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**Time Heals Everything : Complexities and Reconciliation of Familial Relationships in Anita Desai's *Clear Light Of Day***

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**Abstract:**

Anita Desai is an eminent Booker prize winner Indian Novelist who has written many novels such as *Fire On The Mountain*, *Fasting Feasting*, *Cry the Peacock*, *The village by the Sea* and many more. Most of her novels are concerned with the isolation and internal struggle of the major characters, lack of communication and Marital discord in the context of Indian society. Her works delve deep into the challenges of segregation, identity and most importantly, the clash between East and West, projecting more on the emotional and psychological lives of her women characters. Written against the backdrop of partition of 1947, her *Clear Light Of Day*, published in 1980 is such a novel that embodies all these aspects with a subtle variation in terms of her use of time from a completely different outlook. Desai uses Time in this novel in such a way that major characters in this novel seem like puppets at the hands of time; siblings relationships become complicated and continue until right time comes to reconciliation. In *Clear Light Of Day* Desai in a unique manner captures the passage of time, showing how time leaves tremendous effect on the lives of the characters by changing their patterns of minds, attitudes and personality. As the Title of this article indicates, it aims to reflect time's working on shaping human relationships in course of life's progression.

**Keywords-** Time, partition, destroyer, preserver, siblings relationships, intricacies.

**Introduction:**

Set against the backdrop of postcolonial India during partition of 1947, Anita Desai's *Clear Light Of Day* explores all the lives of siblings of Das family, who are Bim, Raja, Tara and mentally retarded Baba. In this novel, Desai “dives deeply into the intricacies of family relationships, individual identity, and the cultural environment of a nation that is always changing through the intricate development of character and sophisticated narrative” (Bera 251). Desai has generated the plot of this novel under two time frames, one is pre partition era and another one being post partition era. She presents the dual nature of time here – time has been shown as destroyer as relationships between 4 siblings, Raja, Bim, Tara and

mentally retarded Baba get complicated and become worse as time progresses and also shown as preserver because ultimately at the end of this novel all the siblings unite and reconciliation takes place. Partition of India plays a major part in this novel; the plot of the novel has been woven keeping partition at backdrop; but the more the plot unravels, it is seen that the event of partition becomes more crucial as a family consisting of siblings become disintegrated and get fractured. Desai shows that the time frame during pre partition era and during partition destroy siblings relationships and the same time frame during post partition era brings reconciliation to that same family. Talking about the dual nature of time, Kamila Shamsie opines, “ How to live in the present, that has been constructed from the past.”

### **Discussion**

Anita Desai in this novel shows that in past times, time acted as a destructive force during the occurrences of partition of 1947. She in a dignified manner records the tremendous changes that the nation itself undergoes during partition. During partition, time had played havoc with the whole nation in that communal harmony and union of people fell apart; situation got completely different because prior to partition there was unity among Hindu and Muslims and people, belonging to both these communities fought hard against British forces for gaining independence. Things were going well and India was about to achieve its independence but suddenly, time began to act as destroyer when Muslims began to demand a separate nation for them. Consequently disintegration among people occurred which became worst due to the emergence of communal riots. People thereby began to indulge in communal clash and unity, sovereignty utterly fell apart. During this period, time acted as a destructive force by changing attitude and patterns of minds of people. In part 2 of this novel, Desai captures the horrendous summer of old Delhi in that so many people lost their lives, and particularly, Muslims suffered a lot at the hands of Hindu rioters. At that time, Desai shows, Muslims like Hyder Ali compelled to desert their homes and all other belongings, thereby moved to safer places like Hyderabad. Muslims had to face hard times before furious Hindu rioters. Desai thus shows how the event of partition of a nation did great damage to Muslims. All this time before and during partition, Desai demystifies that time acted as a fearful and devastating force that brought nothing but utter dismay and wreck.

While depicting time’s destructive role during partition, Desai simultaneously shows another partition within Das family which also is caused by time. Raja, who always had love and affection for her siblings including Bim, gets completely changed as he becomes quite self centred and he can not help moving to Hyderabad at the invitation of Hyder Ali without taking into consideration of both Bim, his elder sister and his mentally retarded brother Baba. He shakes off all her responsibilities towards his siblings and he “achieves his goal by marrying his boyhood hero Hyder Ali’s daughter” ( Wadekar 240 ). Desai in this way shows that time as a destroyer is how much liable to bring massive change in attitude and minds of people. This change in Raja comes just during partition as a consequence of time’s blow. Selfishness is instilled in Raja by time’s destructive force and that’s why he can not ignore the call of Hyder Ali for staying with them in Hyderabad. Thus the whole Das family became disintegrated and relationship between siblings got hampered to a larger extent by destructive force of time. So time as a destroyer, leaves a larger impact not only on nation of India, but

on Das family as well. During this period, time came to destabilise the relationship between Raja and Bim; Change in Bim's mind is also inculcated by time's destructive force very much like Raja; She gets disheartened as Raja departs for Hyderabad, and his departure onwards, Bim begins to develop a great deal of resentment towards Raja. After Raja departs, she takes up all the responsibilities towards her family, aunt Mira and her mentally challenged brother, Baba. She undergoes a massive change, infused in her by time. Her personality gets contradicted as sometimes she "appears irrationally angry and sentimental at other times" (Wadekar 240). Due to this change in her, she becomes quite strong and mentally developed and chooses the life of self alienation by taking the decision of not to marry throughout her life yet her characteristics lack stability. Wadekar also points out that "there are traits of unsteadiness in her behaviour that swings between alienation and conformation. She finally finds her entrapped in struggle and regains consciousness in the end" (Wadekar 239). Much later the letter that she receives from Raja seems to have humiliated her and she increasingly begins to develop a strange relationship with him. As time's devastating blow, this letter makes a great rift between Bim and Raja. Raja wrote this letter to Bim, considering her as a tenant after he inherits their family home from his father-in-law, Hyder Ali, treating her in a condescending manner and giving hints at raising the rent which deeply hurts Bim. She takes this letter to be both offending and insulting since it has come to her from Raja about whom she is very sceptical and critical due to her animosity towards him. Thus, time as a destroyer, came to make a heavy blow on Das siblings.

