



# LONELINESS AND DETACHMENT IN THE NOVELS OF ANITA DESAI

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## Abstract

The researcher notes that Anita Desai expresses her concern for women through characters such as Lotte, and that striving against patriarchal tyranny and exploitation requires female unity and like-mindedness. Women's self-help groups need to encourage camaraderie among its members. Regardless of their particular differences, women—black or white—must recognise and value the reality that they belong to a single sisterhood. A woman's quest for freedom and uniqueness stems from her empowerment. It is impossible to say that a woman is completely empowered unless she has the autonomy to act and make her own decisions. A fully liberated person makes her own decisions without external pressure or coercion of any form. A sense of independence eliminates servitude, dependence on anything, and even preconceived notions. People in Baumgartner's Bombay lack the freedom to question or disagree with anything, including the very forces that affect their own circumstances. Because their memories are fogged with images of their race and culture, they are aware that they are not emancipated people and struggle to see themselves as unique individuals. Consequently, these elements have left an influence on their thoughts. These people are the epitome of degrading and insignificance. They stand for terrible deprivation, helplessness, and submission to oppressive powers.

**Keywords:** Decisions, Terrible deprivation, Helplessness, Oppressive powers.

## 1.1 Introduction

This novel belongs to the phase of Anita Desai's career where she shifts to a male-centred narrative and her main focus is on the male protagonist's psyche. In 1986 Anita Desai had immigrated to England and in 1988 the book was published. Baumgartner's Bombay is a story of pain, of rootlessness, homelessness, of lack of communication. Baumgartner's Bombay is a depiction of the loneliness and detachment experienced especially by exiles and immigrants. The novel depicts the life of Baumgartner who is a Jew. He experiences the realities of disillusionment with human company, strained relationship with society, victimization, homelessness, racial discrimination and rootlessness which are sensitively treated.

Baumgartner's Bombay marks the departure from the rest of her opus in terms of style and content and delivery of message. In Baumgartner's Bombay, Desai departs from her previous practice of including familial bonds, sentiments and such like to bring out the inner world of her character and to show it to the outer world. She weaves the story of a bachelor who out of love for his mother, hoping to give her a good life, moves to India with high hopes of the future. He comes to India in search of an identity but fails to get it as he is considered a 'Firanghi'.

The story moves from the loner's

childhood towards every step that he takes to secure his future but eventually shows him as a failure for whom even death could not be peaceful. Throughout the reading of the novel, one is made to experience the realities of disillusionment with human company, strained relationship with society, victimization, homelessness, racial discrimination and rootlessness which are sensitively treated. The study analyses the actualities of victimization of an individual by impersonal forces which are beyond his control.

The study analyses the actualities of victimization of an individual by impersonal forces which are beyond his control. Further, the researcher examines the aspects of loneliness, nostalgia, misfortune, the enigma, absurdity and meaninglessness of life in this novel. The unpredictability of human existence, the bitter experiences of exiles, isolation and alienation, the impact of childhood on adult personality, the impact of war and communal riots on individuals- these are some of the aspects of realism explored in this novel. However, the II world war and the communal riots in the wake of the partition of India forms the backdrop for the novel. The researcher also examines the stark realities of violence, cruelty, disgust, frustration, suffering, pain and the crucial search for identity. Real life with its void, its perfidy and its betrayal is brought out in varied aspects through the story of Hugo Baumgartner.

The origin of the character of Hugo Baumgartner lay in an Austrian Jew whom a friend of Anita Desai knew. He was in the habit of collecting leftovers for his brood of cats. Although he was not poor, he lived a life of penury. It is said that while Anita Desai was strolling around in the Lodhi gardens, that the whole gamut of the novel, its title and the memory of the Austrian Jew, scintillated her mind and the idea of Baumgartner's Bombay was born. In her own words during an interview, she says

*... And it was when I saw this Austrian Jew in Bombay-I actually saw the man pottering around the streets picking up scraps for his cats- that I began to imagine his past. And that gave me the key to open that German world. And I*

*was able to use my mother's memories of pre-war Germany and our own perception of the war far away from India simply as a set of rumors and news that came to us.*

## 1.2 Story Plot

Hugo Baumgartner, a German Jew, lives in Germany. His father is a prosperous furniture dealer. The II world war being imminent, Hugo's father loses all his wealth under the Nazi rule. He is tortured and humiliated and is reduced to the status of psychological devastation and he ultimately commits suicide. In Germany, the Jews were tormented and banished by the Nazi Germans. The onset of the II world war, precipitated torment for the native Jews even in India, under the British rule. They were arrested and detained in Internment camps. Circumstances force Hugo to leave Germany and come to India through the assistance of Herr Pfuehl, his father's business partner. As directed by Herr Pfuehl, Hugo arrives in Bombay, and meets Chimanlal, who is Herr Pfuehl's business associate.

