

**An Analysis of Depersonalization in the Select Novels of
Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood**

**A
Thesis**

Submitted to



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U NIVERSITY**

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Certificate by Advisor/Co-Advisor

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2. She has pursued the prescribed course of research.
3. The work is original contribution of the candidate.
4. The candidate has incorporated all the suggestions made by the Department Doctoral Board during Pre -Submission Seminar held on 12th August 2017.

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Declaration

I do hereby acknowledge that:

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Vani Khurana

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Vani Khurana

Introduction

Mental health and mental conditions are the major concerns of the humanity from the time immemorial, but in 21st century these concerns are the centre of intellectual and medical discourse. Open any newspaper, television channel or any other source of information; stories of problems in human behaviour are circulated invariably. Mental illness, abnormalities and disorders are real and need our attention equivalent to the illness of body. These mental disorders are largely ignored; however vast troubles are originating from these disorders. Whereas physical illness is considered normal and real; mental illness are still shrouded under social taboos. Due to the ignorance of the society in general, many mental disorders remain undiagnosed, untreated, and unreported. Depersonalization is also one of such disorders, which is still remaining unreported or people confuse this disorder with other diseases due to the lack of information. Depersonalization is a mental disorder of the self. It is related to sensory perceptions (which are the fundamental aspects of average human's existence); in this disorder, unreal seems dramatically true or fader and nightmares are visualized like reality. It results into the "altered sense of selfhood" (Abugel 6). Ludovic Dugas, a French psychologist, has coined the term depersonalization. He refers this state as alienation of personality. Human mostly lives in one dimension (apart from conscious meditations) where past, present and futures are perceived in a linear and coherent manner. The stability, sanity and reason are relational, so does the time and space. The identity of social subject is also dependent on relative terms and relationships. The attachment to the body is one of the most basic elements for a sane personality, but in depersonalization body seems like a foreign object, unrelated to mind. Initially,

Depersonalization emerges as a part of defense-mechanism of mind to save human from shock or stress; it is an escape route of the mind to avoid the situation which can cause anxiety to the human. Medical textbook entitled *Modern Clinical Psychiatry* defines depersonalization:

Depersonalization, a pervasive and distressing feeling of estrangement, known sometimes as the depersonalization syndrome, may be defined as an affective disorder in which feelings of unreality and a loss of conviction of one's own identity and of a sense of identification with and control over one's own body are the principal symptom. (Depersonalization qtd. Abugel 11)

The psychologist Ludovic Dugas, a French psychologist, has coined the term depersonalization in 1894. He refers this as a state of alienated personality. Dugas and Moutier define it as a "state in which there is the feeling or sensation that thoughts and acts elude self" (13). According to Maurice Sierra, there are three major different theories of depersonalization-Sensory theories, Psychodynamic Theories and Theories of self-experiences. First theory is based on psychoanalytic analyses which concentrates on ego principle and relate itself to altered awareness of self. Second theory is based on Cognitive Behavioural Approach which relates to anxiety disorder. Third theory is based on the subjective encounters of people with depersonalization. Present study uses a blended model of Sensory theories and Psychodynamic Theories. This study focuses on dissociative conditions which includes temporal or permanent alteration of identity and reality, memory distortions, heighten sensibilities, phobias, detachment from the self, context and world, anomalous body experiences, de-affectualization or emotional numbness,

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Main objectives of the study are -

- To analyse the importance of practical and theoretical application of depersonalization theory.
- To establish the link between self-objectification and conditioning of women.
- To investigate the causes of depersonalization disorder among women.
- To analyse the role of language, culture and society in the depersonalization of women.
- Application of the theories of self-objectification in the selected literature of women.
- To explore a possible cure for depersonalization.
- To evaluate the of male and patriarchy in the degeneration of female into depersonalized.

Present research work deals with the depersonalization in the select novels of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood and all these objectives are studied in with reference to these novels. Both of these writers are prominent female writers who describe female psyche and inner pangs in a vivid manner. The selected novels for this study are Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1977), and *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) and Margaret Atwood's selected novels are *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985).

These authors belong to different countries, but in delineating psychological realism and portrayals of female psyche, these authors are at par. Both of these authors portray abnormal psyche of females in their selected novels. There are some striking resemblances in the characters of both these authors. The women characters of these novelists belong to modern era and are educated; they are living in urban areas, but not totally free from the dominance of males. The present study explores depersonalization, which is a modern phenomenon and these authors' works explore inner disorders of females. In traditional literature borderline personality disorders of female characters did not receive the required attention, but these writers explore the psyche of disturbed females which eventually highlight depersonalized behaviour of these characters. The narrative style of both these authors provide window to their inner psyche to the readers.

Characters of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood are suffering from depersonalization on all four levels referred by depersonalization theorists- on the level of cognition, emotional behaviour, physical and environmental. Protagonists of all selected works are living a life that is more oriented to the emotions than to rationality, thus the triggering of depersonalization is also at the level of emotions. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* develops a strong bond with her pet Toto and its death shakes her core. She starts living alone and behaves strangely. She becomes emotionally volatile and it drifts her away from the rational world of her mind. For her, if a person cannot accept nature his life is not worth living. She scares from her Self, weeps at night, tries to strike conversation to avoid being alone. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* evades attachment to save herself from pain and suffering. She wears the mask of indifference. Both Maya and Nanda Kaul experiences emotional

numbness. Maya has acute desires and when she cannot fulfil these desires it makes her numb; Nanda Kaul in contrast has always received ingratitude so she stops expecting from people. Sita grows hyper-sensitive and she feels affinity with eagle and tries to save it from the crows. All these volatile emotions refer their instable state of mind. Margaret Atwood's characters also show same volatile emotional state of mind. Marian in *The Edible Woman* is so terrified by her decision of marriage that she experiences emotional wretchedness. She feels as she is turning into an edible object and she is eaten by Peter. In her defence, she stops eating. Nameless Protagonist in *Surfacing* feigns that she is the part of nature and cannot do what a natural object cannot do. She stops eating cooked food and stops communicating. Offred's state of emotion is that she is not allowed to feel any emotion. Her body and her emotions are considered detached. These emotional volatility induces inertness in the female characters. They feel that they are not the owner of their emotions. Marian's tears starts flowing without her control, Sita weeps and laughs like some mechanical process, Nanda Kaul unable to bear the emotional outburst dies. These characters feel the lack of agency in their emotional part.

Cognitively these protagonists are aware about the existence of their second Self. They feel that there is a lack which was not in existence previously. They experience that their cognition has no control over their body. They experience dual personalities and lack of instrumentality. There is denial of autonomy in them as they are unable to determine their course of action. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* evades attachment, but once she comes in contact with Raka, she tries her best to establish a meaningful relationship with her. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* cannot stop thinking about Albino and Sita lives in Manori Island unconsciously.

Marian in *The Edible Woman* wants to stop and wants to get caught by Peter, but her body rejects her command. She wants to eat and relish food, but cannot order her body to do so. Mind has a very important role in maintaining solid personalities. Due to the lack of control by mind, these characters turn into fluid identities. They experience fungibility as their bodies are interchangeable. They have out of body experiences in all its negative senses. Their bodily senses reject their rational mind. They act like prisoner of their body rather than its masters. There is denial of subjective experiences, because subjective experiences emerge from authentic actions. Authenticity of these characters is intimidated. Their mind in crucial conditions is unable to control their body movements and sensibilities. They lost at some point of time control over touch, smell and eat. They are not able to fulfil basic requirement of being normal. Their bodies deny food, air and sometimes them.

On the level of surrounding and culture- these protagonists try to evade social contact and defy cultural norms. It appears that depersonalization is the product of their surrounding and culture. Its glittering example is Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the Republic of Gilead, depersonalisation is induced through culture. Women are put under wail, complete inward and outward scrutiny, through punishment and theology. They are forced to have peace with their surroundings. Same is with other characters, male in the life of these women has superior position and they force these women to accept subaltern position. The concept of femininity is imposed upon and like Marian time and again they are reminded about that. They are the middle dwellers like the working place scenario of Marian's place. Their subjectivity is denied on the basis of female behaviour. The anatomy of male and female are complementary to each other, but due to male centric culture, female

biology is considered inferior to male. Maya lives her life by her sensory pleasure and she is ridiculed by her husband by the lesson of theology. For Offred, her biology is her prison house, whatever turn she takes to escape from it; she ends up at the same corner. Nameless Protagonist of *Surfacing* is ridiculed for not accepting the fate of women. These women are considered an object to satiate the desires of males. Nanda Kaul's husband in *Fire on the Mountain*, Commander in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Joe in *Surfacing* also commits the sins of senses, but nobody questions them. It is considered natural for them; but from women, it is expected that they should behave different to their bodily demands. Thus the anatomy of female is culturally formed prison-house. The surveillance in case of these women has been turned inward. Thus the socially induced roles push women towards the goblin of depersonalization.

The characters portrayed by the selected authors can be divided as per the division of the critics of depersonalization. First types of protagonists are avoidant. These protagonists try to use escapist tendencies to avoid the scenarios where they feel uncomfortable. They try to keep their depersonalization at bay through avoiding circumstances that cause anxiety and distress to them. Epitome of avoidance is Nanda Kaul, throughout her life she lives like a recluse to cover her past. She lives in Carignano to avoid her bleak past experiences. Once she faces her past unwittingly, she fails to observe the shock and die. Sita is also an avoidant. She feels that she can avoid depersonalization by either smoking or by living on Manori Island. At the end of the novel, she understands her foolishness and accepts the practical aspect. Offred is culturally induced avoidant. She is trained to avoid her true traits of self. For her the cure was easy, she just needs to go out of the prison

house of Gilead. For the patients, who are avoidant, if they face their neurosis, there are chances of their recovery. Like in Sita's case, once she realises the futility of avoiding, she cures and goes back to civilization. Second types of protagonists are suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder. Marian suffers majorly from obsessive compulsive disorder. She starts thinking about her marriage and impending loss of freedom, it makes her anorexic. Like avoidant, these individuals can be cured once they realise the futility of their inactions. Once Marian realises it by conversing with Duncan, she bakes the cake that refers to her authenticity, she gets cured from her depersonalization. Last and worst type of disorder is depersonalization is of border-lined individuals. Unnamed Protagonist in *Surfacing* is border-lined individuals. She is at the brink of insanity and At the end of the novel she breaks all her ties with civilization and starts living like a natural object. Worse than her is Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*, who turns into a murderer and commits suicide. These types of individuals are highly volatile and have no control over their actions. These types of patients should be sent for therapy immediately and need to be dealt with caution.

It is important to note that none of the characters goes to doctor as they consider themselves pretty normal. Their family members call them impractical, stupid, arrogant, but they are never referred to doctors. This accelerates their depersonalization syndrome. Like these textual characters, there are many females are in the society, who are living inauthentic life as per the social definitions of femininity. There is a clash of conscious and unconscious in them. Apart from that society is ignorant about psychological issues faced by the patients. Most of the time either they become superstitious or simply ignores the disorder. This ignorance cost many lives or many lose peace and tranquillity of their life.

The Thesis is divided into 5 chapters and conclusion. Chapter 1, Brief Candle deals with brief history of the depersonalization- origin of the term, causes, symptoms, treatments- introduction of authors and the selected novels, and literature review. Chapter 2- “Ubiquitous Male Branding and Inner Goblin of Depersonalized Electra Females in Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock* and Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*”- is a study of the impacts of ubiquitous male centric ideology on the psyche of females. This chapter explores the effects of hyper-connectivity on the psyche of females, which also become a cause of their depersonalization. This chapter highlights that male ideology and male supremacy is the matter of common sense and is ubiquitous. Dominance of male culture and ideology does not revolve only around physical control. The root cause of this control is in the prevalent value system. Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* States, “Male Supremacy, like other political creeds, does not finally reside in physical strength but in the acceptance of a value system, which is not biological” (27). This value system is endorsed and propagated through cultural events, customs, regulations, social and political laws etc. It also has its roots in the control over economy. The control of economy provides the status of superstructure to male ideology. All objects are branded according to male centric perspective. In this male branding, women are others and for them recognition by males is center of their existence. In case of the select novels male branding of the female branding affects the mental condition of females and works as stimulator to the inner goblins of depersonalization. Chapter-3- “Depersonalization of Ennuyéx Females and Coercive Male Gaze in *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* and *The Edible Woman*”- analyses the role of boredom and male gaze. Ennui is defined as incapacity and incompetence of an individual against

his free will. It is a crime against spiritual self. This chapter foregrounds the role of mimicry of male by females in shaping the identity and existence of females. Boredom signifies an ideological crisis that reaches its zenith in the twentieth century. Modernity is often associated to ennui because in modern era, human are deprived from heroic deeds because all that is heroic is already done. Modern life is also more individual centric and nuclear family life style intensifies the rate of self-scrutiny. Conscious boredom may be just a part of the body and if you remove the body form those situations, the body can come out of the boredom and can escape from ennui, but unconscious ennui is more fatal. In the novel *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* and *The Edible Woman* we have protagonists who are ennueyex and searching for an escape from the male gaze. The male gaze is a bullyingly present in female life. Gaze is like a physical emblem of male centric ideology. It is the part of male branding, this all pervasive gaze of males put women in the spot from where they cannot run. Chapter- 4- “Multifaceted Loneliness: Subversion of Feminine self and Facets of depersonalization in *Fire on The Mountain* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*”- highlights the role of loneliness in stimulating depersonalization, which ultimately results into depersonalization. Majorly loneliness has been studied in these novels at three levels- Level of vulnerability to social disconnection, ability to self-regulate the emotions associated with feeling isolated, mental representations and expectations of, as well as reasoning about others. Loneliness can be physical, a state of mind, or cultural. In this condition of impaired regulation, all attempts of the subject induce and reinforce loneliness. Subject starts running from interpersonal encounters and draws within. He starts nurturing two selves one that is in tune with his conditions and another that he actually is. Unwilling loneliness creates wariness

and triggers hypersensitivity or emotionally numbness. The art of socializing starts getting weakened. Chapter-5- Depersonalization in the Select Fiction of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood: A Comparative Study- concentrates on the comparative study of the select authors. This chapter studies social variables in all novels, which make women victim of depersonalization and allow male characters to maintain their sanity. Characters portrayed, by both authors, are victim of the biased attitude of their respective societies. This tendency also highlights the role of social conditioning and social set up in the depersonalization of these characters. This chapter highlights off-center position of women, their inauthenticity in social contexts, and loss of agency. This chapter reflects how protagonists have been suffering from excessive introjections and excessive projection of external world. And the Conclusion part of the thesis compares and contrasts the symptoms of depersonalization. This part also highlights that like these textual characters, there are many females in the society, who are living inauthentic life as per the social definitions of femininity. There is a clash of conscious and unconscious in them. Apart from that society is ignorant about psychological issues faced by the patients. Most of the time either they become superstitious or simply ignores the disorder. This ignorance cost many lives or many lose peace and tranquillity of their life.

Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood substantially contributed in literature in general and feminist writing, particularly. Their writing created new waves in feminist writing. Their creation of female characters is unorthodox and techniques used by them, in the delineation of female characters, are unconventional. Still research related to their writings is pretty less and conventional. This study will fill this lacuna by analysing the unorthodox protagonist of these two eminent writers.

The present study will contribute in literature from many perspectives- it will open new dimension in the analysis of characters; it will add another feather in the feminist literature; and will explore another covert dimension of female oppression thus will help women to safeguard their interests.

Vani Khurana

Abstract

Mental health and mental conditions are the major concerns of the humanity from the time immemorial, but in 21st century these concerns are the centre of intellectual and medical discourse. Open any newspaper, television channel or any other source of information; stories of problems in human behaviour are circulated invariably. Mental illness, abnormalities and disorders are real and need our attention equivalent to the illness of body. These mental disorders are largely ignored; however vast troubles are originating from these disorders. Whereas physical illness is considered normal and real; mental illness are still shrouded under social taboos. Due to the ignorance of the society in general, many mental disorders remain undiagnosed, untreated, and unreported. Depersonalization is also one of such disorders, which is still remaining unreported or people confuse this disorder with other diseases due to the lack of information. Depersonalization is a mental disorder of the self. It is related to sensory perceptions (which are the fundamental aspects of average human's existence); in this disorder, unreal seems dramatically true or fader and nightmares are visualized like reality. It results into the "altered sense of selfhood" (Abugel 6). Ludovic Dugas, a French psychologist, has coined the term depersonalization. He refers this state as alienation of personality. Human mostly lives in one dimension (apart from conscious meditations) where past, present and futures are perceived in a linear and coherent manner. The stability, sanity and reason are relational, so does the time and space. The identity of social subject is also dependent on relative terms and relationships. The attachment to the body is one of the most basic elements for a sane personality, but in depersonalization body seems like a foreign object, unrelated to mind. Initially,

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Main objectives of the study are -

- To analyse the importance of practical and theoretical application of depersonalization theory.
- To establish the link between self-objectification and conditioning of women.
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Marian in *The Edible Woman* wants to stop and wants to get caught by Peter, but her body rejects her command. She wants to eat and relish food, but cannot order her body to do so. Mind has a very important role in maintaining solid personalities. Due to the lack of control by mind, these characters turn into fluid identities. They experience fungibility as their bodies are interchangeable. They have out of body experiences in all its negative senses. Their bodily senses reject their rational mind. They act like prisoner of their body rather than its masters. There is denial of subjective experiences, because subjective experiences emerge from authentic actions. Authenticity of these characters is intimidated. Their mind in crucial conditions is unable to control their body movements and sensibilities. They lost at some point of time control over touch, smell and eat. They are not able to fulfil basic requirement of being normal. Their bodies deny food, air and sometimes them.

On the level of surrounding and culture- these protagonists try to evade social contact and defy cultural norms. It appears that depersonalization is the product of their surrounding and culture. Its glittering example is Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the Republic of Gilead, depersonalisation is induced through culture. Women are put under wail, complete inward and outward scrutiny, through punishment and theology. They are forced to have peace with their surroundings. Same is with other characters, male in the life of these women has superior position and they force these women to accept subaltern position. The concept of femininity is imposed upon and like Marian time and again they are reminded about that. They are the middle dwellers like the working place scenario of Marian's place. Their subjectivity is denied on the basis of female behaviour. The anatomy of male and female are complementary to each other, but due to male centric culture, female

biology is considered inferior to male. Maya lives her life by her sensory pleasure and she is ridiculed by her husband by the lesson of theology. For Offred, her biology is her prison house, whatever turn she takes to escape from it; she ends up at the same corner. Nameless Protagonist of *Surfacing* is ridiculed for not accepting the fate of women. These women are considered an object to satiate the desires of males. Nanda Kaul's husband in *Fire on the Mountain*, Commander in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Joe in *Surfacing* also commits the sins of senses, but nobody questions them. It is considered natural for them; but from women, it is expected that they should behave different to their bodily demands. Thus the anatomy of female is culturally formed prison-house. The surveillance in case of these women has been turned inward. Thus the socially induced roles push women towards the goblin of depersonalization.

The characters portrayed by the selected authors can be divided as per the division of the critics of depersonalization. First types of protagonists are avoidant. These protagonists try to use escapist tendencies to avoid the scenarios where they feel uncomfortable. They try to keep their depersonalization at bay through avoiding circumstances that cause anxiety and distress to them. Epitome of avoidance is Nanda Kaul, throughout her life she lives like a recluse to cover her past. She lives in Carignano to avoid her bleak past experiences. Once she faces her past unwittingly, she fails to observe the shock and die. Sita is also an avoidant. She feels that she can avoid depersonalization by either smoking or by living on Manori Island. At the end of the novel, she understands her foolishness and accepts the practical aspect. Offred is culturally induced avoidant. She is trained to avoid her true traits of self. For her the cure was easy, she just needs to go out of the prison

house of Gilead. For the patients, who are avoidant, if they face their neurosis, there are chances of their recovery. Like in Sita's case, once she realises the futility of avoiding, she cures and goes back to civilization. Second types of protagonists are suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder. Marian suffers majorly from obsessive compulsive disorder. She starts thinking about her marriage and impending loss of freedom, it makes her anorexic. Like avoidant, these individuals can be cured once they realise the futility of their inactions. Once Marian realises it by conversing with Duncan, she bakes the cake that refers to her authenticity, she gets cured from her depersonalization. Last and worst type of disorder is depersonalization is of border-lined individuals. Unnamed Protagonist in *Surfacing* is border-lined individuals. She is at the brink of insanity and At the end of the novel she breaks all her ties with civilization and starts living like a natural object. Worse than her is Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*, who turns into a murderer and commits suicide. These types of individuals are highly volatile and have no control over their actions. These types of patients should be sent for therapy immediately and need to be dealt with caution.

It is important to note that none of the characters goes to doctor as they consider themselves pretty normal. Their family members call them impractical, stupid, arrogant, but they are never referred to doctors. This accelerates their depersonalization syndrome. Like these textual characters, there are many females are in the society, who are living inauthentic life as per the social definitions of femininity. There is a clash of conscious and unconscious in them. Apart from that society is ignorant about psychological issues faced by the patients. Most of the time either they become superstitious or simply ignores the disorder. This ignorance cost many lives or many lose peace and tranquillity of their life.

The Thesis is divided into 5 chapters and conclusion. Chapter 1, Brief Candle deals with brief history of the depersonalization- origin of the term, causes, symptoms, treatments- introduction of authors and the selected novels, and literature review. Chapter 2- “Ubiquitous Male Branding and Inner Goblin of Depersonalized Electra Females in Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock* and Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*”- is a study of the impacts of ubiquitous male centric ideology on the psyche of females. This chapter explores the effects of hyper-connectivity on the psyche of females, which also become a cause of their depersonalization. This chapter highlights that male ideology and male supremacy is the matter of common sense and is ubiquitous. Dominance of male culture and ideology does not revolve only around physical control. The root cause of this control is in the prevalent value system. Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* States, “Male Supremacy, like other political creeds, does not finally reside in physical strength but in the acceptance of a value system, which is not biological” (27). This value system is endorsed and propagated through cultural events, customs, regulations, social and political laws etc. It also has its roots in the control over economy. The control of economy provides the status of superstructure to male ideology. All objects are branded according to male centric perspective. In this male branding, women are others and for them recognition by males is center of their existence. In case of the select novels male branding of the female branding affects the mental condition of females and works as stimulator to the inner goblins of depersonalization. Chapter-3- “Depersonalization of Ennuyéx Females and Coercive Male Gaze in *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* and *The Edible Woman*”- analyses the role of boredom and male gaze. Ennui is defined as incapacity and incompetence of an individual against

his free will. It is a crime against spiritual self. This chapter foregrounds the role of mimicry of male by females in shaping the identity and existence of females. Boredom signifies an ideological crisis that reaches its zenith in the twentieth century. Modernity is often associated to ennui because in modern era, human are deprived from heroic deeds because all that is heroic is already done. Modern life is also more individual centric and nuclear family life style intensifies the rate of self-scrutiny. Conscious boredom may be just a part of the body and if you remove the body form those situations, the body can come out of the boredom and can escape from ennui, but unconscious ennui is more fatal. In the novel *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* and *The Edible Woman* we have protagonists who are ennueyex and searching for an escape from the male gaze. The male gaze is a bullyingly present in female life. Gaze is like a physical emblem of male centric ideology. It is the part of male branding, this all pervasive gaze of males put women in the spot from where they cannot run. Chapter- 4- “Multifaceted Loneliness: Subversion of Feminine self and Facets of depersonalization in *Fire on The Mountain* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*”- highlights the role of loneliness in stimulating depersonalization, which ultimately results into depersonalization. Majorly loneliness has been studied in these novels at three levels- Level of vulnerability to social disconnection, ability to self-regulate the emotions associated with feeling isolated, mental representations and expectations of, as well as reasoning about others. Loneliness can be physical, a state of mind, or cultural. In this condition of impaired regulation, all attempts of the subject induce and reinforce loneliness. Subject starts running from interpersonal encounters and draws within. He starts nurturing two selves one that is in tune with his conditions and another that he actually is. Unwilling loneliness creates wariness

and triggers hypersensitivity or emotionally numbness. The art of socializing starts getting weakened. Chapter-5- Depersonalization in the Select Fiction of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood: A Comparative Study- concentrates on the comparative study of the select authors. This chapter studies social variables in all novels, which make women victim of depersonalization and allow male characters to maintain their sanity. Characters portrayed, by both authors, are victim of the biased attitude of their respective societies. This tendency also highlights the role of social conditioning and social set up in the depersonalization of these characters. This chapter highlights off-center position of women, their inauthenticity in social contexts, and loss of agency. This chapter reflects how protagonists have been suffering from excessive introjections and excessive projection of external world. And the Conclusion part of the thesis compares and contrasts the symptoms of depersonalization. This part also highlights that like these textual characters, there are many females in the society, who are living inauthentic life as per the social definitions of femininity. There is a clash of conscious and unconscious in them. Apart from that society is ignorant about psychological issues faced by the patients. Most of the time either they become superstitious or simply ignores the disorder. This ignorance cost many lives or many lose peace and tranquillity of their life.

Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood substantially contributed in literature in general and feminist writing, particularly. Their writing created new waves in feminist writing. Their creation of female characters is unorthodox and techniques used by them, in the delineation of female characters, are unconventional. Still research related to their writings is pretty less and conventional. This study will fill this lacuna by analysing the unorthodox protagonist of these two eminent writers.

The present study will contribute in literature from many perspectives- it will open new dimension in the analysis of characters; it will add another feather in the feminist literature; and will explore another covert dimension of female oppression thus will help women to safeguard their interests.

Chapter 1

Brief Candle

Mental health and mental conditions are the major concerns of the humanity from the time immemorial. Open any newspaper, television channel or any source of information, stories of problems in human behaviour are circulated invariably. Mental illness, abnormalities and disorders are real and need our attention equivalent to the illness of body. These mental disorders are largely ignored; however vast troubles are originating from these disorders. After the invent of Internet, people started sharing their stories and these disorders took central stage of people's attention and many people started sharing similar stories, but still there are very less people who are actually aware about psychological problems. Whereas physical illness is considered normal and real; mental illness are still shrouded under social taboos. Due to the ignorance of the society in general, many mental disorders remain undiagnosed and untreated, unreported. Depersonalization is also one of such disorders, which is still remaining unreported or the suffering subject confuse this disorder with other diseases, due to the lack of information.

Depersonalization is often described as a way of "cutting oneself off from parts of self and from reality" (Resnik 65). In this condition, body is considered as an external object that is available for self-scrutiny like an external object. Collins English Dictionary defines depersonalization as:

"1. the act or an instance of depersonalizing 2. *psychiatry* an abnormal state of consciousness in which the subject feels unreal and detached from himself and the world", depersonalized is defined as,

“1. to deprive (a person, organization, system etc.) of individual or personal qualities; render impersonal 2. to cause (someone) to lose his sense of personal identity.” (446)

It is an intriguing condition that leads to distress and affects the sensibilities of the person in such a way that he questions the viability of his surroundings. This inconclusive state of mind leads the subject towards distress and alienation. This existential alienation of the subject affects his mundane life and its essence. World Health Organization describes this condition as:

Among the varied phenomena of the syndrome, patient complaint most frequently of loss of emotions and feelings of estrangement or detachment from their thinking, their body or the real world. In spite of the dramatic nature of the experience, the patient is aware of the unreality of the change. The sensorium is normal and the capacity for emotional expression intact. (Depersonalization qtd. Sierra 1)

Thus this disorder is majorly related to the disorder of sensory perceptions. This is one form of anomalous self-experiences and self-identifications. Louis Sass et al in their article “Anomalous self-experience in depersonalization and schizophrenia: A comparative investigation” refers this disorder as “profound alterations of mental state, in particular, changes in the experience of subjectivity” (430). Alan S. Brown associate this disorder with “schizotypal personality disorder or schizophrenia, and may occur in those experiencing intense anxiety, stress, or fatigue” (100).

The psychologist Ludovic Dugas, a French psychologist, has coined the term depersonalization in 1894. He refers this as a state of alienated personality. Dugas

and Moutier define it as a “state in which there is the feeling or sensation that thoughts and acts elude self” (13). Dugas acknowledged that he took this term from a paragraph written by H.F. Amiel, a Swiss philosopher in his *Journa’sl Intime*. In 19th century term depersonalization used to refer to the loss of self, body, feelings and reality. In 20th century this term starts taking its present shape. American Psychiatric Association of 1994 refers it as “alteration in the perception or experience of the self so that one feels detached from and as if one is an outside observer of one’s mental process or body.”

According to Maurice Sierra, There are three major different theories of depersonalization-Sensory theories, Psychodynamic Theories, and Theories of self-experience. Origin of sensory theories is in Humanitarian approach. Sensory theories concentrate on the complaint of persons that they are devoid of feelings and emotions and consequently loss the difference between real and unreal. Maurice Krishaber, A. Pick, T. Ribot are the major theorist of these theories. Sensory theories majorly focus on emotion numbness, on the lack of body awareness, numbness and deadness of the body. Krishaber relates it to “multiple sensory distortions” (171) which lead to self-strangeness. These theorists relate these sensory distortions to depersonalization. They keep the records of patients’ details and thinks that these are related to sensory pathology.

Dugas and Moutier and Pierre Jenet reject the hypotheses of sensory theorists. Ludovic Dugas and Pierre Janet relate depersonalization to willing and automated mind; whereas willing mind is in the control of the subject, automated mind makes its own maps of behaviour and this creates the difference between the feelings of the subject. It is a form of apathy. Dugas relates it to double

consciousness, which also refers to the feelings of déjà Vu. Depersonalization for them is heightened experiences of phobias, anxieties and obsessive compulsions; where a person feels sensory incompleteness. It is in direct opposition to person's normal self. Dis-connectivity is the key term in this point of view; it heightens sensory experiences-person feels disconnected the context and situations. Another Critic Mayer Gross in his paper on depersonalization relates depersonalization to cerebral dysfunction a physiological disorder in which the subject has acute self-observation along with loss of emotional important. It is like an escape route of mind which it employs to save the subject to suffer from anxiety or pain. Sigmund Freud's theory of fear principle is the central point for these theorists, which he relates to mind's voyage to escape from the harsh realities. This is a structuralist approach which creates fragmentary and distorted ego or self, Adolescents are the major victim of this where defence mechanism works to keep negative emotions at bay parents neglect of the child causes emotional void and they observe themselves harshly. Schilder explains it thus:

All depersonalized patients observe themselves continuously and with great zeal; they compare their present dividedness-within themselves with their previous oneness-with themselves. Self-observation is compulsive in these patients. (260)

Individuals in this condition faces split personality or multiple personalities and unable to relate particularly with any of it. C.N. Sarlin, Edith Jacobson, Jacob Arlow, P. Schilder all relates depersonalization to the distortion of ego. Some of the critics like Kraepelin and Pick relates depersonalization to memory distortion as human grows between own experience and others intermingled and memory defuses

authenticity. G. Heyman relates depersonalization to perception impairment specially in recognizing the visual or other sensory signals perceived by the subject. In centre of all these theories is body image and body perception. The way subject perceive their body, its schemata ultimately constitute in self-awareness and self-integrity. Constructive syntheses of body image are emotional void and growing strange to emotions.

Theories of self-experiences has its base in sensory theories. Pierre Janet considers depersonalization as “a manifestation of psychasthenia” (Maurice Sierra 16). She concentrates on the feeling of incompleteness, emptiness. Another critic Jasper states that self has five dimensions-activity of self; awareness of unity, identity, personality and self-non-self and depersonalization affects these factors. A person who suffers from depersonalization has affected perception of self or its unities. They are unable a synthetic view point of dimension of their selves.

So in brief there are three types of theories and two approaches to view depersonalization. First approach is psychoanalytic approach which concentrates on ego principle which relate to altered awareness of self. Second approach is Cognitive Behavioural Approach which relates to anxiety disorder. Present study uses a blended model of both of these theories. This study focuses on dissociative conditions which includes temporal or permanent alteration of identity and reality, memory distortions, heighten sensibilities, and phobias.

Psychologist Ludovic Dugas is the one who introduced the term depersonalization in psychiatry in relation to the person’s lack of connectivity with their emotions and feelings. It is a feeling that he relates to the strangeness to his/her self. His study helped experts to relate depersonalization to personality and personal

experiences. Till date many endeavours are made to explain what is personality, but most of them fall short than the satisfactory definition. Most of theorists concentrate on one element and ignore others. Some theorists emphasize on gender, some on social surrounding, some on culture and some on genes. According to Henry Kellerman:

If our personality formed solely because of the experiences we had growing up, then perhaps genetics would have played a very little or no part at all in its formation. On the other hand, is it possible that everything about your personality is genetic and none of it is based on our experiences with parents and siblings, teachers, and friends?

(14)

The origin of depersonalization is hidden in the process of personality formation. The idea of early life compliance to things is common to all of us and that in turn generates underlying anger which in turn galvanizes a process resulting in a profile of personality traits. These traits help us to adjust and adopt different situations. This becomes our personality signature, which involves our styles, needs, controls, impulses, attitudes. Gradually with the passage of time our wishes and desires increases and this leads to dissatisfaction. All our wishes cannot be fulfilled and in turn it generates a process leading to the appearance of psychological and emotional symptoms. When unfulfilled wishes are repressed, it leads to anger. Then anger will be repressed and it will lead to emotional and psychological symptoms in personality. These emotional and psychological traumas metamorphosed into 'acting out'. It is a stage where we can start recognizing the traces of how the psyche creates its defence mechanism to prevent the horrifying and fearsome traumas from being

getting expression on conscious level. Rather than venturing into these fearsome stages, psyche creates endless barriers to keep the subject into a fixture, where he is unable to get the insight of his/her self. Although awareness about the self- the deep insight is not the remedy of the problem but it works as a campus, which can provides the direction to get out of the bewilder state. After getting direction it's important to goes into that direction which leads you out of that. Unaware state of this undercover fiend is the ultimate danger. In nutshell acting out is like moving in a circle without any campus or insight. The symptom, acting out, is the outcome of continuous repression of a wish. For example a person may find some pleasure in an anti-social manner and there is an element or people, who is preventing him, from getting that pleasure or possess a thing of his pleasure. The person can be a social agent, an individual or custom. Continuous depravity, denial or repression of this pleasure seeking desire turns into a phobia or a fatal fear. The acting out symptoms of this denial of immoral or anti-social desire can get its expression in disguised form of lying, stealing or any felonious behaviour. This repression of anger leads to anxiety. Unfortunately, acting out and acting in controls the intensions and purposes of erasing the identity. These tools create obstacles in the attempts of the person to reach at the root cause of the problem. It affects the smooth functioning of the personality formations. It leads to the person's inability to face the anxiety and turns into fool man's paradise. Person's reflexive responses create a disorder of suppressing or repressing the anxiety syndromes rather than solving it. Dr. Hartman reiterates same idea as he states, "The cathartic cure, in that case, the acting out, might become a psychological defense worse than what it seeks to cure and could continue a vicious cycle" (15).

Depersonalization is a captivating and intriguing phenomenon which perplexes the suffering subject and the observer. It causes a significant source of distress and alienation and poses a direct challenge to long-held, unquestioned assumptions regarding subject's existence and identity. Unreal entities dramatically seem true and fader and nightmares are visualized like reality. It results into the "altered sense of selfhood" (Daphne Simeon and Jeffrey Abugel 6). Indeed, the person affected with depersonalization complains spontaneously that his or her mental activity, body and surroundings are changed in their quality, so as to be unreal, remote or automatized. Human mostly lives in one dimension (apart from conscious meditators) where past, present and futures are perceived in a linear and coherent manner. The stability, sanity and reason are relational so does the time and space. The identity of social subject is also dependent on relative terms and relationship. The attachment to the body is one of the most basic seems like a foreign object, unrelated to mind. It is the disease of mind and perception in the state of depersonalization hyper awareness of the mind and thoughts causes distantness from the bodily experiences and thus it creates the duality for the victim. Among the varied phenomena of the syndrome, person complains most frequently of loss of emotions and feelings of estrangement or detachment from their thinking, their body or the real world. In spite of the dramatic nature of the experience, the person is aware of the unreality of the change. "The sensorium is normal and the capacity for emotional expression intact" (World Health Organization, 1992). Since the condition was first described (half a century before it was named), during the first half of the nineteenth century, depersonalization has been found to be commonplace in psychiatric individuals. For example- Schilder in his book *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (1935) wrote extensively on depersonalization. He

believed it to be present, at some stage, in almost every neurosis. A similar view led a panel of clinicians to conclude that, after anxiety and depression, depersonalization was the most frequent symptom seen in psychiatry. Such ubiquitous nature of depersonalization led early writers to believe that depersonalization must be related to functions relevant to the understanding of both normal and abnormal mentality: “the syndrome is related to so many urgent questions of medical and normal psychology that it is worth studying in a large number of patients” (Gross 111). It became well established for example, that fleeting experiences of depersonalization were commonplace among teenagers, as well as in people facing life threatening situations. In turn, empirical studies on large samples of patients confirmed the view that depersonalization was indeed “highly prevalent among psychiatric in patients, as well as in patients with depression, anxiety disorders and schizophrenia” (Brauer et. al 513). However, unlike the case with equally ubiquitous symptoms such as anxiety and depressed mood, the high prevalence of depersonalization was taken to mean that it was so nonspecific as to lack any clinical relevance. Depersonalization is actually a part of defence mechanism of mind to save human from shock or stress; it is an escape route of the mind to avoid the situation which can cause anxiety to the human. It is non-effectual and detached state, but also blurred the sense of real and unreal. Medical textbook entitled *Modern Clinical Psychiatry* defines depersonalization.

Depersonalization, a pervasive and distressing feeling of estrangement, known sometimes as the depersonalization syndrome, may be defined as an affective disorder in which feelings of unreality and a loss of conviction of one’s own identity and of a sense of identification with and control over one’s own body are the principal symptom. (Depersonalization qtd. Abugel 11)

This book also elaborates that unreality principal either gives perception of changed personality or that the world is unreal, emotional meanings faded away, brain seems on automated mood and emotions lacks control. The vision lacks authenticity.

