the external world of relation and the internal world of emotion with its longingness. Her ultimate object of writing novels is the exploration of sensibility, the particular kind of Indian sensibility. Naturally, her novels deal with a recurring theme which is the female's agony of existence and identity in a hostile patriarchal society. She represents the female world with confidence which emerges from her personal experience as a woman. Her preoccupation is always with the inner world of women's sensibility rather than the external world of action and result. The female characters in Anita Desai's novel have the best expression through the first-hand experience of the writer as a woman. She succeeds in capturing the complex shades like women. In most of her novels, she represented women as a protagonist. Naturally, her novels are full of the qualities or feelings associated with the female world.

Her novels describe the disillusionment, emotional depression, longingness, barrenness of heart, escape, and surrender of female characters in a stereotyped society. Her novels are representative of the Socioeconomic cultural environment typical of India, in which men are considered superior to women. She has brought an innovative chapter in the history of Indo-Angliannovels through psychological realism that makes them able to represent various facets of women's living. Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*, often regarded as Anita Desai's most intricate novel, stands as a literary masterpiece intricately weaving together the lives of the Das siblings within the backdrop of postcolonial India. Desai was inspired to write the novel by modernist poet T.S. Eliot's famed *Four Quartets*. She similarly structured her novel in four parts and ignored chronology, preferring to interweave past and present; she also quoted the poem in the epigraph to the novel. She referred to *Clear Light of Day* as "a four-dimensional piece on how a family moves backward and forward in a period." The novel is divided into four parts through rich character development and nuanced storytelling, Desai delves deep into the complexities of family relationships, personal identity, and the cultural landscape of a changing nation. *Clear Light of Day* deals with the story of four siblings named Bimla (Bim), Raja, Tara, and, Baba. After the death of their parents, they were living with Miramasi who further died because of a bad habit of alcoholism. Tara further gets married to Bakul. Raja had fallen ill due to Tuberculosis. Bim served him like a mother to take him out of the disease. She arranged for a doctor to treat Raja, named as Dr. Biswas. Dr. Biswas studied in Germany and appreciates music immensely; he plays violin, but poorly. He takes a liking to Bim, but she doesn't return the favour. He likes to believe he is a self-sacrificing person, but Bim avoids



him. Further, Raja leaves Bim promising her of his return. But after getting married to Benazir, daughter of landlord Hydar Ali in Hyderabad. Then Raja settles there forever. This makes Bim live lonely and unmarried to serve Baba's Autistic brother. This research article explores the multifaceted layers of the novel, dissecting its themes. By examining the interplay of tradition and modernity, the article sheds light on the character's experiences struggles for self-discovery, and their collective quest to reconcile the past with an evolving present. Through a comprehensive analysis, this article seeks to unravel the profound insights offered by Desai's work, illuminating the broader implications of the novel in the context of postcolonial literature and the human experience. Following are the major themes of the novel.

### **Partition:**

The story of *Clear Light of Day* is based in 1947 India-Pakistan Partition. While the lead characters are not part of the event, the partition influences their lives over the years. The characters exist in Old Delhi, which is on the right side of town, so they do not face the same kind of violence of the partition at all. Though, the Partition still separates the family up to extend anyway. Raja goes to Hyderabad to be near Hyder Ali Khan Saheb, whom he worships; Tara marries as a way of escaping the dysfunctional family that is her home; and Bim and Baba live together again, in the only house they have ever called home, responsible for the ghosts of their childhood. They must not have been separated through some terrible ordeal, but that is rather due to their choices. Their "partition" is self-inflicted.

### **Family:**

Although the Das family remains at the heart of *Clear Light of Day*, the Das siblings are frequently contrasted with those of other families such as the Alis and the Misras. As with Raja and Tara, family is something to run away from; something that frustrates, infuriates, and mystifies; something that is missing, as with the Das family; and something that is different from what you would expect, just as the close relationship between Bim and the siblings, the intensity of her love for Baba, or Bim and Tara recognizing how much deeper their similarities are than they had always believed. Family is one of the few sustaining things in times of duress, and even though it is not perfect, it is worth investing in. Desai suggests that family makes us who we are and that we should forgive those whom we love to achieve peace.

### **Adolescence**

The early years of the Das siblings and how those years influenced their current lives are the subject of a significant portion of the book. Tara and Baba were the least loved siblings and eventually became dependant on others, albeit in various ways, whereas Bim and Raja, the older brothers, were self-assured and aspirational. Since their parents rarely provided for them, the kids were always on the lookout for attention from one another. Their adolescent experiences, along with their frequently contentious relationships, shaped who they were in the future. Once a conceited and egotistical man, Raja grows up to be a wealthy and haughty man who still aspires to be the hero he loves, Hyder Ali. Tara depends on her spouse and other people all the time. Bim witnesses the degradation of her widowed aunt in her house and the limitations of marriage, and she decides to live a life of independence.