Hugo finds a kindred soul in Chimanlal, who provides him with security and help. An intimate friendship develops between the two, along with the enhancement of business. Hugo occasionally even visits his home and also accompanies Chimanlal to the horse race course. Soon, both Hugo and Chimanlal together buy a horse and train it to participate in races. It wins several races and obtains fortune for Chimanlal. Chimanlal is overwhelmed by love and gratitude to Hugo and persuades Hugo to keep the silver trophies for himself. Though his early life in India is happy and quite prosperous, through his business with Chimanlal, as wood merchant, it does not last long. As Hugo holds a German passport, he is arrested by the British and taken to the Internment camp in Ahmednagar.

Hugo is a very lonely man and he makes no attempt to initiate friendship with Indians, except with Chimanlal. However, he maintains friendly relations with Lotte, a German cabaret dancer. But it is not possible to forego his belief in Germany and his childhood days. He remains fastened to Germany and to his childhood, even after his mother's death; he can no longer go back to Germany. With Chimanlal's death, Hugo loses his business connections. He

develops into a bedraggled, shabby, solitary and desolate man. He becomes a recluse and leads an atrophied existence. He keeps numerous stray cats for company and becomes known in the vicinity as the 'billiwallahpagal'. He exhibits peculiar traits, in that, he regularly collects leftovers from restaurants to feed his brood of cats.

In Germany, he had been dark—his darkness had marked him the Jew, der jude. In India, he was fair— and that marked him the firangi. In both the lands, he is not accepted. Hugo remains an outsider throughout. In Germany, he was an outsider marked by his dark complexion. But in India he is a foreigner marked by his fair complexion. Hugo aspires for acceptance and friendship only from Germans. This trait of seeking friendship only from Germans lands him into trouble and claims his life. He befriends a young German drug addict, by name Kurt. Out of compassion for the vagabond, he takes him to his poor lodgings. But Kurt murders him and decamps with some of Hugo's silver trophies.

### 1.3 Analysis

The novels of Anita Desai are directly connected to all of these phases. They encapsulate her artistic vision of alienation as femininity. In her books, she explores and reveals the long-smothered wail of the incarcerated soul, trapped within the four walls of domesticity. We have heroine characters here, sandwiched between tradition and modernity, between fantasy and reality, between mask and face. Thus placed, in order to discover her true self concerned with the outward quest of a woman for an authentic selfhood and an awareness of the existential problems of life, the Desai woman disowns a ritualistic and tradition-bound life, the Desai heroine is all agog to maintain her individuality in the teeth of disintegrating and divisive powers that challenge her existence as a woman. In this book, "In Custody" Anita Desai graphically discussed the problems faced by a middle-class woman in Hindu patriarchal society.

The novel "Baumgartner's Bombay" begins with Lotte's depressed emotional state, reading Baumgartner's mother's notes, and ends with the reading of the cards and attempting to find out the cause of the murder of Baumgartner. In fact,

we will move far closer to the women's perspectives in this book. In the sense of the patriarchal cultural pattern, a close examination of Anita Desai's work shows her fight for female autonomy. She appears to be posing a fresh and distinct question at the start about her female protagonist's condition in society. The writing of Mrs. Desai can be interpreted as a self-conscious response to the overwhelming masculinity of the dominant privileged gender. In this book, in asserting the personal and the subjective, we can recognise a defiant tone of voice in her female character. Her focus is psychological rather than sociological, her deep analytical maturity gives a gender-based (female) paradigm work as the ideological system for the overall study of culture. Like all feminist literary artists, a sustained analysis of allusive and elusive expression of individual is imperative for her. In her own words, her solely subjective novels "depend upon a private vision". This private vision presents extreme circumstances resulting from contradictions between the will and the truth of the "Self" Human interaction is rightly characterized by Carl Rogers as a way of self-disclosure, arguing:

"In his own personal and subjective world, man lives and even his objective functioning is the result of subjective intent and subjective choice."