Depersonalization, predominantly, refers to the condition of the lack of self-awareness. In this condition, individuals have strong feelings of distorted reality and the subject live in altered state of consciousness. The first signs that appears in depersonalized individual is de-realization, second is detachment or estrangement from one's body and surroundings, consists of panic attack, obsession, depression, anxiety dread altered awareness, hypersensitivity, dissociation, isolation, personal relationships and interpersonal communication is thwarted due to the unique sense of self and experiences. Apart from a few cases where the individual find depersonalization comfortable and safe it causes acute stress. In terms of active meditation it has different. In this section major symptoms of depersonalization are discussed in detail.

Depersonalization attacks one thing that creates the world for the individual-his self. In depersonalization subject feels detachment from the self, context and world. It makes it dissociative and at worst extinct it. Thus results into detachment from self and the world. It seems to the sufferer that there is duality in his existence. The memories of past blurred and some parts are diminished. Objects and relations which once were considered dear and near one loses the personal connection and world and context seems distant and strange.

Maurice Sierra states anomalous body experiences as a symptom of depersonalization and she further divides it into four categories

- (1) “Lack of body ownership feelings;
- (2) Feeling of loss of agency (the feeling that actions happen automatically without the intervention of a willing self);
- (3) Feeling of disembodiment; and
- (4) Somatosensory distortions” (28)

Body is an integral part of self-observation, self-consciousness and identity formation. In anomalous body experiences, sometimes the individual feels intrigued by his own body and feels an hostility or indifference towards it, it can be toward, the partial part of the body or to the complete body. It seems to the subject he is alien to body and its experiences. In loss of agency, suffers feels the lack of control over body, it is inability of control body by conscious cognitive. In embodiment feels out of their bodies and considers that they can analyse their bodies.

Another stage is subject feels de-affectualization or emotional numbness. In this state, person fails to actualize his emotions; it can be of different degree. It is the effect of derealisation of the body and its experiences. It seems to the subject that he does not belong to his emotions like love, hate or other basic emotions, it causes internal distress and anxiety. The subject is not to enjoy or feel other natural emotions. It causes stress as the subject is not able to react in everyday scenarios. Jeffrey Abugiel in *Strangers to My Self* describes this situation as “inability to imbue objects or situations with emotional feeling” (125).

Contrary to the above referred state subject may feel Hypoemotinality (over-affectualization). Subject gives over-response or shows abnormal reactions. It can be consist of guilt, shedding tears for the loss of any object, over-Joyousness in a few

cases. In this situation, suffers feels increased worry, heart points faster than usual and panic attacks are usual. Jeffrey and Abugel in their book *Feeling Unreal* describes this syndrome as a “strange void” (81) as the “soul has departed” (81)

It also leads the subject towards visual distortion and disturbances. Subject may feels that there is a visible or invisible wall between him and the world and the person feels that he is seeing the world through a veil or a glass. He fails to decipher the difference between real or unreal objects. Visual hallucination is consisting of watching demons, angels, ghost etc.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is also a symptom of depersonalization. In this state, person is obsessed with some mundane activities; it can be the representation of some inner phobias. In this state, person a cutely observe some of their activities like placement of an object, intake of any food or ever food etc. The act can be repetitive or abused in nature. In this case, persont checks lock many times and feel anxiety as having amnesia related to the act performed. Mauricio Sierra relates it to “combined effects of loss of agency and high alertness” (31).

In depersonalization a person can observe alternation in the perception of time, duration and space. The sufferer feels the inability to place events at right time and does not differentiate the time sequence of events. It’s difficult for the person to refer past in a chronically manner; in a few cases person feels that they are caught in the time zone and are not moving forward or it seems to then that everything is happening at the same time. In increased rate of mental activity or in decreased rate of mental activity person complaints that either things are moving at a very rapid speed or moving slow than expected-the geographical clock appears opposite to the psychological clock.

The sufferer starts getting the feeling of derealisation. He feels that he is alienated from his surroundings. The term was introduced by Mayer Gross to refer the strange appearance of things which refers to inability to distinguish things. Salomon Resnik defines this situation as, "the self felt invaded by "lines and dots"; the patient tried to first to control them and then deny their existence" (38). These symptoms appear in men and women alike with varied length, intensity and duration. Its onset, course and triggers can vary. In the next section of the thesis causes of depersonalization are discussed in details.

Depersonalization presents protective reflex of mind or automatic response to save the individual from the immediate threats or anxiety and dread. It is also related to early life events or experiences. These early life incidents are triggered at one point of life. Different individuals has different case histories, triggers point are highly varied. Major causes are discussed below.

Intoxication of drugs often causes depersonalization for a limited duration. It is plausible that the drugs have induced this affect in acute state of anxiety. While in most cases after the period of intoxication is over people come back to normal state but in a few cases this become a triggering moment and later on person keeps on getting these attacks without any drug. Simeon et al in article "Feeling Unreal" discusses that Cannabist, Katamine, Marijuana and LSD are one of the most used drugs that cause depersonalization.

In this sort of depersonalization person gets flashback in which they experience old memories or events all over again people with morbid experiences, anxiety, psychological stress or dread when comes in contact with drugs are more

vulnerable to depersonalization disorder. These flashbacks are mostly related to painful experiences like amputation of a body part, loss of a close kin. If the person induces the drug again, the severity of the problem increases. This is one sort of neuro-chemical trigger which manifest itself in the form of depersonalization in this case of triggering, individual is mostly biologically and psychologically vulnerable and drug takes it to the zenith level or breaking point.

Defence Mechanism of brain, often in life threatening situation especially in childhood, triggers depersonalization disorder. It is the fleeting tendency of the mind works through strong survival instinct of the humans. This is adaptive strategy, but if an individual lives in this sort of stress for a danger duration. This fleeting tendency can land him into depersonalization disorder childhood traumas like physical and emotional abuse, sexual abuse. Witnessing domestic violence or war loss and separation etc. are the few reasons. Among above referred traumas, traumas of emotional nature mostly are the cause of depersonalization. Isador H. Coriat in his book *Abnormal Psychology* states:

Suppression of certain memories or experiences having a strong emotional meaning can lead to hysterical symptoms, such as paralysis, contractures, convulsions, or even changes in the mental state or the personality of the individual. (66)

Overwhelming anxiety and acute stressful situations often trigger depersonalization disorder. Most of the researches that are done in the field indicate that this disorder triggers at the moments of accident, natural disaster, indolent attack etc. at the time of such situations, depersonalization allows individual to

respond to the situations like a preserved adaptive behaviour. In such situation emotional disengagement are the compulsive bodily acts to save it from stillness or numbness. Panic also has a major role in inducing anxiety and creating the ground for depersonalization. Panic is a symptom as well as cause of depersonalization. Jeffrey Abugel in *Strangers to My Self* elaborates that three kinds of panic attacks seem to persist in people who ultimately experience depersonalization. One is the spontaneous, out of nowhere variety, as described by James and Mayer Gross. The second is ruminative. Self-scrutiny variety wherein over concentration on the self, on the process of thinking about the possibility of panic actually leads to panic, albeit of slighter intensity. And the third is situational, which only appears under dreaded circumstances.

An individual, who is living in a long term stress, poverty, anxiety etc. and is living in disturbed situations of hopelessness if comes contact with sudden relief, positive response where he was expecting a negative note, winning a lottery, a news of winning a lottery, a news of winning a lottery etc. could also become a point of triggering depersonalization These overwhelming experiences have unique personal meaning for the deprived individual, sudden chemical reaction of body causes depersonalization

Culture in historical perspective can be one reason as in culture all realities are relational and identities are solely related to materialistic accomplishment the economic system under stern bureaucratic rule can make a human feel inadequate and dehumanized. Isador H. Coriat in his book *Abnormal Psychology* reiterates, “Culture and social conventionalities are built upon a repression of instincts, a

strangling of emotions, and the revenge of the nervous system upon this repression is the breaking out of a psycho-neurosis” (374). Self and identity formation is cultural phenomenon. Individualism and collective identity are part of the same circle and depersonalization entails on the experiences of the self or the perception about the self. For example a person from a liberal society lands into the society of slaves will feel depersonalized. If the collective identity of a society comes under threat individual identity will also respond in the same manner.

D. Baker, E. Hunter et.al in their book *Overcoming Depersonalization and Feeling of Unreality* while analysing American sample drawn that in depersonalization 25% of individuals suffers from depersonalization due to stress 12% due to panic attacks, 9% due to depression. Daphne Simeon and Jeffery Abugel while discussing various styles of disorder causes by depersonalization points out three most common personality disorder- “Avoidant (23%)”, “Borderline (21%)”, “Obsessive Compulsive (21%)” (102) Avoidant are those individuals who are overtly scared by social gatherings, reclusive and isolated individual. They are not able to communicate freely and spend their most time in seclusion. If contacted by strangers, they are highly uncomfortable, avoid eye contacts or meaningful interaction. Borderline individuals are moody. Their mood changes without any external trigger. They do not have a socially established identity, often reckless in approach, withdraw and indulge in fight or brawl with impulse obsessive compulsive individuals are perfectionist in their approach pay too much attention to nifty gritty details. Another 36% did not show any specific personality disorder these are elements of paranoid, narcissistic, dependent, schizotypal, schizoid etc. (Daphne and Abugel 102).

Men and women are equally affected by depersonalization, gender does not have any specific role in it, and adolescents are victimized the most. It triggers due to acute emotional feelings or turmoil and manifests itself into personality disorders. The language, civil and political society all work to create a social reality and identity for an individual. For example a gay person or leprosy suffers may consider himself a sinner dependent upon socio-historical space and time. Societal taboos are important element in creating dissociative disorder. Depersonalization can become worse in case the person has a negative impulse towards his/her disease. If patient starts considering his/her future black and believes he cannot come out of his disease, this chain of thought feed depersonalization. Person should avoid catastrophic predictions over thinking negative events or incidents, blaming yourself, avoiding the fearful encounters, believing in external agencies. In case of women, this disorder becomes a cultural entity as they are living in a society where these feelings are nurtured in them. Social symbols and norms ask them to adopt depersonalization or create ideals and examples them to follow, which indicates that they need to act otherwise than they desire.

Dawn Baker et al. in book *Overcoming Depersonalization and Feeling of Unreality* state that depersonalization can effect on five levels.

- 1) “Cognitive– thoughts, beliefs, meanings, images, attention and memory.
- 2) Emotional- how you feel, your mood, numbness.
- 3) Behavioural- what you do more or less of, things you avoid.
- 4) Physical- bodily changes, sleep patterns, numbness.
- 5) Environmental- situations, relationships, work, home.” (37)

In depersonalization, person feel they are distanced from the reality, lives in dream like state, experience mood swings, robotic emotions, acute anxiety, isolation, lacking benevolent emotions feeling detached. On the level of cognitive person is unable to control thinking process automation happens, cannot co-relate past to the present or unable to memories. He perceives world as unreal, hollow, lose control our senses, objects or small appears alien, distant and bigger, world semis less colourful, voices lose familiar qualities, everything seems liquid and changing. Hallucination and delusions evade the world of the person.

There are various approaches by which depersonalization can be cured. One of them is Cognitive behavioural therapy approach which identifies that depersonalization effects on all five systems (cognitive, emotional, behavioural, physical and environmental) and correlate all these five system to identify the relation and diagnose the causes and outbursts. It helps to distinguish each component. CBT recognize, challenge and change negative patterns, emotions and thoughts by interacting with the patient. Psychologist and counsellors often use this approach. In this approach usual used methods are like keeping record of events in writing, managed exposure to the situations that causes depersonalization, creating positive perceptions, questioning meaningless perceptions and assumptions etc. CBT is more useful in curing depersonalization caused by stress and anxiety. Jeffery Abugel in his *Strangers to Myself* call this approach “psycho-educational” (219). This therapy consider depersonalization as a dissociative diseases and relies on associative technique, it mends the broken bridges of perception and the real world.

Second approach is Psychodynamic Therapy. This approach concentrates on control therapies as most of the person feels like losing control over events and

actions of the body and mind in depersonalization. This is a useful approach to handle childhood traumas. In this approach emotional reliving caused by traumatic events is treated by using reactive techniques. Therapist encourages the patient to verbalise his experiences so that they subjectively explain their depersonalization in this way self-constancy which was disrupted by the sensation of alter self. Mostly patients feel that they are not able differentiate “from others, self-constancy or other constancies” (Abugel 173). A borderline personality fails to differentiate between himself and other, a narcissistic person finds problem in self-consistency and a neurotic personality has an overwhelming inner conflict. Through abreaction all these problems are solved by interaction.

Third approach is Psychotherapy. This is eclectic and mixture of many techniques like psycho education, identification and diary keeping, cognitive behavioural intervention, grounding techniques, positive reinforcement, task training (Abugel 173). It starts with narrating the history of the disease, trigger moment and causes are identified in second stage it explores emotional turmoil and thought process and then the person is measuredly exposed to the risks.

According to Daphne Simeon and Jeffrey Abugel it can be concluded that following techniques can be used to cure depersonalization:

- (1) Psycho education
- (2) Interpreting physical experiences
- (3) Controlling techniques
- (4) Diary keeping
- (5) Grounding
- (6) Modulating arousal

Abnormal behaviour, alienated and isolated personalities, freakish experiences, distorted perceptions, deceptions of mind, dichotomy of real and unreal moreover, mind and body always fascinated literature and philosophy. The reference of these feelings has its seeds right from the Bible and diversely appeared in almost every form of art and literature. Theory of existentialism in depicts depersonalization in all its forms and colours. Sartre in his being in nothingness portrays depersonalization. Existentialism studies anxiety nausea, angst, dread, loss of self, authenticity, bad faith. All these elements are the part of depersonalization. However eastern philosophies or religion like Hinduism and Buddhism views depersonalization as a positive entity. Buddhism claims that self is a transient illusion for Buddhist achieving depersonalization is the goal, they called it "Nirvana" for Yogi, it is a blissful condition.

Depersonalization as per se has a very unique relationship with literature. Literatures reflect societies as it is- at its best and worst both. Literature is always a substantial medium to express the unexpressed thoughts and abnormal psyches. Literary depiction of different dilemmas of depersonalisation like phobias, dilemmas, panic gets its expressions in different modes. In different cultures and histories depersonalization is projected in different manner. If we analyse ancient lore structurally and content wise, we will be able to locate many myths and stories where Gods or demi-gods promise to human being to give glimpse of other world, which create panic or fear in the mind of the onlooker. Examples of Mahabharata, where Lord Krishna shows numerous universes to his mother and shows his multi-dimensional existence to Krishna can be cited. In both cases, impact on the onlooker is discomforts and panic; reason is the violation of the perceptions induced by

common sense. Many sci-fi movies claim to explore another world. These other worlds are attributed with super human power to human agent by opening different realm of human consciousness. For example Superman, Thor and many other superheroes are projected as the part of alien civilizations. For them culture and life of Earth has different meanings. As the studies will continue new result will come out but one thing is sure that the experiences that are by deliberate meditation and a patient who suffers it unconsciously have sea differences, because these experiences are neither esired nor voluntarily. Apart from above examples, Hamlet's troubled utterance "to be or not to be?" Iago's disturbing declaration "I am not what I am"? all are the reflection of the existence of other inside the surface of simpleton. The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, whose poetry and prose is rich with esoteric meaning and intuitive perspectives on the nature of existence and nonexistence, a *real self-versus no self*, provides his own speculation as to the mystery of Shakespeare, with thought provoking relevance to the subject at hand. According to Michael Foucault, "All knowledge is an expression of the 'Will to power'. This means that we can speak of any absolute truths or objective knowledge. People recognize a particular piece of philosophy or scientific theory as 'true' only if it fits the descriptions of truths laid down by the intellectuals or political authorities of the day, by the members of the ruling elite, or by the prevailing ideologies of knowledge. We speak from our unconscious. Browning is the master of projecting morbid psyches and his Lover of Porphyria is still an enigma- what makes him to strangle his beautiful girlfriend is a matter of the study of his darker unconscious. The unconscious part of our mind is dominated by our past or unfulfilled desires. When we speak or write, our writings are dominated by our unconscious, which in

turn is effected by society. Literature is the right place for the expression of these unsaid morbid experiences. In literature depiction of depersonalization is done in different disguises.

Works of existentialist philosophers are very close to Depersonalization behaviour. Sartre, one of the famous existentialist writers, in his first novel *Le Nausea* published in 1938 presented with bone chilling accuracy, but rather than calling it depersonalization, depicted it under the label of existentialist dilemma.

I am. I am. I exist, I think, therefore I am; I am because I think, why do I think. I don't want to think any more, I am because I think that I don't want to be, I think any more, I am because I think that I don't want to be, I think I...because...ugh! I flee. (Sartre, *Nausea* 100)

The term existential angst is one off shoot of depersonalization, which also refers to the dehumanization of modern man. Sartre's portrayal of hypersensitive and over-conscious Roquentin in *Nausea* is the portrayal of a depersonalized character. Albert Camus in *The Stranger* portrays the emotional numbness and dead feelings. Mersault is the epitome of depersonalized elements as he fails to react to emotional situations. For him, reality is non-existent. Franz Kafka's portrayal of Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* is also a portrayal of a depersonalized man, who is transformed into a vermin and feels apathy towards human world.

Psychoanalytic critics also have cited examples of these darker secrets of unconscious. Although Freud refers to depersonalization only once, in the Acropolis paper, it appears that he was not unconcerned with the phenomenon *per se*. Freud

refers in his work, "this veil was torn only at one moment - when, after an enema, the contents of the bowel left the intestinal canal; and then he felt well and normal again" (Freud 75). Experiences of wholeness and integration are usually understood as being due to the self in Jungian literature. It is argued here that this is due, in part, to the fact that Jung takes a very narrow view of the ego. As quoted above Jung sees the ego as the center of the field of consciousness but says "it is questionable whether it is the center of the personality" (Jung, *Self* 11). Jung sees the ego as "the conscious personality" (7-8), while recognizing that the ego is not wholly conscious, by which he can be understood to mean that the ego includes all those elements of the personality of which the individual has become conscious, even though not all will be present to consciousness at any one moment. In contrast, he sees the self as "the total personality which, though present, cannot be fully known" (9). For example, in *The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious*, Jung describes the way that certain individuals identify (their ego) with particular elements of the unconscious with resulting "psychic inflation". He cites the optimist who becomes overweening and arrogant, and the pessimist who becomes overanxious and dependent. Jung writes, "each in his way steps beyond his human proportions, both of them seem a little 'superhuman' and therefore, figuratively speaking, godlike" (*Unconscious* 227). On the other hand, Jung gives the example of those who make one-sided identifications with the intellectual and rational aspects of their personality.

Apart from above referred authors Marxists theorists Tolstoy, Shklovsky, Brecht and Karl Marx in their theory of Estrangement also express same sort of ideas of depersonalisation. Douglas Robinson states:

If Tolstoy's utopian imagination of the smooth literary transfer of shared feeling is born out of a wishful negation of depersonalization, and Shklovsky's and Brecht's utopian imagination of repersonalization is based on the interruption or obstruction of shared feeling, clearly "shared feeling" will have to shuttle both dystopian disorders and utopian cures back and forth across the shifting boundary between the familiar and the strange, the local and the foreign, the "own" and the alien, the conventional and the experimental—a boundary that is continually being created, or at least temporarily stabilized, by the somatic shuttle. (XII)

All this suggests that estrangement for Tolstoy, so far from being a mere literary device that he used to great effect in his fiction, was a debilitating psychological disorder—what the psychiatric community refers to as *depersonalization*. But before we begin to psychoanalyze Tolstoy, let's first review the signal events in his life. As Vadim Rudnev describes the disorder, "From the physiological point of view, depersonalization most often appears as the brain's answer to a sharp emotional shock by way of an increased secretion of endorphins, which anesthetize consciousness. From the point of view of the behavioral strategy of consciousness, depersonalization appears as a powerful defense against stress" (55). They are narcissism, depersonalization, derealization, *deja vu*, sadness over transience; all of which are, in my opinion, related themes.

Thus the literature always has been a medium of the expression of unconscious desires. Through the lens of literature dark worlds of psyche can be observed as onlooker as literature gives a clearer vision than the real life. This thesis

deals with the analysis of depersonalization in the select novels of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood. Both of these authors are prominent female writers who describe female psyche and inner pangs in a vivid manner. Their approaches and methods, to depict female psychology, pave ways to analyse depersonalization syndrome in their female protagonists. As per the theorists, this disorder has no link to the gender, but still for women this disorder comes more naturally. Most of the societies are patriarchal in nature and women are marginalized. Secondary position for a woman is considered a natural position. They are devoid of many rights and if they express their desires- they are termed as whores. In traditional societies, where female are forced to stay inside the four walls of home, depersonalization has easy entry. Alienated from their self and emotions, often the experiences of depersonalization become a natural residue for them. Marilyn French states:

This contradiction between orthodox definitions of femaleness and women's actual willful behavior leads men to divide women into categories of madonna or whore, a division that has always reflected not actual women but men's sense of the hostility and personal will that lie beneath women's compliant surfaces. (309)

Women always faced this male branding and male gaze, which turns their self-scrutiny inwards. They try to become socially acceptable and thus behave like other to their natural self. Virginia Woolf states, "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glass possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice at its natural size" (41). Women, serving as looking glass, have no identity, but they are the reflection of male centric ideology. Depersonalization, as disorder, affects inauthentic subjects and such conditioning provides a fertile ground

to the disorder. The selected novels to achieve objectives of the study are Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), and *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) and Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). On the surface level these authors belong to different countries and portray different cultures and traditions, but at the level of theme and portrayal of female psyche these authors are at par. Both of these authors portray abnormal psyche of females in their selected novels. The present study explores depersonalization, which is a modern phenomenon and did not receive required consideration from the patients and theorists. These authors predominantly use stream of consciousness which also provides window of their inner psyche to the readers. It is important to study their literary field before going into the detailed analysis of similarities and dissimilarities of their works.

Anita Desai, born in 1937, is a distinguished post-independence Indian English novelist and has worldwide recognition. She is born from a German mother. She has received her education in Delhi and started writing at very early age of seven. She lives in Delhi, married and having four children. Her published works include novels, collection of short stories, children literature and her interviews. She has won Royal society of Literature award, Winifred Hobby Memorial Prize for her *Fire on the Mountain* and the National Academy of Letter Award (1978), Neil Gunn Prize (1993), and Padma Bhushan (2014). She is shortlisted many times for coveted Booker prize. Apart from a writer she is an accomplished academician. She teaches writing programme at MIT. She is a prolific writer of serious fiction. She began her literary career in 1963 with *Cry, the Peacock*, although she had been writing and publishing short stories since her adolescence. Her stay in Mussoorie gives her the

experience of nature and natural habitats. Her personal proximity with nature reflects in her fiction too. Her list of novel includes- *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaca* (1996), *Fasting Feasting* (1999), and *The Zigzag Way* (2004).

Anita Desai belongs to the second generation of Indian Writing in English. Whereas pre-independence writers for instance trinity of Indian fiction (Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao), depicts socio-economic conditions of the time, post-independence writer infuses new challenges, problems and dilemmas through the powerful medium of literature. They are keen to explore psychological and sociological strains in the social and individual life. Their characters are more individual in nature than a typecast. The characters portrayed by Anita Desai are westernized and urban. She herself states, "If my writing is westernized there is a whole section of Indian society that is westernized. Whole range of people brought up in urban areas have been exposed to western ideas through literature" (Uniyal 251). Her choice of westernized characters makes her an apt choice for the study of depersonalization, as it is inflected more on educated and modern women than the villagers. As modern dwellers, these women are educated and crave for independent existence, but chained by the traditional society, their dreams are not able to see the daylight. Double standards which are the part of male dominated society foster dual personalities in these protagonists.

Anita Desai is often pitted along with Kamala Markandya, Ruth Pawar Jhabvala, Arun Joshi in voicing human predicament by exploring deeper psychic

and mental states. Anita Desai is influenced by the works and techniques of D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Henry James and Marcel Proust, Anita Desai portrays inner turmoil of her characters and give more importance to their psychological aspect than the physical existence. She delineates the psychological realities, explore the dark recesses of anxiety, depict psychological crisis. Like Virginia Woolf, Anita Desai's characters feel that their psychological reality is more vital to their existence than their physical existence. They disobey social taboos and perceptions to support their individualistic essence. In her interview with Yashodhara Dalmia, Anita Desai states:

I am interested in characters who are not average but have retreated or been driven into despair and so turned against the general current. It is very easy to flow with the current, it makes no demands, it costs no efforts. But those who cannot follow it, whose heart cries out the great 'No,' who fight the current and struggle against it may know what demands are and what it costs to meet them. (13)

Anita Desai's protagonists present transition from tradition to westernization. Her characters face anxiety due to changing family set up, industrial scene and changing social values. The depersonalization also flourishes in transient social subjects as they are prone to have double identities and personas. Her main themes are reclusion, alienation existential boredom, anxiety dread, despair, emotional bankruptcy, social and moral hypocrisy, failing interpersonal relationships, marital disorders, nothingness, meaninglessness, in-authentic existence and loss of essence. For Anita Desai psychological reality is the centre of her novel. K.R.S. Iyenger states:

In her novels the inner climate, the climate of sensibility that lours
clears of rambles like thunder or suddenly blazes forth like lightening
it more compelling than the outer weather the physical geography or
the visible action. (464)

To study depersonalization, it is important to have internal insights as
depersonalization has very less overt symptoms. Anita Desai provides this
opportunity as she exposes her characters' inner fears, traumas and sensibilities. Her
women characters are epitome of psycho-social realities. Her narrative brings social
contexts as a background of psychological activities. She carves and inscribes multi-
dimensional pluralistic domestic and familial world, where women are still
entrapped into male world women characters are always the subtext or the
subterranean unconscious of her novels. She is a critique of patriarchal family. In her
interview with Yashodahra Dalmia, Anita Desai states:

I think of the world as an iceberg-the one tenth visible above the
surface of the water is what we call reality, but the nine-tenths that
are submerged make up the truth, and that is what one is trying to
explore. (13)

Her novels have two dimensions of time clock time and psychological time like all
noted psychological novels. She merges past and present in her narrative. Her
characters are isolated and suffer from existentialist pangs. Harish Raizada remarks,
“Desai's novels, like those of Franz Kafka, are thus about human fate, human
bewilderment and human suffering” (129).

Structures of her novels are also very helpful in study depersonalization. Her style and techniques are more functional than decorative. Her plots are not much deliberated on action part because she is more concerned about inner realities. She often presents fusion of form and expressions. Anita Desai in her interview to Atma Ram Sharma states:

I start writing without having very much of a 'plot' in my mind or on paper-only a very hazy idea of what the pattern of the book is to be. But it seems to work itself out as I go along, quite naturally and inimitably. I prefer the word 'pattern' to 'plot' as it sounds more natural. (101)

Anita Desai portrays life as it is. She presents her themes organically. She uses artistic devices like images, symbols, landscapes and myths to delineate the psychic states and psychic reality. Her language is lyrical in nature.

Second selected novelist is Margaret Eleanor Atwood, born on 18 Nov. 1939 in Ottawa Ontario (Canada), is one of the internally acclaimed writers who articulate contemporary dilemmas through her fiction. Her critical works include wide range of genres which include- novels, poems, short stories, essays, children's literature, caricatures and criticism. She is a prominent figure in Canadian literature. She has won many awards like Arthur Clarke Award, Science Fiction Award, Prince of Asturias Award, and Booker Prize for *The Blind Assassin* (2000). She is founder of Writers' Trust of Canada and founding trustee of Griffin Poetry Prize. She is a noted humanist too. Her novels have a long list- *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Lady Oracle* (1976), *Life before Man* (1979), *Bodily Harm* (1981), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Cat's Eye* (1988), *The Robber Bride* (1993), *Alias Grace*

(1996), *The Blind Assassin* (2000), *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Penelopiad* (2005), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), *Maddaddam* (2013), *Scribbler Moon* (2014), *The Heart Goes Last* (2015), *Hag-Seed* (2016). Apart from novels, she has 10 short fiction collections, 20 poetry collections, 7 children books, 10 non-fiction works, she is editor of 5 anthropologies; and she has also written 3 television scripts.

Along with Alice Munro, and Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood presents Canadian feminist tradition. Atwood focuses on the portrayal of new-women who are self-aware, independent and defy patriarchal norms. She uses her novels to explore inner reality. As she states in *Survival*:

Literature is not only a mirror; it is also map, geography of the mind. Our literature is one such map, if we can learn to read it as *our* literature, as the product of who and where we have been. We need such a map desperately; we need to know about here, because here is where we live. For the members of a country or culture, shared knowledge of their place, their here, is not a luxury but a necessity. Without that knowledge we will not survive. (15)

Her novels focus on contemporary social and political issues with. She confirms it by stating, “I do see the novel as a vehicle for looking at society an interface between language and what we choose to call reality” (246). She denies labels, but she is often referred as a political writer. Her novels often have references and cross references of political elements, social discriminations, disputed borders, human rights violations etc.

She has gothic fervour in her novels along with futuristic vision, but her characters are historically and socially deep rooted. She uses deceptive metaphors

and ambiguous symbols. Language is a vehicle for Atwood to convey the intricacies of mind, it is full of allusions, fantasies, double dealings and double viscous. Canadian is not a geographical element only in her fiction it is a perception a place for free thinking. Atwood's narration is witty, ironical, politically and normally dialectical. Atwood novels are seen as proto-feminist. Boundaries between public and personal world blurred in her fiction. In her notes on *Power Politics* she confirms this:

We would all like to have a private life that is sealed off from the public life and different from it, where there are no rulers and no ruled, no hierarchies, no politicians, only equal free people. But because any culture is a closed system and our culture is one based and fed on power this is impossible or at least very difficult. (7)

Atwood presents female bodies as a battlefield for power discourses. Surveillance and self-surveillance are the control point in creating tension in her novels. This makes her novel as an apt subject for studying depersonalization.

Feminism is the centre of her writing. In *Survival*, Margaret Atwood described four victim positions for females

- 1) Denial of victimhood
- 2) Acknowledging victimhood but considering it as an act of good fate or biology
- 3) Repudiation of the victim role
- 4) Creative non-victim

Most of Atwood's novels are trickster in nature. Their communication never surfaces their inner realities. Their deceptive narration is representation of their

unsettled mind. This is very relevant to study depersonalization as their psychological realities and physical realities are in contrast to each other and most of them live double lives. They have labyrinth within labyrinth. Atwood's protagonist tries to escape from these labyrinths. Failing to evade the inevitable, these protagonists start living double lives. They have hybrid personalities which are amalgamation of personal perception and social expectations. This hybrid demeanour is their plan to satiate their volatile psyche, but it often ends into disaster.

Atwood's themes, according to Pilar Cuder, can be divided into six categories of critical approaches- feminist criticism, feminist psychoanalytic criticism, archetypal and mythical criticism, postcolonial themes, Canadian nationalist criticism, and postmodernism. Apart from these approach eco feminism is another major approach that is associated to Margaret Atwood.

Both of these authors are renowned author and substantial research is available on their works. Most authors concentrated on their symbolism, narrative techniques, themes, critical study etc. Some of the major works are referred below chronologically:

Kajali Sharma in her book *Symbolism in Anita Desai's Novels* (1991) explores symbolism in all her novels. She attempts to portray Anita Desai as a symbolist who employs symbols "functionally and artistically" (146). Symbols are integral part of her novels by which she foregrounds the inner being of her characters. Kajali Sharma compares Anita Desai to D.H. Lawrence in terms of modernity and psychological exploration. According to Kajali Sharma "Symbols endow her novels with a rare compactness and richness" (151).

N. R. Gopal in his book *A Critical Study of the Novels of Anita Desai* (1999) studies themes and techniques of Anita Desai's fiction. He states aspects of theme and techniques are inter-related at many levels of structure and texture in Anita Desai's Fiction. She is not a "technical innovator, but her use of poetry is not something very common" (102), for Anita Desai "The theme is warp and technique is woof" (102). In this book N.R. Gopal explores the depiction of Feminine psyche, Familiar relationships, and women as a social being by Anita Desai. Her novels are not political or sociological in character but are psychological.

Neeru Chakraverty in her book *Quest for Self-Fulfilment in the Novels of Anita Desai* (2003) states that Anita Desai's fiction dismantles the "doctrines of the unified self" (227) and projects the quest of its characters for self-fulfilment. Her fiction utilises certain inherent philosophical ideas to highlight existential dilemmas of the characters. The tragedy of her characters stems out of their inability to reconcile with the social conventions.

Shubha Tiwari edited the book entitled *Critical Responses to Anita Desai* (2004) this book is consist of 35 essays related to Anita Desai's Fiction in two volumes. S.P. Swain in his essay "Where Shall We go This Summer?" – Sita's incarcerated self" explores the themes of incertitude, alienation and in communication. According to him Sita is an introverted character and her "alienation is natural and dispositional" (320). Another essay "A clash between Male Chauvinism and Existential concerns in Anita Desai" written by Devika explores neurotic behaviour of Desai's protagonists when they suffer from existential pangs. She also states that in Anita Desai's fictional world male rule over women.

Sudhakar. T. Sali in his book *Anita Desai's Female Protagonists* (2006) explores the psyche of all female protagonists of Anita Desai and vertebrates that Anita Desai portrays “modern Indian sensibility” (161) but registering the mental vibrations of her characters. She delineates the inner lives of her character. Her women characters suffer from insecurities and desperately want belongingness. They have traumatic interpersonal relationships, “peculiar childhood, ungratifying adolescence and dissatisfying middle years” (163). Her characters belong to upper middle class. For her emotions matter more than character Desai uses images from nature to highlight the inner turmoil of her characters.

B.L. Tripathi in his book *Anita Desai: Dimensions of the Inner World* (2007) observes that Desai has a liberal humanist worldview which portrays “not only art, aesthetics and liberalism but to psychoanalysis” (130). Desai’s cultural determinism affects adult lives and lends these characters, “psychological reality” (131). She depicts institution of family and exposes familial discords and disagreements. Her narratives reveal “how parental authority accelerates schizophrenic problems” (140). Her characters are intense creature.

The book *Critical Essays on Anita Desai's Fiction* (2007) edited by Jaydipsinh Dodiya is consist of 20 essays, out of which 4 deals with *Cry, the Peacock* and 3 with *Fire on the Mountain*. Purvi N. Upadhyay in her essay “Cry, the Peacock : A Psychological Study”, observes that Desai emphasis on interior characterization and gives psychological dimensions to her novels. Desai explores Maya’s mind through images- conscious and unconscious. P.D. Dubbe in his essay “Feminine Consciousness in Anita Desai’s *Fire on the Mountain*” observes that Desai spreads “a burning awareness of woman’s condition in our society” (121) and

the novel is suggestive of the revolt of new generation of women against patriarchy. Alka Saxena in her essay “The Impending Tragedy in *Fire in the Mountain*” suggests that the impending danger is created in the novel through various images and symbols. All the stories fabricated by Nanda Kaur are like tranquillizers pills” (129).

Anita Singh in her book *Existential Dimension in the Novels of Anita Desai* (2007) explores Desai’s “unquestionable existentialist concerns” (138). Desai is influenced by Emily Bronte and her characters highlight the existentialist issues. They go through an inward journey for existence, a search of identity and a struggle for self-expression. Anita Desai explores “the intricate fact quoted of human experience bearing upon the central experience of psychic tensions of characters” (15).

O.P. Budholia in his book *Anita Desai: Vision and Techniques in Her Novels* (2010) observes that Desai’s vision and search for self-run parallel to each other and the protagonists fall a “prey to their inordinate desires and impulses” (250). Desai’s female protagonists fail to reconcile with their social surrounding and obligations. Their failure brings them isolation. Male counterparts in Desai’s visionary scheme appear to be weak. Desai’s characters are caught in a state of mental and emotional crisis and having psychological obsessions. Desai’s work reveals “varying mental states, psychical aberrations inner motives and existential pursuit of man” (259).

Anita Desai’s Fiction edited by Arvind M. Nawale (2011) is consisting of 20 articles, out of which five articles are about *Cry, the Peacock*. All these articles portray different perspectives of *Cry, the Peacock*. Article “An Escape from Madding World: Maya in Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock*” is written by Arvind M.

Nawale explores the conditions of Maya and reckons that Maya is deprived from overall development and is totally out of tune from her surrounding and she suffers from violence inflicted upon her by her near and dear ones. Another article explores feminine sensibility and sociological aspects in *Cry, the Peacock*.

The book *Margaret Atwood: Language, Text and System* (1983) edited by Sherrill E. Grace and Lorraine Weir is consist of nine essays covering different genres of Atwood's literary world. The essay "From Poetic to Narrative Structures: The Novels of Margaret Atwood" gives insight that narrative world of Atwood reveals in the "treatment of the static/ dynamic paradox" (17). Possession is the central theme in most of her novels and *The Edible woman* is a lyrical poem the projects layers of feminine self. Another essay "*Surfacing*: Amerindian Themes and Shamanism" by Marie, Francoise Guedon suggests that in *Surfacing*, Atwood presents fragmented western culture in contrast of aboriginal traditions. She insists that, "Narrator's return to a silent community is evidence of the failure" (110) of civilization. Americans are presented as living dead because they use machines to kill.

Barbara Hill Rigney in her book *Women writers: Margaret Atwood* (1987) states that Atwood teaches through negative example and her protagonists are not heroic. Canada and being Canadian is "a state of mind" (3) for Atwood, which she depicts as a house for freedom and artistic liberties. Her images and archetypes are derived from Canadian tradition and culture. Her male characters are not romantic in nature. Atwood is a political and moral writer. She creates a supreme fiction "which transcends religion" (134).

Another essay “The Uses of Ambiguity: Margaret and Hubert Aquin” by Philip Stratford draws a parallel between both authors as novels of both contain “the same cultivated ambiguity” (113) which stems from paranoid schizophrenia. Aquin by his ambiguity draws uncertainty, Atwood uses it as a tool for revealing characters of both authors are alienated but Atwood’s characters are able to resurface whereas Aquin’s character drowns into the sea of self-created labyrinths.

David Ward in his essay, “*Surfacing*: Separation, Transition, Incorporation” (1994) explores the idea of multiple interpretation in the novel- *Surfacing*. He observes that transiting from one level to another causes separation and questions incorporation of ideas and desires. At the heart of the novel there is a notion of the incompetency of language. Desai portrays “separation is from linguistic habit and from the social and cultural deformation that accompany it” (101).