### **Escapism:**

The Das siblings are always striving to get away from where they are. The absence of attention from their parents feeds into this urge. In defiance of his family's expectations, Raja begins to lean toward Islamic culture. Tara, on the other hand, begins spending more time with the Misra sisters and initially pursues attention from Mira Masi before eventually marrying Bakul and moving out of Old Delhi. Baba plays the same song on repeat all the time in an attempt to subconsciously escape his immediate surroundings. The urge to suppress painful memories from their early years drives these three characters. It seems like Bim is the only one who is unwilling to leave her family behind. But as the narrative goes on, one begins to see through Bim's armor. She is constantly hurt by her siblings and needs to escape—this time, ironically, into the past.

### **Women's Role in Society:**

Characters frequently compare Bim and Tara to one another and voice their opinions on one or the other depending on how submissive they are. Despite living in the same environment, the two sisters' goals and feelings are derived from distinct experiences. While Tara is an escapist and seeks to other people for emotional support, Bim is independent and pursues perfection. The sisters are also greatly impacted by the sufferings of their widowed aunt Mira Masi and the Misra sisters, who, although well-educated, are abandoned by their husbands due to their lack of education. Bim occasionally makes the same comparisons to Raja and yearns for his privileges and attention that come with being a guy. Overall, Bim can transgress some gender boundaries but Desai is aware that 20th-century Indian culture is not one in which women have the same opportunities as men.

### **Memory and the Weight of the Past:**

The main characters in *Clear Light of Day* are constantly drawn into the past and memory. Indeed, Bim's current life is like a shrine to the past: the same house, the same routine, old papers kept, rooms never changing their decor. Bim dwells in the past in her mind as well, thinking about various grievances and memories that shaped her. Tara lives more in the present because she knows what letting in the past will do: weigh her down and make her feel as if she were sinking into the dark and scummy well. Nevertheless, Tara comes to see that some engagement with the past is necessary because it shaped her and because she needed to gain understanding and resolution to things that had haunted her. Bim, for her part, finally sees the danger in dwelling too much in the past and releases some of her heavier, more noxious memories.

### **Forgiveness:**

One of Bim's major struggles in the novel is her inability to forgive Raja. She blames her ire towards him on the letter he wrote about being her landlord, but it is clear that her hurt stems from something deeper—something like Raja leaving the house and leaving Bim alone with the rest of the family, with whom she was not as close. Bim clings to her bitterness, believing it makes her powerful and incapable of being hurt again. However, by the end of the novel, Tara's visit has forced Bim to confront some of her issues and realize that her love of Raja is



worth setting aside her grievance. She will accept him for who he is and will let him back into her life; her constant anger was only hurting her, rather than sustaining her. This decision to forgive was not made rashly or easily, but Bim's ability to get there reveals her to be a thoughtful, intelligent, and sympathetic character.

### **Alienation:**

Alienation is a state of man's contradiction with his milieu. It alludes to the polarization between man and nature and the breaking down of man's dreams of joy. It also reflects a mirror; a condition of man's separation from himself, with a common feeling of depression or a sentiment of avoidance that goes with any conduct where the individual is constrained to pointlessly. The people are compelled to control individuals and circumstances as per social requests while feeling unequipped to control their activities. Alienation is an old phenomenon but it has accepted alarming extents in the present age. Several factors have achieved this condition of awareness. The feeling of alienation is characteristic in man as he is inclined to practically all the physical and mental assaults of society and its controllers. The contrary impacts of alienation lead man either to end it all or to see himself as not over automation deprived of any close-to-home positioning or individuality. In this novel, *Clear Light of Day*, the main protagonist Bim is living in an alienated state. Being an older daughter of the Das family, which made her to be with her younger brother because of his state of autism he was unable to live independently. So consequently, due to familial responsibility as being elder daughter, she remained with Tara

To conclude, the intricate themes in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* are a superb tapestry reflecting the complexities of family dynamics, personal development, and the passage of time. Desai investigates the diverse reactions to social expectations, the healing of old grudges, and the long-lasting effects of childhood events on adult life via the intertwined narratives of the Das family. The theme of Partition reveals a glimpse of the bitterness of that time. The paper also throws light on the causes of alienation. Here it informs about women's role in postcolonial Indian society. The novel emphasizes the universal search for identity and understanding in the setting of shifting historical and cultural landscapes through its detailed representation of the characters' internal and exterior challenges. Readers are encouraged to consider the fine line between remembrance and forgiveness by Desai's rich, evocative writing and astute psychological insight, which ultimately suggests that healing and connection are possible even in the face of the past's wounds. *Clear Light of Day* thus stands as a poignant reflection on the enduring power of familial bonds and the resilience of the human spirit.

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