Now, in Anita Desai, the centrality of self is concentrated in frightening isolation, finding it difficult to reconcile with the world around "Self" In all of Anita Desai's main female characters, a common characteristic is their desire to be free of all kinds of social and family involvement. One remembers, Simone de Beauvoirs that:

"The independent woman is one who, like man can move from immanence to transcendence in her public life activities and avoid sado-masochistic relationship in her personal life."

They face a peculiar challenge in marital relationships in the midst of societal disdain. In this book, Baumgartner's Bombay, we see that Lotte is a significant character. She arrives in Calcutta to earn her livelihood by dancing in a hotel. Just like Baumgartner, she also leads a very lonely life in India. For Jaw and Cabret, she was a German dancer. She married Kanti Lal Sethia in order to avoid incarceration in the camp.

Kanti Lal died, and her son threw her into the street after his death, depriving her of her house. She is all alone, and in her isolation, she just has Hugo. She was so severely depressed in her later life that she mainly stayed in her house and drank liquor. The only thing she says after Baumgartner's death is:

"Yeah, yes, I'm going now, and I'm going to go too."

The wretched and isolated situation of foreign immigrants in India is depicted in this novel by Anita Desai. Mrs. Desai describes Lotte and Baumgartner's pathetic state. Baumgartner directly influences Lotte's life. The lonely and isolated state of Hugo Baumgartner, a German immigrant in India, is portrayed by Anita Desai. Baumgartner has been living in India for fifty years, and he can never feel a sense of belonging, despite his long stay. He gets Indian citizenship, but he is never recognized as an Indian by Indians, even then, and he always longs for his country. With Lotte, we realize the same circumstances, but since she is a woman, her situation is more bitter. He met Lotte when Baumgartner first came to Calcutta. Lotte was once Mrs. Sethia, the wife of Calcutta's nondescript Marwari businessman. His family shunned her later, and then she came into contact with Baumgartner. It was merely a change from Kanti to Baumgartner for her. Her philosophy of life was only 'compromise,' but to some degree she was right in her approach to life because women are always marginalized in our society and men are always dominating it. In this regard, Ania Loomba expresses her opinions thus:

"In patriarchal society, women are separate subjects who watch men watch themselves. As femininity itself is characterized by being looked at by men, they turn themselves into objects."

By portraying their annoyance, Mrs. Desai gives fresh insight into the perception of the female psyche. Their problems and concerns which, through their response, find expression. Lotte is a survivor of the situation. Her war is another one-'war within war within war within war. There is a reflection of the attitude of Hugo in her, although she disguises her discomfort with 'laughter and foul language.' If she calls the Indian husband, it is life's prose. Lotte reacts:

"Company, business, nothing else is important to a man. Then he gets exhausted, and then he

needs a break."

In reality, Lotte realizes 'no return' from it, the search for life and love and a pervading feeling of apprehension. A mixture of Monisha's silent brooding is present inside her. The wish of Amla and Sita for a sort of escape from society's terrible oppression. She loses all control after Hugo's murder and feels 'suddenly too old,' but the blood-stained postcards-Ms. Baumgartner's letters to her son-gives her answers to a 'puzzle,' a sense to the meaningless. Hugo's own concerns are also her problems. But by rising above the situation, she learns to be more vigilant. The struggle is to start. Once again, the 'ordeal' is to figure out her own identity - 'In my beginning is my end.' Each of Mrs. Desai's female characters is specifically chosen and purposeful. In the role of loose woman, Lotte speaks of the ambition, annoyance and gloom of feminism. Through the descriptions of her portrayed life, Desai forces one's attention to certain protagonists who hold millstones around their necks. Like Hugo's, Lotte's multicoloured past is suffocating. She is the embodiment of the changes that extend from Napoli to Bombay in the urban style of life. Regarding the importance of money, she explains:

"You don't? She blew up. Without money, can you live? She slammed her glass down and quickly refilled it. Without money, you can't be Memsahib. I tried Hugo, but no, without money, I was just a poor old Lotte, not a great Memsahib."