Peter Quartermaine in his essay “Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*: (1994) Strange Familiarity” states that the novel is obsessively private in its narrator’s focus” and “authorial intent” (119). He emphasizes that linking of sanity and death is troubling and the colonial undertone is nightmarish. It is like a ghost story and full of disturbing images and memories.

Coral Ann Howells edited book *Margaret Atwood* (2006) is consisting of 12 essays which highlight Canadian context, biographical elements, historical elements, elements of humour, and dystopian visions in the novels of Margaret Atwood. In the book, Madeleine Davies in her essay “Margaret Atwood’s Female Bodies” explores writing of the female bodies. She states that Atwood dips into “gothic parody” (58) to stress on the relationship of body and mind. Coral Ann Howells in her article

“Margaret Atwood’s dystopian Vision” states that Atwood displays two sides of same coin.

Coral Ann Howells in her book *Modern Novelist: Margaret Atwood* (2006) states that “Atwood’s novels, situated at the interface between language and what we choose to call reality” (162). She emphasises that Atwood questions social myths. She explores Canada as a symbol of own space in Atwood’s fiction and relates phases of Feminist movement with Atwood’s different novel. She explores the definition of feminine, female and feminist in Atwood’s fiction.

Ellen McWilliams in his essay “Margaret Atwood’s Canadian Hunger Artist: Post-Colonial in *The Edible Women*” (2006) concentrated on “Atwood’s preoccupation with the relationship between feminist and nationalist discourse of power” (71). He observes that Marian’s loss of appetite has a direct connection with her loss of identity. He refers that Peter is often referred as hunter and Marian’s refusal to eat is a symbol of female hunger strike.

Cinda Gault in research paper “Not even a Hospital: Abortion and Identity Tension in Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*” (2007) concentrates on conflicting relationship of national and female autonomy. According to her, illegal abortion of the protagonist represents personal dilemma and “a national moral hierarchy” (18). Protagonist recollections of her abortion are about the misperception of the personal and national identity. She relates national purposes and personal identity as anti-female.

Harold Bloom edited the book entitled *Margaret Atwood* (2009). This book is consisted of eleven essays, out of which two are worth mentioning. Alice M.

Polumbo in her essay “On the Border: Margaret Atwood’s Novels” states that Atwood uses double voices in narration to expose double struggle of her characters. According to her Atwood’s characters are in the process of “learning to negotiate all the edges there are” (33). Barbara Hill Rigney in her essay “Alias Atwood: Narrative Games and Gender Politics” explores her novels as “narrative exercise” (65). She also states that her women characters establish a close relationship with each other and “Atwood’s narrative blades are sharpened and ready lest we sink her into sentiments” (65).

Ambika Bhalla in her research paper “Eco-feminism in Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*” (2012) discusses about the oppression of nature and women. Protagonist has created two selves, natural and artificial construct. Her affinity with the nature is her affinity with the female self. She termed it as “eco-feminist novel” (6) without propagation female superiority. It seems like that Atwood advocate balance and harmony. Same ideas are pointed out by Dr. Darsha Jani in her article “Proclamation of Ecofeminism” in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* in the context of the novel. She assesses role of patriarchal forces in the oppression of women along with capitalistic exploitation of nature.

Sonika Sethi in her research paper – “Self-realization through Nature: An alternative narration in Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*” (2016) discusses about Canada’s biocentrism and America’s concentricism” (12) in Atwood’s *Surfacing*, David is the symbol of male domination like America. She reveals that the wilderness is the “other” in the novel. She states that traumatic experiences of the protagonist makes her oversensitive and she feels hurt if animals hurt. Protagonist struggles for “self-realization and self-approbation” (13).

After going through all these books, essays and research articles, one thing is clear that most of the literature available on Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood concentrates either on female sensibilities portrayed by them and her themes. Most of the time researchers concentrate on feminism while analysing their fiction. All critics consider them the champion of female causes. Some of the critics also pointed out toward the abnormal psyche of her female protagonists, but not even a single research is available on depersonalization in context of the selected authors. Most of the critics concentrated on abnormality and psychosis in general, but they did not pinpoint the psychosis of these characters. Moreover, there is a wide lacuna in the available research as critics did not specifically trace the structural and chronological journey of the characters from neurosis to psychosis. This study will fill this lacuna and will pave way to study the relation of women's conditioning with their personality formation. A typical patriarchal setting dents female behaviour and their perception about themselves. These setting will be critically explored to foreground female exploitation in proceeding chapters.

Chapter 2

Ubiquitous Male Branding and Inner Goblin of Depersonalized Electra Females in Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* and Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*

The society provides a lens of common sense to its dwellers through which these dwellers try to interpret the events and happenings of the society. Most of the societies are patriarchal by nature. Male ideology and male supremacy is the common thing and is ubiquitous. Marilyn French states her book *A History of Women in the World Vol-III*:

Patriarchy was the result of a revolution, the world's first. It occurred after men had realized they had a part in procreation, knowledge that triggered their discontent. They may have wanted to own the young they fathered, in order to control their labor, but it appears their main objective was to obtain more power over women. (9)

Feminists have started a battle against this unethical control long times after; whereas male ideology by the time has taken the status of universal truth. The rights, which males get without any protest or these rights are called as Human Rights, are denied to females and the ones who ask for these rights are called feminists. Except the examples of few matriarchal families and tribes, there has never been a matriarchal state. Dominance of male culture and ideology does not revolve only around physical control. The root cause of this control is in the prevalent value system. Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* states, "Male Supremacy, like other political creeds, does not finally reside in physical strength but in the acceptance of a value

system, which is not biological” (27). This value system is endorsed and propagated through cultural events, customs, regulations, social and political laws etc. It also has its roots in the control over economy. The control of economy provides the status of superstructure to male ideology as Elizabeth Grosz states, “Classes and class relations are positivistically reduced to narrowly economic positions; the economy is considered the infrastructure which directly determines the ideological and cultural superstructure” (8). Ideology is the precondition of the production of individuals as social subjects and in the case of humanity, ideology is male centric and this ideology is ubiquitous. All objects are branded according to male centric perspective. In this male branding, women are others and for them recognition by males is centre of their existence. In case of the select novels male branding of the female branding affects the mental condition of females and works as stimulator to the inner goblins of depersonalization.

In these male centric societies, Father is a symbol of security and social authority; thus also indicates the existence of social taboos and moralities. Whereas Oedipus complex refers to males’ desire, conscious or unconscious, to replace their father as their mother's sexual partner; Electra complex refers to females’ father fixation. The term was coined by Carl Gustav Jung to refer girl’s psycho-sexual development; Freud termed it as feminine Oedipus attitude and relates it to females’ penis envy. In the formation of the self, this is a very important stage as the child develops identification with the same sex parents and magnetism for the other sex. She/he also develops the understanding of other gender and sexual desires. At the early stage of life, it is important for a child to have proper parentage. If one of the parents is not available to the child, he would try to find this image outside his

family or can also develop excessive fixation on one parent only. In case of a girl, absence of mother in her life can create Electra complex because in this case she has nobody to compete with or due to the excessive attention given by his father she may feel drawn toward her father. Electra complex also refers to the excessive aggression which arises from “her thwarted *erosimus (animus)*, which desired union with father” (Phil Goss 86). Whereas same sex energy and identification with it provides an anchor to personality formation. It is one sort of marker that guides the physical and psychological development as a social subject; contra-sexual identification refers other and lack. This also develops positively in a yoked anima-animus craving or desires. In the case of positive development, this desire creates a perfect unison between opposite sexes, but in case of dysfunction, it interjects representations with the adored parent. Lacan in his notion of the Symbolic Order and the law of the Father divides this psycho-physical development into three orders: Imaginary Order- refers to fantasies that are involved in mirror phase, Symbolic Order- refers to societal conventions, language and other signs by which human express their emotions and ideas; the Real Order refers to real life experiences beyond the language and expression. Father fixation is developed during the symbolic order, as father represents the imposition of the incest taboo. It leads them to gender consistency as they try to present themselves as girl or boy in the social contexts; they accept the societal norms and experience world through these identifications. For positive development of a child, it is important to have both parents with the child. In the novel *Cry, the Peacock* and *Surfacing*, Protagonists have dysfunctional families and absence of mother in the life of Maya and unnamed Protagonist in *Surfacing* sets a different path of psycho-social development and father fixation for them. They try to complete their psychodynamic development by

fixing their anchor in their partner- either in husbands or in boyfriends; contrary to their expectations, they are introduced into ubiquitous male branding which creates a psychological tension for these characters. Both female protagonists are living in patriarchal society and male gaze is one of the determinant factors that affect the way these female observe themselves. They are branded as sane or insane, normal or abnormal, acceptable or unacceptable as per male standards. Thus males are the most important entity in their life not only in terms of economy and social reasons, but also for psychological satiation. Guided by psycho-social desires these protagonists try to have perfect male in their love as per the model of their fathers. It sets them as Electra females and their intrusive fixation with males and males' detachment to their desires and feelings invokes the internal goblin of depersonalization.

Cry, the Peacock is story of Maya, whose sense of reality is always clouded by her childhood traumas and determines her present. Her childhood memories cast an ill-omen spell on her life and she is obsessively affixed to a childhood prophecy which blurs her vision and darkens her judgement at crucial moments of her life. Narrative of the novel opens up in after marriage stage of Maya. She is living an insignificant lonely life in her in-law's house. She is not involved in most of the important decisions that are taken. She is inauthentic as she is not valued by her husband and her in laws. Maya's husband, Gautama, finds her childish and too emotional. Her in-laws have ambivalent attitudes towards her. They can consider her child, but deprived of the attention that she as a child craves for. Maya's mother-in-law goes to her clinic and for her; Maya is a non-existent and an "outsider" (Desai, *Cry* 44). Same is the attitude of Gautama's siblings, they left her "out of it with

naturalness” and she “had to accept for they knew I would not understand a matter so involved” (45). Matters which are discussed with Maya are related to “babies’ meals, shopping, and marriages” (45). Interestingly, all these elements are the cause of the anxiety that she has been facing. She is a childless and unhappily married woman for whom materialistic goods does not matter much. For her in laws, she is their baby, “their indulgence, not to be taken seriously” (45). She is alienated in this strange world of logics and mundanely. Her world is different from their world. The world “she came from was less than that it was a luxury A crime to suffer” (45). These contextual cues makes her dejected. She feels that she does not belong to the world she lives in. She desires to run away because she is considered inferior, an object to play with at free times. At the time of serious discussions, she needs to be kept out and this triggers inferiority complex in her. Her personal existence lacks the essence that she desires for. Her attempts to have a smooth relationship with her in laws never go beyond the small trips for shopping. Russell Meares states:

Memories of a state in which one’s feeling of personal existence are overthrown are registered implicitly as a stunted narrative, a ‘script’, which tells the individual he or she is bad inferior, useless, and so on. This system is triggered by contextual cues. It repeatedly enters and disturbs the conversations and relationships of ordinary life, determining conversations in which, in a subtle and particularly way, the intimate is excluded. (3)

In Maya’s case, these mundane tricks are performed every day. The conversations that she involves are insignificant in the life of her in-laws. She is also devoid from

the intimacy of her husband and it deepens her alienation. Maya yearns for Gautama's love and he has no time for his demented wife. Seema Jena states, "Her (Maya) neurosis becomes acute due to the lack of communication between her husband and herself" (22).

Maya is not the centre of anybody's life in her in laws home; even she is not the centre of her own life. She is living an inauthentic life. This makes her think about her father and craves for the care that he offers her. It makes her life in the past where she can take shelter in her father's soothing phrases like "it will all be well, it will all be well soon" (Desai, *Cry* 48); "It's best to accept" (48) etc. Her father asks her to abandon Western philosophy and in this transcendental stage, she forgets her surroundings. This always kept her nerves in control. Maya's frequent visits at her father's home are her attempts to save herself from depersonalization. Her father's advices always help her grow calmer and more aware about the other world than the closed one. She loves the object presented by her father and desires for the protection he provides her. She loves ghazals which her father made her listen. According to Gautama, Maya's husband, these couplets are "absurdly primitive, native and pointless" (87) and as per him these "stagnant drugs of a sentimentalism available only to the decadent" (87). He never realises that these are the medicines that keep Maya's inner demons silent. Maya has two important males in her life her father and her husband who's branding and labelling matter a lot for her. Her father always treats her like a princess and feeds her social and psychological needs. She is a motherless child; there is a gulf between detached Gautama and passionate Maya. Lack of mother in her life also indicates the lack of proper female image during her childhood. Thus single parenting is the cause of her

weak defence against the patriarchal world. This has affected her personality formation. She never has two anchors of anima and animus as referred by Jung that can give her a stable understanding of the world. She has father fixation, her father is the only anchor available to her. Maya is obsessed with protected world of her father. As Jung states, “The father represents the dynamism of the archetype, for the archetype consist of both form and energy” (39). For Maya, her father is both form and energy of his life. Her life revolves around him. According to Gautama she married him because she has “a very obvious father obsession” and that’s why she marries to a much older than herself. It is a complex that she feels difficult to deal with. For her this father image “gives rise to statements, opinions, etc.” (Jung 110). Maya always feel nostalgic and craves for her earlier existence. Dalvir Singh Gahlawat states:

Nostalgia in her novels (Anita Desai) may be interpreted in terms of the unconscious obsessions and fixation that her heroines carry with them. These obsession and fixation keep vitiating their adult existence and ultimately becomes the feeders of their illusions. Their neurosis originates from the presence of the father or the mother. (76)

Maya has father image in her mind and she carries this image in her adult life. The rift between her husband and her father makes her loneliness more deep. Whereas for her father metaphysical existence is more important, for her husband rationality is more important. This father-husband ideological clash makes her a dweller of in-between world and her anxiety soars high. She is unable to relate herself any one of them. Her choices are belittled by her husband and Gautama’s sarcasm annoys Maya. These choices are important for Maya, because for her, her father is a hero-

an ideal. She respects her father and Gautama ridicules his father that annoys Maya unconsciously. She wants to have same companionship in her husband as she has with her father by also getting physical love. Her expectations from her husband were more than what she has from her father. She wants to assimilate her two distant worlds into one, but her dream is denounced by her husband. His cold logical attitudes affect her sensitive mind. Peder Jothen discusses the process of self-formation in these words:

In order to be a self, one must make choices both about what to relate and how to relate; indeed, one can never escape the demands of choosing how to live. This web of relations demands that a self acts, wills and consciously understand itself as ethical creature. (56)

On the face of the rejection of Maya's choices she starts feeling pangs of alienation. She feels disembodied as her choices are considered inferior and she has no other choice. In the absence of strong mother relationship and due to the cold attitude of her mother-in-law she has no female ideal. She has only male ideology and she finds this ideology in direct contrast to her, specially the ideology of her husband.

Away from her father's caring world- which always provides her socio-psychological comforts, she feels trapped in the world of her husband's cold logic. She is alienated physically, mentally, psychological and ideologically. This alienation and inauthentic existence opens up the valve of other world for her and triggers her depersonalisation. Unable to reject her husband's strong logics, due to her over dependence on him she develops the tendency to escape from the harsh existence. Once she takes this escape route, she taps in the world of her childhood permanently. From this point her depersonalisation syndrome becomes bad to worse.

She never recovers from her trauma. She lives with her shadows only. The alienation proves fatal for her and drags her toward de-personal and unreal world. Neeru Chakraverty States, “She (Maya) is a study in mental fragmentation and psychic disintegration. The novel explores the various conscious and unconscious dimensions her emotional alienation within, the framework of the conflicting philosophers of attachment and detachment” (36). Maya is mortally scared from her alienation consciously as well as subconsciously and her present existence provides her no solace and aggravates her disintegration of reality principle. In contrast to this, before marriage her world was full with friends. She has unconditional caring of her father, who never forces her to accept his ideology, but just present his explanation.

Maya is frustrated because of insatiate libidinal instincts. There are many references in the novel that suggest that Maya is sexually and physically deprived. Physical intimacy is very natural to her and she craves to satisfy these desires. In her husband she tries to have intermingled model of her father and husband; that why she has married to man of her father’ age. Her husband fails on both grounds; he neither provides her unconditional love like her father nor satisfies her physical needs. This failure on physical and psychological level refers an archetypal failure for Maya. She hits meaninglessness. Here it is important to notice even name of Maya and Gautama are symbolical. Maya as her name symbolises illusions and fantasies, but the problem is these illusions and fantasies are too real for her. Her illusions and fears are kept in bay because of her father’s unconditional nurturing and after marriage, she tries to find same image in her husband. B.L. Tripathi states, “Gautama’s observation could be seen as the usual complacent and self-

aggrandizing view men take of themselves. In fact his observations however precise and witty they may sound, are intended to belittle and undermine Maya” (21). Many critics consider Gautama as a victim of Maya’s irrational desires, but they fail to find, how Gautama drags her towards neurosis of depersonalisation. This dragging refers to his inner jealousy of Gautama from Maya’s youth and vigour. He is unable to provide her the promises of youth and body and to save himself from embarrassment he takes resorts in philosophising. He trivialises Maya’s physical and emotional needs to justify his superiority. It is his male ego that makes him brand Maya as irrational and inferior. He ignores her demands as he is unable provide for these desires. Many critics blame Maya and consider Gautama as a victim, but Gautama is responsible for her plight as he married a very young passionate girl and rather than giving her proper care he is baffles her with her cold philosophical Gita based sermons. Sudhakar T. Sali states, “Maya is unable to achieve the interpersonal fusion-the union of body and mind-with her husband” (II).

Her alienated existence also heightens her sensibilities and she starts feeling affinity with natural objects. She has such a deep empathy with these objects that she feels oneness with them. Her husband has a practical approach and he fails to understand her concerns. Maya feels he is bored from his life. Gautama is a practical man and man of world. He is concerned with his life only and believes in rational life. Logic is a supreme authority for him and his wife who is drive by her emotions is childish for him. Maya rebuffs, “You didn’t want to weep when you saw that pregnant women? You were just-bored” (Desai, *Cry* 58). Maya believes in the sentimental aspect of life; for her others grief and pain matters. Gautama is objective in his approach. In his defence, Gautama reasons out by casting inferior opinion on

her branch of thinking. He compares her indiscipline with his “sense of practical” (58) and states “if a man were to react to the sight of pregnancy by bursting into tears, Maya, no court of law would consider him sane or sober” (58). For him facts are made to be accepted and Maya’s reaction to this reasoning is like as she is “preparing to plunge off a cliff” (59). Dr. T. Sasikanth Reddy states, “Highly sensitive and poetic in temperament, Maya wishes to have nothing in her married life except that Gautama should be responsive enough to her sensitive and sentimental longing for him” (25). Her sensitivity becomes more fatal because her husband ignores her needs and she remains in the trap of her childhood fantasies. Both of them are having different approach. Whereas Maya painfully gets involved and tries to tell Gautama that her life is separate. Gautama tries to Judge her reactions and as per his standards. He tries to mould her behaviour which is fatal for their relationship as Marcus West states:

The sensitivity to sameness and difference does not necessarily mean that the individual always act crudely so as to achieve sameness and avoid difference, it is just that this will play an important part in processing their experience. The individual will “naturally” be related to the constantly. Changing stream of reality and will feel is some way dull and lifeless if they become defended against or dissociated from that stream. (15)

Gautama tries to bring her on the same level of thinking by his constant reasoning, this insensitive act of Gautama draw him more aloof from Maya. Their relationship gets dull and lifeless. Maya has heightened sensitivity then Gautama. Maya give food to bear as she feels “the bear doesn’t get much out of his earning” (Desai, *Cry*

77). Dancers' plight makes her sad too but for her husband "it is sheer pusillanimity that makes them take up this common form of half way prostitution" (78). The difference in their approach is due to different in childhood conditioning and age. N. Rajeshwar confirms the same by stating, "Maya expects some emotional and physical satisfaction in married life but both of them are denied to her one by Gautama's cold intellectuality and the other by his age" (241). In the novel there are many references which indicate that Maya craves for physical intimacy and in response she gets cold logic. Her emotions are denied on the basis of logic, thus Maya defies logic as her counterattack on Gautama. Maya tries to escape. In her escape spree she lands herself in a dark alley. She takes shelter in her protected childhood in which she lives "as a toy princess in a toy world. But it was a pretty one" (Desai, *Cry* 78). Her life was like a fairy tale untied a nightmare happens to her. To escape from that nightmare she wants to live in her toy world. Gautama does not like this fantasy world. He calls her a neurotic and blames her father for spoiling her. Maya loves "luxuries of the fairy falls" (98) and cherishes it as her happiest times. In contrast to this Gautama and his family is "egoist" who work for "fame, name, money" (99).

Maya is on the verge of the destructive form of depersonalisation and she can be saved by companionship and love. Maya craves for love and friendship she thinks about the call of peacocks who shrieks with pain "pea, pea" means "lover, lover. Mio-mio- I die, I die" (Desai, *Cry* 82); these two things constitute the basics of her neurosis- craving for love and fear of death. She feels oneness with peacock and its cries. She refers love making of peacock that fights before mating as "living, they are aware of death. Dying, they are in love with life. Lover, lover, you will hear

them Cry I the forest. When the rain-clouds come. Lover, I die” (83). Maya hears these cries and echoes it in her head she suffers from “the mortal agony of their cry for lover and for death” (83). Dejected from her husband she thinks of meeting her friends but all her friends-Leila and Pom has troubled life and she wants to run away from troubled. Her brother also does not resemble to her in thoughts. According to him, she lives her life to seek pleasure. He himself denounces prosperous life and works in a canning factory. She wants her life to be full of colours and happiness as her book shelf is “coloured and gay” (Desai, *Cry* 120) his husband lives his life with serious attitude; his books are heavily marked in contrast to this Maya’s book shelf consist of multi coloured books. She has nobody to communicate shares her nightmares and fears. She lacks companionship and has nobody to communicate. This draws her inwards and she starts talking only to herself. She starts thinking about the adequacy and inadequacy of her behaviour.

In the background of all this turmoil is a childhood trauma- a fear neurosis. This was a latent fear but this is triggered again by the reference of horoscope by her brother- Arjuna. She starts asking people do they believe in fate. Astrologer lives within her and enters in her life with “soundless feet” (Desai, *Cry* 84). She craves to be heard and understood. The care and empathy of her father, but her husband fails to do so. She feels alienated from her body and questions her own identity and destiny. Howard Steele points out in his article:

For adults with DID (Dissociative identity disorder), they have often experienced from earliest childhood overwhelming evidence of an obstacle to their pursuit of the primary attachment goal, i.e., the wish to be heard, seen, held and understood. Quickly they would have

learned that to expect such understanding was radically mistaken.

(39)

Like a typical DID patients, she has a prophecy as a background of all her actions. She has dissociative identity and its effect was multiplied by depersonalisation. She seeks love and warmth from Gautama, her husband, but realizes “there was no bond, no love hardly any love” (Desai, *Cry* 93) between her and Gautama. She tries to build intimacy with her husband, but instead of understanding Gautama gives her lecture of Bhagwad Gita. In her dissatisfaction, Maya states “you know nothing of me- and of how I can love. How I want to love. How it is important to me” (96). For Gautama love is a mere attachment and his lecture on rationality and detachment makes Maya shriek “you think me mad?” (98). Due to her present dissatisfaction her childhood nightmares start surfacing. She feels like sitting in a “a tomb” (110). She weeps as she feels the pain of peacocks. “I understand their call; I wept for them, and wept for myself, knowing their words to be mine” (84). This oneness with the peacock which results into tears indicates her depersonalisation.

She starts becoming a victim of dreadful phobia of death. She remembers albino’s dark chamber, his opaque eyes, bleached hand. In her fears, she is “torn between two worlds-the receding one of grace, the approaching one of madness” (Desai, *Cry* 148). She is not able to find out any escape from this haunting home of her psyche. She is on the borderline of madness and her dread pushes her into the world of insanity. She is pushed inwardly; her nightmares and phobias become alive. Her internal dread is more dangerous than external terror. It is like a goblin which is intrinsic and lives on her fears. It feeds her fears and makes her insecure and neurotic. Marjorie Grene defines dread as:

Dread is a more ambiguous (then terror), even though a profounder, uneasiness, whose object is not this or that within our world but in some sense the very limits of that world itself. It is dread before emptiness-before annihilation-before nothing. (52)

Maya faces this is existentialist dread. This is the agony she faces in her utter helplessness. It limits her world view and she encounters emptiness and nothingness. Previously, she has the magic of her father's gentle words to soothe her and console but in the absence of this remedy, she turns profoundly towards dread. She feels like stabbing her husband to escape from eerie nothingness that surrounds her.

Her fear neurosis drags her into a stage where she feels her reality principle is compromised beyond limit. Her perception about the world starts getting blurred and she is unable to differentiate between real and unreal. She herself questions the credibility of her narrative by warning the readers:

A warning: Do not take too seriously what I write now, for I cannot quite recall whether these conversations, these episodes that I relate, ever actually took place, or merely occurred to me when I sat there, alone, insane with dread. I was ill, ill. (Desai, *Cry* 149)

Her delusion overshadows her life and reality. She feels everything is unreal and controlled by "a force existing in another sphere" (153). She starts feeling inauthentic and fears that even her body is also controlled by some external force. O.P. Budholia states, "She (Maya) as a patient of fear-psychosis stands for the pervading feeling of isolation, alienation and the strained relations between husband and wife. Apparently, the inner pangs and the turmoil of Maya remain undiagnosed

because of her sensitive and imaginative mind” (23). She feels so scared that even that she feels unable to move her body away from heat stocks. She knows that her body exists, but not able to command it. She feels her body and her mind are two separate entities. It is like an attack of paralysis, whereas patient of paralysis has physical inability; Maya feels mental inability. There is a mental block; she disowns her body and its action. She desires for immediate solution which are not available to her. `She questions. “How could I remove it? How could I dare? I was afraid.” (Desai, *Cry* 153). This echoes her cognitive failure and rule of delusions on her cognition. Lisa Bortolotti states:

According to neuropsychological accounts, delusions are the result of a cognitive failure or a combination of cognitive failures. Such failures can be due to an abnormal perceptual experience, an abnormal experience accompanied by a milder dysfunction such as reasoning biases or a breakdown of certain aspects of perception and cognition including a deficit in hypothesis evaluation. (28)

In case of Maya she loses the sense of real and unreal, truth and falsity. Her mind starts wavering like an uncontrolled wind and she feels she cannot express herself. She traps into acute silences. And her detachment from her body is complete. She contemplates, “I saw my body detach itself from it (*from soul, my emphasis*) and float away, to rest upon the dim mirror where I could gaze upon it from a cool distance” (Desai, *Cry* 90). This distance mortifies her and her reclusion from other people drifts her away from the real world. Further she ventures into reclusion, further she drifts from reality. She starts believing that there is a mark on her head which must be seen by the “opaque eye of albino” (91). In mirror she feels there is

“a blemish in her unscarred skin” (91). She starts getting the strokes of insanity and distance herself from rationality and wisdom. She states, “Yes, I am going insane. I am moving further and further from all wisdom, all calm and I shall soon be mad, if I am not that already” (92). Rather than taking responsibilities of her actions, she believes in fate and its fatality. She ponders upon the meaning of her name- Maya, which means illusion. She desires for monsoon-rain like a peacock rain symbolizes her craving for companionship. She is a “peacock searching for mates, peacock tearing themselves to bleeding shred in the act of love, peacock screaming with agony at the death of love” (146). She develops schizoid tendency. This tendency is described as “loss of contact with other people is related on the intra-psyche level to loss of contact with oneself (inner dialogue) and then with the outside world (external dialogue)” (Salmon Resnik 197)”. Maya feels incapable to convey her feeling to her family and she is not able to understand her own anxiety. She loses sense of worldly notions. She describes, “thoughts come, incidents occur, then they are scattered, and disappear. Past, present, future. Truth and untruth. They shuttle back and forth, a shifting chroscuro of light and shade; of blood and ashes” (Desai, *Cry* 149). Maya has blurred boundaries of all binaries. She fears from silences, loneliness. She longs for the company. She scares to enter into silent darkened room. Astrologer is the part of her sub consciousness. She doubts on the reality quotient of the events that surrounds her. Her dread is very powerful. Extreme silences evaded her world. She thinks only about the agents of destruction. She wants to set herself free “from fate, from death, and dreariness and unwanted dreams” (158). She is not able to fathom her delusions and come out of it. Alistair Munro explain disillusioned characters by stating “there is no effective insight and because a delusion is held with extraordinary conviction, any attempt at contradiction is met with anger and

disdain, the later reflecting some degree of grandiosely is many cases” (50-51). Maya also hates other people’s perception. From annoyance she enters into denial moods. She grows indifferent to rational perception and cultivates sentimentality. Maya cries while watching caged animal and it irks her when she observes that for her husband it is just a case. It irks her so much that she feels like murdering him. At the end, Gautama symbolically moves into her perception- coming between her and the worshipped moon. She feels his figure (rational perception) is ugly and crooked that transgressed its sorrow chastity. She screams in fury and push him from the roof. For her Gautama was a sorry figure. He was poor because he is “not to be able to notice the odour of times, not to hear the melancholy voice singing, somewhere behind the plantains, not to have time to count the stars as they come out one by one” (171). According To her he was intense but never lived, so his death does not matter. His death is not going to create any void as he never lived any life, according to Maya. Neeru Chakraverty states, “Maya’s overwhelming sense of fear becomes the catalyst for her growing needs of assertion in forcing her to re-examine her relationship with her physical and emotional world” (45). Death of Gautama is her attempt to escape from the prediction done by Albino. Her unconscious dread is attached to the death of Gautam. She is unable to bear it longer, removes the object that was the reason of her neurosis. It is the act of typical depersonalization patient as she was not able to control her body and mind and she seeks freedom by controlling the external object of her dread.

Her life is full of negative emotions. She fears from her surroundings. Her psychological world is like a hells filled with “torture, guilt, dread imprisonment these were four walls of my private hell, one that no one could survive in long death

was certain” (86). She has this death wish which she feels is the only possible escape for her. She tries to find solace in Gautama’s line but their relationship has a void. As she states, “The thing we have unsaid would fill great volumes. What we do say, only the first few pages of introduction” (90). She feels that she is an object. She objectifies herself to feels subjective she craves for companionship, warmth and love. She feels deprived of all. Like a peacock she cries.

Father !brother! Husband !who is my saviour? I am in need of one. I am dying and I am in love with living. I am in love and I am dying- had let me sleep, forget, rest. But no, I’ll never sleep again. There is no rest anymore-only death and waiting. (Desai, *Cry* 84)

She feels she is an object that needs to be saved and to do that she needs to be loved. In absence to these external factors, she shrinks into the dark lone of her fears she feels like sitting in “a tomb” (Desai, *Cry* 110) and has nothing to do. She continuously thinks about astrologer and fierce headache. She self objectifies herself. She loses the control of agency and from being a subject she turns into an object. She feels she is no more in control of her own actions. She carries this secret which weighs like tons on her. She objectifies herself to the extent that she believes that meaning of her existence can be derived only form external factors and others. In absence of the acceptance of others, she considers herself non-existent. She is highly aware of others’ pain and her mental agony that it creates a hyper-reality for her. The immediate real form seems like dead to her and she grows distant and dreadfully aware about the pains of peacock. John M. Rector states:

.... self-objectification often leads to heightened body awareness and compulsive body monitoring which in turn, increases feelings of shame, inadequacy, and anxiety; at the same time, such neurotic preoccupation reduces one's overall awareness of an sensitivity to positive emotions (18)

Maya also feels inadequacy, lack of substance and preoccupied with her own thoughts. It makes her anxious and feeds her neurosis. In absence of positive emotions she constantly thinks of death. Maya is modern but grown up reading fairy tales. She is deep down romantics and disillusioned by the harsh reality. She is a mid-dweller between two worlds. Maya is morbidly obsessed with death. Death of the Toto, her dog leaves her alienated. The novel opens on an April day with the death of Maya's pet Toto. It indicates the important event in Maya's life and makes her aware about the mortal situation of her, where she is trapped for eternity and has no companion. She scares from mirror. She constantly drifts around the topic of one's soul and its resurrection. Apocalyptic images like fire, flood or rising lizard entices her. All order is gone away from her life. She is de-familiarised from her surroundings and surrounded by disorder and death neurosis. .She feels world is a gigantic bubble and she is entrapped into that. In this condition, a feeling of meaninglessness appears and takes central stage of her life. Novel demonstrates the inner self of its characters in the novel past and present overlaps and intermingles and highlights the anguish, dread, phobias and despair of the protagonist. The death is a constant psychological metaphor used in novel used as a psychological marker and the title Cry and the peacock symbolically refers to Maya and her fixation to death. Kajali Sharma states, "The peacock is supposed to be the only animal who

knows about its death beforehand. It is used as the symbol of Maya who also knows about her impending death beforehand” (31). Maya’s mind is pre-occupied with sinister images of lizards, snakes, albinos, death etc. her last action to push Gautama of the roof is her attempt to save her sensuous world she is also childless.

Maya’s receding contact with the world and alienated existence push her towards depersonalization. In simple terms, when unfulfilled desires accumulate unbearably, the cover of normalcy is broken and the subconscious takes charge of the conscious. Utterance, deeds and behaviour of this state are a reflection of the unrealized craving. Maya thinks that she can be cured if she removes Gautama from her life as she fears for his death. Her murder accelerates her disorder as she has no body to fall upon. She killed a father figure and husband at once. She erupts into laughter and talks alone. Her disorder is complete as she become insane. Her strokes of insanity are considered as the stroke of shock that Maya suffers from due to the death of her husband. Her in-laws fail to recognise the symptoms of depersonalization. Like typical families of depersonalization affected families they believe she is normal and cannot commit the sin like killing her husband, so even after this big outburst and her open acceptance of the crime, Gautama’s family does not believe on her. They never tries to send her to doctor, rather than they are worried about their social status. Their inaction ends up with the suicide of Maya. Nowhere to go, lack of companionship, no labelling, absence of male anchor she dies an alienated death.

Surfacing by Margaret Atwood is not exactly pinpointed geographically but as per setting of the novel, it is somewhere on the border of Ontario and Quebec. The novel presents Nameless Protagonist, who comes to this colonialism affected

border area in search of her missing father. Author never offers her name as she wants to present her a character without self and credibility. The protagonist has a troubled childhood which become a root cause of her journey into the wild colonial affected world and bewildered and distorted psychic realities. As a child, narrator was a shy child who does not like to participate in birthday party games. Due to her inability to respond to children, she was considered as a freak and most of the tricks were played upon her. In school she was target of tricks and minor tortures of fellow students. Sometimes they tied her with skipping rope and forget to untie her on purpose. She has limited interpersonal skills and thus she is projected socially retarded and thus considered as mentally retarded. This act shows the attitude of society in general towards the person who suffers from depersonalization. Society labels them various names thus hinders the recovery process. Narrator also scared from being labelled as mentally retarded person and suppresses her inner demons.

Novel is narrated by first person incredible narrator and her voice is the only voice available to follow for the readers. It also makes readers to venture into labyrinth of protagonist's mind and her deceptive narration. Readers feel as baffled as the narrator, because all events flows like fluid have no trace of beginning or end. Realities are reduced to the perspectives and perspectives are reduced to prejudices. Her accounts of the events and people are deceptive so does her mind. The novel *Surfacing* starts on a nostalgic note, as the narrator thinks about her family. She has troubled relationship with her friends and family and has haunting memories of the past. These memories keep on surfacing at the moment of anxiety and stress and determine her present. Strangely, she is never able to remind her past in a chronicle state; her past in her mind moves like shuttle cock, where events and people appears

in various forms and their destinies vary with every account. She thinks in indefinite terms and phrases that make it difficult for her and the readers to determine what happen to her and her family. For example, in her first account of her brother, she states that her brother died due to drowning before her birth, but she remembers this incident clearly. In the next account she states that her brother was saved by her mother from drowning. This makes the readers suspect her account. According to her, her brother has done “nothing still he grew up on real to her” (Atwood, *Surfacing* 67). The reality principle has been fading in her life. She constantly makes statement about her family which contradicts each other.

Narrator has father fixation like Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*. Her quest for her father is also symbolic of quest for male; this makes her an Electra Woman. She thinks about her father in indefinite terms “wherever he is now, dead or alive and nobody knows” (5). These indefinite accounts are also in equilibrium to her perspectives about male’s role in her life. She always has symbolical relationship which never grew up to maturity. It shows that she never rejects male branding but tries to escape from it by her silences. She comes on this border area to find her father. Like border area, she has multiple interpretation of her father’s existence which is paradoxical and indefinite. She believes that in childhood she was a princess. She hates her father for getting vanished by leaving no trace. Her father, as per her accounts, finds people irrational as she finds too. He stayed on this island to get freedom from interference and never liked to live in groups. She also desires for the same, she wants to be like her father. She has love-hate relationship with her father. David comments that Narrator is purist and either she hates men or wants to be a man. It is a very relevant comment to categorise her Electra complex and also

expresses the state of the mind of the narrator. She hates her father because she wants to make herself complete and at the same time she hates this idea because as a female this will be socially unacceptable. She never accepts the death of her father. Every time she thinks about her father, she creates a different discourse that defies as well as rejects the previous account. Even when everyone is convinced that her father is dead, she believes her father is still alive and can hear their conversations. Narrator believes her father was a talisman. This magic like quality refers the psychological existence of her father, who without actually appearing at the surface always appears in the background. Narrator attempts to follow the paintings drawn by her father. It expresses her desire to follow the footsteps of her father. She does not have anything substantial of her mother, on whom she can fasten herself, she laments on this fact and she wants to find traces left by her mother as like her father to become complete. Philip Stratford in his essay states

It (*Surfacing*) uses a search motif as frame; in this case another nameless first-person narrator seeks to unravel a mystery, that of her father's disappearance from an island in a lake in Northern Quebec ... But the description of the search is simply a narrative bait – what the heroine is really exploring and discovering is herself. (115)

Narrator's search for her father is actually an emblem to present her as socially acceptable. In her father's world, she is not a freak. Her relationship with her father does not have the complication that she faces in her other relationships. This fact is also justified by the nostalgic tone that lingers in her narrations where she compares everything with "there used to be" It seems like that the old world and childhood never dies for her. She does not accept the obvious fact that her father is dead

because he is alive in her. Acceptance of this loss can be havoc for her as she would have lost the only stable male relationship of her life.