Desai has woven part 3 of this novel in such a manner that it becomes instrumental because here she makes a shift from past to present. She does so in order to bring potential reconciliation between Das siblings by making time to play the role of a preserver. This retrospective narration between Tara and Bim is very significant because "By using retrospective narration, Desai gives the Das sisters' return to their childhood and adolescence significant psychoanalytic meaning...The human empathy that Bim and Tara frequently lack for one another is infused into the plot via Desai's storytelling method. They are opposites of one another due to the sharp differences of their worldviews, emotions and thoughts, which emphasises neither of them has a critically reflective self-image. Desai explores the intricacies of their relationship and provides a thorough examination of each character's mind and interactions with the other through this narrative" (Bera 254). It is shown that Bim and her married sister Tara, who has come from abroad to their old Delhi house for attending the wedding ceremony of Moyna, the daughter of Raja and Benazir, plunge in reminiscing childhood memories. This part 3 is fully devoted to the recollection of fond and adorable childhood memories. As a consequence of time's role as a preserver, Tara also undergoes change. Previously she did not pay much attention to heal her relationship with Bim because Bim has always been cherishing a feeling of jealousy towards Tara due to her happy marriage life with her diplomatic husband, Bakul. But now her consciousness also arises as an effect of time's working as preserver. Bera opines, "...in order to fully emancipate herself and uncover her actual self, Tara must go back to her childhood home and face the past...Tara experiences substantial development and change throughout the course of the book. She overcomes the paralysis of her early recollections by the story's conclusion and makes peace

with her history. This reconciliation represents her newfound independence and emotional liberation. In order to overcome the limitations that had previously confined her, Tara's quest also led her to separate from her husband's overly protective inclinations. Through her transformation, Tara becomes a stronger, more independent person who is embracing her newfound freedom and is no longer bound by her past" (Bera 256). In this way, Desai offers potential reconciliation between Bim and Raja. The role of Tara is very important here because she acts as a mediator in that she focuses on the golden phases of childhood in which both Bim and Raja were very close to each other and undoubtedly both of them used to enjoy each other's company to a greater extent. Quite tactfully, Tara makes Bim to recollect fond childhood memories by focusing more on the golden moments of life between Bim and Raja for she seeks a jovial reconciliation between both of them. Desai in this way depicts how past memories are instrumental in bringing a potential reconciliation. In the end, both Bim and Tara realise that their current situation is greatly affected by certain emotional challenges that has been hidden by destructive force of time which they must have to overcome. Bera opines, "In the end, Bim and Tara both realise that their current situation is greatly impacted by hidden emotional challenges rather than being purely determined by physical or financial limitations. The ladies achieve emotional liberation by facing their personal demons, in part because they are willing to examine the highly guarded areas of their vulnerability in private" (Bera 253). Desai by making two sisters indulge in reminiscing golden phases of life, has made time to act as a restorer. In part 4, Bim gets influenced by the precious words while reading "Life of Aurangzeb", "Strange that I came with nothing into the world and now go away with this stupendous caravan of sin!" (Desai 257). Time as a preserver awakens Bim's consciousness to discover her real self. She therefore feels the urge to reconcile with Raja, dispelling all her ill feelings, resentments, grudges against him. Bim then tears down the letter of Raja, realising nothing has been lost and blood relationship can never be evicted. Thereby she eradicates all her ill feelings against Raja. In this way, Desai shows, no feeling, be it good or bad, can last forever. Any feeling is always transient. So ultimately clear light of day illuminates Bim's mind who realises the utmost necessity to repair her relationship with her brother, Raja. In this way, Desai shows time acts positively to restore siblings relationship; to be precise, time plays the role of preserver. So it could be easy to come to this conclusion that what time can, reason can not. If Bim continued to harbour her ill feelings against Raja giving priority to reason, reconciliation was not possible. So time is fully liable to bring a massive change in Bim's mind, helping her to come out of her ego by dispelling all her resentments. According to Ulka S. Wadekar, "Bim rises above all the restrictions and bindings of the ego centric self. With a new vision and perception, her quest of identity ends. She discovers the real Bim" (Wadekar 242). In this way, Desai, with the help of Memory, has tried to offer potential reconciliation between this two siblings. The second epigraph from T. S. Eliot's "Four Quartets", "Time the destroyer is time the preserver" (Desai 277) conveys passage of time, demonstrating that time passes but things do not change in the course of time; things always remain same except changing their patterns.

## Conclusion

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In conclusion, at the end of novel, time as a preserver proves triumphant. While time as a destroyer, which played a major role throughout the plot, is pushed into the background at the end, and even eclipsed. The narrative of *Clear Light Of Day* is infused with the thorough examination of “ family dynamics, individual identity and the larger socio political backdrop of post Colonial India” ( Bera 256). In this narrative, Desai has been able to establish that time’s role is very important in awakening consciousness to all human beings to explore their real selves. Desai goes to such an extent of intricacies of siblings relationships to which she explores time’s working of both as a destroyer and preserver; while it can severely damage the bonding between siblings, it also can heal the same by awakening consciousness, leaving ego aside. In this way, Desai upholds the dual nature of time both as a destroyer and ultimately as a preserver.

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