The physical novelty and the name of Kanti offers her some kind of relief from the present outlandishness, but later on she is made faithful by mental stimulation and companionship.

Who looked after me? Nobody - Except Kanti." She is distinguished and different from other characters. Bold and stunning, Kanti's gold bangles remind her of:

"—but I can't take them off and put them in the bank. It's like taking your wedding ring off. When they become widows, Hindu women do it, but I won't as they're not a wedding - ring, just gifts. Kanti presents."

Lotte may be a mistress, but a shift of outlook is symbolised by the care and concern she displays for Kanti:

"I wasn't even there to hold his hand. His family was still arguing over the property, there in the hospital, no one even holding his hand.

Dogs die in the street like that. Hugo, this is how we go, she wagged her head in the end alone."

With individual hypocrisy, the philosophical insight is contrasted:

"These boys, when they were young, I knew them. I made them porridge if they were ill. I sat at night holding ice to their foreheads. I kept the priest away, called a doctor. They didn't even have a thermometer in the house until I went and got one. I went and chose their clothes if they wanted to dress smart."

Lotte was devoted to Kanti Lal and his family, and she would take care of his sons as a mother, but his family members refused to accept her after Kanti's death. Nothing is the same after Kanti's death. His sons refuse to recognize her:

"Who's the woman here? This lady we don't know. Throw her out!"

The misfortune of Lotte is that she is not legally part of the family and being an outsider, she is not even able to show her sympathy for the dying man who had lavishly maintained her and would come to visit her regularly from Calcutta. Worse still, she is not even allowed to go to the hospital when she goes to Calcutta during the final days of Kanti. The case of Lotte and her relationship with the family of Kanti Lal is an ironical presentation of the condition of women in the Indian Society. We had polygamy in ancient India and the shartras defined the duties of a co-wife but bigamy is a crime in modern times. But being polygamous in nature, a man often breaks his life-long relationship with the other woman. In the days of Adam and Eve, gender disparity was not understood, but women were relegated to an inferior role in the society across the ages. From being the very embodiment of power (Shakti) and knowledge (Gnyan), women came to be held only as a child-bearing machine, and their horizons were meant to be restricted only to their family position. Mainly the blame was placed on men, and it was assumed that male dominance would not allow women to flourish freely. In recent times, however, there have also been responsive writers like Anita Desai who have taken a humanist approach to the situation. Feminists contend that women have not been psychologically different since birth. The female-child is only biologically different, but the patriarchal culture conditions it as a woman: "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman,"

Simone de Beauvoir says. She goes on to say, 'No Biological, Psychological, Economic Destiny decides the figure that the human female presents in society, it is the civilisation as a whole that creates this creature, the intermediate between the male and the eunuch, defined as feminine.'

Lotte becomes a victim of the propensity of society to condition a woman to adhere to the standards of patriarchal set-up. Mrs. Desai as a real humanist places the blame not only on men who are struggling with the complex of male-superiority but also on women who exploit their own gender. It is not only the male chauvinist who acts as the antagonist power but even apathetic female does more damage in terms of the loss of woman spirit. Here, the matter of Lotte is very different in this book. She struggles a lot because she was held by Kanti. The state of Lotte was not respectable in society and the family of Kanti takes advantage of her situation, particularly after the death of Kanti. Mrs. Desai reveals the pathetic condition of this woman (Lotte) in male dominated society. But, not only as meekly/passively rebellious, Mrs. Desai sees women as the embodiment of dominance that offers her strong vision of feminism. Lotte opposes the hierarchization of male ideals by restricting the female factor to a negative and almost nullifying factor. Her views express her desire for her feminine self to be validated. It is actually a quest in a male-centered phallogocentric environment for the real female self on her part. But it's not a tradition here. It's an esoteric hunt, something odd and grotesque on a woman's part. But Lotte never worries about the social impact that her esoteric quest could bring. She is removed from the cultural heritage of India and its social consequences. She adopts a radical feminist point of view, taking up a non-conformist position, all agoguing to:

"Abolish the sex/gender structure - the true source of discrimination against women - and the develop a modern society in which men and women are equal at all levels of life"

In this book, Mrs. Desai depicts the inner struggle of a woman to express herself, to discover her true self, through the character of Lotte, not only the world of Lotte, but also the world of the mother of Baumgartner, Frau Baumgartner. She has dealt with the theme of isolation and frustration in her character again.