Apart from her troubled family, narrator ponders upon her failed marriage and troubled relationship with live-in boyfriend Joe. She believes marriage means woman's responsibility to please man and this makes them dependable upon them. Protagonist is divorced as per account of her but she still wears the ring given by her previous husband. She shows this ring to Paul, so that he gives her respect. She plays with this ring most of the play; sometimes she wears and sometimes she removes it. This constantly shows her state of mind in the given moment. For her rings is no more than an emblem of social validation. It is a piece of decoration like a crucifix. She does not believe in it, but wears it for social validation. Elizabeth Grosz in the preface to *Sexual Subversions* states:

Bodies are not the brute effect of a pre-given nature, but are historically specific effects of forms of social and institutional production and inscription. Just as the history of production of knowledge is possible, so, too, is a history of the production of bodies. Whatever identity the body has, this is the result of a play of forces unifying and codifying the different organs, processes and functions which comprise it. (x)

Wearing the ring is the mark of protagonists' identity, a stamp of being a valid feminine subject. Wearing social artefacts appears to her as "artificial limb" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 49). She carries the burden of this limb; her body discards this limb. She feels that the part that holds this ring is not her; she feels the otherness of the ring and of her own body which holds it and flashes it like a social card of

acceptance. Her mind vehemently rejects its value and meaning. This divorce and ring discloses her mental block and her self-objectification. Protagonist' parents disapprove her divorce. According to her..

I don't think they even understood the marriage, which wasn't surprising since I didn't understand it myself, what upset them was the way I did it, so suddenly and then running off and leaving my husband and my child. (Atwood, *Surfacing* 25)

She never comes out of the shock of her divorce and the divorce determines her future relationship too. This marriage was never a perfect union, but a social act, where a child is imposed upon a woman. She refers her child as her husband's child. She states her feelings:

He imposed it (child) on me, all the time it was growing in me I felt like an incubator. He measured everything he would let me eat, he was feeding it on me, he wanted a replica of himself; after it was born I was no more use. (30)

In case of the protagonist she feels like an object. Child in her womb is the one that constitute herself for her husband thus she turns into an object for husband to achieve a child from her. However this is her one of the perceptions. This is protagonist's belief that she will be used by male for this purpose. She doesn't feel any connection with her child and for her it is just an imposed burden. Robert A. Caper states:

Identification in the paranoid-schizoid position is a product of omnipotent unconscious phantasies of concretely incorporating the

object into one's body in a physical sense, which gives rise to a confusion between self and object. (101)

Having a child is a big thing for a woman, as this literary grows on her body and mind. Narrator feels this identification with the child and the process of having a child. She feels like a vessel where this child was planted by her husband to fulfil his own desires. She has nothing to do with it. In her a few flashbacks, she thinks about her discussion with her husband where they Dr. Johnson as manic-depressive, Burns as alcoholic, Goldsmith as a pauper, she likes them more after knowing that because they "weren't paragons anymore" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 35). This indicates her point of view about male. They are not paragon, but socially they are depicted as one. She never comes out of the shock of her divorce as she states that "a divorce is like an amputation, you survive but there's less of you" (39). She is an amputated woman; she survives the failed marriage, but never become a complete woman again. Some part of her dies in the marriage and some part die with its epic failure. This failure is her yardstick to compare all relationships and their utilities.

Her troubled marriage also affects her present live-in affair. Narrator is not sure that does she love Joe or not. This relationship for her is no more than a symbol of social authenticity. She states, "... the boyfriend I'd proved my normality by obtaining; I wore his ring, too big for any of my fingers, around my neck on a chain, like a crucifix or a military decoration" (49). She obtains boyfriend just to prove the society that she is normal. He is an emblem of social acceptance. She tries to convince herself and justifies her decision to live with Joe by giving various reasons and excuses. She tries to rationale by summing up and dividing him into various categories, "...he's good in bed, better than the one before; he's moody but he's not

much bother, we split the rent and he doesn't talk much, that's an advantage" (39). The way she was treated in her marriage, same she does in this relationship. Rather than evaluating her relationship on real account, she measures it as per comforts and usage. She objectifies her relationship to convince herself about the utility of having an affair with Joe. She decided to live with him like she is buying a fish. She compares him with her imaginary concept of husband and sums up that he does not make her sad. This makes her hollow from inside and immune to relationship. Her relationship with Joe also starts moving towards absurdity. They are used to of each other and this irks the narrator. She contemplates, "when you can't tell the difference between your own pleasure and your pain then you're an addict" (84). Joe proposed her for marriage. Protagonist wants to know why as they are already living together and a certificate will not make any difference. At time when Joe is pushing her to marry him she was calculating how much getaway money she has and how soon she gets a new place. She states –

Prove your love, they say. You really want to marry me, let me fuck you instead. You really want to Fuck, let me marry you instead. As long as there's a victory, some flag I can wave, parade I can have in my head. (87)

Narrator tries to evade the question by telling Joe that she is already married and has a kid. She recalls her last marriage and how she feels pathetic after the marriage same feeling she is going to get after this marriage. This is some sort of recalling and free play of same action. Joe and narrator decide that once they will back to the city, they will split. According to her 'He didn't love me, it was an idea of himself he loved and he wanted someone to join him, anyone would do, I didn't matter so I

didn't have to care" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 111). She feels that she is needed in Joe's life because Joe wants to extend himself by shrinking her into less human being. She does not want to go into the same sorry state. For the protagonist marriage is just signing a name and then growing up only in expectations; she states, "I still don't see why signing a name should make any difference but he began to expect things, he wanted to be pleased" (36).

In every account of the protagonist there is a nostalgic undertone that suppresses other qualities of her narration. She finds everything unreal, repetitive and she has a feeling of déjà vu. As she states "I can't believe I'm on this road again" (3); either three of them are in the wrong place or I am" (4). She does not believe on her own. She does not know her exact age. She does not refer her own name. She feels she is going senile. She panics on this account as she does not have solid identity. Peter. H. Ditto states

Individual motivate to arrive at a particular judgement conclusion engage in a biased memory search to access hypothesis, inference rules, and instances from past behaviour that are most likely to support their desired conclusion. (30)

In case of the narrator, she does not want to rely on her memories as these memories are preference consistent and thus the validity of information that these memories supply is dubious. It is a biased set of cognitive operation the she uses to pursue her goal to deceive herself and the world at the same time. In the lack of evidence, her lies are never questioned and validated as semi-truthful by others. She suspects the truth about herself and others. She feels she is "seeing poorly and translating badly" (76). She questions her own perception and memories. She states:

I have to be more careful about my memories. I have to be sure they're my own and not the memories of other people telling me what I felt, how I acted what I said; if the events are wrong the feeling I remember about them will be wrong too, I'll start inventing them and there will be no way of correcting it. (70)

She feels she is trapped on the island. She senses watching eyes, lurking presence and unpredictability. She feels her father can attack them at any time. She conceals her fears by keeping herself busy. She dreads that her fears as a smell. She reminds about a childhood anecdote when her mother scared a bear bare-handily. Narrator also suffers from Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome and having a dual personality – one that is visible to others and second that communicates to her only. This shadow personality is latent and unconscious. Barbara Hill Rigney in her book *Women Writers: Margaret Atwood* states:

They [Margaret Atwood's narrators] are not totally reliable narrators; they may lie to the readers as they sometimes lie to themselves or some instances, they are even a bit mad. They are often fragmented, isolated, seeing poorly and translating badly.' (1)

She also states, "All of Atwood's writer/ artist protagonists share a curious ambivalence towards their craft: they often use their fictions for the evasion of reality rather than for confrontation; they create illusions rather than transform reality" (2). In the same manner, protagonist uses these fictitious accounts to fill the vacuum of her mind to appear as a complete that has a history, past and life. In reality her life is fragmented and there are many missing links and accounts. She

never speaks her mind to other and it helps her to keep her secrets and depersonalization syndrome hidden. Like Alice in Wonderland, Atwood's heroines often moves through mirrors and through their own self-deluding fictions into worlds of myth, where it is possible to lose the self and where they flounder amidst the ruins of traditional roles and obsolete images of women. She has created so many unreal stories about herself that a small deviation or changed in reality makes her dejected. She lacks the agency part of authentication in her own life. They are headed towards and direction and old roads are changed. Narrator feels dejected by the changes.

I feel deprived of something, although I can't really get here unless I've suffered; as though, the first view of the lake, which we can see now, blue and cool as redemption, should be through tears and haze of vomit. (Atwood, *Surfacing* 11)

Narrator also have child fixation. She keeps on thinking about having children. One of the biggest reason of her depersonalization is her memories of aborted child, which haunts her at every turn and dilutes her all relationships. Having child for her is too much to go through for nothing. She explains the complete process objectively:

They stick needles into you so you won't hear anything, you might as well be a dead pig, your legs are up on a metal frame, they bend over you, technicians, mechanics, butchers, students clumsy or snickering practicing on your body, they take the baby out with a fork like a pickle out of a pickle jar. (79)

Whole process is expressed like a mechanical and inhuman in nature. She believes her husband was not with her at that same which is wrong as it was his idea and fault.

Narrator does not have any genuine relationship to rely upon. She never forms true friendship with anyone other than her own insane habits. She is with group of friend David. However, the protagonist are with the friends and she likes and trust them but she wishes they were not here though they're necessary. Car in which they are travelling is of David and Anna. All of them have disowned their parents and never really talks about them. Protagonist has vague idea about the past of his friends. She thinks "one of us could have amnesia for year and the others wouldn't notice" (26). The same can be true about the narrator true, she may have amnesia and nobody may ever notice.

She tries to observe the relationship around her and she finds same uncompassionate couples. For example Anna and David are married for nine years. David wants Anna to look like a young girl and forces her to wear makeup. When she forgets her make up this makes her worried. She is not more than an object to David used to satisfy his lust. She is also suffering from domestic violence. For every little error, David has punishment for her He makes her cry because "he can't do it himself" (123). If he gets angry he stops having sex with her or "slam it in so hard it hurts" (123). This is his display of muscularity and male dominance. As per Anna he does not like to be loved by her. Anna compares beard face of David with cunt as symbolic of filth. For Anna marriage is letting go of herself. Anna is on pills and it gives her a blood clot in her leg. This makes Protagonist abhors marriage as

she feels marriage means uncomfortable compromises only. Anna says in disgust that David is schmuch as he was hitting on the protagonist. She says,

He was doing it to me. He always does stuff like that to other women in front of me, he'd screw them with me in the room if he could. Instead he screws them somewhere else and tells me about it afterwards. (99)

Joe always wakes up from his dream and states "This is the wrong room" (126) but never tells what he dreams. and they are shooting a movie named as Random Samples by David, protagonist calls it Random Samples as they are not aware what are they shooting for.

In one of the encounter, David asks Anna to remove her clothes so that they can shoot her naked, when she refuses, he tries to humiliate her. Anna can also suffer from depersonalization, but she is not hypersensitive. In revenge to her husband's atrocities, she makes physical relationship with others. She even sleeps with Joe. Anna is desperate and she uses her body as her weapon and she is fighting to have her life which is David. Anna has accepted her fate of being the second sex. She is ready to live life as per David's conditions. This makes Protagonist more averse to relationships and hastens her depersonalization. David tells her to make her jealous and blames her for being a bourgeois and possessive. In the fishing venture, they meet two Americans, who are referred as colonial exploiter.

Protagonist is a creative person as she has written five books and stories that never reveal essential things. She likes Joe because of his failures as an artist. She is a translator too. Her creativity is hampered by her conditions. This is her bent out of

pent up emotions. Like a typical obsession, when she fails to get it, she becomes restless. Protagonist is bored from the searching and wants to go back “where there is electricity and distraction” (48). On the island, she has no distraction and she has to think about herself. It brings her to crucial stage of self-exploring and self-analysis. This allows her pent up emotions to come out and disturbs her calm social demeanour. Her inner instability starts surfacing up.

The novel also has many German and Fascist references. British India Company is referred as “Rotten Capitalist Bastards” (8). David believes men who are moving in boats are from C.I.A. and they want to snatch their water and establish their snoopers’ base in the island. They meet Americans in the way “for them the only thing worthy for life were human, their own kind of human, framed in the proper clothes and gimmicks, laminated” (129), but deceptively they were not American but Canadian and what appears to them as American flag was a sticker. It seems to narrator that even Canadians are turning into Americans and they entered into their brains and “take over the cells” (130). This also hastens his depersonalization disorder. Hitler is permanent symbol of evil for the narrator, he is gone but evil stayed. In their venture into the heart of the land they come across a dead bird. Deheron, tied and looped over a tree branch, and they filmed this. Narrator believes that it is the doing of American, they did this to show their power as they cannot tame, cook or train it so they killed it, but It appears that even in Candia there is an America. This makes the narrator unstable too, as she feels that even in her there is an American- a colonialist. It starts her self-loathing and self-negation process, because she feels she becomes the one she abhors.

She is not able to create a balance between what she thinks and what she communicates. She feels that she cannot use language effectively. She cannot answer to Joe's question that does she love him or not. Anna and David break the news of her father's death to Narrator, and tell her his body is found in the lake but she believes that they are lying to her. She believes she has power to look through pictures and symbols. She feels dead are put into coffin so that they cannot turn into something else. She feels unable to communicate. While talking to David she thinks "I had to concentrate in order to talk to him, the English words seems imported, Foreign; it was trying to listen to two separate conversations, each interrupting the other" (151-152), David and Anna considers her inappropriate as she does not mourn her father's death, but Narrator thinks "... nothing has died, everything is alive, everything is waiting to become alive" (160). Surfacing begins and ends in the lap of nature and wilderness. It is the quest of woman, whose expressions are trapped in fragmented language, for the world she hardly makes sense and world has lost its essence for her. Coral Ann Howells in her books *Modern Novelists: Margaret Atwood* states:

Surfacing is a gerund (a noun made out of a verb), indicating process and activity rather than a completed action. Surfacing charts a change in the narrator's subjective perception of reality, as she shifts from a position of alienation and victimhood to a new sense of the vital relationship between herself as human the land which she has to face in coming to terms with human beings in the modern world. (32)

The next symptom that starts appearing to the protagonist is of emotional numbness and hyper sensitivity. She has imbalance of emotions. Her response to

different act is dependent on her state of mind, which is highly volatile. For a few very important things, she feels no emotions at all and for others, she has strange ownership and love. While having sexual intercourse with Joe, Joe was impressed the way she takes off her clothes and put them again later without display of any emotion. For her sex is just a mechanical procedure and an expression of male desires to make her an object and she is emotionally numb to that, it is just an exercise, a drill for her. She puts worms and a Frog with her while going for fishing and pierces the body of worms and frog seductively. Anna calls her cold blooded for this brutal act. It is an act of killing but narrator feels nothing for worms and frogs. A simple act of killing a mosquito shows her state of mind. She lets it bite her “waiting till its abdomen globes with blood before I pop it with my thumb like a grape” (70). She enjoys this act of killing, because she connects it with act of society to use her body like an object to fulfil their needs. Contrary to this with fish, she feels affinity as it is the victim and used to satisfy hunger. She does not want to kill the fish once it’s caught it makes her feel a little sick as she has killed something. The shape of the heron seems to her like Jesus Christ, who died instead of humans. In her hypersensitivity she realizes all plants and animals are Christ as they die instead of humans, but they are not worshipped. During her story on the island she is devoid of feelings. She contemplates:

I realized I didn’t feel much of anything, I hadn’t for a long time. Perhaps I’d been like that all my life, just as some babies are born deaf or without the sense of touch; but if that was true I wouldn’t have noticed the absence. (106)

Like a typical depersonalization patient she feels the absence of emotions, something missing. Narrator also feels the absence of genuine grief or concern. She is on this island to find her father, but from the beginning she never expresses any shock. She neither pays much heed to her father's disappearance nor to Joe's proposal of marriage. She feels bad for Joe as he is vulnerable and can feel. She realises that her body is free from her will. She is losing her autonomy. Jill Savege Schariff states, this condition in the psychodynamic image:

The autonomous self has to take in feelings and ideas, and put forth feelings and express ideas in language. The autonomous self can conceive, symbolize, communicate, share, plan and negotiate. The autonomous self keeps the need of self and other in balance and builds relationships of mature interdependency. (8)

Narrator has lost all the above referred elements. She feels like as somebody else is answering instead of her. She is not able to balance her emotions, thinking and desires. She envies Joe as he can feel pain. She feels that she is cut into two - One half is locked away and attached and feeling self and second half is detached and terminal. "I was nothing but a head, or, no, something minor like a severed thumb; numb" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 109). Beverly Engel describes this syndrome thus:

... some people whose mood shifts are from normal, people who experience radical changes in their mood ... some not only show different side of themselves depending on the situation, but they are capable of creating double lives or entirely different personalities... these people suffer from what I call the Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome.

(9)

She has split personality and it cause imbalance in her responses. She tries to rehearse emotions, watch them, and memorize them. It seems like wearing clothes by imitating others. She fears, that she is not alive. She shows extreme hypersensitivity for heron. She feels responsible for its death. She believes nobody discourses about the death of animals, but people write books on wars and killing of humans. She does not want death or wars. She can stand death but writhing and painful crawling. She starts believing that she is one of the animals and her depersonalization syndrome starts getting acute. Protagonist achieves a state of mind introducing her to a reality which has integrated at least part of the supernatural into the natural through the “intermediary of spirit conjured formally by rituals, and of ghosts – her parents, and infants – both her dead child and the newly conceived embryo” (104). Protagonist wants to fight but she does not as she always defend herself either by flight or by invisibility. David forces Anna to strip and dance a little. Protagonist feels affinity with David as she states:

David is like me, I thought, we are the ones that don't know how to love, there is something essential missing in us, we were born that way, Madame at the store with one hand, atrophy of the heart.
(Atwood, *Surfacing* 138)

She feels Joe and Anna are lucky, they suffer because of their heart but they have feelings. She and David are unable to love anybody she impersonally without empathizing to Anna, wants to know the reason behind David's act. David tells her he does all those things because Anna has relationship with other men and they donot talk to each other when people are not around. According to David, Anna is neither loyal nor intelligent and she manipulated him to marry her. Both Protagonist

and David are devoid of emotions and their interactions are hollow. As George Butterworth states:

The emotions form an invariant constellation of Feeling qualities which are experienced as belonging to the self, while interaction with other is the eliciting condition for such self-specifying experience.

(31)

David and Narrator are also not capable of making meaningful conversations.

She has indifference toward Joe while having sex. She has this emotional numbness from a long time, but with time this indifference toward physical desires become acute. She loses the sexual desire. She objectively refers it thus:

... his hands at any rate are intelligent, they mover over me delicately as a blind man's reading brailed, skilled, moulding me like a vase, they're learning me; they repeat patterns he's tried before, they've found what works, and my body responds that way too, anticipates him, educated, crisp as a type writer. (Atwood, *Surfacing* 65)

She feels that their sex has lost the quality of being a stranger. She feels that sex is like an operation performed on her drug injected body. She is not the part of act, her body is and she is above than her body. While having sex, she thinks about condoms. The expression sex without risk gives way to precautions but it is a half success. Sex smells like a rubber to the narrator. The way she hears sexual encounter of Anna and David, where Anna keeps on shrieking with pain and disgust to physical experiences. She contemplates "bad part isn't the thing itself but being a witness" (82)

Narrator starts objectifying her body and observes it in parts rather than as a whole. She states, “I’m not against the body or the head either, only the neck, which creates the illusion that they are separate” (15). She willingly makes intercourse out of room with Joe to have a baby out and she decides she will have her delivery in a natural way and nobody strap her to death machine in the metal framework. Joe feels that she is back in her life but narrator think

He still doesn’t understand he thinks he has won, act of his flesh a rope noosed round my neck, leash; he will lead me back to the city and tie me to fences, doorknobs. (167)

Surfacing indeed allows us to imagine, for better or for worse, what ‘it might be like to be someone else’ Atwood’s novel is a demanding achievement, both in its crafted execution and in its expectations of the reader. The most challenging aspect of that achievement is our realization that someone, someplace else can be – if strangely – familiar (131). On Seventh day, she dives into water to find his father’s drawings. She feels death in the water. She realizes the self-deception and she states:

I pieced it together the best way I could, flattening it, scrapbook, collage, pasting over the wrong parts. A faked album, the memories Fraudulent as passports; but a paper house was better than none and I could almost live in it, I’d lived in it until now. (145)

She realizes that all these details were formed by her. She has made all these memories as hers but actually these memories belong to others. After realization she feels empty and amputated. There was no painting and only failures of logic. She was having out of body experiences “it was as though I was seeing him through a

smear window or glossy paper” (147). She understands language divided humans into fragments. She feels like was her entrance into other world quote of deception. Joe tries to have sex with her, but she resists and stops him by stating that she will get pregnant.

She is wearing ring in her hand to deceive people that she is married.

Her marriage was a façade, he was an idealist and for him it was “a certificate framed on the wall, his proof that he was still young.”

(150)

David tries to seduce her. For David sex is “an exercising program, athletic demonstration, ornamental swimming in a chlorine swimming pool noplac in California” (152) which he wants to impose on protagonist because according to him she was interfering in his life. David tells her that Joe and Anna are sleeping together so they can also have their revenge. By doing the same, Narrator feels that David is decaying and in old age he has to copy. He is an “imposter, a pastiche, layers of political handbills, pages from magazines (153). He is a second hand American. Narrator realizes that she hates American, men and women both and she thinks:

I wanted there to be a machine that could make them vanish, a button

I could press that would evaporate them without disturbing anyone

else, that way there would be more room for animals. (155)

She hates Americans because they are against gods and nature. She does not answer David’s comment and Anna states sorrowfully “she really is inhuman” (155)

Narrator realizes the deception of the world. Everybody wants to save the world “men think they can do it with guns, women with their bodies, love conquers all, conquerors love all, mirages raised of words” (160). Anna believes she puts Joe and narrator together by having sex with Joe, but narrator considers her half dead. Narrator picks him the film from the camera and throws it into the water. It is a planned act. She feels that she has no name and she is not civilized. For her all are American and she believes “I am by myself; this is what I wanted, to stay here alone. From any rational point of view I am absurd; but there are no longer any rational points of view” (173). For Narrator, truth is on the island.

All her companion leaves the island and in isolation she weeps and feels furious why they left her. She feels frustration. She feels fear at night she hears “breathing, withheld, observant, not in the house but all around it.” (179)

She starts giving up all deceptions, she slips the ring which symbolizes her non-husband, and she drops it into the fire. She tries to eliminate history. She burns all scrap books, papers and documents to free her. She breaks, glasses, plates burns mystery books, the Bible everything which is possible to treat or burn. When nothing intact left she leaves in wounded blanket to the shore. She feels home and canned food is forbidden to her. She lives like a natural animal. She feels she can look through her body she states, “I’m ice-clear, transparent, my bones and the child inside me showing through the green webs of my flesh”, (187). She feels she is a place. She hallucinates. She feels she is not a human and if other identifies her they will shoot her or hang her like heron. She feels she will be safe in dead tree roots.

She gets used to hunger. She believes everything that is touched by metal is forbidden. She feels she can be anything “a tree, a deer, skeleton, a rock” (193). She thinks somebody is on the island shocked to see that footprints are of her own. She feels hypersensitive towards the killing of natural objects and feel oneness with them. She feels like a time traveller of past five nights, the primeval one. At last Paul’s boat arrives at island with Joe. She feels him as “a mediator, an ambassador, offering me something: Captivity in any of its forms, a new freedom? (198). She feels if she goes with him she has to talk, words intercession will happen probably they fail sooner or later, more or less painfully but still she can rely on him:

... he may have been sent as a trick. But he isn’t an American, I can see that now; he isn’t anything., he is only half formed, and for that reason I can trust him. (198)

She is in dilemma if she responds to Joe’s calls it means trust and “to trust is to let go” (Atwood, *Surfacing* 198) and she knows he will not wait for long, but right now he waits for her; contrary to this “ The lake is quiet , the trees surround me, asking and giving nothing” (199)

Surfacing as a novel resists interpretation and invokes multiple interpretations at the same time. It is indeterminate in terms of narration, constant and context. In its background anxiety over American economic domination forms a tragic tone and enhances anxiety and loss of the contact with nature and natural objects highlights the insensitivity of modern human, in this way all are Americans: Worshipper of mechanical and utilitarian life. Communication is an illusion created by the characters in *Surfacing* as s survival tactics. David Ward states:

Language, movies, make up, the mutual illusion of marriage, form the communicating surfaces which structure and are structured by David and Anna, structure and are structured by their society. (100)

Women in this advertisement and capital oriented world are the object and victim of advertisement. David Ward states:

The magical book behind these acts of transformation is the glossy advertisement or Playboy centrefold, icons, manufacturing desire and the object of desire, distorting the feminine body to the power/possession fantasy of the phallocrat. (100)

Surfacing signifies to the act of making surfaces that deny deep penetration into the heart of the female. Divorce here is an amputation caring for parents is a useless fixation, loving nature is insane and sex is an act of love. The social self and personal self are in continuous opposition to each other here, thus the self of the subject dwindles. The novel deals with “enciphering and deciphering” (Ward 103). Here body and mind are two separate entities questioning the rationality and interpretation of each other. Peter Quartermaine states:

The confrontation of repressed fears is shaping metaphor throughout (most literally in the disturbingly paired sequences of the narrator confronting the body of her drowned father and the fact of her own abortion) but Atwood also renders the mundanity of life with convincing, at times chilling particularity. (120)

The novel offers multi-layered and overlapped real or imagined meanings and a linguistic camouflage.

In both the novels, protagonists are pushed towards depersonalization by male branding. Maya is living in India is pushed towards the inner goblins of depersonalization by her dependence on males. She tries to anchor herself on her husband, who is a practical man and does not pay much attention to her emotional needs. Due to her dejection by her husband, she takes shelter in making a relationship with her pet- Toto. After the death of Toto, symptoms of her depersonalization become more evident, but her husband and his family do not pay much attention to her disorder. Due to this fact she turns into a murderer and commits suicide later. In case of the protagonist in *Surfacing*, she lives in deceptions. She creates her own fabricated realities. Her friends and boyfriend are not able to identify her symptoms of depersonalization. Their depersonalization is termed as over emotionality, over-sensitivity, due to the ignorance of the society. Lack of awareness of respective families, turns one into a criminal and another lose control of her mind.

Chapter 3

Depersonalization of Ennuyéx Females and Coercive Male Gaze in *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* and *The Edible Woman*

The French word *ennui* has its roots in Latin word *inodiare* which refers to hate and detest. Most of the *ennui* is interchangeably used with related words that include tedium, languor, acedia, melancholy. Boredom, as a syndrome, has got less attention in the previous times. With the dawn of Christianity, it starts coming into the central stage when it is considered as spiritual impotence. It is defined as incapacity and incompetence of an individual against his free will. It is a crime against spiritual self. It is considered so fatal that Stendhal defines it as, “*Ennui* takes everything from one, even the desire to take one’s own life” (288). Fernando Pessoa empathizes that boredom is so radical that it cannot even be overcome by suicide. Kuhn defines it as a state of nothingness and a complete loss of will to live. It is an immediate reaction to the situation that surrounds and defies your inner beings. Boredom signifies an ideological crisis that reaches its zenith in the twentieth century. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche relate boredom to despair that emerges from dull habit and mediocrity. Heidegger describes it vacillating, paralyzing, torturing. Modernity is often associated to *ennui* because in modernity human are deprived from heroic deeds because all that is heroic is already done. Modern life is also more individual centric and nuclear family life style intensifies the rate of scrutiny. From psychoanalysis point of view boredom is a one sort of *defence* mechanism. Barbara Dalle Pezze and Carlo Salzani in their essay “The Delicate Monster: Modernity and Boredom” explains “....boredom is explained as a *defence* from fears and desires which threaten the stability of the subject and thus lead to *a repression* that hinders

the discharge of tension” (15). Kierkegaard defines modern boredom as demonic boredom deprived from spirituality it has no antidote and it emerges from the lack of interest in spiritual growth. William McDonald in his essay “Kierkegaard’s Demonic Boredom” explains boredom as:

Boredom fails as a form of consciousness, which consist of the opposition between ideality and actuality, since it erases the opposition of retreating into its own ideality and ignoring actuality (or by transfiguring it into fantasy, or by negating it with Romantic irony). It also fails as a form of consciousness that relates ideality and actuality appropriately to one another, since if it relates them at all; it does so without passionate concern or interest. (78)

Conscious boredom may be just a part of the body and if you remove the body from those situations, the body can come out of the boredom and can escape from ennui, but unconscious ennui is more fatal. In the novel *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* and *The Edible Woman* we have protagonists who are ennueyex and searching for an escape from the male gaze. The male gaze is a bullyingly present in female life. Gaze is like a physical emblem of male centric ideology. It is the part of male branding, this all pervasive gaze of males put women in the spot from where they cannot run. As Laure Mulvey points out:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are

simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (309)

Depersonalization becomes the part of this male gaze only when women start internalizing this gaze and mimicking male expectation. Their depersonalization initiates sleeping and eating disorders which represent their inner anxiety and thriving demon of depersonalization.

The novel, *Where Shall We Go this Summer?*, represents women's boredom and meaningless existence and her attempts to escape from the frenzy of this world which she finds impossible. The events of the novel are divided into two eras- 1947 and 1967. Novel is divided in three parts Part I and Part III refers to Monsoon 67 which symbolises new life and Part II entitled as winter 47 refers degeneration. Chronologically part II is the first part of the novel. This part starts right after the independence of India in 1947. The title, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, refers to uncertain state of Sita's mind that is not able to decide between conscious and unconscious, illusion and reality, past and present. It also symbolizes to her boredom and existential ennui from which she wants to escape, but finds no door to escape. Three parts of the novel presents thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis of the narrative. Sita's unusual childhood, a motherless in secured childhood, celebrated father and unexpected marriage makes her feel like a wounded eagle. She has romantic notions of life in Bombay she is alienated and detached. The novel presents psycho-emotional journey of Sita, who travels on the path of self-alienation and self-adjustment. She is living an alien life in the crowded urban world which is in direct contrast with her previous life.

The root cause of Sita's depersonalization is her unusual childhood and charismatic father is at its centre. Sita is the protagonist of the novel and her father was a freedom fighter and people call him "Second Gandhi". After the independence he gives up his political life and come to the island gifted by his follower Dalwala as a token of respect and her father name it is Jeevan Asharam "the home of the soul" (Desai, *Summer* 57). Her father wants to put his theories in practice on this island. His revolution was religious, political and social-at once. Here Sita has the first tryst with the theatrical life of miracles. She is the daughter of a saint, who is considered a form of God by many, but for her it's paradoxical. There are many references where real meets unreal and confuses the adolescent mind of a young girl. At the very outset of their life at the island, father digs a well at the place, whereas all other (Chelas) people find the water of well sweet, Sita finds it's normal. All people starts believing that he possess magical powers. Due to his blessings Phoolmaya gave birth to a son, Kanti Amma's son was saved from scorpion's poison and he starts giving false medicine to the ignorant islanders. "His Chelas called him a saint, his critics a charlatan, the villagers a wizard, and each produce evidence to prove his theory" (68). For Sita the problem is she exposes to two realities- one theatrical reality which she lives and participate in publically and second that she explores during her secret ventures into her father's room. This creates confusion in her mind from the very childhood. She has an extraordinary childhood and has an extraordinary father. She does not possess any charismatic aspect of her father's personality. She is a simpleton. There was always distantness between Sita and her father. The eldest sister Rekha was close to her father and also cause stir of incest among chelas. Sita was never clear that Rekha was her step sister or the real one

because her father was always surrounded by his chelas and this secret remains “a ghost of her life” (72) and these secrets haunts her present. She has disbelief on the normal course of life. The same is true about Sita and her relationship to her father. To find out the secrets of his father’s heart of darkness, she starts taking midnight voyage in father’s dark universe. One night she discovers that her father is neither a doctor nor a magician. Rather than giving medicine to people he gives mixture of pearl and gold grinded into one. He befools people; this shatters her faith in her faith and in herself at the same time. She never discloses this secret, but it often erupts in her insane behaviour. Sita’s in her second spy venture makes finds her father with woman and he was recommending strange remedies to them. In her third venture, she finds him sitting alone and perspiring and reflecting the “attitude of a ruined lion” (86). Through these ventures, she discovers that he father was an uneducated man. His biographer never mentioned “existence of a mistress, perhaps a second wife, and his desertion by their own mother” (83). Sita is aware about these incidents and these secrets tolls heavy on her chest. His followers call him “Second Gandhi” (78), but for Sita he is “grotesquely ugly” (81), who casts “hypnotized kind of notice and regard” (81). Sita since her childhood carries two images of her father, one social image and one secret image. She publically accepts her father as a miracle man and believes she is the daughter of her father; privately she hates him and knows him as a trickster. She fails to break this strange bond. The death of his father left her bewildered. Rekha, her elder sister, who was very close to her father, after his death states “we can go now” (89) and in a matter of months she become “Nightingale of AIR” (89), her brother Jivan become “a turbulent trade union leader” (89). Both of them set themselves free. Sita never comes out of the spell that

her father casted on her. She starts living dual life- divided into two halves and accepting dual realities.

The seed of depersonalization was already sown in her childhood, she can escape from it, when her father was dead, but she commits another error. She marries due to wrong reasons. After the death of her father, she has no place to go; the only option that appeared to her is to marry to his father's friends' son- Raman. He married her "out of pity, out of lust, out of sudden will for adventure and because it was inevitable" (83). She marries because of wrong reason and has a troubled marriage life. O.P. Budholia states, "She (Sita) is also in constant search for a valued existence..... she craves love beyond the flesh while her husband rushes madly after the physical love" (42). Both of them have different expectation from their marriage. Their marriage was compulsive act of Sita and Raman. It proved empty and meaningless. It aggravates Sita's boredom with life. She wants to get rid of boredom and disillusion. Her husband proves to be a "middling kind of man" (43) neither introvert nor an extrovert. He is neither bored nor exhilarated. He is "dedicated unconsciously to middle way" (43). All people around her are happy with their meaningless existence, they are used to their life of inaction and passivity, but Sita "never got used to any one" (43). She revolts against living in age rotted flat of Queens Road because according to her these flats were full of "subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness" (43). This is a bored existence in contrast to her previous life. She was destined to be at the centre of attention, but somehow she lands into the world of simpleton. For her husband this is the real form of life, for Sita, this life is not fulfilling. They live their married life by avoiding fights as she states, "All through their married life they had preferred to avoid a confrontation"

(30). They do not fight to disturb their marital life, even when Sita instigate her husband by her theatricals, he never fights. Yazher, Arafath M in his research paper “Psycho-analysis March and Retreat of Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*” discusses the difference between the couple by stating:

The disaffection proceeds primarily from their temperaments. Raman is a successful businessman, realistic, having a pragmatic view about life. Sita is over sensitive, keen-eyed, poetic and imaginative, having more than ordinary sense. If Raman is social and extrovert, Sita is introvert. ...Because of their temperamental differences many point of discord between them occur and their responses to life are different. (15)

Their varied responses and varied expectation from life are never solved as they never indulge in meaningful dialogues. She runs away from her husband and start living on island. When she starts loving her life in the island, her husband’s sudden arrival creates upheaval. Raman a “man so passive, so grey” (Desai, *Summer* 177) creates a tumult of life. His sudden arrival disturbs her, but also gives her hope to be loved. This instance shows that inwardly Sita craves for her husband’s life and rely on him to provide a meaning to his existence. All her desires to be loved again arise on the distant reference of care and love. She thinks that it is Raman’s deep care for her which brought him her. As she thinks, “Entrance by the thought that there was someone, on the mainland, who remembered her, called her name, asked about her condition and future. She felt shaken, by “an unexpected love” (120-21). She, who was feeling oneness with the objects surrounding, starts loving herself again. All her senses of de-realization go for a toss and she starts feeling like a subject again. She

wants to run her husband and wants to say that “My father’s dead-look after me” (120). It also shows her expectation from her husband. She wants him to be a miraculous character, not a simpleton. Sita’s romantic notion about her husband’s arrival did not stay for long as she comes to know that her husband came on the island not because of her, but due to children. This makes her realize about the insignificance of her existence. She is neither centre point of her own life, nor of her husband and family. Her strangeness and self-objectification is the result of her being not the centre point of her life or somebody else’s life. Paul Marcus states:

...as a moral subject, the individual is always found lacking Such a notion of the subject, formed, shaped and ultimately constituted by the encounter with the other,.... viewing the other as primarily a source of gratification of one’s relational needs, whether for companionship friendship, love and intimacy. (36)

Sita also wants to fulfil her relational needs. The idea of having her husband on the Island changes her chain of objectified thoughts. She lands into the real world from her delusion thoughts and self-objectified pity. Her happiness does not stay for long as she comes he does not come for her but because Menaka, her daughter called him. She feels betrayed. Author states:

Their betrayal had torn her open with such violence, now violence pouted from her like blood. In it was also the shame, the disappointment he had not come to see her, to fetch her, as she had supposed. (Desai, *Summer* 122)

She feels betrayed and like an object, who is not an important part of her family’s life. It is feeling of unloved, rejected, and humiliated. Sita like an existentialist,

contrary to her husband, having the courage of being a coward; in contrast to her husband, who takes on responsibilities. It was a battle between his brand of courage and hers. Her husband believes in compromise as he states:

Other people put up with it –it’s ‘no! so, so insufferable,’ he said, why can’t you? Perhaps one should be grateful if life is only a matter of disappointment, not disaster. (Desai, *Summer* 131)

He is satisfied with his life or living in self-deception. He is also bored from his life and theatricals of his wife, but is putting a brave mask on his face. Sita fails to do so. For her, marriage is like all human relationships, is an epitome of boredom. She feels existentialist vacuum in her life due to boredom of banal existence. She feels she will never understand her husband’s trivial thoughts and desires. She wants to discover the undiscovered and wants to measure new horizons.

Sita also has incoherent relationship with her children. They find her abnormal and are more close to their father than her. When in her frenzy of escaping spree, Sita after 20 years returns to Manori Island with Menaka and Karan; her troubled relationship with her children surfaces and discloses the state of Sita’s mind. Sita is not a normal mother as per her children. There are always comparisons in Sita’s mind. For Menaka, her mother’s “proclivity for drama, for theatre, for emotion” (101) is meaningless. Sita tries to mend gap between her and her children by telling them stories about island, but she has no gift for narrative. She starts making childish shapes from mud with her kids and feels “oblivious joy” (105). She feels “too oblivious, too incautious, too impulsive again” (105). She pours her heart out and feels like a subject again. Sita hates science and rationality for her two and two are not four. She states, “You’re not taking into account that One part of two

may be a shrunk, Shrivelled thing, the other a fat and Swollen thing that over shadows it” (107). This thinking also presents her state of mind, where she rejects logic of the mundanely and believe in miracles and odds. She hates labeling because “a label doesn’t reveal the quality” (Desai 108) for her label is a mask and shroud which leads to a dead end. Sita loves spontaneity, in contrary to her Menaka considers it “disorder and nonsense” (Desai 109). Contrary to her imagination and emotional approach, her children have rational approach. They are more like their father, for them Sita’s compulsive act of saving an eagle is stupid and insane. For them, she is theatrical and overdoes things. They were partially happy with their life on island. It was out of compulsion, they come a little close to their mother. Once their father returns, Karan and Menaka do not mention island in their conversation, it hurts Sita further. She feels as all her family are together “to fight her to run away and hide from her” (Desai 126).

Sita understands that she never makes any sense to her family. She never has any actual conversation. All her conversation were regular and about boring day to day events of her life. Her father never communicated with her; her only companion was her brother, who like her believes in miracles and strange events. For her husband and her family, she was a lunatic, who was destroying their life. For Menaka, she is standing between her and her career; for Karan, she is standing between his comforts of city life. For Sita reality is beyond the discourses of normal people. Due to her lack of trust on her surrounding and accepted realities she never communicates effectively. Bauman states:

The deficit of trust inevitably leads to a wilting of communication; in avoiding communication, and in the absence of interest in its renewal,

the strangeness of strangers is bound to deepen and acquire ever darker and more sinister tones. (70)

Sita's sinister and darker world has its surfacing due to this lack of communication. She found herself incapable of forming solid relationship. She thought on the island, she has formed a strong relationship with her children, but her children's ultimate betrayal shatters all her hopes.

In this ennuyex existence from where her symptom of depersonalization starts appearing. She starts smoking and begins "to speak in sudden rushes of emotion, as though flinging darts at their smooth, unscarred faces" (Desai, *Summer* 44). Woman's life in these places was kitchen which was totally different then her life on the island "she found this at first so fantastic as to be unreal" (44), but with time all this become looking at others. All other people were living same life from centuries. This all pervasive truth makes her feel pathetic. She wants to run away, wants to escape from this life. She reminds a casual meeting with a stranger on the road and sharing With him. She believes the stranger was very brave and wants to travel like him to the unknown horizon. As Levinas states, "Reaching for the other is not something justified of itself; it is not a matter of shaking me out of my boredom." Reaching for the other is "the most radical breakup of the very categories of the ego," the commitment "to being somewhere else than myself," he refusal of "definite existence" (85-86). Sita is also looking at other and thus becoming a victim of self-objectification. She feels the lack of agency, will to run away from the inescapable mundane life. This life for her was too realistic, it has no charm. It was repetitive and defies irregularities. She starts rebuffing her own

existence so much that she is not able to relate with the photograph of wedding albums. She ponders :

She was amused to turn from the album to the mirror and see the layers of experience and melancholy and boredom that had settled upon her face since then, like so much gray (48)

Like a typical Desai's heroine, she feels incapable to relate to her past. Her unconscious mind declines the idea of relating to this too realistic account. She fails to relate to her own body. She wants to be liberated from this boredom, but rather than "indubitably real, overpoweringly real" (44). To avoid all this over overpoweringly real she starts "smoking instead of eating, toe staring about her silence, to speaking provocatively" (44). Three symptoms of depersonalization which other able to notice, but never able to decipher are- her strange anorexia- it seems that rather than solid thing like food, she wants to live on smoke, which leaves no trace of its existence; long silences- she is the victim of communication disorder, on substantial matters she hold her peace, but on very small incidents she speaks provocatively. She tries to win over this bored existence by shifting from that place, but "people continued to come and be unacceptable to her" (45). These unannounced visits of familiar strangers unsettle her and she spends her most of the time in balcony and looks at sea. She is bored from life but she does not know how why and with what. She cannot "comprehend her boredom" (45). She feels drowned and dead. This is the existentialist boredom. Barbar a Dalle Pezze and Carlo Salzan states, "... boredom swallows every things-sin and remorse confession and relapses, charm and repugnance-into the great yawn of indifference" (7). Sita has also lost all feeling and love for her and ennui-boredom reduces her "sense of

self through objectification, and occasionally, makes available an opportunity to recognize existence in entirety” (Sara Crangle 75). She wants to escape from it but not by her efforts and welling into her own life. She waits for ‘other’ to liberate her. She sits in balcony although for what she could not tell (Desai, *Summer* 49). Thus she is turned into “a living monument of waiting” (49).

She has two parts of her life, both are in contrast to each other and unconsciously Sita always fight a battle of choice. She is not able to decide which part of her life is real and which part is real. This problem of choice makes her anxious. She feels de-realization as she states:

How could she tell, how decide? Which half of her life was real and which unreal? Which of her selves was true, which false? All she knows was that there were two periods of her life, each on direct opposition to other. (Desai, *Summer* 139)

Unable to decide between real and unreal, Sita feels bewildered. She asks herself what she desires. Throughout her life, she wants to break the chain of his father’s magic and enigmatic world. In all this her father is at central stage. She wants to discard his presence. She succeeded, ultimately, in discarding his father and leaving him, what was left of him, on the island, but he could not be forgotten. “Unlike her mother, he had left traces and not merely traces but what could be called monuments” (79). She loves the life of island and feels solidarity with this island. She feels like an authentic subject, but in mainland she feels like an object. Sita finds that she is incapable to eliminate the existence of Island from her memories. Her present world was a total contrast to her past life. For Sita it was like coming out the “theatrical era of her life” (90). The era ends in the mundane world, but its mysteries

never die in the memories of Sita. She is still imprisoned in the same walls of Jivan Island and fails to untie herself.

This leads her to the anxiety and hypersensitivity. As Louise Embleton Tudor and Keith Tudor states, “As the senses have been overwhelmed in the past, the present is likely to be misperceived. This can lead to acute anxiety states, hyper-vigilance and/or paranoid states” (143). Sita also suffers from acute anxiety as her past follows her. She starts believing that her father was a wizard who casts “illusion as fisherman casts a net, with the faintest susurrations of warning, upon a flock of fish in the sea” (Desai, *Summer* 90). Only his wife was able to form a hole in this net and run away.

The others he had held in his net and smiled upon, most inscrutably. Fed them with pearls, caressed their long hair, fondled their fingers, whispered magic chants into their ears and then, as he lay dying, released them saint like into their native sea. (Desai 90)

This late freedom does not set these naïve fishes free, but makes them vulnerable. Sita feels the things of this anxiety. N.R Gopal also highlights upon Sita’s sensitivity by stressing “Sita is hypersensitive psychological probing is there mainly into the character of Sita describing how she is never able to come out of the fantasy world of her childhood” (98).

She is totally convinced to the meaninglessness of her existence and is on the verge of depersonalization. Trigger point of depersonalization in her life comes when she gets pregnant again. It appears to her that the birth of this child is an act of violence and murder, because dividing lines between creation and destruction are

hazy and indefinable for her. She feels threatened by “murder infanticide, incest, theft and robbery” (34). She feels everyone fights and all of them are violent. Small incidents like kids fighting reminds her that to everyone “destruction came so naturally, that was the horror” (41). Even a small kid like her son Karan loves to destroy tower of blocks; Meenakshi’s act of destroying her painting, appeals her. Sita believes that even if something is not worth keeping, is not worth destroying. She is scared from the acts of life as she is unable to differentiate between herself and the surrounding, her and the others. She feels existentialist anxiety. Paul Marcus states:

Anxiety, that dreadful self-absorbing feeling of worry or nervousness, in its extreme form, horror and panic, that usually emanates from anticipation of some kind of perceived threat menace or danger, the basis which is mainly unknown or unrecognized. (69)

Her anxiety is the product of her lack of control in her life. She feels that “control was an accomplishment that had slipped out of her hand” (Desai, *Summer* 29). She feels affinity with the violent acts that happen around her. Her acts of saving wounded eagle from crows and she wines dreadfully everything she hears a child’s cry suggests that she feels that “other” are she. She cannot feels that they are separate objects. As Paul Marcus states:

A subject or self that has given up the need for comprehensive thematization and systematic objectification, for understanding and control, will be so responsible for the other as to be substituted for the other, including to the point of the other’s suffering and even death. (30)

Sita is also not able to believe in herself as a subject but she subjectifies other objects as herself. To control her feeling, she hatches a plan to escape to Manori Island which “had been buried beneath her consciousness” (Desai, *Summer* 51). She left Mainland for the magic of Manori Island which implies miracle.

She is frightened from the idea of having fourth baby because for her “happening were always violent. She has resentment, anger and fears she thinks, “How could civilization survive, how could the child? How could she hold them whole and pure and unimpeached in the midst of this bloodshed” (50). Soon she develops phobia from violence. She feels “destruction may be the true element in which life survives” (50) and creation is “merely a freak temporary and doomed event” (50). This scares her from performing an act of creation. She feels that may be she is “destroying what was, at the moment, safely contained and perfect?” (50). She feels giving implies “solidity and security” (52) once, but not anymore it turns into “a hopeless disappointment” (52).

She tries to find solution to her typical problem. Unable to confront it, she decides to escape this frenzy. She picks up the root to “turn, go back and find the island once more” (52). She does not want to have abortion but also do not want her baby to be born. She runs to Manori Island after 20 years “in order not to give birth” (28) as she believes it is an island of miracles. She states, “What I’m doing is trying to escape from the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to be same again” (32). This is the journey to her unconscious and her attempts to uncover her psychic disorders starts. People in the Manori island still remember the father as “the fabled father” (13). Moses feels disappointed as Sita does not inherit “the dignity, the mystery and the ascetic splendor of the fabled father.” (13). Sita, alone

with Menaka and Karan, is welcomed by Mariam, wife of Moses. Sita in the middle of monsoon away from doctor, hospital and a telephones reaches in the island. This is her attempt to achieve oneness with her existence; between her body and mind; between her thinking and action. She knows that; however, long time before she came away from the island, but under the deep layer of her mind, island always stay there. It creates an alternate for her. An alternate to reality it seems to her that world is like a deep and dark seas and she wants to swim back to the net of elusion created by her father for his devotees. She states:

If reality were not to be borne, then illusion was the only alternative.

She saw that island, illusion as a refuge, a protection. It would hold her baby safely unborn, by magic. Then there would be the sea-it would wash the frenzy out of her, drown it. (Desai 91)

She feels that the island is an answer to her husband's habitual summer quarry "where shall we go this summer" (91). Sudhakar T-Sali states, "Sita's irony in 'Where shall we go this summer?' lies in the fact that she constantly dangles between self-realization and self-delusion, consciousness and anguish. Dr. Sanjay Kumar states, "Sita is endowed with a peculiar vision and sets herself a search for self. She always questions the usually unquestioned one. Her cynical, but "realistic observation cannot be missed out" (29).

She feels affinity with the island and the objects of island. An affinity, a closeness for which she craves for but not able to get-neither from her father; nor from her husband and family. Sight of a dead Jelly fish makes her sad, as she objectify herself as the fish.

It appears to her to be brain of the opaque mind of some gigantic undersea creature that had lived all its life far beneath the level where life penetrated and that had, in the creature's tormented death pangs, burst forth from the fine white skull-washed and washed again to that unearthly whiteness. (114)

Her empathy is gone to the level of feeling for the dead body of Jelly fish and it makes her feel the pangs of her death. She fails to feel boundaries between herself and the fish. John. M. Rector observes.

As one's boundaries of self are constricted and rigidified, non-identification with the other becomes the status quo, making objectification more likely. Conversely, as one's self-boundaries are expanded and increasingly flexible, the ability to feel connected to or identified with the other became more possible, making objectification less likely. (74)

She feels connected to the dead body of Jelly fish. Her boundaries of self are blurred and are intermingled with the object surrounding her. Strangely wherever she fails alone in the crowded places of mainland, she feels content on island because she feels its presence, presence of sea and palm trees as these objects are talking to each other. She never feels "alone or unsafe" (Desai, *Summer* 117). This island starts becoming the part of her unconscious mind and has occupied the central stage. She contemplates.

If it stayed like this long enough, without a disturbance, without an interruption, perhaps the slowness, the monotony of regular tides

would enter one's very veins, one's blood would begin to flow in their measure and one would adjust to a life in which there was never any change. (Desai 116)

The island symbolically refers to her unconscious part of her existence and this part of her brain is not happy with her existence. She is threatened by her meaningless existence and her flight on the island refers to her escape from the meaningless and bored existence of the city life. She still has this perception that her life has some unfinished part left on the island and if she connects herself with that she will become complete again. Kajali Sharma states, "The city is the symbol of the conscious mind of a human being, and the island of the unconscious. The sea in between the two stands for the subconscious which is dark, fathomless and mysterious as the sea" (94). Viktor A. Frankl states:

What threatens contemporary man is the alleged meaninglessness of his life or, as one might call it, the existential vacuum within him. And when does this vacuum open up, when does it appear, when does this so often latent vacuum become manifest in the state of boredom. (227-228)

Sita also encounters the same meaninglessness. She feels her life does not have any meaning nor does his father. She wants to confront this meaningless. She does not want to compromise like her husband or alter herself like her father for others. She states, "I never ran away at all-perhaps I am only like the Jelly fish-washed up by the waves stranded there on the sand bar. I was just stranded here by the sea, that's all (Desai, *Summer* 135). She feels that there was only one happiest moment when

she had seen a man looking towards his young wife as nothing else exist. She loves them love their sadness. It was divine and inhuman. She feels her children are like chains. "Children only mean anxiety, concern pessimism. Not happiness. What other women call happiness is just. Just sentimentality." (134). She wants to set herself free from sentimentality. She feels free when her husband leaves her out of weariness.

....felt herself releases and freed. Immensely tired now, all emptied out, the drama drained, the passion crumpled, she felt so light that she could have risen and floated out to sea, a black sea-bird. But she did not. (138)

She sings the poems of Lawrence. She can be free at the moment, but she decides to leave island like "a player at the end of the performance.....reddened and relived" (138). Freedom comes with liability and she is not ready to take that responsibility. Sita is symbol of nature and unable to adjust to mechanical life. Sea for her is a powerful symbol of nature. That can was the city. Throughout her life she waits for something magical. Unable to let this happen, she feels her life is an epitome of compromises. Illusions and reality runs hands in hand in her life. B.L. Tripathi states,

The return of Sita from unfettered but lost, illusory fanciful world to the appallingly mundane routinized rut in Bombay could by no stretch of imagination be seen as a journey from subnormalcy to normalcy. The novel invokes a sense of lost time. (49)

Thus in terms of her depersonalization syndrome Sita is affected by theatrical and coercive male gaze. This is theatrical in terms of her rejection and coercive in terms of her unwilling acceptance of the accepted norms.

In *The Edible Woman*, we can observe this gaze more vividly and its play on the centre stage of the novel. Marian and Ainsley lives on the top floor of a large house in one of the genteel land older districts. Marian lives her life as per the social norms. She wants to be acceptable and respectable. Marian needs to wear high heels in the office. She makes her choices as per all pervasive ideology of ideal behaviour. Their landlady considers Marian respectable because of her dress choice and Ainsley isn't respectable for her again due to dress choice. Marian contemplates:

Ainsley says I choose clothes as though they're a camouflage or a protective colouration, though I can't see anything wrong with that.

She herself goes in for neon pink. (Atwood, *Edible* 6)

According to Marian, this difference of choices is due to their belonging of different places as Marian thinks "Ainsley doesn't come from a small town as I do, so she's not as used to people being snoopy; on the other hand she's not afraid of it either" (7). In case of Marian she finds it intimidating. She scares from the gazes of other and fears from the consequences that may be rendered on them due to others. Two girls living alone in one apartment allows the society to do moral policing. Ainsley feels paranoid by the behaviour of the lady and she rejects these gazes. The lady does all this to protect the innocence of the child and according to her "two young ladies were surely more to be depended upon than two young men" (7). Miran Bozovic states, "In the body's encounter with the gaze, even such a basic notion as

identity can become blurred and elusive” (1). The gaze is more specific in case of single girls leaving together and staying independent. Marian and Ainsley have different attitude towards society, whereas Marian accepts it and changes herself as per the social norms; Ainsley defies these norms. She feels in individual morality and her feminine notion of good and bad.

Novel, *The Edible Woman*, opens with Ainsley’s complaints about her bored existence, which she expresses by retelling her depressing encounters with dentist students and the protagonist Marian was making sympathetic noises. Ainsley works as a tester of defective electric toothbrushes on temporary basis and she desires to open a little art gallery, Ainsley hates her job, for her it is “another day of Machines and mouths” (4). Marian McAlpin is bored from her job and feels Ainsley’s job is more unusual. Marian works for Seymour Surveys and revises questionnaires. Their company has three floors, upper crust is for executives and psychologists, all men, lower crust is full of machines and middle crust where Marian works to take care of human element – interviewers – and is consist only of females. This division is quite symbolical; it seems to refer that women has only one option- to live in a middle way. They can neither think of flying too high nor too low. They need to pick a safe route. Mrs. Bogue is the head of their department and Marian knows she cannot “become one of the men upstairs” (14). Marian desires to be like the men upstairs; she is annoyed for not having this choice. Under this ennueyex life, when she is asked to sign on the pension plan, she gets her first out of body experience. She states, “Somewhere in front of me a self was waiting, pre-formed, a self who had worked during innumerable years for Seymour surveys and was now receiving her rewards, A pension” (15). Throughout her jobs, she was thinking of escaping from

“I”, not signing this pension makes her think that maybe she has no escape, but to live her life in this job only. This makes her anxious and feeling of trapped victim. Her depersonalization is triggered by the realization that she is tangled into an existence which neither she likes nor she wants to live. She realizes her inauthenticity and feels the lack of agency. She realizes that route of her life has already been decided and her decisions are not her own decisions.

Male gaze and patriarchal objectification is referred by many references of condoning and making norms for female behaviour. Female biological processes like virginity, pregnancy, ideal body, ideal girl and sex are defined and categorized by males. Marian’s office friends are sarcastically referred as “Office Virgins” (16). Ainsley, Emmy- the typist, Lucy- PRO and Millis-Personal Assistant of Mrs. Bogue- all of them have different reasons to being virgin. Millie thinks “in the long run it’s better to wait until you’re married don’t you? Less bother” (16). Millie here refers to male expectation and how it causes trouble to women if they are not virgin. Lucy maintains her virginity due to social quelling as she is much bothered about “What would people say?” (16) and Emmy is scared the sex will make her sick. Whatever are the reasons, all these ladies are forced to see their body as an object and virginity as one type of social confirmation and respect. Suzanne A. Brenner states:

Women may be the objects of men’s sexual desire, but they are not thought likely to succumb to their own sexual desires. The notion contradicts the idea that men are ruled by reason and women by their passions, but it should not be taken to its face value, for it, too, constitutes a prescription for, rather than a description of, reality. (39)

Thus these women are going against their nature. They are controlling their passion and emotion just to remain socially acceptable. Surrounded by such people, Marian also has same opinion for being socially acceptable. She is ready to alter her behaviour accordingly. Ainsley offhand way of alluding man makes Marian and Office Virgins uncomfortable as it is against the norms and socially acceptable behaviour, which is centre of their life. Pregnancy is another important symbol of femininity and female self. It is the sacred reason of world's survival. This is belittled by both male and female in the novel. Mrs. Bogue regards "pregnancy as an act of disloyalty in the company". (Atwood, *Edible* 19). This biological supremacy of woman is disparaged by males as well as female ideological slaves which hinder women's progress in career. Peter is boyfriend of Marian, considers that all his friends are taken away from him by their marriages as he refers women as hunter and male as hunted. Len Slank is another patriarchal character who loves to seduce girls who are less than 17 years old. He feels girl older than that are thinking human being and thus are not suitable for him. In this way, he likes the idea of dumb woman. Any reference of smartness from woman makes him run for his life. Ainsley acts dumb and scared and plans herself cold bloodingly. For her Len is specimen; even she plans the birthday month of her child. She tries to study Len's family history, his blood group etc. Leonard is "a self-consciously – lecherous skirt chaser" (90) with an inverted morality. Women accused him as misogynist and male misanthropist.

The passive existence of Marian's friend Clara is also a reason that triggers her depersonalization. Marian desires to get married and have children and she has a reference point that is her friend Clara. When Marian is called by Clara on dinner,

she gets glimpses of her bored existence. Clara relentlessly talks about her children, their shat habits etc. Clara does not have any specific reason of having children, these children were unplanned and she has them because everybody else has them. It is part of women's existence according to Clara. Marian describes:

The babies had been unplanned: Clara greeted her first pregnancy with astonishment that such a thing could happen to her, and her second with dismay; now, during her third, she had subsided into a grim but inert fatalism. Her metaphors for her children included barnacles incrusting a ship and limpets clinging to a rock. (33)

Clara was impractical in her approach. Unlike Ainsley, she is passively chaotic; Ainsley comments on Clara's self-objectification vehemently as she states "She lets herself be treated like a thing" (35). Ainsley's point is women get married, just because they want to have babies, in process of acquiring they become an object to their desire. Iris Marian Young states, "The very forces that would make child bearing normative for women, I suggest, also tend to rob these women who do choose to bear and birth children of the subjectivity of the experience" (21). Clara after giving unplanned birth to children makes her life like a chaotic entity. She does not know how to come out of this stress and to distress herself she calls her friends for dinners, so that she can escape from the frenzy of looking her kids. Clara made many resolutions without actually fulfilling any. In her visit to Clara in hospital Marian encounters how women are casual about their diseases which they have picked while acting like an object. As Clara states:

They're so calm about it (diseases), and they seem to think that each of their grisly little episode is some kind of service medal: they haul them out and compare them and pile on the gory details, they're really proud of them... I wonder why women are so morbid.
(Atwood, *Edible* 140)

This unsettles Marian, she asks the question why women bear these atrocities of male ideologically willingly, and by subscribing this ideology they become part of their own oppression.

Another companion of Marian is her friend Ainsley and she presents radical image of woman. She is anti-marriage yet keen to have kids, but to achieve this desire she does not want to tie the knot. She does not want to give distorted image of parents to her children. As per Ainsley "the things that ruins families these days is the husbands" (38). Ainsley supports breast feeding and blames males for stopping females from doing so because "it makes them feel not needed" (38). Ainsley's desire to have a baby sounds to Marian as the voice on the radio. Ainsley wants to have baby to fulfil her "deepest femininity" (39). Ainsley has a practical approach and she wants to enjoy motherhood, which according to her is possible only when you are young, in terms to Marian it's like having an illegitimate child, but Ainsley blames her for being a "prude" (40). She does not want to wait for the society to change but wants to become the part of change. This unsettles Marian. Ainsley to achieve her purpose- seduces Len. Len likes immature girls Ainsley poses "should be seen and not heard act, as the safest course" (77) to trap Len- she shows patience like "a pitcher plant in a swamp with its hollow bulbous leaves half-filled with water, waiting for some insect to be attracted, drowned, and digested" (78). Ainsley

planned sexual encounter meticulously. For her Len is “an inexpensive substitute for artificial insemination with a devastating lack of concern for his individuality” (130); Marian and Ainsley both disapprove each other’s course of action on moral grounds. Ainsley feels very elated of getting pregnant. Len feels used and tricked. For him being a father is “obscene”, “tangled”, “horribly oozy”, “nauseating” (172). He becomes hysterical. All plans of Ainsley end in becoming the part of same system. She is the emblem of radical female ideology and this ideology does not render desired results. Ainsley gets a father image for his child by marrying Fischer. She has used Len as an object as male does to female and thus become the part of same system. She destroyed the sanity of Len and turns him into a victim. Len starts staying with Clara and plays with Arthur’s toys (Clara’s young son) and even fight with him on the possession. Both these friends of her create a major upheaval in her thinking. In the novel *The Edible Woman* giving birth to the child is a metaphor of authenticity and creation so does in all the novels of Atwood; in *Handmaid’s Tale* its Frankenstein and in *Surfacing* a colonial guilt. Women friend are another device like Ainsley, Anna Moira are sanity marker. In *Surfacing* Marian has some proper and another socially improper man in her life, as well as women friends again divided into socially acceptable or rebel. Maternity and marriages are integral part of their thinking but the approach is different.

Marian finds that she is surrounded by male norms and male centric signs of progression to achieve a status of woman. Even a beer commercial with a jingle like “Any real man, on a real man’s holiday – hunting, fishing ... a deep-down manly flavour” (21) reflects upon the thinking of the society, Marian on survey displays the thinking of males. As one interviewer states, “Now what’s a nice little girl like you

doing walking around asking men all about their beer?” he said moistly. “You ought to be at home with some big strong man to take care of you” (47). This is the male mentality, where woman is considered as an object of protection.

Marriage is a big decision for a male as it decides the destiny of females. Marian’s boyfriend Peter wants to marry her because as per him, she is the kind of girl who wouldn’t try to take over his life” (61), and he hates “the other kind” (61), who interfered in man’s life. This is quite a statement as he interferes in every decision of Marian. Marian needs to adjust as per his mind which is “true of any man” (61). For Peter, Marian’s body is an object to release his frustration and his worries. He never asks her about her preferences. Their sex life is like wastelands- signifies nothing. Her first sex experience with him was “rotten” but she responds it is “marvellous” (62). Their sexual intercourse in a bath tub appears to Marian as “mortification of the flesh” (62). Every time one of his friends marries, he tries something new which causes discomfort to Marian. Marian feel likes an object as she states:

He had intended it as an expression of my personality. A new corridor of possibilities extended itself before me: did he really think of me as a lavatory fixture. What kind of girl did he think I was. (63)

Problem is not only that she is treated like a lavatory fixture, but also that Marian tries to mould her behaviour as per his requirements. Self-objectification triggers because she wants to know what kind girl she is considered by Peter. To feels like subject and earn the jealousy of Peter she projects Len as an object of jealousy. Pater wants her to behave like a female; he Peter blames her “why can’t you even cook anything” (65), she wants to make sharp comment but suppress it. Peter considers

marriage as “predatory”, “malicious” and a “domestic void” (65). Marian wants to marry him and feels all these adjective belongs to her. Pater considers himself solitary as Marian’s company is solitary. She as an individual, as human, as friend does not stand anywhere. Peter shows his upper hand at everything and even at a small gesture of showing affection, it is evident. Marian contemplates:

I put my hand through Peter’s arm ... - and he brought his other hand over and placed it on top of mine. I was going to bring my other hand up and place it on top of his, but I thought if I did then mine would be on top and he’d have to take his arm out from underneath so he’d have another hand to put on top of the heap, like those games at recess. (66)

For Peter love is also like a game in which he loves to dominate. Peter metaphorically refers patriarchal set of rules by which he tries to bind Marian. Surprisingly, Peter himself never feels need of any rule for himself. If he feels solitary, same is with Marian. He is indifferent toward Marian’s needs. In his sexual intercourses, he bothers only about himself and this secondary position in sexual intercourses lit up depersonalization in Marian, for whom sex is about emotional fulfilment. Kriston Poirot states:

Conflicts over sexuality for many women – about what they wanted from sex, about what they had learned about themselves (and men) by learning about sex, about what counted as ‘real’ sex... the experience of being one of the two sexes had everything to do with the sex one was (or one was no) having sex with. (88)

Same is the condition of Marian, in the sexual intercourses she is the one on which sex is performed. She is the one who needs to lie about her sexual experiences to satisfy the ego of Peter. Peter and Marian do not make sex out of love, but it happens out of frustration of Peter. His obsession with trying new in sex on the cost of Marian's displeasure and discomforts represents Peter's attitude towards Marian.

In Peter's life Marian does not have a great role. Peter is centre of her life, but Peter always prefers his friends. Marian feels happy when she heard that all his friends are married now, but it does not change her status. For Peter, first thing is career, social gathering, friends and the last thing is Marian. Marian's attempt to get attention of Peter by making him jealous of Len has been stolen by Ainsley and she feels alienated and gets first stroke of de-realization. Her lack of agency puts her in a situation of being an object. She sums up her experience thus, "Peter's voice seemed to be getting longer and faster – the stream of words was impossible to follow, and my mind withdrew, concentrating instead on the picture of the scene in the forest" (Atwood, *Edible* 71). In this moment of panic and dejection, she feels numbness and how her body starts reacting beyond her control.

... A large drop of something had materialized on the table near my hand. I poked it with my finger and smudged it around a little before I realized with horror that it was a tear. I must be crying then! Something inside me started a dash about in dithering mazes of panic, as though I had swallowed a tadpole. (71)

She starts losing control over her body. It is like losing the role of agency. She first time feels that her body is a separate entity than her and behaves as its own. She is

not able to understand what is happening. It seems absurd to her and she tries to grip herself. She feels that she is treated like “a stage troop”; silent but solid, a two dimensional outline” (72) by Peter. After the dinner over, while leaving the restaurant, she suddenly starts running. She wonders how her feet began to run. Everybody gets astonished. She expects Peter to run behind her, but he goes back to get the car. She runs and waves off to people. In this chase when Len bumps into people. She realizes she is not able to stop herself. She is needed to be stopped. She feels good for being stopped and listen normal voice of Peter. She feels happy to know that ‘he was real’ (76). Marcia Cavell in her essay “Triangulation, one’s own mind and objectivity” states:

We think with thoughts, about things, and we cannot think about these things unless we recognize our thoughts about them as thoughts. Someone gripped by a fantasy has for a moment put aside the possibility that what he thinks might be false, or a case of wishful thinking, or just a partial view of things. (84)

In case of Marion, it is a wishful thinking. She wants to escape from what she cannot flee- the harsh reality. Len believes that she is hysteric. Marian feels defeated and “filled with penitence” (Atwood, *Edible* 77), but has no outlet for her emotions.

Marian’s hysteric actions do not end here. After coming Len’s apartment, she slides under the bed. She feels like different objects. She contemplates- “I had dug myself a private burrow. I felt smug” (79). She feels good that nobody knows where she is, but she does not know the reason of her flight “I could no longer recall what good reasons had led me to cram myself under Len’s bed in the first place. It was

ridiculous” (79). She finds these actions ridiculous, it also implies that she neither justifies her action nor have control over them. She knows she has done a wrong thing, but she decides she “would stay until forcibly removed” (79). Her hysteric decision has a reason that she feels she is monopolized by Peter and in counter attack, she wants to monopolize him, but she feels unethical to do so and thus lead to a sort of vacuum. She wants to talk about their future, which they avoid since four months. She was evading reality but at last decides to face it. She feels engaged the way she is treated by Peter, but she still does not know the exact because of her rage and acts. She contemplates:

Once I was outside I felt considerably better. I had broken out; from what, or into what, I didn't know. Though I wasn't at all certain why I had been acting this way, I had at least acted. Some kind of decision has been made, is something had been finished. (81)

Marian's freak behaviour was the product of her long term inaction. She has acted at last, but in wrong direction. For the time being, she feels content and having ins and outs of depersonalization. She lets Peter treats the way he wants to treat her. This was their first fight. She believes she is no more involved with Peter, but in actuality she was unhappy on the fact that Peter enjoyed himself and she does not get the desired attention. Kyle Stevens states

Within the binary (man and woman), since men are defined as the ones who act, emotional expressions were associated with Femininity, understood to be opposed to actions, and indicated passivity, a reception of the world. (129)

Peter in the same binary does not like Marian's hysteric actions and states "you see just rejecting your femininity" (Atwood, *Edible* 83), but Marian does not like blaming femininity for his rue behaviour. She believes she is also a human and like male has a separate identity. This new found identity of her is in direct contrast to her old self. Marian starts believing she is two selves. One which is involved with Peter and second, which dejects him. She faces the problem of choice. What she should choose the self that was trained by long term traditions which she presents and lived accordingly; or the one which rejects all these norms and conditions. One the way back to home, when Peter cannot control the car, and ruins somebody's lawn. She states, "you'll get us all killed!". I must have been thinking of myself as plural" (84). She believes Peter is doing this due to guilt, but for Peter it is a projection of his muscular power as he ruined somebody's lawn. Marian calls Peter "overgrown adolescent" (84), who is not serious. Marian wants Peter to be committed to the marriage from a long time and she feels this is the reason of her weird behaviour, but once he proposes her, she stares at him and see herself "small and oval, mirrored in his eyes" (85). Next morning she feels lost. She feels she tried too hard for such a small place in Peter's life. She states "my mind was at first as empty as though someone had scooped out the inside of my skull like a cantaloupe and left me only the rind to think with" (86). She accepts to Ainsley that she wants to marry Peter all along, but once this starts happening as per her unconscious plans she feels troubled and uprooted.

Marian starts viewing Peter into a new light after the marriage proposal. He is transformed from "a reckless young bachelor into a rescuer from chaos provider of stability" (92). She feels he will provide her stability and security which is

missing from her life. Peter has different reason for getting married. He does not want to be termed as queer by the society, it's good for his profession as clients are suspicious of single men and he believes "Most women are pretty scatter-brained but you're such a sensible girl" 93). This decision of marriage is part of her career choice, his dwelling into the civilized society and his road to progress. In contrast to this Marian has no reason of getting married; for her it is a natural choice. While making decision about marriage day, Marian astoundingly unlike her let peter takes the decision: She feels nervous and feeling of nothing to do. To fill this emptiness, She wants to do something finished and accomplished.

Bored and anxious, she tries to find solace in mundane action like laundry. Laundry scene is an attempt of Marian to get the feeling of authenticity and completeness. All her actions till now she has dual perspectives, she wants to do thing with single mindedness. While going to laundry, she sarcastically answers to Ainsley. She says, "I've chopped Peter up into little bits. I'm camouflaging him as laundry and taking him down to bury him in the ravine" (9). This is what she is actually doing; camouflaging in society by shedding her natural emotions. Marian feeling of getting caged into her thought of getting Peter is over, but still she feels restless. She states, "They say all caged animals get that way when they're caged, it's form of psychosis, and even if you set the animal free after they go like that they'll just run around in the same pattern" (109). She is also a caged animal and she feels even if she will be set free she does not know how to act. She wants to break this monotony. She is anxious to have freedom as she does not want to bear its consequences. In this sort of paranoia, she kisses Duncan out of jerky attractions and repulsions. She does not remember any sensation as Duncan states "hunger is more basics than love" (105), this was out of hunger, hunger to be a subject not an object

of love. Marian has dream of marrying and having child, like every other women as per Marian because life for her is not principle driven but based on adjustments. But she starts getting driven by her unconscious – She realizes, “it was my subconscious getting ahead of my conscious self, and the subconscious has its own logic” (108). Her subconscious wants her to take action which she has been avoiding since her meeting with Peter. Whereas her conscious decisions were driven by social necessities and embodied into social reality’ her subconscious weaves different fabrics of real for her. It draws its own pattern, free from Marian’s social persona and desires. As Abraham J. Twerski states

This is the nature of an obsession or compulsion, whether it occurs from a suggestion given under hypnosis or from a subconscious urge from same unknown origin... a compulsive act can be irrational, yet the urge to do it may be virtually irresistible. (9)

Same is happening with Marian, she knows she has made a rational choice of marrying Peter; he was attractive, bound to be successful and neat, but still she was unhappy. She does not even know the name of Duncan, but she kissed as her subconscious wants to have distraction. The reference of Underwear Man is important in terms her viewing herself as a sexual object. “Women face filthy phone calls from “Underwear Man” and he says he is from their company. Marian feels sympathetic towards him and imagines him as a victim of social norms. Marian feels that Maybe Peter is the “Underwear Man” (125)

Next symptom of depersonalization is that she developed recently is detachment. Marian never really gets involved in anything completely and at her workplace she remains detached to the turmoil. Marian sometimes doubt that may be

she is suffering from anaemia. Marian starts rejecting Peter's patriarchal rules stealthily. While watching movie in a theatre, she sits in unlady like position. She also recalls embarrassing moment with fugitive old man of childhood. She encounters Duncan in theatre and feels like touching him "...she noticed a peculiar sensation in her left hand. It wanted to reach across and touch him on the shoulder. Its will seemed independent of her own; surely she herself wanted nothing of the kind (Atwood, *Edible* 134). Her body starts behaving independent to herself. It seems to her like a distant object, acting as its own. She is not able to determine what is real and what is unreal. She doubts that she is a victim of a complicated hallucination. She feels vulnerable and pre-occupied with her body. Ghislaine Boulanger paraphrases this condition thus:

It is not the material body as the site of greatest vulnerability, but the psychic body, the body-in-mind, the host to agency, the interpreter of volition, the container of affect, that is subject to fragmentation and depersonalization. (87)

Marian faces the same issues of depersonalization. She loses control over reassuring and consolidating embrace of psychic control and feels that her body is exposed to self-scrutiny.

Marian starts meeting Duncan, a curious adult, who loves ironing and eat pumpkin seeds to avoid smoking. She does not reveal it to anything as she believes, "it might upset the balance the power" (Atwood, *Edible* 148). Duncan hates public rumours and motherly advances of people. Duncan likes Marian wants complete things and what bothers him is lack of finality. He is anxious over temporary things and wants to place permanent leaves on the trees. For him, Marian is "just another

substitute For the Laundromat” (156), but Marian does not what does he substitute for. Marian knows she is living with Duncan to replace something, but she is still far away from deciphering this. For Duncan, his room-mates are substitutes for parents who should be protected from reality to their kids. Thomas Freeman describes substitution on the manner:

Substitutes are formed from the displacement of emphasis from one idea or group of ideas to another idea or group of ideas. In conjunction with the archaic (pre-logical) means of representation, condensation and displacement are responsible for the formation of manifest content ... and the pathological form of thinking, perceiving, and remembering. (93)

Both of them Marian and Duncan are substitute for the other. Marian is using him to displace her uneasy thoughts of Pater and marriage. Duncan is a condensed image of social rejection and questioning male made morality. Her secret trips to laundry are symbol of washing away the dirt of male ideology and meeting Duncan is her rejection of social morality. Both of these things are at unconscious level.