Her fading fate is described by the novelist in these words:

" The sweetness always ended in a quaver. It attracted and produced a teardrop. The teardrop hung suspended, gleaming from the window in the light and Hugo waited, memorized waiting for it to burst and fall. Tear-drop, drop of Pear. Silver-light, gold-fresh and then-the fall-fresh and then-the fall- "

Hugo and his mother both fear loneliness. Wherever they go, they are separated from the rest-Hugo, in India, is a lone foreigner. In Germany, his mother shares the same feeling. It hunts them and becomes a monstrous, dark block. There hasn't been any peace:

"Since the shadow of the past was still alongside the train, of what was and could never be left elsewhere - an animal in the day like a jackal; a hyena in the night. It continued to follow the train in the darkness, chasing Baumgartner "

While Hugo's parents live together, they still have very different interests. Anita Desai reflects on a critical aspect of feminism here again and introduces a broken and strained relationship between the mother and father of Hugo. His father does not bother to know his mother, nor does he try to understand this woman's emotions. It hurts her heart, truly. Frau Baumgartner and her husband (Herr Baumgartner) have very different temperaments. In Berlin, Herr Baumgartner has a respectable reputation. To make a show of happiness and success, he led a costly life. He always behaves like a rich and successful man. On the opposite, Mrs. Baumgartner enjoys a very easy life and keeps the space of her house far from being showy. She is a beautiful and elegant woman, and Mrs. Desai reveals the emotional quality of a woman in this lady. Her husband's indifferent behaviour fills her heart with a sense of contempt, and her confidence in him is shaken. The cruelty and indifferent actions of her husband nips his peace and independence into a bud. The cruelty of her husband leaves her disgusted, angry and lonely. Even though she sings sweet songs, her lonely being is not given peace by them. Hugo loves his mother, and once he visits Grunewald with his mother, he likes her company and he falls free from the suffocating environment formed by his father. He loves nature's beauty, and in his mother also sees improvement. He is

astonished:

" Why did she not come more often if that made her so happy?"

From the sudden shift of her mother, he realizes and there is:

A split, a break between his parents that may have existed for all these years, but of which he was only now really aware."

Hugo is saddened to see that his father's relationship with his mother is not in decent form. After the death of his father, his shop was sold, and his mother's situation became more miserable. Mrs. Desai seeks to concentrate on their submissiveness by projecting women comparatively in sober regulations. We realize that her novel Baumgartner's Bombay is about the hero Baumgartner, but we discover the feminine psyche through the characters of Lotte and Mrs. Baumgartner. In the annals of the Indo-Anglican book, Anita Desai's preoccupation with feminine sensibility is exceptional. Her feminism is not of a demanding, obtrusive kind of clamouring, but is a delicate depiction of intelligent, gift-ed women married to gentle, dutiful but sensitive men who are slowly falling into the bog of a dull marital relationship. The novels by Anita Desai together constitute the documentation of radical female resistance against a patriarchally established notion of normality through fiction. She considers fascinating the similarities between female duality, myth and psychosis; each heroine is seen as pursuing, discovering and swallowing or annihilating the double that reflects the socially inadmissible elements of her femininity. In both contemporary Indian and Western literature, sexual politics and madness have been noticed and treated as concomitant manifestations of the awakened feminine consciousness. Anita Desai, a contemporary Indian novelist, brings new insights into the sexiest essence of the sanity problem. The female protagonist of Desai points out the insane clarity of all family relationships, the farcical essence of all marriages, the illusory quality of all male and female human relationships. Mrs. Desai reveals that Lotte is not a Gothic maiden who has been persecuted. But it can be equally terrible for her emotional suffering brought on by insensitive social norms. Anita Desai is not trying, incidentally, vengeance for the ills of Indian womanhood by presenting each female protagonist at the end of

her tether. A modern definition of feminist fiction has been developed by her, not only to lock horns with male dominance, but also to make us aware that we are not to settle for absurdity, nausea or nothingness being nature itself. The women here are on a continuous search, not only for themselves, but for humanity in general, for a more meaningful life. The novel "Baumgartner's Bombay" also depicts a non-traditional role for women, Lotte is a fine example of it, Lotte cannot be classified as a strictly stereotyped woman. Anita Desai is mainly concerned with the interpretation of the characters' internal or psychic reality. Anita Desai has adopted a practical style of writing when dealing with the issues of feminism. She discusses the issues of temperamental incompatibility, conjugal anarchy and inharmonious man-woman relationships. "The great relationship of humanity" says D. Lawrance:

"Will always be the relation between man and woman. the relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child will always be subsidiary." (Delmia, "Desai Interviewed" The Times of India)

The man-woman relationship has become a common concern because it directly affects the life of a woman due to rapid industrialization, increasing awareness among women of their rights. Desai expertly explores the psychic reverberations of her female characters using profundity. In her novels, Anita Desai highlights the theme of feminism through her female protagonists. Desai's novels explore the bedimmed and misled psyche of a female protagonist who has gone through moments of intense and fiery confrontation.

Mrinalini Solanki provides Horney's explanation in these words, "such incidents have a 'cramping influence' on the mind of the child." All these occurrences explicate his wariness and vigilance over interacting with people. Hugo leaves Germany in a helpless condition of bewilderment and fear, hoping, however to make a home in India for his mother. But his dream never becomes actualized. The stamp of an alien is perpetually affixed to his name. He is like "an old turtle trudging through dusty Indian soil".

Hugo is perpetually in fear, as his is a disoriented and equivocal environment. And in such an environment, an individual is subjected

to tremendous insecurity and helplessness. Disappointment, frustration, discontent and unhappiness are the familiar facts of human existence. His hopes of establishing home and a secure life for his mother in India are shaken. There is no hope. Frustrated over his desires, hopeless, the only way to survive is to be all alone. Due to lack of social approval and favour, Hugo confronts uncertainty and instability in his relationships, however scanty they are.

Hugo loses connections with Gisela and Lotte, the two cabaret dancers, who had befriended him in Calcutta. With the outbreak of war, and his detainment for six years in the Internment camp, all relationships obliterated and died a natural death. Gisela and Lotte escape imprisonment owing to the alliance with Indian men. After a hiatus of several years, Hugo finds the occasion of meeting Julius (his German friend of the Internment camp days) and Gisela, his wife. The relationship does not blossom, once again, as Gisela wants to efface every trace of the relationships of the by-gone years.

Frustration naturally sets in. Despondency and gloom are realities that encounter every individual, at one stage of life or the other, in whatever form. Hugo is ".....a man without a family or a country....." Such a man as Hugo suffers depression and misery is quite plausible and conceivable. Lotte's words, "Yes, there was nowhere to go. Germany was gone..... Europe was gone ....there is no home for us....." These words only reiterate Hugo's agony of homelessness. Hugo's sense of security has disintegrated with his father's torture by Nazi regime. His father's suicide comes as a great jolt which further serves to disrupt the child's sense of security. However, with his arrival in India and the assistance of Chimanlal and a willingness to accommodate to the new environment, Hugo tries to reconstruct a new self, a new identity. But the order of things is disrupted initially by war and then by the internal war. Hugo withdraws into silence. "He realised at that instant that silence was his natural condition."

V.L.V.N. Narendrakumar's opinion is pertinent here. "A profound and unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life". He further says that life is a convoluted and confused maze which poses a puzzle to some of its unfortunate

dwellers. This is the condition of Hugo. Thus he withdraws into a secluded shell. Therefore, it is apt to quote Radha Chakravathy's statement regarding Hugo, which is as follows, "oblivious to the realities of Bombay, he lives in an illusory past....." Thus, any person who is under Hugo's circumstances would progressively become nostalgic of home and motherland. The novel says,

"it was as if his mind were trying to construct a wall against history, a wall behind which he could crouch and hide, holding him to a desperate wish that Germany were still what he had known as a child and that in that dream-country his mother continued to live the life they had lived there together."

Anita Desai reveals their nostalgia (Hugo and Lotte) in these lines.

"Yet their thoughts, their taste buds, lingered over the food at home as if these comestibles were keys to the past, and in talking of victuals they were not just reminiscing over but actually eating, masticating the past, over and over to extract the last drops of juice, that last drop of flavour."