Pater takes authenticity away from Marian. He is an emblem of social taboos and authority. Peter chooses all things for both Marian and for himself. According to him Marian does not understand child care on parenting he has “led a sheltered life” (Atwood, *Edible* 159) and she does not understand such complex issues. Peter starts looking at her more intently and this makes her somehow uneasy. This external control on her body triggers eating disorder in Marian as she feels she is not the master of inner and the most basic human urges. While eating meat in restaurants, she cannot take her attention away from the thinking about cow. She feels she is

“devouring it. Gorging herself on it” (164). She tries to eat it but does not able to. She starts detesting meat. Len’s incident of eating chicken in egg makes Marian unable to eat eggs. Alice M. Polumbo states :

Atwood problematizes the idea of authenticity and unitary identity in the novel through Marian’s dilemma. In attempting to avoid being a consumer, Marian instead falls into a ritualistic form of progressive anorexia which makes her unable to consume anything. (22)

Marian’s increasing identification with the consumed object (her over identification as a victim) leads to her becoming a victim of her own body. Marian also feels affinity with the London girl who stopped washing. Marrian starts watching people around him in different perspectives. She feels them, their identities and their substances. She feels’,

She was one of them, her body the same, identical, merged with that other flesh that choked the air in the flowered room with its sweet organic scent; she felt suffocated by this thick Sargasso – sea of femininity. (181)

She feels that she is merging in other bodies of femininity and she tries to fix a barrier between herself and the “liquid amorphous other” (182). Even in such feminine atmosphere newlyweds girls are considered as unstable and unfit. Marian realizes hse has a liquid personality and it is the product of the adjustment that she has made throughout her life and now these adjustments are dictating terms to her. Marian starts feeling that her body is acting independent to her. There are convulsive movements of the muscles, numbness and assimilation into other’s liquid bodies.

She has a loss of appetite for meat specifically. Barbara Hill Regney in *Women writers* states, "... Marian's antipathy to Food is clearly a rejection to her female identity and the maternity that identity seems to her inevitably to imply" (23). This is her rejection of feminine cultural model that Pater imposes on her. Peter takes her to different parties of lawyer which she attended silently and smilingly. She gave up eating hamburger, mutton, lamb, hotdogs and list goes on. "She was becoming more and more irritated by her body's decision to reject certain foods" (193). It seems to her that her body is "other' then her. Her rejection of food is her rejection of the roles given to her. Madeleine Davies states "*The Edible Woman*, where the protagonist's loss of appetite marks a resistance to pre-designated roles as both consumed and consumer. (It is no coincidence that Marian works for a market research company)" (60).

Marian starts growing hypersensitive to all living things. She rationalizes that she cannot eat things which once been or might still be living. One instance of carrot goes like this:

She became aware of the carrot. It's a root, she thought, it grows in the ground and sends up leaves. Then they come along and dig it up, may be it even makes a sound, a scream too low for us to hear, but it doesn't die right away, it keeps on living, right now it's still alive.

(Atwood, *Edible* 194)

She feels hypersensitive towards food. This hypersensitivity is the part of her mental mood and state of mind. She feels she is a living thing and due to her compromising nature and adjustment her silence is taken as her approval to use her as object; same

is true about the living objects. She feels these natural objects are screaming and telling her that they have life. William James states:

The various permutations and combinations of which these organic activities are susceptible make it abstractly possible that no shade of emotion, however slight, should be without a bodily reverberation as unique, when taken in its totality, as in the mental mood itself. (1066)

To avoid anxiety which Marian has been suffering from, she starts seeing Duncan frequently, who is also looking for frequent escapes. She and Duncan both are escapist who believes external activities can cover up their inner vacuum. She liked to be used by Duncan as an escapade because his demands do not require answer from her. She states the difference thus:

....when he would murmur, with his lips touching her cheek, "You know, I don't even really like you very much", it didn't disturb her at all because she didn't have to answer. But when Peter, with his mouth in proximity the same position, would whisper, "I love You" and went for the echo, she had to exert herself. (200)

Duncan's demand are not existential for Marian, because Marian can reject them as authentic subject. With Peter this is different, Peter speaks with an authority of a husband, a lover which society approves and Marian cannot reject this. In Duncan and Marian's case both of them using each other for escapes and with him she lives in present only. While staying with Peter stings of past and future start pulling her attention. Duncan is self-centred and Marian finds it comforting without knowing the reason. Marian does not want destruction of Peter and Duncan and want to have

both of them. Duncan describes sex as distraction and how its “ad nauseam” (207) which suits to Marian as sex with Duncan is not a matter of social obligation, but an act of physical necessity.

While going for dinner at Duncan’s place on the invitation of Trevor and Fish, Marian takes her wedding ring off, Marian tries to put her inhibitions away by trying to pretend that these ailments are superficial. She does not want to be labelled as freak or neurotic. In Marian’s case there was no childhood trauma related to her eating disorder. Marian thinks about all her friends with whom she can talk and consult but she finds it no help. She wants to know to what direction she is moving to. Hairdressing appears to her like her head treated like a cake, an object that needs to be carefully iced and ornamented. “She did not enjoy feeling like a slab of flesh, an object” (229). It seems to her like a nurse and doctor drama. Marian’s conditions keep on getting deteriorating. She scares from baths as it seems her she will be dissolved in the water. “She was afraid of losing her shape, spreading out, not being able to contain herself any longer, beginning (that would be worst of all) to talk a lot, to tell everybody, to cry” (240).

Marian’s perception and her ability to calculate Peter’s reactions in advance start getting blurred. Suddenly he “become an unknown quantity” (248) to her. All people who are known to her, starts growing stranger to her. To ease herself in Peter’s party, Marian called Ainsley, Office Virgins, Duncan and his roommates. He later regrets to call them. She is not able to get a complete vision of herself. She watches her naked arms and they look “fake, like soft pinkish-white rubber or plastic, boneless, flexible...” (251) to her. Even to pose for camera to have a photograph with Peter made her uneasy.

Joe, Clara's husband, refers to the dilemma of women quite appropriately. Joe in his discussion tells about how women get devastated especially when they are educated. They are treated like a thinking human being and their core gets evaded once they get married. It is the core of their personality, a built an image of their self, in reference of Clara he states, "her feminine role and her core are really in opposition, her feminine role demands passivity from her... She's hollow, she does not know when she is anymore; her care has been destroyed" (259-260). This is apt description of women's dilemmas as femininity that is social phenomenon is in opposition to the image that these women have conceived for themselves. Stephen Frosh states

.... image of the self as an illusion suggests that the dissolution of the personality evident in some psychotic states should be seen as the purest expression of the human condition; or, atleast, it makes psychosis a metaphor for contemporary experience. (13)

Clara and Marian's dissolution of self-perception is also social in nature. Their core is against the societal norms and feminine perception. They crave for the life of mind, but are caged into the image of feminine body.

Marian termed Peter's friends as soap-men. Marian wears red dress in the party and everybody tells Marian that she should wear red more often, except then Duncan who finds Laundromat more comforting then her party. This red dress makes Marian uncomfortable, as she feels this attracts male attention and male approval to her demeanour. Unable to adjust with this objectification, she runs away from her own party stealthily to laundry. Her body had cut itself off and it rejects

everything. She is desperate to feel alive and get authentic control over her body. In her desperation, she tries sex with Duncan in a cheap hotel:

To Duncan, she starts appearing too real, so she is no more an escape. Duncan lives in his own world of fantasies, but these fantasies are chosen by him and he likes them, Marian has her own personal cut-de-sac. (291)

Duncan is an inept person and thus never spreads his safety tactics on her. Even while having sex, he does try to relate her body with social decoration. It is an act of hunger- a hunger that Marian wants. This is the first act of her social defying and she starts getting the agency of her body back.

Pregnancy in Atwood's fiction presents self and loss of self at the same time. For Peter Marian juxtaposes the images of hunter, Killer and the Underwear Man. The reality that is created by Marian and Duncan is subjective in nature. Duncan presents anorexic body of Marian. She also has maternal feeling for Duncan and child fixation for Duncan and for not being fat. Duncan poses her alter ego, a tool to free her Self. The red dress in the novel presents male gaze and depersonalized female self an attempt to embody male desires as their own. The male oriented corporate world like Seymour where female are middle dwellers where self-cannibalism is a necessity and socially embellished custom presents alter male reality. Rather than giving artist in her a wing what she does is review and rewrites a Seymour Surveys. The cake made by her ultimately unleashes that female creator, the god that rules the psyche of the subaltern. Marian presents unconscious female archetype. As a middle dweller in Seymour she neither was able to go underground

to form a labourer's force nor at the executive level to have the power of ideology. Her act of baking cake was crafting a female image as per her own parameters. Duncan states that hunger is more basic than love. Marriage is consuming, child birth organically refers to artistic expression but as a social imposed rule relates to amputation Linda Hutcheon in her essay "From Poetics to Narrative Structures: The Novels of Margaret Atwood" states:

The Edible Woman is necessarily Atwood's best novel; it is a transitional work, an overt displaying and working out of the aesthetically and morally problematic and paradoxical nature of artistic creation. It gives life and yet condemns to artifice. (20)

Marian starts understanding her problem and in this attempt The cake baking scene unfolds layered parts of Marian's psyche. She draws a female image on the cake. It is her way to defy Peter's attempts to make her feminine:

You've been trying to destroy me, haven't you", she said. "You've been trying to assimilate me. But I've made you a substitute, something you'll like much better. That is what you really wanted all along, isn't it. (299-300)

Peter refuses to eat it and this makes Marian hungry, extremely hungry and she starts eating from cake woman's feet. Even Ainsley screams at her this act. She states, "You're rejecting your femininity" (301), but it does not stop Marian from eating as she states "Nonsense ... it's only a cake" (301). Thus her journey from a consumed object to become a consumer get complete as she starts differentiating between her

body and other objects. Marian loves her status as a personal singular noun. Barbara Hill Rigney states in her essay:

Marian MacAlpin of *The Edible Woman* is a cannibal who eats herself; the nameless protagonist of *Surfacing* ritualistically murders dolls in childhood, just as she later, as an adult, considers herself guilty of child murder by abortion, real or imagined or simply a lie.
(63)

This also makes her feel that her situation is interesting. After all the trouble Marian comes back to reality and in Duncan's words "you're a consumer" (Atwood, *Edible* 209). Duncan ate the cake made by Marian and it gives a peculiar sense of satisfaction to Marian.

Thus Both Sita and Marian are affected by the social norms and are fed up from their inauthentic existence. The symptoms that appear in them are detachment from body, hypersensitivity, emotional numbness, lack of agency, visual and perceptive distortion, acute self-observation or self-objectification and derealisation. Causes of their depersonalization lie in patriarchal structure and social set up. It affects them on the level of cognition as it triggers inferiority complex in them as well as lack of agency. Emotionally, they feel volatile and unable to respond rationally. It changes their behaviours. Marian feels that her body is constantly under scrutiny of male gaze, which initiates her depersonalization. To escape from the anxiety of depersonalization Marian starts making midnight trips to laundry and meets Duncan. Sita hates violence and refuse to give birth to her fifth child hypersensitively. For Sita violence is centred in masculinity and its expression is to

condone females. It is like a coercive male gaze which is ever present. Sita and Marian become anorexic. Marian stops eating food and Sita tries to live on smoking. Possible cure for both of them is either accepts their destiny and succumbs to male culture or to revolt against it. Sita as a middle aged woman and not a practical person has no other choice. She is half redeemed from depersonalization. She accepts her destiny. She understands her problem, which cures her psychosis. In case of Marian, she does not only understand, but also takes action to cure it. Her act of baking a cake and forcing Peter to eat it suggests that she understands the effect of her surroundings. She realises that it is Peter's patriarchal nature that is pushing her towards depersonalization. She revolts against her social role of being an object and assumes the role of a subject. She breaks her engagement that triggers her depersonalization and disregards the middle path of Seymour. She assumes the role of an analyst which ultimately becomes a tool in her cure.

Chapter 4

Multifaceted Loneliness: Subversion of Feminine Self and Facets of Depersonalization in *Fire on The Mountain* and *The Handmaid's Tale*

Loneliness is the part of human existence and almost everyone feels the pangs of loneliness in some point of time in their life. This loneliness can be acutely felt at the time of the death of a dear one, at the time of big loss, sometimes at the time of happiness etc. Loneliness alters behaviours of the individual by affecting the person physically and psychologically and also “shows up in measurement of stress hormones, immune function, and cardiovascular function” (Cacioppo 5). These physical changes compounded with psychological affects prove catastrophic for human. Cacioppo refers to UCLA loneliness Scale to measure loneliness. Symptoms of loneliness are-

- 1) Felling out of tune with people
- 2) Lack of companionship
- 3) Feeling left out
- 4) Feeling of meaningless relationships
- 5) Feelings of inadequacy
- 6) Feeling of irrelevance in other's life
- 7) Felling as an Object
- 8) Detachment from the surroundings
- 9) Absence of meaningful communication
- 10) Emotional numbness

It becomes problematic only when a person traps into self-enforced and self-created negative emotions. Majorly loneliness affects at three levels- Level of vulnerability to social disconnection, ability to self-regulate the emotions associated with feeling isolated, mental representations and expectations of, as well as reasoning about, others. Loneliness can be physical, a state of mind, or cultural. Christina Victor, et al states:

Loneliness describes the state in which there is a deficit between the individual's actual and desired level of social engagement and is distinct from being alone (time spent alone), living alone (simply a description of the household arrangements) and social isolation (which refers to the level of integration of individuals and groups into the wider social environment). (22)

Loneliness disrupts the ability of a person to regulate his emotions and thus person starts getting regulated by the external elements. In such scenarios subject often tries to take shelter in alcohol, drugs etc. if these elements fail, he may tries to commit suicide or some other defence mechanism. Loneliness creates a ground that can easily trigger depersonalization. Loneliness offers the fertile ground for depersonalization. In this condition of impaired regulation, all attempts of the subject induce and reinforce loneliness. Subject starts running from interpersonal encounters and draws within. He starts nurturing two selves one that is in tune with his conditions and another that he actually is. Unwilling loneliness creates wariness and triggers hypersensitivity or emotionally numbness. The art of socializing starts getting weakened. Loneliness in old age is the product of loss of esteem or ingratitude of children. Their self-image is dependent on their children and

unwantedness by them creates depersonalization in them. Throughout their life, they may have a good life and they were centre of people's lives and in old age they are discarded and are forced to take marginal position. They may feel the loss of reference and craving for old self and prestige. They feel their opinions are unwanted and they are no more are hero or ideal as they were earlier in their close relatives' lives. They try to encounter their loneliness by referring the glory of their past. Apart from above referred loneliness, the most complicated loneliness is existentialist loneliness. This is the product of human existence and their natures that make human depress and cause anxieties. Human existence is in its nature lonely.

Anita Desai in *Fire on the Mountain* and Margaret Atwood in *The Handmaid's Tale* provide two heroines, who are lonely and suffering from the pangs of reclusion. These two protagonists are from different nations and belong to two different cultures. Whereas Nanda Kaul lives in utopian land of Carignano; Offred is the dweller of dystopian world of The Republic of Gilead. Loneliness in the case of Nanda Kaul is the part of her mundane existence in patriarchal world order; and in case of Offred it is culturally induced in matriarchic world order. Thus the authors portrayed distinguished cultures, but the loneliness is depicted as the destiny of these female characters. All their attempts to escape from this loneliness fail to render the desired results.

In the novel *Fire on the Mountain* Anita Desai has presented the protagonist-Nanada Kaul- in her old age. She is devoid of youthful emotions and living the life of loneliness. The novel is divided into three parts –Nanda Kaul at Carignano, Raka's arrival at Carignano and Ila Das leaves Carignano. The whole plot revolves around the character of Nanda Kaul, a recluse, who in her old age lives in

Carignano, Kasauli. Loneliness is the most important part of her existence and even the postman's entrance in her home disturbs her composure as she ponders "what could he have for her she had no wish for letters" (Desai, *Fire* 3). She wants to live with "pines and cicadas alone" (3). For Nanda Kaul letters are the symbol of her past and attachment and she craves for none of these things. She lives on the ridge of the mountain at Carignano, in Kasauli and "she wanted no one and nothing else; whatever else "came, or happened here, would be an unwelcome intrusion and distraction" (3). She desires to be a non-existent for the world. "She fancied she could merge with the pine trees and to be mistaken for one. To be a tree, no more and no less, was all she prepared to undertake" (4). She feels dejected by the world and wants to have affinity with the trees and other animated or natural objects. As a natural object, she can live in the world, where can be the centre of her own life. She is not young anymore and she does not want to have relationship with the human world. She is happy with the barrenness of Carignano. She disapproves the presence of the postman by "nostrils pinched and whitened" (5). She feels her identity and identity of her home are interrelated. The home is the part of her Self; like this home she has a sinister past which she does not want to remember. The house and town belongs earlier to Britishers and after independence it goes to native. It has faced many parties and relationships in its youth; now in old age like its owner, it is dejected and alienated. Thus the author heightens the impact of alienated existence by creating references of the surrounding. Nanda Kaul rejects the concepts of social identity and believes in extreme individualism. Miriam Erez and P. Christopher Earley observes:

In its extreme form an individualistic approach views individuals as self-contained and detached from their social milieu, ignoring the importance of interpersonal relationships in shaping self-identity extreme individualism limits the development of the self by mitigating the role played by interpersonal relationships in shaping self-identity. (10)

The problem with Nanda Kaul's extreme individualism is that this is forced individualism. This is the illusion she has created. This makes her border-lined depersonalized patient. If the façade of her individualism and reclusion is broken, she will be shattered. Nanada Kaul undergoes many superficial relationships in the past and now she wants to shut the door to her past. She abhors communicating even with her children, who has abandoned her. In this reclusive existence a "letter unsettle her and even before opening she resolved to say "NO" (14). She is scared from her past. She has somehow contained her frustration and loneliness by aggregating her ego. She believes that the loneliness is her choice as she wants to live her life according to her own wishes. Unconsciously, she is scared that any invariable in this condition can erupt the volcano that she has kept silent in her. Her loneliness is like the hay or dry forest any fire of emotion in it can destroy it completely. Her fear from this emotional rupture can be observed in a simple action of opening a letter.

She felt an enormous reluctance to open this letter. She looked at it with distaste and foreboding for a long time before she finally tore it open and drew and the bundle of dark blue pages across which Asha's large writing planned. (15)

Nanda Kaul's anxious reaction to a simple letter shows that there is a deep turbulence under her peaceful demeanour. She has held the rein of this turbulence under the deceptions. She feels phobic that one variable in her existence can change all what she has kept under the carpet. Thus Nanda Kaul is living masked life and she assumes she is another self than the past self. She has kept all her dark secrets buried beneath this calm demeanour. Nanda Kaul does not like this intrusion in her private space. She is scared from the bonds of relationships.

She struggled to suppress her anger, her disappointment and her total loathing of her daughters meddling, busybody ways, her granddaughter's abject helplessness, and her great granddaughter's impending arrival here at Carignano. (Desai, *Fire* 18)

Her anger is the representation to her helplessness that is produced by her anxious resentment to others. She knows that in past, relationships rendered her only pain and in old age she wants to avoid this pain. She wants to enjoy stillness and want to entertain no intrusion. Her past haunts her continuously. She does not want any company but the sound of the cicadas and the pines. The sound of telephone appears ominous to her; she answers the call by great agony. She does not want to remind her old self and wants to relish her current life only.

Behind her desire for this reclusion and depersonalized behaviour is that she is a person without any past and memories (only fake memories and concocted stories of her father's home). Nanda Kaul has dark secrets of unhappy marriage that she has hidden from everybody. She was the wife Vice Chancellor of Punjab University, always surrounded by the wives and daughters of the lecturers and

professors over whom her husband ruled. Everyone complements her “Isn’t she splendid? Isn’t she like a queen?” (19). She was treated like a show piece as “Mr. Kaul had wanted her always in silk, at the head of the long rosewood table in the dining-room entertaining the guests.” (20). In her house her role was arranging parties, taking care of guests and looking presentable to people. Her existence was reduced to the extended persona of her husband. She has no other identity, but she exists only as a part of Vice Chancellor. She was trapped in this snare and spent her life in caretaking the house by mentally stalking through rooms and corridors. In her old age, she does not want this noose to slip once round her neck. She reminds about intense and busy world where she lived as Vice-Chancellor’s wife, it stifles her. Too many guests came to their house and there was lack of privacy. Everything was in abundance. “Too many meals, too many dishes on the table, too much to wash up after” (32). She had to take care of too many things. “She had suffered from the nimiety, the disorder, the fluctuating and unpredictable excess” (32). Nanda Kaul amidst all these parties always was lonely. These parties were the show of her husband’s glory and prestige. It never was her glory and prestige because at the back of this she had a marital discord. Her husband was not in love with her. Her children were not her choice. These parties were a compulsion forced on her. She did not want to decorate herself, but had no choice. She had to wear a mask of highly content wife and project herself as a portrait of panache. She was living the life of other. She was the self that she was not. Her life of deception and depersonalization started from here. She never revolted against this fake existence and her husband’s extra marital love affair. It also triggers self-loathing in Nanda Kaul. These emotions are aggravated because she does not only accept this existence, but she also needs to

celebrate it in front of others. Her social persona and real persona always stands opposite to each other. She has always chosen the former over the later. Nanda kaul, a willing subscriber of patriarchal ideology, lives her life as the wife of Vice Chancellor: a respectable designation without the respect. She succumbs to the gazes of admiration which she receives from 'others'-

Isn't she splendid? Isn't she like a queen? Really Vice Chancellor is lucky to have a wife who can run everything as she does, and her eyes had flashed when she heard, like a pair of black blades, wanting to cut them, despising them, crawling grey bugs about her fastidious feet. That was the look no one dared to catch or return. (19)

Her hatred and denial of these external elements is meek and inexpressive. Her inner turmoil blocked by self-imposed composure and acceptance of dominant ideology. Mr. Kaul uses his wife like a trophy of his victory and always wants her "in silk, at the head of the long rosewood table in the dining-room, entertaining his guests" (20). Anita Desai uses animal imagery to project the psyche and suppression of women. In her self-effacing journey, Nanda Kaul feels that she is a worm "inch by inch resisting inch from the ground till it snapped in two" (23). She feels like "the worm herself" and she winces "at its mutilation" (23). In later part of her life, she feigns the reclusion as her forte. Throughout her life she lives on the mercy of other's approval and abhors what she has been turned into due to her imitations. Reclusion becomes a rescue for her as all she wants is "to be alone, to have Carignano to herself in this period of her life when stillness and calm" are all that she wishes "to entertain" (18). She wants to embrace the nature and craves to be turned into a pine tree. Her natural instincts that are oppressed lifelong by familial expectations erupt

out in the reclusion. A single reference of re-entrance of culture in her life gets its expression in coarse groans and sudden repulsive utterances of rejections and pleas of “discharged all my duties. Discharge” (33). In case of Nanda Kaul, reclusion becomes a “psychological phenomenon, an internal conflict, a hostility felt toward something seemingly outside oneself which is linked to oneself, a barrier created which is actually no defence, but an impoverishment of oneself” (Finkelstein 137). Her act of debarring outer world from her inner circle of loneliness is an emblem of her repulsion for her past. It is “a recluse out of vengeance for a long life of duty and obligation” (Desai, *Fire* 52).

The problem with the Nanda Kaul is that in her old age she cannot even lives under illusion of the glory of her past. Nanda Kaul has the tendency to escape from her past that haunts her. Whenever she encounters her past she gets distressed because her past is bleaker than her present. Her tendency to run away from her past accelerates her depersonalization, because she starts believing in her own lies. While conversing with Ila Das when the chances of coming up her past on the surface get prominent she becomes fierce. In this situation “she felt like the worm” and “wincing at its mutilations” (23). She feels that bird is her husband and she is the worm who eats her identity to glorify his own identity. Nanda Kaul is highly annoyed by the visit of her granddaughter, because this also means that her past in form of Raka will be in front of her. Ila Das also observes the same as she thinks, “if there is really has been nothing in her (Nanda Kaul) voice beyond annoyance and apprehension, or if she had only imagined it” (Desai *Fire* 24). Thus Nanda Kaul defies her own existence. She tries to form stories to cover up her own inauthentic existence. She also maintains a poise and dignity, but inside she is hurt and broken.

Death is the constant symbol that surfaces in the novel and also refers to the death wish of Nanda Kaul. It seems like that she is scared from the realities of the past that rather than facing them, she would love to embrace death. She tries to think of non-living things to overcome her annoyance and irritation. She thinks, “She would imitate death, like a lizard. No one would dare ruse her. Who would dare? ” (24). She practices stillness as she hates open door of her previous house where feet flew or tramped without ceasing. The weight, of not responding to her duties, weighs upon her quite heavily. Her death wish is the wish for the death of her other self. She is fed up by living a life of depersonalization. She craves silence at that time and thinks:

Had they never been silent? Never absent? Plaiting her fingers together, contracting her eyelids, she fretted to catch at a saving memory, one that did not distract and hustle but cooled and calmed.
(Desai 27)

Her past is so horrid for Nanda Kaul that she has only a few memories that cooled her down. She wants to kill all these noises and sounds of past. She has two personalities; she hates the life of in-authenticity she has lived. Her loathing of that self is so strong that she wants to kill her own old self. At moments of annoyance and frustration, she tries to think of those memories. She loves to live alone and read excerpt of “When A Woman Lives Alone”. She wants to believe that she is willingly living alone.

She does not want to open that ledger again with Raka’s stay with her. Nanda Kaul suffers from posttraumatic stress disorder. As Daphne Simeon and Jeffrey Abugel states:

For a person to suffer PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder), they must have experience a major trauma in response to which they suffer “experiencing” symptoms (bad memories, nightmare, flashbacks); massive avoidance of anything or anyone reminding them of trauma and emotional numbness; and hyper-arousal symptoms (trouble sleeping, excessive vigilance and startling). (33)

Nanda Kaul is also a victim of posttraumatic stress disorder. Nanda Kaul does not want to suffer from the same stress again. She groans “Discharge me” (Desai, *Fire* 33) because care for others was a fake emotion for Nanda Kaul. After her husband’s death she came to Kasauli and her children left her alone as they cannot stay with her. She did not plan anything for this house “she revealed in its bareness, its emptiness” (33). This was a perfect and natural setting and Raka’s assumed presence disrupts Nanda Kaul. She considers Raka a liability and a dependant. She states, “She would never be able to sleep, Nanda Kaul moaned to herself, how could she sleep with someone else in the house? She was so unused to it, it would upset her so” (Desai, *Fire* 38). These are the cries of her other Self. Raka’s presence means that root cause of her stress can emerge again. In her attempts to avoid these stress issue, Nanda Kaul comes more close to the depersonalization. She tries to build the forte of lies, stories about her glorious past and utopian life.

Part II of the Novel titled as ‘Raka Comes to Carignano’. This title is symbolic of the variable that enters in the lonely existence of Nanda Kaul. Till now Nanda Kaul has made the fort of her lies strong and she believes in her own lies. Apart from having sudden uncomfortable moments, she was able to live her life of loneliness without much fuss. Arrival of Raka changes all the variables and Nanda

Kaul faces other's gaze again. Her two selves gets materialised again and are available for self-scrutiny. In the absence of others, she was able to ignore her depersonalised self, but in the presence of Raka all these realities and hidden secrets resurface again. Raka and Nanda Kaul meet each other unwillingly "each felt now bony, angular and unaccommodating" (44). For Nanda Kaul, Raka was "still an intruder, an outsider, a mosquito flown up from the plains to tease and worry" (44). For Nanda Kaul plain is the symbol of pain and mountain is a symbol of detachment and comforts. Everything that comes from plain reminds her of other Self and haunts her. Raka is a free bird and walks in home like nearly-caged and tamed wild ones. Raka is a recluse like her grandmother. Raka looks pale and Nanda Kaul keeps a safe distance from Raka and she does not want to be "drawn into a child's world again real or imaginary, it was bound to betray" (50). Strangely, she herself ventures into the world of imagination. Nanda Kaul notices that the Raka has a gift for disappearing silently. Nanda Kaul hates to take interest in another's activities and Raka's presence drags her to that direction. These expectations haunt Nand Kaul. Paul J. Thinbault states:

The agent seeks to control the probabilities, usualities, and the expectations concerning the actions of other social beings by locating them at person-placed which conform to the field of probabilities and expectation which the relevant norms have established. These norms include expectations as to what is usual, what is right, what is required, what is allowed and so on... This controlling field can extend into the past ... it can also extend into the future. (85)

In case of Nanda Kaul, she reacts as per the expectation of her surroundings. She moulds herself as per social norms in her past. Now she wants to be herself and act as she wants. Her actions do not meet her expectations; she has nothing to act upon. She is scared from experiences of depersonalization in her old life that she believes; if she goes back into the same world she will not be able to cure herself. Her methods of therapy that she has used are inadequate. She does not want to make Raka a part of her life. She is a perceptive child. Raka also avoids her, but for them it is not “so simple to exist and yet appear not to exist” (Desai, *Fire* 51). Nanda Kaul finds Raka’s presence irksome and absence perturbing. She is more reproachful than welcoming towards Raka. For Raka the rejection of Nanda Kaul’s existence was effortless. Strangely, this thing hurts Nanda Kaul. Nanda Kaul desires for Raka’s attention; she craves for it. Desai states, “She (Nanda Kaul) eyed the child with apprehension now, wondering at this total rejection, so natural, instinctive and effortless when compared with her own planned and wilful rejection of the child” (52). Nanda Kaul craves for the same detachment, because if she can achieve that she will be able to come out of her depersonalization. This will mean that she needs not to make false stories of her glorious past. She will be living a fulfilling life and no external element is going to disturb her. Nanda Kaul does not have an independent notion of self. Her notion of self is dependent on social gaze as throughout her life she lives life as per the norms of others. The gaze becomes an external element and makes it journey inward towards the psychic repression. As Bhabha refers-

The elision of the eye, represented in a narration of negation and repetition- no....no...never – insists that the phrase of identity cannot be spoken, except by putting the eye/I in the impossible position of

enunciation. To see a missing person, or to look at invisibility, is to emphasize the subject's transitive demand for a direct object of self-reflection, a point of presence that would maintain its privileged enunciatory position qua subject. (67)

Nanda Kaul is also the victim of same male and cultural gaze which she never able to break. To break this all pervasive panopticon of gaze it's compulsory for her to rise above external factors that make rules for feminine self. Nanda Kaul desires to be socially acceptable and wants the love and respect of her children. She does not want to be praised only as VC's life but as an independent self. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari observes:

Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of the desire is another machine connected to it. (26)

Nanda Kaul's desire also has same issue. She desires to be alone as she is scared from other's rejection of her Self. She feels that she will be enslaved by others' expectations. Desire for other's approval is a self-destructive desire. It is an open invitation to the external forces to annihilate what you do have. Nanda Kaul believes that Raka is the messenger of societal culture and interruption in her seclusion. She considers Nanda Kaul's arrival as an interruption in her discourse with nature Raka, who is a dweller of Nature. She is a "newly caged" (45) and ready to dispose of all

prohibitions of the society. She is “a recluse by nature, by instinct. She had not arrived at this condition by a long route of rejection and sacrifice-she was born to it, simply” (52-53). Nanda Kaul plans to reject the existence of Raka in her home. It is a planned attempt from her part, but from the part of Raka she simply denies her presence naturally. Raka creates an image of authenticity that Nanda Kaul craves for. She wants to achieve, what Raka has. She understands that she is too late for this. This constitutes the cause of her anxiety. Her comparison with Raka resurfaces her depersonalised life. Life of inaction which she leads outside her own self.

The problem of the lack of communication intensifies the existential woes of female characters in the novel. Nanda Kaul tries to rise above the imposed recluse and tries to engage a conversation with Raka. This attempt of hers is to tackle the problem of depersonalisation. She believes that if she will be able to interact with Raka it may cure herself. She miserably fails in her efforts. She tries this therapy half-heartedly. Unable to tell the truth as she cannot bear it, she frames a story of wild animals caged in his father's home. In his father's home all animals live inside the home, harmless and at their place. Thus she predicts her parental home as a place of safe existence, where animals of patriarchy are harmless and subdued. This is a utopian world created by her. A world, where she needs not to fancy herself as other and where she is an actor not an object. All her efforts of storytelling fall short of establishing any communication with Raka as she “could not bear to be confined to the old lady's fantasy world” (109). Nanda Kaul's pretension of recluse and love for silence starts shredding away. She craves for the company of Raka. She wants to interact with her, but flying birds hardly make a nest and do not mate with caged ones. White lies of Nanda Kaul fail to bridge the gap between her and Raka. Raka is

an explorer, who wants to touch and see things she wants to see Jackals rather than going to a club. She does not like censoriousness. When Nanda Kaul joins Raka for a walk, Raka gets dismayed as she does not want her company. Raka feels Nanda Kaul's presence is like collar and chain she does not have "a dog's slavishness to companionship" (61). They are awkward companion, apprehensive about each other, and walking unnaturally. Raka hates the very thought of school, of hostels, of discipline, order and obedience. (65). "Raka had all the Jealous, guarder instincts of an explorer, a discoverer, she hated her great-grandmother intently watching her ascents" (67). In this way Raka and Nanda's first adventure to form a companionship at monkey point was a failure. But Nanda Kaul states, "Raka, you really are a great grandchild of mine, aren't you? You are more like me than any of my children or grandchildren. You are exactly like me, Raka (71). Nanda Kaul wants to be like Raka. She wants to merge in the camouflage of nature without having any trace of existence.

This was a sudden outburst of Nanda Kaul. She was thawed from her cold heart by the warm companionship of Raka. Her depersonalization starts getting into control. Her desire to communicate starts appearing again. She was pushed to the loneliness because of aloofness. She was a recluse outwardly but inwardly wants companions, which is not based upon giving but being with someone as you are. Her recluse is not natural but an attempt to save herself from rejection. D Abraham Twerski rightly states:

Human beings by nature crave companionship. The loner doesn't really enjoy isolation, but sees it as the lesser of the two evils.

Mingling with people exposes the addict to the possibility of rejection. While rejection wouldn't be pleasant for anyone, to the addict it is devastating. The addict often anticipates rejection. (58)

In case of Nanda Kaul she stays away from companionship because she anticipates burden and rejection of her true self. She does not want to act as per the expectation of others. In front of Raka, she tries to repair her authority, her composure, but gradually Raka starts moving in her inner circle. Raka found darkness friendlier. She hates clubs and noises. These are nightmares for her. Raka knows the filth of this civilized society. It reminds her of childhood bad memories of her father beating her mother under the influence of alcohol writer states:

Somewhere behind them, behind it all, was her father, home from a party, stumbling and crashing through the curtains of night, his mouth opening to let out a flood of rotten stench, beating at her mother with harmers and first of abuse-harsh, filthy abuse that made Raka cower under her bed clothes and wet the mattress in fright. (78-79)

It seems to her that crying of Jackal is same as her mother's crying. These childhood memories haunt him and she runs away from civilization. Elisabeth Ullmann Werner Hilway states in the preface of childhood and trauma, "Traumatic events can massively and permanently destabilize the self-concept of children, the way they experience the world and the way they behave" (XV). She watches insects and trees curiously. Nanda Kaul fails to decipher her actions. To escape from the haunting memories of her childhood, Nanda Kaul utters, "I don't care- don't care-I don't care for anything! (Desai, *Fire* 80). Raka has a more deep relationship with Ram Lal than

Nanda Kaul. He interests her and provides assurance of safety, which are two vital elements of any relationship. Nanda Kaul starts liking Raka's dependence on her. Raka never realized this solitary existence of herself. She "never asked nor bothered to see if there was a letter for her or news (87). Raka wants to live free; she loves loneliness and want to stay free writer states:

Solitude never disturbed her. She was the only child Nanda Kaul had ever known who preferred to stand apart and off and disappear to being loved, cared for and made the centre of attention. The children Nanda Kaul had wanted only to be such centres; Raka alone did not.
(87)

Nanda Kaul starts liking her presence in spite of her stubborn idea to be alone. Raka's presence stays her awake. She knows that Raka understands Carignano. She values for it. She starts wishing that she never leaves. Raka was very selective about what she listens. Nanda Kaul was able to make some contact with Raka, but her depersonalization worsens because rather than telling realities, she weaves another web of lies. She makes another utopian world of her to enchant her granddaughter into it. The idea of her great grandfather's visit to Tibet enchants her. Nanda Kaul knows that peoples love fantasy and fairy tales she states "who wanted truth? Who could stand it? Nobody. Not even herself". (97). Nanda Kaul talks about Kashmir but she scares from her past as she states. "One seems like that all her life is just holding by the thread of past. Valerie Gray Hard Castle states:

As part of the complex body maps we continually make and revise, we pick out certain events as important, highlighting those over

others. We use those events to understand and explain what our bodies are currently doing, and we use past and present circumstances to envision what is to come. (20)

In case of Nanda Kaul she is haunted by her past. Nanda Kaul paints a fancy picture of her home in Kashmir where his father has bear and dogs who cannot stand the sight of each other. She states she had leopard too. Raka liked the story, but not the caging of animals. She states that they have peacock that were “the only tamed creatures” (105), with whom they shared their meals. Nanda Kaul starts liking her and don’t want her to slip away. She considers Raka’s indifference as a “good a challenge to her” (108). Raka finds this as “disagreeable intimacy” (109). She does want to be confined, into the fantasy world of Nanda Kaul because outside reality appealed her. Nanda Kaul feels that she has achieved her second childhood in Raka. Desai states, “She looked so exactly like a body thwarted, wanting attention she did not get, as she stalked through the hot, waiting house” (110).

Nanda Kaul, after a period of self-imposed recluse, start craving for intimacy and attention of Raka. Nanda kaul is a schizoid she suffers from emotional void. Marshall L. Silverstein states:

Schizoid patients get by in life through their emotionally dampened down withdrawal and empty interpersonal involvements, which represent their characteristically severely limited capacity for intimacy. Their isolation serves to protect them from threats to self-cohesion offered by a world that has come to feel unrewarding in its neglect of and unresponsiveness to normal mirroring needs. (77-78)

Nanda Kaul is also suffering from self-cohesion but Raka's intimacy gives her now life. Raka on the other hand detest caging she "no more needed or wanted, a house than a jackal did, or a cicada. She was a wild creature." (Desai, *Fire* 113). Nanda Kaul fills her fantasy house with furniture, treasure, trophies for Raka's amusement in contrast to her home in Carignano.

Third part of the novel and third stage of depersonalization of Nanda Kaul surfaces when she meets Ila Das. Ila Das comes to meet Nanda Kaul as an unwanted guest and resurfaces the past of Nanda Kaul. First, she confirms the lies of Nanda Kaul by telling related lies. In this way she narrates the societal norms. Her discourse is designated to affirm the position of women. Ila Das's entry into the story opens other dark secrets of Nanda Kaul's past. Ila Das is welcomed by hooligan students in Carignano. Nanda kaul watched this scene with "a frown of disgust" (119). Throughout her life Ila Das was "taunted and desired" (120) by mobs. Her voice is considered anti-social and incapable to communicate. She is tortured by her classmates for not having a normal voice. Nanda Kaul always protected her like an eagle in young age but in old age her presence reminds Nanda Kaul of her dead past. Author states:

Nanda Kaul froze into a state of pale concrete. The entire weight of the overloaded past seed to pour on to her like liquid cement that immediately set solid, incarcerating her in its stiff gloom. (129)

Ila Das's singing on imaginary piano disturbs the peace of Carignano. Ila Das admires Vice-Chancellor's house and wants to live the life of a normal woman. This reminds Nanda Kaul about her desires of being a normal woman and its consequences. It also resurfaces all trigger points of depersonalization- her

emotional numbness, hypersensitivity and unease. Ila Das reminds Nanda Kaul about her dress up, her indulgences into music and Nanda Kaul bears it silently. Ila Das's reference of Miss David halted this chattering. This is the point where Nanda Kaul cannot take it anymore. All this babbling of fantasy world was a white lie –a projection of bad faith. As both of them want to run away from anguish that they had faced in their earlier lives. Sartre in his book *Being and Nothingness* states:

If I am my anguish in order to flee it, that presupposes that I can decenter myself in relation to what I am, that I can be anguish in the form of “not being it”, that I can dispose of a nihilating power at the heart of anguish itself. This nihilating power nihilates anguish in so far so I flee it and nihilates itself in so far as I am anguish in order to flee it. This attitude is what we call bad faith. (44)

In their attempts to run away from the anguish, discourse of these two elderly ladies brings them to the anguish and ultimately truth surfaces. Ila Das's voices suddenly sliced up with bitter and burnt edge which leaves Ila Das “drier, dustier and more desperate” (Desai, *Fire* 134). Both of them are equally bitter and due to these “corroded edge joining the other, making up this wretched whole” (134).

In reality, Ila Das joined University at her difficult times. Her family inheritance was destroyed by her brothers and Nanda Kaul later watched Ila Das and her sister. She arranged job for her but she lost it later. She repents of this decision as she sighs “I wish I had stayed there.... In my position a little humility would have been much, much better....” (136). She leaves the job as she was not promoted as principle and till then she was rushing from pillar to post and life takes an ugly turn.

In her this unfortunate journey, she strayed again into Nanda Kaul's domain but she does not rule this world anymore. Her education is useless. She states, "We thought we were being equipped with the very best –French lessons, piano lessons, English governesses-my, all that only to find it left us helpless, positively handicapped. (139). Nanda Kaul wants to ask her to live with her, but she does not say this because she does not want to trap in this world. Ila Das, in her attempts to be authentic, works as a social welfare officer. She tries to educate poor people, but male dominating society does not allow her to work well. She states, "It's so much harder to teach a man anything, Nanda-the women are willing, poor dears, to try and change their dreadful lives by an effort, but do you think their men will let them? No not one bit. (14). She runs into trouble as she tries to stop child marriage, but all her effort are undone by the priest, who sets young men of the village against her. In these efforts she comes into loggerhead with Preet Singh, who was getting her 7 year old daughter married with an old man. Ila Das wants to revisit the past and have a cup of tea with it when she is tired of present, but Nanda Kaul wants to forget it. Ila Das's presence brought all horror of the past alive for her. Nanda Kaul wants to protect Ila Das and wants to fight some battles of her even on the cost of "making a fool of herself" (145). But attachment for Nanda Kaul was like danger lines. She faces three dangers in a day. There had been the moment where Ila Das babbled manically about mixed doubles at the vice-chancellor's badminton party-that had passed. Then there had been the moment when she felt she must invite Ila Das to stay-and that has passed. Now this final danger was over too-a mere cloud sailing over the hills, followed by its little chill shadow, indigo on azure" (Desai 146). She throughout the day she was scared from all these dangers who can challenge herself

deception, which has created four walls of manage, which assures her that she is sane. Hugo Standberg states:

..... how the self-deception extends over a longer period, how it is not tied to a single act ion but comes to expression in much of what this person does; him realizing that he has deceived himself is not realizing the nature of something positioned at a definite place but is about realizing the meaning of what he has been doing the whole timer. (48)

In case of Nanda Kaul, Carignano is a place of her deceptions and she hates all outer agents who can shatter her deception by entering into her shell of silence. When Nanda Kaul gets the news, she hysterically says, it is a lie. Suddenly all ties of her life start surfacing she states, “

It was all a lie, all. She had lied to Raka, lied about everything. Her father had never been to Tibet ... Nor had her husband loved and cherished her and kept her like a queen-he had only done enough to keep her quiet while he carried a lifelong affair with Miss David. (158)

She neither understood her kids, nor loved them. Even her loneliness was not a choice she lived here alone because that was what she was forced to do, reduce to doing. All those graces and glories with which she had tried to captivate Raka were only a fabrication: they helped her to sleep at night, they were “tranquilizers, pills” (158). Novel ends when Raka states she sets the forest on fire and she sees all lies are dangling as she sees “Nanda Kaul on the stool with her head hanging, the black telephone hanging the long wire dangling” (159).

Abrupt climax of the story erupts like a volcano and there is naked display of mad dance of women's predicament. Ila Das's attempts to save women from their familial suppression and subjugation end with her brutal rape and murder by Preet Singh. While receiving this news on phone all white lies of Nanda Kaul are peeled off. Her recluse was not her own choice but was forced upon her. Her stories that she told to Raka were only fabrication. Throughout her narration of her past glory was her bad faith- a deliberate lie spoken by her. These were her attempts "to flee what it cannot flee" (Sartre 70). She was trying to put herself "out of reach". It was "an escape" (565). All her masks of uprightness and recluse are taken away and she has to face the harsh reality. All her familial bonds were failure. Her husband loved somebody else whom he did not marry but "whom he had loved, all his life loved" (Desai, *Fire* 158). All his children were "alien to her nature. She neither understood nor loved them" (158). Novel ends with Raka's statement that "she set the forest on fire" (158). Forest is symbol of Nanda Kaul's white lies and denial of collective discourse- a self-impose recluse to save her sanity. Raka is symbol of revolution and she ends Nanda Kaul's reclusion by setting her forest of lies on fire. The screams of animals that she hears no longer remain unheard. Nanda Kaul faces the horror of her Depersonalization. Unable to face them, she dies by the shock. News of Ila Das's death remind her that the deception she has created as other self is a lie and her real self surfaces. Reminder of this inauthentic existence plays havoc trick on her.

In contrary to Utopian world of *Fire on the Mountain*, *The Handmaid's Tale* presents a dystopian world, which depicts Gilead's patriarchal world order that is established under matriarchic regulation. This disciplinary world order has a female face for projection and is patriarchal in nature. To foster camaraderie and to save

women from performing all social duties, only one work is assigned to women by the authority of Gilead- that is producing children. On the name of their security, they are turned into children producing machines. Governing mechanism of Gilead world orders are put on display for the reader, but for its dwellers reality is fragmented in nature and dividing lines of real and unreal are blurred. These dwellers are living the life of extreme loneliness. This loneliness is not the product of their actions but it is the part of Gilead's culture. These women are depersonalised on purpose. In this authoritarian rule, women's depersonalisation is done in a structured manner. The novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* has an abrupt opening and has first person narration. The technique of stream of consciousness has been used to juxtapose past and present of the narrator. The novel opens up with the nostalgic comment, "We slept in what had once been the gymnasium" (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 13). Narrator refers past through phrases like "after image", "old sex in the room", "knew from pictures" etc. (13). The expressions give glimpses of the lost world. Handmaids' staying in these places are being transformed into different person for a higher purpose.

To depersonalise them and make them forget previous world order, first step is the systematic categorisation of all subjects. Male and Female are divided and are prohibited to communicate to each other. They are not allowed to communicate to each other. Narrator states, "We learned to lip read, our heads flat on the beds, turned sideways, watching each other's mouths. In this way we exchanged names, from bed to bed. (14). Denial of communication, suspends the change of any actual communication. It turns them into a body that needs to be observed for understanding. Their nameless existence indicates the absence of identity.

Communication is a very important part of our social identity. Denial of this very basic facility is a very systematic step by the authority. Sharon Taylor relates communication to social realities.

Communication – especially participatory communication – is more than just a technology or set of methodologies, resources, or media; it is a set of exchanges comprising a collective “word” for naming people’s realities – a word that by naming a denied and fragmented reality makes it visible, identifiable, and meaningful. (23)

In the absence of communication through verbal languages the reality that is created by these dwellers of Gilead is fragmentary and illusionary. This in effect also affects handmaids’ own reality. They do not have any ideology and reason of their own existence. The perception of these members about each other and about themselves is based on guesses. They observe each other not as a human, but by the role played by the members. Every relation is defined through the narrative of Gilead authority. Every human action is depersonalized and every disciplinary institution is personified as a celebrated and accepted reality. Human interaction for Handmaids is reduced to minimum. Coral Ann Howells states:

Offred has nobody to whom she can talk, so she resorts to telling other women’s stories within her own, creating the impression of a multi-voiced narrative which undermines Gilead’s myth of women’s silence and submissiveness. (168)

In her narration, she intermingles the stories of many other like him, thus her narration is depersonalized which has fluid like identities. Neither she is credible nor aware about her own reality principle.

Next step to depersonalisation them is that they have strict rules for dressing and behaviour. Short skirts and high heels are banned. Opening hairs is considered like “getting undressed” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 38). Invisibility is considered modesty and “westernized” way of open life has been destroyed. Aunt Lydia reinforces this idea by stating, “To be seen – to be seen – is to be – her voice trembled – penetrated. What you must be, girls, is impenetrable” (38). Aunts are appointed as observer and Handmaids are reminded about their duties at every possible chance. They are putting veils and they are not allowed to interact with any male. Handmaids live separately. Males and sex is a taboo in this society. Love is considered a sin and emotions are party to devil. Dress codes are defined so does the behavioural pattern, Narrator termed ‘themselves as ‘ladies in reduced circumstances.

The placement of Handmaids is symbolic in nature. Through this territorial and physical placement in the aloof symbolical territory which is “a face where the eyes has been taken out” (17). All rooms are having same shapes, windows be opened partly, same chairs, same white curtains, “Nothing take place in the bed but sleep; or no sleep” (17). There is no place for individuality. Everything is generalized and defined and treated in terms of its functions. Narrator, Offred, has no affinity with her surroundings and she avoids the use of pronoun “my” (18): Their identity is imposed upon them and shaping of their identity is a right that is denied to them. As Anna Mitschele and Frederic Godart observes in “Identities Seek Control”:

Identity achieves social footing as both a source and a destination of communications to which identities attribute meaning, consequently, without footing, identities would jump around in a social space without meaning and thus without communication. (1)

The identities which are provided to these Handmaids have no footing and consequently jumping in social space. The link between the word of identity imposed on them and the perception of these Handmaids about them has no affinity. The name for them is a word without having any co-relation. To get out of this house prison they need to have a pass and phrases like “behave like a sister” (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 21). The idea behind all this is to destroy individualism. Individualism asks people to form their own identity as per their own tastes and performances. These Handmaids were living same life earlier, but in changed scenario they are forced to be depersonalised into same. It is like a caste system and base of this caste system is body. Their body is their destiny.

These handmaids are lonely in such a manner that they start observing themselves as an object. The loneliness is imposed upon them to alienate them from the things and people that are dear to them. This triggers in Handmaids a process objectifying their own bodies. Iris Marion Young explains women experience of alienation and its impact on the psyche:

Alienation here means to objectification or appropriation by one subject to another subject's body, action or product of action, such that she or he does not recognize that objectification as having its origins in her or his experience. A subject's experience or action is alienated when it is defined or controlled by a subject who does not share one's assumptions or goals. (55)

Handmaids' actions are not the product of their own needs, but are assigned to them. The ladies are under complete supervision. The all-pervasive panoptic eye makes them imprisoned not only of external surveillance but also before their own gaze. They are alienated to their body. They start following their body as they are trained to do so. Protagonist observes herself like an object.

I can see it as I go down the stairs, round, convex, a pier glass, like the eye of a fish, and myself in it like a distorted shadow, a parody of something, some fairy tale figure in a red cloak, descending towards a moment of carelessness that is the same as danger. A sister, dipped in blood. (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 17)

Her vision towards herself as something “distorted”, “a shadow”, “a parody”, sipped in blood shows the objectified vision of her as something inferior shows the level of objectification that has been happening around these handmaids. These women need to use veil. While going outside, it seems to them like their bodies have dejected them. They crave for emotional satisfaction. They are so lonely that they feel “hunger to touch something” (21) to feel real.

The system surrounded these Handmaids defines their identity, actions, and experiences. They are alienated not only from the society but also from the experience of their bodies. These Handmaids lack authenticity of their experiences. Experiences like knitting of scarves are a futile activity because these scarves are not used by anybody known to these Handmaids. This activity is performed to keep them busy. All luxury goods are banned for them “like liquor and coffee, cigarettes are forbidden” (24) what is good or bad for them is decided by outer agencies. They

even sound like “voice of a monotone, voice of a doll” (26). Women in this system are issued to commanders for use. These Handmaids use wings on their eyes so that they cannot look around. It is like setting horses on one direction. These Handmaids are surrounded by guards, who are males, but they are not allowed to touch them. They only touch them with “their eyes” (32). These women do not have power on their bodies. They have a passive power of a dog bone. As narrator states:

There are no more magazines, no more Films, no more substitutes; only me and my shadow, walking away from the two men, who stand at attention, stiffly by a roadblock, watching our retreating shapes.
(Atwood, *Handmaid's* 32)

Everything related to pleasures is taboos and restrictions are imposed on every natural activity.

To suppress any social subject or society, it is important to control over education. In this dictatorship, universities are closed, lawyers and courts are dismantled. In this changed scenario, women of poor men known as Econowives. Reading is something that is banned. Bible is not read. A simple scribbling in the cupboard seems fascinating to the narrator. Ignorance and ignoring are the main motto of their existence. Narrator states “we lived as usual by ignoring. Ignoring isn't the same as ignorance; you have to work at it” (66).

The slavery of women has a long history. Women are always the soft target of centuries old suppression and taboos. Aunt Lydia refers women slavery in previous times:

.... rules that were never spelled out but that every woman knew: don't open your door to a stranger, even if he says he is a police. Make him slide his ID under the door. Don't stop on road to help a motorist pretending to be in trouble. Keep the locks on and keep going. If anyone whistles do not turn to look. Don't go into laundromat by yourself, at night. (32)

Women are always dictated to behave in one fashion or another. In Aunt Lydia's words previously it was "freedom to" and now it is "freedom from" (34). In both cases the word freedom has no meaning, it is just an artefact to make women slave. Their choices are limited. Denise Riley rightly states, "'women' — has no choice but to work with or against different versions of the same wavering collectively" (98). In both scenarios women have no choice, but in this war affected world women are reduced to subhuman status. Companionship is lacking in this tyrannical set up. As a social subject, it is very important for human to have companionship and relevant interactions. Handmaids do not confide in each other as some among them are believers of the system. They are living under twenty four hours of surveillance. Even for going to washroom has limits and it is marked in a chart. Apart from external surveillance, politics of internal surveillance is also in process. She is reduced to a vessel of reproduction control agencies are not male but female who produces internal surveillance Barbara Hill Rigney in her book states;

The Handmaid's Tale is dedicated to Mary Webster and its principal subject is the suppression of languages, especially language as used by women. Women who think or speak, other than by rote, or who dare to write, are hanged in Gilead. (131)

Physical and Emotional intimacy is no more a matter of choice. These female dwellers of this dungeon have no control over their body and their mind is diluted by the information conveyed to them in fragments as truth. The real is not available to them. Dresses are called “habits” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 34) and these are related to their character description. In such a reign of authoritarian rule glimpses of nail polish makes Handmaids’ hungry. Men are hanged publicly for salvaging. Evidence from a “single woman is no longer admissible” (43), conceiving a child is considered a great news. Death is an inevitable part and dead bodies are hanged publicly. A young lady who was raped at the age of 14 is blamed for her being a victim.

But whose fault was it? Aunt Helena says, holding up one plump finger.

Her fault, her fault, her fault, we chant in unison.

Who led them on? Aunt Helena beams pleased with us.

She did. She did. She did.

Why did God allow such a terrible thing to happen?

Teach her a lesson. Teach her a lesson. Teach her a lesson. (82)

As a victim of rape rather than getting sympathy, women are blamed and thus rape becomes a crime of the victim. For a moment, against their own judgement all Handmaids even though they “knew that what was being done to her” they “despised her” (82). The self-loathing is internalized by these women under constant anti-self-gaze. Elizabeth Gross rightly said.

Psychical, social and interpersonal meanings thus mark the body, and through it, the identities or interiority of sexed objects. The female body is inscribed socially, and most often, individually experienced as a lacking, incomplete or inadequate body. (172)

To maintain this system intact it is important to protect the system from inside. Commander's wife, Serena Joy, whose actual name was Pam is the one who control these handmaids. In her previous career of a TV Actress, she made ironically speeches about "sanctity of the home" (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 55). She was accused of putting bombs in her own car for sympathy. She is also a prisoner like handmaids. Her change in the destiny made her more furious. Narrator states

She doesn't make speeches anymore. She has become speechless. She stays in her home, but it doesn't seem to agree with her. How furious she must be now that she's been taken at her word. (56)

Thus even the guard of this vicious circle is trapped in larger and wide level of surveillance. She also has lost her identity and stops others from reaching to their self. Her 'self' that is for public does not agree with her in person. As Sudepta Kaviraj states "What gets interrogated is not the identity of an individual, but the nature of identity. What makes one socially what one is?" (13). The nature of her identity is nothing but a symbol social authority. She has no signified, she just presents a sign that induces social authority. She considers Handmaids as "defeated women" (56). She desperately wants them to conceive children. She even cannot speak that these Handmaids are unable to conceive. Nobody "rustle or gadget these pauses" when she says incompletely "they have been unable... (56). Her utterance

of these border zone discourses also presents her fragmented psyche. As Hubert Hermans states, “if the self is considered as a “multiplicity of voiced position, new meaning are created on border zone between different and opposed position” (78). Her dialogues with Handmaids present these different and opposition position of her. Her stature is dependent on these Handmaids, whom she vehemently denies, due to her passive involvement with the act of sex and physical intimacies.

Belongingness or attachments of any sort between Handmaids and their children is vehemently denied, ridiculed and tabooed. These Handmaids are invisible holder of future. Aunt Lydia reinforces same idea by stating “it was our hand that were supposed to be fully of the future; which could be held but not seen”. (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 57). Belongingness of mother with their kids is termed as “treacherous smell” (57). Their experiences are detached from their body. The product of their labour is not rendered to them. In any sort of personality formation experiences of selfhood are very important. Giampiero Arciero and Guido Bondolfi rightly states:

The being mine of experience, the fact that experiencing belongs to me and corresponds each time to my acquiring a meaning, shows how permanence in time is declined as continually a finding of oneself and/ or finding each other. And it is each time experience belonging to itself which founds individuation in its undissociability from a sharing of the world with others. (30)

Lack of companionship and individuation make them envy each other. Rita and Cora discuss about narration as she’s “a household chore” (Atwood, *Handmaids* 58)

These Handmaids body determines their existence. Women in this dystopian world are “too important, too scarce, and this makes hem “a national resource” (75). Women are categorized as fruitful and barren as per the law. Their bodies’ take the central stage and their beings are drifted to unconscious Narrator craves to “lift off the heavy white wings and the veil “to feel her hall again” (72). It is a luxury that they cannot afford. She does not want to look at her body which determines her being. Their soul is kept as captive of their body. She is supposed to follow rules. She states, “I compose myself. My self is a thing. I must now compose as one composes a speech. What I must present is a made thing, not something born” (76). Thus they are continuously told about their being as an object. It is like behaviour for them. According to Arthur W. Staats:

Continuous reinforcement makes these Handmaids to treat their body as object. “Operant behaviour was learned via the principle of reinforcement. When an operant was followed by a reinforcing stimulus, the response was strengthened.” (40)

Bodies are gazed socially in such a way that the binary of male and female takes central stage and bodies are viewed as social entities. Psyches of social subjects are bound with their physique. Whereas male bodies celebrate nakedness and exposed for inspection in open, female bodies are kept under veil. Male are casual about their bodies as these parts do not exist. Living in such conditions body of the Handmaids becomes an object for observation. Offred explains:

I used to think of my body as an instrument, of pleasure, or a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my

wife. I could use it to run, push buttons, of one sort or another, make things happen. There were limits but my body was nevertheless lithe, single, solid, one with me. (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 83)

In present scenario she and her body are divided. Her body is an instrument for other, for her it is a prison house. Offred feels as her body is a “shape of leather” (92)

The suppression and oppression of feminist sensibilities and depersonalization also project itself in the structures and system too. Washroom doors are without lock. It shows the lack of private sphere. Church is known as soul scrolls and runs by machine, a mechanic nature of listening and doing prayers. To speak against these machines is considered treason. Women doing job constitution is suspended, newspaper are censored, roads are blocked and identity passes are imposed on everybody and less words. “Women can't hold property any more” (187). Women do not have rights. Even in her earlier life Luke and Offred's relationship was mechanic, but in this case it was totally objectified. As Norman Fairclough states:

... structures are reproduced and transformed depending the state of relations, the 'balance of power', between those in a struggle in a particular sustained domain of practice., such as the school on the workplace. (58)

In case of these Handmaids this Gilead is their school as well as workplace and these structures are formed to keep them as an object.

Sex for these waste-landers is a passive act. Narrator differentiates between “Lie and Lay” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 47). She explains, “Lay is always passive. Even men used to say, I’d like to get laid. Though sometimes they said, I’d like to say her” (47) Passivity is the part of life. Wasting is forbidden, only option these Handmaids do have is telling in their head. This passivity pushes Handmaids towards being an object. Iris Marion Young explained object as:

The object is passive, inert matter having no self-moving capacity, its movement all externally and mechanically caused. The object is what can be handled, manipulated, constructed, built up and broken down, with clear accountability of matter gained and lost. (78)

Through these passive experiences Handmaids are turned into objects. They are reminded more and more about their limitations. Male are described as subject. Aunt Lydia differentiates the role and responsibilities of male and female thus, “They can’t help it, she said, god make them that way but He did not make you that way. He made you different. It’s up to you to set the boundaries” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 55). Whereas male are defined as doers or breakers of the rule, females are celebrated as passive protector. Handmaids are not allowed alone with the commanders. Sex should not be entertaining. Handmaids are considered “two legged wombs, that’s all sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices” (146). Male are defined as “sex machines” (153)

Another remarkable thing is a sex also objectified for the males. No real pleasure is involved. Man in this world is “woman’s strategy for making other woman” (130-131). It is a woman’ centred culture but woman are not subject here,

but an object to achieve on the name of her security they are kept as prisoners. They are reduced into an agent of child rearing agency, which produces a child on her own image and to be more precisely as per the image crafted by the society. Diana Titjens Meyers rightly pointed out:

The agentic skills that a culture promotes match the social roles people are expected to play, and the stock concepts and interpretive schemes that a culture transmits provide input for these skills that are preselected and preprocessed in culturally congenial ways. (23)

These agents of the continuation of species in the web of socio-political intricacies

Gender determines social status due to the amount of power involved in sexual intercourse. Whereas women has more active role in it, they are always pushed to the place of passive counterpart. The sexual intercourse is not to satisfy physical needs, but performed for the continuation of species, to produce more women, while having intercourse Serena Joys sits over Offred. Offred's head on her stomach, her public bone under the base of her skull. Her arms are raised and held by Serena Joy to signify that they all one. Offred states this objectified and horrifying activity in this manner.

My red skirt is hitched up to my waist, though no higher. Below it the commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body. I do not say making love, because this is not what he's doing. Copulating too would be inaccurate, because it would imply two people and only one is involved. Nor does rape cover it; nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for. (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 105)

Whereas in act of love making and copulating two people are involved, here the involvement of female counterparts is passive. It is worst then rape because even in rape resistance of the counterpart is there. This act of physical contact is avoided for Handmaids and they want to get this over as soon as possible. While having sex, Offred tries to think about other things to escape from this horrifying and boring act. This experience is not exciting due to the lack of love or passion. Arousal and orgasm are termed as “Frivolity” “Outdated” and “Superfluous” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 105). This act is like performing a mandatory duty for all three. Kissing is forbidden. For both Serena Joy and Offred this is a bad experience. Elizabeth Gross states:

The social and patriarchal disavowal of the specificity of women’s bodies is a function, not only of discriminatory social practices, but, more insidiously, of the phallogentrism invested in the regimes of knowledge – science, philosophy, the arts, which function only because and with the effect of the submersion of women under male categories, values and norms. (139)

Here Offred’s body is categorized as per male usage. Utility of her body to reproduce another female is the only cause it exists socially. The social gaze is against her existence and denying her body as any other identity. Her body has only one category “a carriage for baby. The continual enforcement of social subversion and social terminology makes her gaze her body like an object of social usage. She states:

I can't think of myself, my body, sometimes, without seeing the skeleton: how I must appear to an electron. A cradle of life, made of bones; and within, hazards, warped proteins, bad cry stalls jagged as glass. (22)

This social categorization determines the external and internal gaze of the social subject and society. She and her body are one but later determines what she is. The reflection of this external categorization is internalized through the process of division and naming. The norms and nurturing is as per the socio-political structure of hegemonic existence. Iris Marion Young rightly described the situation:

An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as mere body, as shape and flash that presents itself as the potential object of another subject's intentions and manipulations, rather than a living manifestation of action and intention. (44)

All people around Offred- commander, his wife, his keeper- Cora wishes her to be pregnant. For them she is a vehicle of hope. Rather than saying she have kid soon, they use the word "maybe we have kid soon" (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 45).

Ironically, it is a woman centred culture. Offred's mother says "you wanted a women's culture. Well, now there is one, it isn't what you meant, but it exists (137). The women in this culture are broken. They are not the believer of the system but they are like" puppy that's been kicked too often" (139). Due to their regular stay in this confinement these Handmaids lost "they taste for freedom" they start "finding these walls secure (143). These women are baby making machines. The menstrual

cycle is observed minutely as this defines Handmaids. Offred states, “Each month I watch for blood, fearfully for when it comes it means failure. I have failed once again to fulfil the expectation of others, which have become my own” (122). She does not have a desire for baby, but she is fulfilling the desires of other by having a baby. Her subjectivity is determined by her ability to fulfil other’s desires, “Images and expectations about women” make them “a symmetrically associated with sex, birth, age, and Flesh and they have” “little voice to express our own point of view on this fleeting existence or on the social relations that position” them (Iris Marian Young 5). Babies in this oppressive society determined by test to be declared as babies or unbabies like things. Women who denied having babies are termed as “lazy” “slut” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 122). This dystopian world deny and condemns old technique of painless birth and believe in “multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children” (124). Birth of the children is discussed in a much objectified manner. On the day of birth commander’s wife receive congratulation and other wives touch her “tiny belly” (126) as she is going to give birth to a child. For commander this is the time to get promotion. For Handmaids this process ends with a sigh of relief not with outburst of happiness. Mother of the baby is not the part. For them “Pain marks you, but too deep to see. Out of sight, out of mind” (135). Naming of the child is done by wives, not by mother and babies are considered “a bouquet of flowers: something she’s (wives) won, attribute” (136). Role of the mother is minimal

She’ll be allowed to nurse the baby, for a few months, they believe in mother’s milk. After that she’ll be transferred, to see if she can do it again, with someone else who needs a turn. But she’ll never be sent

to the colonies, she'll never be declared unwomen. That is her reward. (137)

The purpose of giving birth to a child is to prove that she is a woman. This process determines their identity. From internal, this identity turns into external. Due to this externalized certification these women start observing process of giving child in an objectified manner. An essential part of women's self is her capacity of reproducing life. A life she is as close as her own self is distanced systematically. Anne and Becker states:

The Formulation of the self as the independent operator of a body engaged in the attainment of an ideal form pits the self in a perpetual struggle against its body. As a result of the body's exploitation as a forum for the projection of self rather than of the collective, embodied experience is often formulated as an entrapment of the self. The body is objectified and alienated as something against which to struggle. (130)

To achieve the target by authoritarian society, the authority uses many strategies. Constant parallel with old world are create to degenerate the past and celebrate the present. Movies and video clips that are shown, to the Handmaids project old world's degeneration to glorify the present. Reality is shrouded with unreal projections. These "unwoman" documentaries (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 128) are without soundtrack so that handmaids cannot listen these unwomen's ideas:

They don't play the soundtrack, on movies like these, though they do on the porno films. They want us to hear the screams and grunts and

shrieks of what is supposed to be either extreme pain or extreme pleasure or both at once, but they don't want us to hear what the unknown are saying. (129)

In this projection of unreal is projected as real. Dean Maccannell and Juliet Flower MacCannell states in their essay, "Technically, from any human standpoint, the real is only that which cannot be assimilated symbolically, it does not correspond to the empirically observable parts of what is already symbolized" (131).

The problem with the handmaids' real is for them their real is projected symbolically. So the line between real and unreal is blurred. Offred realizes that the reality constructed these constructions of the real are far away from the real. "There are too many parts, sides, crosscurrents, nuances; too many gestures, which could mean this or that, too many shapes which could never be fully described. (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 144). Due to living in this suspended belief of (un)real she herself observes her vision objectively. She interrogates her own perception. She thinks, "May be the life I think I'm living is a paranoid delusion...Sanity is a valuable possession; I hoard it the way people once hoarded money. I save it, so I will have enough, when the time comes" (119).

Religion in this scenario is portrayed as per social needs. Religion is a tool used to justify the social setting and to impose internal control over the social subjects. In this process of self-objectification, use of religion as a tool is very effective. Slogans are posted on the building stating "GOD IS A NATIONAL RESOURCE" (225). Bible is quoted to justifying the existing scenario and condemns freedom. It is "kept locked up" (97) and read for handmaids like bed time

stories. They are not allowed to read it. As Lenin said “Religion is opium of the people. Religion is slaves of capital drown their human image their demand for a life more or less worthy of man” (83-84).

In this objectified world males are also livings in repression. Owner of the household is commander, who does sex with handmaids; he is also disinterested like handmaids. Protagonist describes commander as “he looks like a vodka ad, in a glossy magazine, of times gone by “(Atwood, *Handmaid's* 97). Offred believes that commander disguises himself in various characters and do not have a real identity. He is also looking for love and emotions. Offred visits commander’s room on his request and they play scrabble, which is considered forbidden and indecent. Playing games like this is considered “voluptuous” (149).

In those visits Offred gets an older magazine, which signifies covert way of objectification. These magazines enticed the older generation with “promises dealt in transformation” (165). These magazines suggest “endless series of possibilities” (165). Commander loves romance and emotion beyond bodily pleasure. Commander behaves “Daddyish” (193). Offred starts reading voraciously and quickly she learns the meaning of “Nolitebastardes Corborundorum” (196) “don’t let the bastards grind you down” (97). It shows the regressive and progressive power of media. Kuan-Hsing Chen states

Our sense of the world, of the real, have largely been re(defined) by the explosion of mass media operation; media practices have rearranged our senses of space and time. What is real is no longer our direct contact with the world, but what are given on the TV Screen.

(74)

The psychological objectification starts from physical segregation of the subject when the individual is treated like an object and her fixity or transition is decided by external agency, it starts affecting the perception of the social subject about itself. In the colony of Handmaids talking to each other is a privilege. They can converse a little only in front of television cameras. News which are shown to them are mostly fake and consist of old clips. Only victories are shown to them not the defeats. They news anchors appear to be “convincing” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 93) and dubious. Offred doubts the truthfulness of this news. She lives in utter alienation like other Handmaids. Even her name is not real; her real name is forbidden to her. She feels:

The name has an aura around it, like an amulet, some charm that’s survived from an unimaginably distinct past. I lie in my single bed at night, with my eye closed, and the name floats there behind my eyes, not quite within reach, shining in the dark. (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 94)

These Handmaids do not use their real names while conversing to each other. Russell Meares states, “Conversation in which there is no, or limited, evidence of the transmuting force of the stream of consciousness will be those of relative alienation” (121). These Handmaids are living in relative alienation. They need to hide her emotions and sentimental attachments.

Commander and Offred go on a secret date where powerful commander try to replicate the past which seems like “a movie about the past” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 247). This was a party in which all commanders try to live the emotions like past. Commander states “... You can’t cheat Nature”, he says. “Nature demands variety for men. It stands to reason, its part of the procreational strategy. It’s a

Nature's plan" (249). Commander knows that existing world order is anti-nature, so he wants to escape from that. Offred comments that in the contemporary situation, they don't have different clothes, so they "merely have different women" (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 249). But this still does not satisfy them. These men like to see women "painted up" just like "another crummy power trip" (265). It gives them "a kick out of it. It is like "screwing on the altar or something" (265). Defying of nature makes them crave more for their natural – desires. This threatens their whole existence and self. Marcus West states:

This was not simply splitting between good/ pleasant and bad/ unpleasant experiences; rather these were experiences ; rather these were experiences as infinite in nature and fell to threaten her whole existence and identity. (20)

Due to anti nature act they are doing, they are losing their identity. It is not good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, but anti nature.

Taboo and control over sexual activity is another highlight for the dwellers of this Gilead. When Offred fails to deliver a child, Serena Joy sends her to Nick and sex turns into an assignment. Nick is also paid for this sex. Offred enjoys this time as sex this time was per her requirement; there was no Serena Joy and holy combo while having physical intimacy. She feels alive and scares that it might only be once" (273). While having sex with commander she closes her eyes. With Nick she enjoys it and keeps her eyes open. Even while having role play with commander does not awake an excitement in her. In her head, Serena Joy is always present in their intercourse. She feels the presence of taboo, and authority even while they are

not there. She defines thus, “He pulls down one of my straps, slides his other hand in among the feathers, but it’s no good, I lie there like a dead bird. (267)

She tries to fake the excitement out fails to do this even. She feels like an object on which power and authority has been exercised. At the age of 14 Handmaids are employed for producing kids as “start them soon is the policy” (231). It is like habit formation: To justify this oppressive system horrible and fabricated example from the old system are given. As commander states:

Don’t you remember the terrible gap between the ones who could get a man easily and the ones who couldn’t? Some of them were desperate, they starved themselves thin or pumped up their breasts full of silicone, had their noses cut off. Think of the human misery.”
(231)

Whereas the old system has been condemned and misery of women in that system has been highlighted to develop common consent among the Handmaids, so that the chances of revolution can be reduced to minimum. As Norman Fairclough states:

There are in gross terms two ways in which those who have power can exercise and keep it: through coercing other to go along with them, with the ultimate violence or death; or through winning others’ consent to, or at least acquiescence in, their possession and exercise of power. (33)

Through this consent these Handmaids become the part of their own oppression. In one of the scenes where a Guardian is allegedly accused for raping a Handmaid, all handmaids brutally kill him or, kicking; Offred gets pleasure out of it. She states:

Death makes me hungry. May be it's because I've been emptied; or maybe it's the body's way of seeing to it that I remain alive, continue to repeat its bedrock prayer: I am, I am, I am, still. (Atwood, *Handmaid's* 293)

To feel their own existence, they need to feel death of the others, so that they can differentiate between life and death.

In this oppressive system, Offred has desire "to be with someone" (113). Love for them is a discount dream and what they get is sex. Due to this state of emotional bankruptcy, they start feeling dry and disembodied. Offred observes:

There is something dead about it, something deserted. I am like a room where things once happened and now nothing does, except the pollen of the weeds that grow up outside the window, blowing in as dust across the door. (114)

Her existence is totally devoid of emotions. She believes in resistance without doing it or knowing it. She objectifies her body. She compares her torso with women torso in a skirt. She craves for familiar objects. To avoid this emotional bankruptcy, she fights with her husband Luke in her head "script all fights" (Atwood, *Handmaids* 210). Her world is reduced into "egg" only.. The discussion between these Handmaids is not actual but "like a telegram, a verbal semaphore, Amputated speech" (211). Serena Joy and Handmaids even don't communicate because "there are not that many subjects that could be spoken about, between us; there's not much common ground, except this one mysterious and chancy thing" (214). Men are also devoid of feeling. Commander observes:

... sex was too easy. Anyone could just buy it. There was nothing to work for, nothing to fight for. We have the stats from that time. You know what they are complaining about the most? Inability to feel. Men were turning off on sex. They were turning off on marriage. (221)

The act of getting pregnant is also emotionally hollow as it is like “to go through all that, for nothing worse than nothing” (226).