Nostalgia extends to food as is natural of life. The foregoing lines from the novel depict the magnitude of their homesickness or nostalgia and their susceptibility to fantasize about their homeland and loved ones.

Anita Desai realistically portrays the emotional life of the foreigner Hugo, and she voices the feel of his language exactly as when he greets the watchman in broken Hindi; the tone of the voice of the watchman betrays repulsion. It is manifest to the fact that man cannot overcome pain and loneliness solely by his own actions and inclinations. The external forces such as, the society and socio-economic institutions have to cooperate in bringing about harmony and rejuvenation.

These refugees have migrated to an alien country. Migration from one place to another is an authentic fact. But migration creates restraints and inhibitions on the individual's behaviour and in his relationship with society. Exploitation and abuse may arise as plausible consequences. One cannot repudiate the reality of migration in society which may be due to various causes, like marriage, economic reasons or even oppression, poverty, better chances and

scope for employment. A woman migrating from one country to another is exposed to several dangers, as she is more vulnerable and weak. She may be exposed to even attacks and violence. Lotte and Gisela might have been induced into their profession of cabaret dancing, which is nothing short of prostitution in India. Lotte and Gisela have migrated from their motherland due to the onset of oppression and war. Both these women emphasize the reality of foreign women who cannot remain chaste. The study of this novel proves that moral values can function only with economic security. The fact remains that they have to establish themselves and get stabilized in their adopted country.

The fact entails many adjustments on their part. It necessitates a social change, where the person has to be accepted by the society and where the individual should learn to live according to the traditions and customs of the adopted country. This aspect was faced with tremendous conflict in Lotte. Although she enters into a marriage with Kanti, she does it out of compulsion, in order to escape the gruelling life at the Internment Camp. She submits to the life of the other woman because that gives her a sense of belonging. Their migration is by no manner of means only circumscribed to the physical plane. They carry an amount of socio-cultural mass which composes of their own original identity, language, food patterns and habits, values, traditions and customs, their memories. These socio-cultural constraints are very hard to go by. They psychologically and emotionally pummel the individual. Hugo, captured by racial turmoil even in the Internment camp cannot but reminisce about his home with melancholic yearning. The unwitting act of migration has left a deep wound in Hugo's psyche. His sentimental attachment to his mother, and the sense of bereavement of estrangement from her, can be emphatically perceived. Recollecting the happy days back home can be the only panacea they can indulge in. The agony of homelessness, the nervousness and apprehension in the adopted country and the nostalgia of the homeland is intelligible, as shown by the present study.

Migrating from one country to another is an interminable phenomenon since primitive times. Christine Gomez asserts: "Expatriation is a widespread phenomenon in this century." The



causes for migration may be varied, like wars, oppression, agriculture, better resources, income etc. The circumstances like oppression, where the individual has to leave his motherland involuntarily, the change of language and culture can appal and petrify the individual to a drastic extent.

In order to combat the sense of isolation, these foreigners, including Hugo resort to engaging themselves in some activity. Kurt in drugs, Lotte in drinks, Hugo in fending for stray cats; Gisela and Julius in art etc. Lotte is in an abject state of loneliness and misery. She passively abdicates herself to her fate in drunkenness. Lotte suffers two-fold. One is that she has migrated to an alien culture and the oppression which she suffers in a male dominated society. Lotte is caught in between the two cultures. In the course of her orientation into the Indian soil, she loses her family life, economic and financial security and status. Due to this factor, she like Hugo, becomes isolated from Indians and spends most of her time in drinking. She perpetually pines away for her home. It is excruciatingly painful for her to realise that an exile can no longer go back home. Lotte, all by herself, cannot establish her own identity in India. She has to be Kanti's mistress or a cabaret dancer, both roles are equally disrespectful in India. She succumbs to addiction of alcohol.

Lotte is yet another woman, who is exploited and oppressed and later discarded by the male society. She cannot have any other identity, apart from that given by Kanti and she accepts it stoically for survival. She is used and abused by Kanti. She has to be deferential to his demands only because he has rendered her economic security. Many a time she bemoans his absence. She has to revel only in Kanti's glory. Lotte is a woman who is not truly empowered and her search for self-identity does not materialise. Lotte bears the brunt of the most excruciating forms of human rights abuse. Kanti's sons throw her out of her flat, soon after his death. This incident in the novel corresponds with the reality of a woman's experiences, especially when she is the second wife. The law which was mainly developed from male point of view, in those days, refused to respond to the particular protection needs of the woman. Lotte is left unarmed and she is unable to seek protection from law. Such a kind of violence

against women is not unheard of. It is a stark reality which encounters many a woman, who have succumbed to the position of a mistress. The Indian government did not afford any opportunity to seek protection under law, because her position as a second wife was not a legal sanction. Further, in the case of Gisela, her movement to security and safety and an escape from the Internment Camp, has to be bought with a payment of sexual favours. Nobody recognized and empathized with the plight of these women. J.Wilson's quotation is very relevant to these womens' state. "In patriarchal society, women are split subjects, who watch themselves being watched by men. They turn themselves into objects because feminity itself is defined by being gazed by men".

Gisela's loss of self is reflected in an accumulation of new names and guises. Deep within she feels she is none. Gisela uses the extent of her marginality to her own advantage. However, she accesses new worlds of possibilities and she strikes the reader as a dynamic woman. So is the case with Lotte. Lotte cannot be legal Mrs. Kanti, because Mrs. Kanti is somebody else. Gisela drifts here and there, because it is money and fame that draws her. Both are popular cabaret dancers, very much esteemed and admired by men of wealth. But this does not earn them an identity. The disillusionment they experiences over the course of time is a part of their intense loneliness.

The novel is laid against the formidable background of the II world war. The war brings in its wake the prospects of the disintegration of human values. Violence which is all pervasive cannot be rooted out of society. This aspect is an immanent, congenital reality in society and it appears in various contexts in society. So also in India, conflict perennially prevails between the two most powerful communities, Hindus and Muslims, which had led to the partition of India.

In "Baumgartner's Bombay" the protagonist (female) is a "solitary explorer" of her identity. Desai paves the way for a new kind of novel - the female protagonists' novel of psychic sensitivity. The protagonists of Desai are solitary individuals and not a social person:

"No other author, it is said, is as concerned with the lives of... women in Indian cities as Anita Desai is. "

Her female characters crave the freedom from the shackles of the socio-psychically maladjusted world of their feminine self. They want to remain whole, but they retrace and retrace when the option is given. Through these women, Anita Desai illustrates a broad range of subjects in her novels, ranging from left-wing politics, feminism, sexual license, generation gaps, the ongoing competition between marriage, career and self-fulfillment, the polemics of tradition, reform, religion, the ambiguities of personal and cultural emancipation, the tensions in family relations, desire, shame, incest, Her characters suffer from lack of parental affection, troubled adolescence, broken families, and Oedipus or Electra Complex. They are also disgruntled with their lives and opt out of the mainstream of life. In Desai's female characters, alienation always manifests in unethical relations and behaviors that we hardly find in any other Indian female novelist except Shobha De. Desai's novels show the quest for her female protagonist's identity through self-discovery and self-identification.

#### 1.4 Summary

The researcher observes that Anita Desai voices her concern for women in characters like Lotte and that female unification and like-mindedness is the pre-requisite and imperative to struggle against patriarchal oppression and exploitation. Camaraderie among women has to be promoted by women self-help groups. Women, black or white, must perceive and appreciate the fact, that they are part of one sisterhood, apart from personal differences. Freedom and the search for individuality of a woman is based on the issue of their empowerment. Unless the woman has her own freedom to act and decide, she cannot be said to be totally empowered. The truly liberated individual takes her own independent decisions; she is not restrained by any kind of violence or exploitation. The sense of freedom takes away bondage or the reliance upon anything or even the stereotyped ways of thinking. In Baumgartner's Bombay, the individuals do not enjoy the freedom to challenge or dispute anything, even the very forces that impact upon their life situations. They fail to look at themselves as individuals because they are aware that they are not liberated persons, because their memories are

cluttered with thoughts of their race and culture. Therefore, these aspects have made an impression on their minds. These individuals are the embodiments of insignificance and degradation. They represent a miserable privation, passivity and subjugation to violent forces.

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