In this world marriages are condemned on the ground of divorces and domestic violence. Love is considered pointless. Nuns are unearthed to “renounce their celibacy, sacrifice it to the common good” (232). They were not allowed to become wives as they were considered “too dangerous for position of such power” (232). Women are blamed for transgression. Biblical references are given to justify. Marriages are not considered for love but to serve duties and having intercourse while looking at ceilings. In such scenario of emotional void, women have lost crying ability, they weep and “ooze like a sponge” (239). There is no substance. Offred states, “I am only a shadow now, for back behind, the glib shiny surface of this photograph. A shadow of a shadow; as dead mothers become. You can see it in her eyes: I am not there” (240). These Handmaids are thrice removed from the reality and are shadow of a shadow. Offred uses butter on her in the hope that one day she will be touched with love and desire. Lotions and creams are banned as wives do not like them to look beautiful. For them they are just “containers, it’s only the inside” that is “important. The outside can become hard and wrinkled for all they care, like the shell of a nut” (107).

Men are considered “sex machines” (153) and Offred is a 33 year old Handmaid, brown hair, five seven with viable ovaries” (153). She observes herself as “a map, a diagram of futility, criss-crossed with tiny roads that lead nowhere” (153). Offred calls her story fragmentary like “a body caught in cross fire or pulled apart by force” (279). Amputation & psychological separation as a woman and an artist are the part of Handmaid’s tale. Moira the revolutionary in Handmaid’s tale meet torture and prohibited to communicate. Lack of belief on each other faced this emotion as a trick of survival. The roles are pre-determined, dressed in red gowns, hat are peaked to list them have uni-view. Offred’s information is based grapevine and gossips. Alice M. Palumbo in her essay “On the Border: Margaret Atwood’s Novels states:

Atwood has made constant use of the double voice, depicting characters and war with themselves and their environment. Through intertextual allusions, alterations in narrative point of view, and the use of the unconscious, Atwood shows the way in which the self is constructed from contradictory impulses, some more societally acceptable than others. (21)

.Thus Handmaids are living in a scenario where depersonalization is the part of the culture. Republic of Gilead is in transition where they are creating new reality for women. In this transition a new reality is imposed and grown upon them. Once the process will complete they will accept it as their own destiny. It is like a lab test performed on humans.

Depersonalization, in case of Nanda Kaul and *Handmaid's Tale* is the product of culturally induced loneliness. Nanda Kaul is like typical an old Indian woman, dejected and rejected by her family and children, living in Carignano. She lived a stressful life and in her old age, she is unable to handle the truth of her past. She creates her own realities based on the illusion of her past glory. This makes her emotionally numb and hypersensitive towards the truth that she has buried under the shroud of lies. On the behaviour level she maintains a stoic silence but inwardly she craves for love and care. She lives as a recluse to avoid any interference that can bring her in face to her traumatic past experiences. In the climax scene, death of Ila Das peeled all her deceptions off and her real persona comes into surface. Unable to face her own persona, she dies in shock. She is an avoidant depersonalized patient. She kept her depersonalization at bay by creating illusion. Once these illusions are shattered, she dies by eruption of emotional volcano. Her cognition fails to defend her against overwhelming and uncontrolled free of stressful memories. In case of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred is put in a situation, where depersonalization is a socio-political reality. Offred is an obsessive compulsive persona. She is obsessed with the old world and in her new socio-political realities; she is devoid old emotional needs. Due to this fact, she feels emotionally amputated. She craves for real life emotions. She needs to behave as per the direction of Gilead, this blurs the boundaries of her real and unreal. It seems like acting in a movie and due to playing this role continuously, the role become her identity. She feels her inner persona and imposed persona are amalgamated. This causes stress and anxiety to her. There are possible cures for both these characters. Nanda Kaul can face her dark past by just

talking about it. It can have therapeutic impact on her. She got a chance even when Ila Das come at her place, but she avoids communicating with her. Offred's attempt to run away from Gilead is successful at the end and there are references that once she is out of Gilead, she may gain her sanity.

Chapter 5

Depersonalization in the Select Fiction of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood: A Comparative Study

Society and context plays a major role in the depersonalisation of all female characters in the novels of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood. Apart from the internal factors and trigger moments, there are some social variables and contextual cues which move these characters towards depersonalization. These characters already have seed of depersonalization in them, but the fertile land to this disorder is provided by the society. As per medical history, depersonalization affects male and female at the same rate and frequency, but there are some social variable in all novels, which make women victim of depersonalization and allow male characters to maintain their sanity. Characters portrayed, by both authors, are victim of the biased attitude of their respective societies. This tendency also highlights the role of social conditioning and social set up in the depersonalization of these characters.

First common element in the lives of these protagonists is that they are not centre of their own lives; due to the patriarchal structure of the society. Centre of their lives are males – males mostly as companions or father. Human relationships are profoundly threaded with human psychology. Margaret Atwood and Anita Desai portray these dysfunctional relationships as a root cause of women's unhappiness. Maya's husband in *Cry the Peacock* is a centre of her life. Novel presents the contrast between Maya's sensitivity and Gautama's detachment. The problem of Maya is that she wants her husband to compliment her, but he is another opposite binary that taunts her and questions her identity. Maya wants to be the centre of her existence, this pleas is ignorant vehemently by her rational husband on the ground of

impracticability. Maya in her pangs of loneliness states, “There were countless nights when I had been tortured by a humiliating sense of neglect of loneliness, of desperation that would not have existed had I not loved him so, had he not meant so much” (Desai, *Cry* 173). After the death of Toto (Maya’s pet) and her remoteness from her father, she has only one person to rely upon that is her husband. Maya is a semi-educated woman, but she does not have any job or career. She does not have a child and her mother-in-law is also indifferent towards her, Maya verbalises her fears, “Because when you are away from me, I want you. Because I insist on being with you and being allowed to touch you and know you. You can’t bear it, can you? No, you are afraid, you might perish” (113). Maya is a toy princess in toy world. For Gautama, materialistic needs are the centre of his life and he wants his wife to support his social position and helps him to attain his roles. Maya’s demands are physical, emotional and partially spiritual. P. Sudha and Dr. Mummachi rightly states in their essay “Marital Discard in Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock*”:

Maya’s neurosis also denotes a collective neurosis, which tries to shatter the very identity of woman in our contemporary society dominated by patriarchy in which woman longing for love is driven mad and compelled to commit suicide? (1401)

Maya and Gautama are the victim of poignant problem of marital maladjustment and both sought for different things from their marriage. Maya also wants to engage a substantial place in her husband’s life. Maya is frustrated from her life, she is anxious to be the centre of her existence. Her extreme act of murdering Gautama is her attempt to be the centre of her life again. She wants to liberate herself. M. Srilakshmi affirms same stance:

Disenchanted with life for different reasons, they [Maya and Dimple] become neurotic and gradual descent to the role of murderers is carefully patterned. Maya's act of murder, like Dimple's killing of her husband, is an act of self-liberation. (279)

Dejected by her present persona, she becomes other person, separated from her body and mind- a depersonalized woman.

Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* is living far away from the madding crowd of the city. In her past life in the city, she has no identity, no career. She lived as the wife of vice Chancellor, who has an extra-marital affair. She suffers this desertion of her husband silently. Her desires remain buried in her heart. She hates her matriarchal role where her life was limited to "looking sharply to see if the furniture, all rosewood, has been polished, and the doors of the gigantic cup boards properly shut" (Desai *Fire* 26); she escapes from that life and "she asked to be left to the pines and cicadas alone" (16). Her marriage was based on the convenience of Mr. Kaul. Her life was empty and insatiable. Even when she was surrounded by so many people and her children, she lives in complete separation. Her soul is diseased as she distrusts attachments and relationships. Nobody, neither her husband nor her children, ever cared what Nanda Kaul wants. This makes her depersonalized and she starts living in illusions and dreams, so that she can be the centre of her existence.

Pragati Das states:

She prefers seclusion not because she favours it but to rest her pain filled psyche, her stagnated pulses, bit and pieces of identity. But she attempts to get in the shelter of Carignano doubtless need that rock

like interior to give them a wholesome structure, a hopeful destination. (105)

Nanda Kaul gives all her life to her husband and family, but she gets nothing in return. Sita, in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, has no social identity. She is failure as a mother, she has no career. She is neither the centre is her father's life nor of her husband's and children's. Bewildered by this strange meaningless existence, she tries to find centre of her life in Manori Island. She does not have any talent and in such situations, she does not want to give birth to one more child which may turn insignificant with time. She wants to hold the child in her womb; it gives sense to her that the child still belongs to her and she is the centre for this child as long as it is unborn. She feels her children are hostile to her "they accused her of every mishap and misfortune. Whenever she turned or looked up, she saw them staring at her, watching her as though waiting for her to break down and admit failure" (Desai, *Summer* 102). She feels futility and hollowness of her existence. She finds disparity between her inner state and physical existence. Her attempt to save eagle from crow is her attempt to save herself as fluid in other people's identities. Dr. M. Mani Meitei aptly states :

Sita's words "perhaps it flew away?" against her husband's caustic remarks that her eagle has been eaten by the crows, suggests the future course of her action following her defeat and loss of identity (35-36).

To save herself Sita has a toy gun only. She understands that in present situation she cannot be the centre of her own life so she runs away from the island.

Marian in *The Edible Woman* has lost the status of being the centre of her own life since her engagement with Peter. Peter is a successful person and he lives the life with feigned perfection. Marian, after having engagement with him, loses the power to take her decisions. He uses her as a commodity, another medal on his uniform of perfection. Marian realises it later when she bursts with anger “you’ve been trying to destroy me” (Atwood, *Edible* 301). Her eating disorder is the manifestation of her inner fear of being consumed. It refers that she may become another person by accepting the terms of Peter. Samira Sasani and Diba Arjmandi rightly remarks:

The powerless heroines came to search for their lost self and step forward to claim what has been deprived of them in the patriarchal community. Marian is also captured in this system and cannot uncover her identity and also individuality. (1521)

In her attempt to be an accepted woman, she starts reshaping herself as ‘other’ woman – a living contrast to her own image. She tries to be stereotypical and happy about that. She becomes anorexic, which also shows that how weak identity she does have. She feels and behave as Peter wants, thus she has no autonomy of her own actions. She starts suffering from depersonalization and her own body starts appearing to her foreign, because her actions are not self-directed. Her hyper-obedience of Peter causes her the loss of appetite. As a human, she is on the upper level of consumer in the food chain, but as she loses her individuality, she also loses her status of consumer; her loss of appetite signifies her loss of the status of human being. Her outlook towards her body changes in a drastic manner. As she thinks:

How peculiar it was to see three reflection of yourself at the same time, she thought; she swayed herself back and forth, watching the way in which the different silver parts of her body suddenly bloated and diminished. (Atwood, *Edible* 227)

These reflections are actually of her other Self. This presents contrast of conscious and unconscious desires of Marian. Her sudden outburst of running away from Peter symbolises her unconscious desires to run away from Peter and be the centre of her own life, but she is scared to take this quantum leap and it makes her suffer from depersonalization.

In *Surfacing*, Margaret Atwood presents a nameless protagonist, who has a liquid entity. In such status of liquid identity, she never could be the centre of her own life. In the pretext of journey, she starts living in the memories of her past in order to forget her present. She is with group of three other friends, but she does not want them to be there, so that she can be the centre of her own life. She constantly thinks about her old marriage and abortion, in that relationship she was never a centre. A simple scene of physical intimacy with her lover presents how her identity has been attacked by male colonizers. As Marian observes, "... he was pinning me, hands manacles, teeth against my lips, censoring me, he was shoving against me, his body insistent as one side of an argument" (147). The physical intercourse with her boyfriend is one sort of attack on the protagonist's identity. She is not even able to decide what she desires from her body. She wants to be pregnant, but she was not able to do this without the consent of her husband in past and her lover in present in her past relationship, her husband treats her like a slave. He refers her child as:

... he [her husband] imposed it on me, all the time it was growing in me I felt like an incubator. He measured everything he would let me eat, he was feeding it to me, he wanted a replica of himself.” (39)

It appears to her as for husband, the child is centre of her body. Her desires are pushed to marginalized state and she turns into a womb. Ambika Bhalla rightly points out, ‘The novelist [Atwood] has made an attempt to create an emphatic relationship between the wounded self of the unnamed protagonist and the damaged landscape of the island near the border country in Quebec’ (2). Her Self is wounded by the male colonialist, who denies her natural status in life.

In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Offred is not the centre of her existence. Her body is the centre of Gilead’s life like other Handmaids. She has no name, no career, and no life beyond the four walls of Gilead. Her depersonalization is culturally induced formula. She has no Self, other than the imposed one by male theocracy. The role management in the Gilead allows women no breathing space. All their actions, from dressing to the accepted behaviour, are under surveillance. Here the roles are assigned- Marthas cook, wash and clean; Handmaids breed and Wives control the house hold. They are not allowed to decide roles or communicate. Offred lacks “swash buckling, heroism, single-handed combat” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 261). Her identity is reduced to nothing. Darsha Jani rightly states:

Like other women she too is considered as a mere natural resource, as a mere reproductive being and is utilized to the maximum romantic or even simply emotional relationships are illegal among most groups and punishable by death. (405)

Handmaids are trapped in surveillance, they have no real selves. Her depersonalization is the product of this authoritarian system. Offred's midnight trips to commander's room and Nick's room are her attempt to reinstate her old emotional being. She does not like her being to be reduced into two legs womb. This quality triggers depersonalization in her.

All these protagonists have been suffering from excessive introjections and excessive projection of external world. Salomon Resnik explains this situation in *The Delusional Person*:

Excessive projection, albeit a means of getting rid of internal persecutors and controlling external reality, empties and weakens the self, and this in turn creates a high degree of dependence on what the self has projected into other objects. Similarly, excessive introjection gives rise to the feeling of being replete, overwhelmed, submerged.

(39)

Not being the center of their existence, they develop excessive introjections. In this stage they start treating themselves as an object. The lack of authenticity and overwhelming dependence on others push them towards submerged human existence. They are not complete human as they derive authenticity from others. This creates excessive projections, as the process of self-objectification starts. These characters start internalizing the gaze. This process of self-scrutiny initiates depersonalization in them. As this excessive projection is opposite to what they call internal self. They accept rules of their surroundings unwillingly and start living the life that they loath. Compromises are the part of human existence, but excessive

compromising triggers depersonalization. In case of females, it is the part of their nurturing and conditioning in traditional society. They are asked to behave in one particular manner. They are forced to protect their femininity and their biology is attached with their psychology. These characters start feeling like the prisoner of their body and surroundings. These characters are not self-centered so the centers of their Selves also get dislocated.

Second common element is that all these characters have dysfunctional families. Absence of proper parenting has rooted the seeds of depersonalization a long time before in their unconscious mind. This parenting issue has created traumatic experiences for these protagonists. These childhood traumas take proper shape in later life of these characters. Maya in the *Cry, the Peacock* does not have mother that's why she has developed father fixation. Due to the fact that she does not have mother, she is not trained to live a neglected life. She was the centre of her father's existence and she expects same from her husband. Her desires never meet her existence and this triggers frustration. She starts living in imagination. She has only one meaning to her life- Gautama. She has no other identity and thus she becomes victim of incomplete parenting as in her husband she tries to find husband and father both. Sita's mother has left her family without any traces. In similar ways, Sita also does not develop feminine sensibilities. She neither gets the love and attention from her father or even from her mother. She also has father fixation and wants to live the life of ideals and miracles. Here, mother also stands for practical approach and worldliness. She is not able to accept this world's natural tendencies as she does not have a mother. There is lack of Nanda Kaul's mother's reference and Raka has a troubled childhood. Nanda Kaul in her imagination creates a beautiful

picture of a paradise, but in this paradise, she never mentions her mother. She herself is totally absent from her children's lives. She never gets the love of her husband and he has an extramarital relationship. Raka inherited this dysfunctional family; she has seen her mother being beaten up by her father. She turns into recluse and her hatred for the society is the product of this thing only. Devoid of being centre of their life, these characters rely on their familial bonds but their dysfunctional families do not provide them any solace. Thus these characters are dragged inwards.

Like Anita Desai's characters, Atwood's characters also have dysfunctional families. While referring *Surfacing* it is clear that her mother has no proper identity and she has no traces of it either. She vanished to thin air and the protagonist has ambivalent relationship with her father. Even in her married life, she has a dysfunctional family. Her mind is full of bad memories of her past. Pregnancy and abortion haunts her continuously. Marian in *The Edible woman* never refers her parents and her relationship with Peter is hitting on dead rocks. Unable to stand with this relationship, she becomes anorexic. Archetypically, *The Handmaid's Tale* presents Gilead as a foil to family and also presents dysfunctional society – A woman centric society. In this society females are the centre of the economy and existence, but this does not liberate them. It chains them into the mundanely of producing children. This dysfunctional society has exploitation at every level. It is consist of loveless sex, disloyal husbands, barren wives, prostitute like Handmaids and their desires for love and care. All people are tangled in this troubled existence, hollow and leading an insipid life. Unlike all other characters, Offred does not have a family. Her old family has no more in existence. This Gilead is her family, but it is devoid of emotional attachments. These Handmaid's are under strict rules and they

never get bent for their emotional needs. Suppressed to their core dwellers of Gilead, male and female both, hopes for freedom. Even Elite class like Captain has places where they try to have emotional satisfaction. Midnight discussions of Offred and Captain suggest the same. This dysfunctional family structured authority induces depersonalization on purpose.

Another factor that is majorly responsible for the depersonalization of these protagonists is culture. These female protagonists are living in patriarchal setups and culture. They feel more affinity with nature than the culture. Culture stands in opposition to them and delimits their freedom. Social factors and surrounding are the main elements that constitute the personality of any person. Stephen Frosh states:

Social factors are *constructive*, in this view, in a very simple yet subtle sense: they take the raw material of each individual infant's basic psychological processes and weld and order it into the shape of a particular structure of consciousness and experience. This socially shaped structure is sometimes called simply 'I', sometimes 'the ego', most commonly 'the self'. (2)

In the formation of the self and ego surroundings and culture are the integral part. It seems like that these authors try to provide conflict between nature and culture, whereas Mother Nature is feminine, culture is patriarchal; dejected by culture, these characters find solace in nature and natural objects. Nanda Kaul deserted by her husband and family retreats into the world of nature- Carignano, where she wants to be peaceful “to be a tree, no more, no less, was all that she was prepared to undertake” (Desai, *Fire* 4). The life of culture does not suit to her tastes and

aspirations; she tries to be invisible, private and detached. Bidulata Choudary rightly points out, “*Fire on the Mountain* displays skillful dramatization of experiences of certain women embroiled by the cross way of life” (77). Nanda Kaul has chosen the life of nature and at the end violence of masculine culture enters in her peaceful world through the murder of Ila Das and it seems to her that her world of tranquil nature is set on fire and she dies by the shock. This shock proves havoc for her as in her feminine world, males are omnipresent evil. She was trying to run away from this, but tragedy of Ila Das brings her back towards the same male culture. Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is bored from her existence in mainland, which is full of violence. It appears to her that she is living in irreconcilable temperament which is diametrically in opposition to her female existence; it seems to her that culture of mainland under the shroud of practicality deny the freedom that she seeks freedom of creativity and emotional explanation. In her psyche, she has the binary of this culture – Manori Island. It is cradle of her childhood, which witnesses all her irrational explanation with benevolence. She is in her early forty and seeks for liberation. P. Arockia Rajakumari remarks.

Sita’s frustration drives her to the island, Manori, a corruption free world, void of mere appetite and sex, where she hopes to provide her unborn child. To preserve her sanity, she has to escape from the sweat and turmoil of the urban atmosphere in the Bombay and flee to Manori. (31)

World of Manori is harsh and free from urban comforts of electricity and telephone etc., but it soothes the grieving heart of Sita. Sita is searching for a safe haven, and

Manori Island is the metaphor for nature that provides her the required place. She cures from her depersonalization only in the soothing lap of nature. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* is deprived from her desire to get attention from her husband lives in affinity with her pet Toto and garden. Depersonalization is triggered in her life only after the death of her pet dog- Toto. She is considered misfit by her in-laws to understand the intricacy of culture. Convinced by this argument, Maya is always drawn in to the world of Nature. Her estrangement leads her to utter desolation. She feels affinity with crying peacock desires for love and chants “pia, pia”. She asked her husband to be taken on vocation on her father’s home, which is again close to nature. It may save her from impending tragedy, which was coming close to has her due to the oppressive atmosphere of urban culture. She feels utterly alone. She states:

Showing how little he knew of my misery, or of how to comfort me.
But then, he knew nothing that concerned me. His coldness, his coldness, and incessant talks of cup of tea and philosophy in order not to hear me talk and talking, reveal myself. It is that – my loneliness in this house. (*Cry* 9)

This urban culture deprives Maya of emotional satisfaction. Anita Sharma remarks, “*Cry, the Peacock* engages the complexities of modern Indian culture from a feminine perspective while highlighting the female predicament of maintaining self-identity as an individual woman” (2). Thus deprived from cultural cognigence, she turns into a murderer and commits suicide. Interestingly, titles of all these novels are also nature centric. All the titles present unconscious desires of women protagonist

and are pointing towards Nature. *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* portrays existentialist cry of Sita's heart and she finally got its answer in Manori Island. *Cry, the Peacock* refers the emotional anguish of Maya and desires to her Pia's beloved. *Fire on the Mountain* refers to the anger of female. Anita Desai has chosen these titles to project that women are more close to nature than culture. In nature they are superior human being, contrary to their existence in male culture.

Atwood's characters shift their base into Nature, whenever their female identity comes under the threat of depersonalisation. It is their attempt to maintain their original self-intact. Unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing* comes on the island in search of her lost father and symbolically her Self. Her constant loathing for American colonization is her hatred for culture. Canada itself is a symbol of Nature and dominant Americans are "bloody, fascist pig Yanks" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 6). She compares animals with Jesus Christ. She states, "The animals die that we may live, they are substitute people, hunters in the fall killing the deer that is Christ also" (179). For her, culture is a haunting substitute of Nature and she hates it. Sonika Sethi remarks, "*Surfacing* is a novel about self-realization and an assertion of the protagonist through her reconciliation with nature. *Surfacing*, thus is the story of self-realization, hence, life-realization (13-14). Thus novel highlights the role of culture in contrast to gender identity. In *Surfacing*, there are several instances that indicate that male misuses nature and female feels affinity with the Nature. Patriarchal culture is the opposite and hostile binary for these females. Women in this culture are powerless and manipulated. David forces his wife to decorate herself with make up as per the emblem of cultural beauty. He cannot bear the site of her natural self. Suppression of women and nature goes hand in hand and both are

passive and oppressed entities. Killing of Heron makes the narrator feel depressed. She laments, “The trees are killed as soon as they are valuable” (Atwood, *Surfacing* 80). Her lover Joe wants to marry her as per the social norms, but protagonist craves only for companionship. She desires to be invisible. At the end, in her desire to live in harmony with Nature, she starts living on the island like natural habitats. She hides from human, stops interacting with her group and minimize her needs as per the requirements of natural dwellers. *The Handmaid’s Tale* is a bitter satire on authoritarian culture. On the pretext of the improvement of women’s lives, they are turned into properties. Commander states, “We’ve give them more that we’ve taken away. ... Think of the trouble they had before Don’t you remember the singles bans, the indignity of high school blind dates?” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 220). They were here kept secure to “fulfil their biological destinies” (220). This novel is set up in US thus referring to women’s colonialization and suppression of their natural instincts. Novel is set 2195 in Cambridge in Republic of Gilead and ruled by Christian theocracy. It is dystopian, here infertility is big threat and women are used for procreation purposes. They are turned into objects, their bodily pleasure are suppressed on the name of holy duties. Thus they are their bodies are cultural dissected from each other. They have no bank accounts, or husbands or families. They are categorised as Handmaids, unwoman or wives as per their ability to produce kids. Their bodies turn into their identities and they are fighting a battle against their bodies as Offred states “we are two legged wombs” (146). Every action of these women’s natural instincts and anti-culture meet with punishment. They are forced to live under strict regulations, they walk like trained animals. Darsha Jani reiterates, “Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* is rightly considered to be an

ecofeminist novel as females, natural phenomena and natural creatures show resemblance under the same oppression (407). In this world of Gilead, male are culture and hub of the power. In this novel, culture is presented as anti-female state apparatus and females are presented as an object. This culture induces depersonalization. *The Edible Woman* presents the image of anorexic women, to present the attitude of culture towards women body. Vijeta Gautama and Jyotsna Sinha in their research article rightly states:

..... neither their body nor their actions are self-directed, or not even their own. Because of their helpless hyper obedience to the wishes of others, anorexic typically consider themselves powerless. (706)

Marian understands that she is just a powerless and passive puppet in the hand of male culture. She understands that from a thinking subject, she is turned into an eatable product by the patriarchy and she is devoured regularly culture makes her feel that her body is foreign to her. She refers herself into third person as the body of her is somebody beyond her real self. SankhaMaji rightly states, “She can feel the psychological and cultural pressure. Which has suppressed her subjectivity and snatches her capability of independent thinking” (5178). This is pretty obvious that the culture in which Marian lives is anti-female self. The hierarchy at her work place forces her to stay at middle path. Her Boss Mrs. Bogue also prefers “either unmarried or seasoned veterans” (Atwood, *Edible* 168) and whatever they do, they never can go the upper level. Only possibility for them to going up the level is to marry with a well settled man – the man that they desired to be. Peter is projected as a hunter and in the chase scene it is very much clear that Marian tries hard like a rabbit, but she has no place to run away from cultural hound. This is the culture that

triggers depersonalization in her and make her think that she should be moulded to other self for being accepted.

Unable to face the harsh realities of life, these characters do not try to find a permanent solution, but try to escape from the problem. Their tendency to run away from the depersonalization brings them close to depersonalization. The problem that they are facing is internal, but they try to find solution in external agencies. This makes them inauthentic, vulnerable and alienated. Kyle Stevens states, “Psychological realism is repulsive, because it allows us to escape unpalatable reality by taking shelter in the ‘luxuriousness’ of personality, losing ourselves in the depth of individual character” (11). Due to this repulsive realism these characters are not able to form a cohesive personality. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* is deserted and jilted runs into Carignano to live the life of recluse, tries to escape from existential issues. She comes to Carignano in order to save herself from the world of attachment, motherhood and gratitude. Rama Kundu states:

Kasauli is a real empirical space and at the same time it is apparently emblematic of Nanda’s protest and assertion, the penultimate act of assertion that she has made at the fag-end of her life, regarding her need of a ‘room of one’s own’. It seems to be a contrast to the male spaces she has lived in the past. (150)

This solitary existence is her desire to be live away from the persona, she hates to. Her desire to live away from social responsibilities does not stay long. Soon she finds herself entangled into the world of a child- Raka. She tries again to weave fantasy and fairy tales. She hides away from realities and truth as she states, “why

then did she not tell the child the truth? Who wanted truth? Who could stand it? Nobody. Not even herself. So how could Raka ? (Desai, *Fire* 97). Without even asking Raka she decided that Raka cannot stand truth like her. Nanda Kaul accepts that she “had suffered through the nimity, the disorder, the fluctuating and unpredictable excess” (32). She is happy that it is left behind, but her happiness does not stay long. First Raka and then Ila Das remind her that the fate she has faced is eternal. Her fate is also the fate of her daughter, Tara, who faces even more fierce torture in hand of her husband. Ila Das who unlike Nanda Kaul tries to make some independent identity, faces rape and death and somehow same is the fate of Raka. This is the fate of women in general. Unable to face this harsh reality, she dies in shock. Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer ?* finds the life of mainland as violent and full of commotion. At the death of eagle, she says “perhaps if flew away” (35) as she does not want to accept the death of the eagle. In her frenzy of escape she goes to Manori Island to find her Self. She is in the pursuit of self and identity runs away from her mundane existence. She wants to achieve miracle without doing efforts; it wanes after sometimes. As S.P. Swam remarks, “Fed up with the dreary metropolitan life in Bombay and tormented by the ‘paranoiac fear of her fifth and reluctant pregnancy she leaves for Manori island off the Morris island.” (21-22). She fails to achieve satisfaction as the island even and retreat unwillingly. She chooses to compromise. All her illusions are thwarted. She finds the solution within. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* also tries to find escape from her inner demons. Albino’s prophecy is part of her psyche and in alienation all her dormant fears try to rule over her actions. As a child she enjoyed “princess like, a sumptuous fare of fantasies” (Desai, *Cry* 41) and in her husband’s life no done “speak of love, for less

of affection” (46). She wants to go on vocation at her father’s home. Her husband denies her plea. Her failed attempt to escape from this indifferent atmosphere leads her to utter desolation. Unable to strike a balance between sensual desires and intellectual barrenness, she murders her husband and first and then commits suicide. She throughout her life stays an escapist. She searches for saviour in her father, husband and brother and when she fails to find an escape, she tries to liberate herself by murder and suicide.

Surrounded by Carnival culture, female protagonists of Atwood also choose the path of escape, with a few exceptions. Their escape strategies are consist of avoiding clashes, silences, ignoring males and their actions and getting preoccupied with natural objects. Offred in *The Handmaid’s Tale* is living in the authoritarian culture and always hatches plan to escape from this Gilead. This world uses violence and discourses of utility, religion and ethics to oppress women. Offred willingly unwillingly participates in her own oppression. She fears to take risks she is scared to take action as she says nothing while Doctor tries to seduce her, “I’ve given no trust, taken no risk, all is safe. It’s the choice that terrifies me. A way out, a salvation” (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 71). To survive in this place of oppression Offred surrenders to the system. She is obsessed with the phrase “nolite be bastardescaro-brundorum” which means don’t let the bastards grind you down. But she does nothing to save herself from this. At the end of the novel she escapes, but not by her efforts and she is unsure where is she going. Offred lives in the world of suspended realities and she contributes in it by letting herself go with the flow. This escapist tendency in her is the major reason of her depersonalization as inauthentic self-ignites the feeling of otherness in her. Marian in *The Edible Woman* is again the

victim of patriarchal culture. She has two other female models to follow or look upon- Clara and Ainsley. Clara completely surrenders to the patriarchal culture and assumes the role of women as per the social norms. She starts living life of other. Apart from sudden outburst, she does not even realize that she has been depersonalized. Contrary to this Ainsley makes a radical plan to use male as an object to achieve her femininity, she fails in her purpose but else become authentic. Marian does like either of the option. She is bewildered that what she should choose. Unable to take the onus of choice – she tries to escape the unavoidable. Dr. Prantik Banerjee and Ms. Arpita Mukherjee points out:

The Edible Woman shows woman's body is always a site of constant struggle between self-control and self-assertion while analysing the extent to which Atwood's fiction might dismantle culturally – encoded concepts of femininity keeping the problem related to identity crisis. (21)

Marian's self-control and self-assertion is at back burner and rather than making a firm choice related to her future, she tries to escape from the anxiety. Her trips to laundries and to Duncan are the past of her escapades. Her attempts to save herself from making the choice trigger her depersonalization. She does not like what she is; she does not dare to become what she wants to. She becomes a dwindling creature. She starts having out of body experiences. She feels emotional numbness and detachment from body. She feels that there is no boundary of Peter and she is like a fluid. She starts assimilating into Peter. Her social identity is devoured into Peter, this makes her anorexic. Her attempts to run away from Peter are her attempts to escape from the inevitable result of her marriage with Peter. She is reduced in

person, become an ‘other;’ in her own eyes. Her anorexia is her unconscious attempt to defy the colonialization of her body by Patriarch- Peter. Peter is presented as a well groomed and a perfect person like a male ideology and Marian is portrayed like female ideology – which lack centre of power. Marian unconsciously denies the position of powerlessness and thus to avoid it pick up the escape route. Unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing* comes on the island in search of her missing father. It in returns is her attempt to escape from her troubling past, memories of past marriage, and abortion and volatile relationship with Joe. On the Island, she tries to avoid the company of her group. She avoids the inevitable question of her relationship. She is running away from the culture, but also not able to embrace what she wants to. This depersonalised her into the other. Patriarchal cultural and feminist nature in her is always in conflict. She wants to stay as a natural object but wants to be culturally acceptable. For example, she does not want to tie knot of marriage, but she always wears the ring, so that people can consider her respectable. She never tells her uncle that she is not married. At climax of the novel she avoids the course of civilization, as she believes that even natural Canadian is turning into colonialist American. She wants to escape her Canadian natural identity; she picks up the course of getting intermingled with the nature. She believes one day fur will grow on her body, she starts crawling like animals. These are her escape tendencies that turn her into another person or animal to be precise.

All these characters are having depersonalization, but their families have an indifferent attitude towards those symptoms. They never take these symptoms seriously and led them to worst scenarios. Sita, in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, is termed as hypersensitive or impractical. Her symptoms of

depersonalization are never taken seriously. Her children consider her theatrical and her husband hysterical. Inability and apathy of her family makes her pessimistic and melancholic. Shubha Tiwari states, "Sita's pilgrimage with its promise of renewal and regeneration is the result of her social alienation" (322). To save herself from this meaningless existence, she runs on Manori Island. Here she is able to be united with her inner self, but her children defy this sort of primitive existence. She suffers this torment for 20 years. She is suffocated and inauthentic. She admires the strangers, who take the root which he desires for. At the end she is able to cure from depersonalization because of action of her free will. At the end she reconciles with her family, but her reconciliation is not submissive. Her doubts are cleared and she is a complete self-capable of taking her own decision and live with them. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* has seed of depersonalization since her childhood. Her father knows that and always treat her irrational queries with love and care and her fears were dormant, but after her marriage, she starts living with her in-laws who were indifferent towards her symptoms on her husband's part "Understanding was scant, love was meagre" (Desai, *Cry* 89). She wants to watch Kathakali dance to release her anxiety, but her husband asks her to wait so that "it will be less expensive" (43). Madhusudan Prasad rightly remark "...their marriage has been fiasco, they continue be together, leading an explosive life of in communication" (51). Her symptoms are ignored with the discussion of "cups of tea and philosophy" (Desai, *Cry* 9). She is told to sleep "there was no-bond, any love – hardly any love" (108). Nanda Kaul has devoted prime period of her life to her husband and her children, but she was living alone in her old age. She lives in hostility of weather and indifference of her children. Harish Raizada rightly remarks, "From the missing of her agitated mind it

appears that as the wife of the vice-chancellor For the Punjab University and the mother of several children, she has lived a very busy and tiring life” (44). At last, she has accepted her destiny to be alone. Her children do not let her stay long, she is forced to baby sit her granddaughter Raka. Her family has use and throw attitude and never cared for her yes or no. Unable to bear the news of Ila Das’s death she dies by shock.

Atwood’s Characters do not have integrated familiar relationship as Anita Desai has projected. Her protagonist are staying independently or only with their lover or in nuclear families. This makes attack of depersonalization on them worst, as they have very less people around them who can observe the symptoms of depersonalization, but even when their kins are not able to observe these symptoms, they neglect these symptoms as an attempt of the protagonist to have attention. Offred in *The Handmaid’s Tale* lives in Gilead where depersonalization is a culturally induced formula. Her authority and culture of Gilead tries to turn her into other person. Offred belongs to the transitional generation who have not accepted new feminine identity yet. They are the part of the process of re-identification. As Aunt Lydia proclaims:

It is the hardest for you. We know the sacrifices you are being expected to make. It is hard when men revile you. For the one who came after you, it will be easier. They will accept their duties. With willing hearts. (Atwood, *Handmaid’s* 127)

The next generation would not have any other identity. Here depersonalisation is promoted through theology, with the help of lecturing and physical punishment.

Their original names are taken away and new names are assigned to them. Movies of old times and news of old times are shown to them to tell them how they were living degenerated life. Loathing of old self is preached, and imposed at the same time. Men are compared to “sex machines” (153), so that these Handmaid’s should not get any romantic idea about males. It is a society where women have freedom from their own old self and this freedom is celebrated in a structure manner by the power apparatus. Old self of them is termed as “lazy women”, “sluts” (123). Reproduction is the only purpose they do have. Barbe Hammer observes:

The novel constantly emphasizes the omnipresence of the scrutinizing gaze; the word “eye” is everywhere; the secret police are called “eyes”, and the farewell greeting “under his eye” refers to the divine gaze but also testifies to the fact that everyone is indeed under the eye of someone else. (8)

Thus the depersonalization is imposed upon these Handmaids by constant surveillance and with the passage of time. This gaze has started getting internalized and thus these Handmaid’s starts depersonalizing. This dystopian situation is atypical in nature. This is commune supported depersonalization process. Marian in *The Edible Woman* has many instances where the symptoms of her depersonalization surfaces. Peter observes its manifestation but chooses to ignore it. Marian is a woman in her early twenties, she panics because “somewhere in front of her “a self was waiting, preformed” (Atwood, *Edible* 21). Peter is obsessed to make her a docile, socially accepted woman. Marian unconsciously defies these boundaries and revolt against cultural concept of female and feminine. All characters in the novel Peter, Ainsley, Clara and Owner of the hostel believes that

Marian is a dignified lady because she follows social norms. She is the ideal female and having feminine sensibilities. They ignore the explosives that were buried beneath this composure. Peter always tries to persuade her to follow his footprints. Her first social blast of depersonalization happens when she runs away aimlessly from the restaurant. Here Peter rather than follows use a superior tactics to catch and second time when she hides under the bed. In both cases, Peter ignores the symptoms of depersonalization. He is a narcissist and wants a submissive wife. He reminds Marian on regular interval that she lives a “sheltered life” (147) and is incapable of taking decision. Even when Marian stops eating most of the foods, he never notices. He notices this thing only when she escapes from her own party and creates the scenario where there was a possibility to harm his social reputation. In the climax scene, Marian bakes a miniature version of her – a cake woman and asks him to eat it. Peter refuses it and thus this becomes her point of resurrection. As Sofia Grant explains, “Atwood indicates that the solution is not to accept and adapt oneself to repressive culturally defined conventions, but to rewrite them” (82). In *Surfacing*, nameless protagonist has many moments where she displays depersonalizations, but her close group of friends never notices it. They blame her for being insensitive and that she wants to be man but they never notices that she needs help. For instance, when she refuses to marry, Peter never tries to find the real reason. He always responds physically, whenever narrator approaches him for emotional satisfaction. He never realizes that why she refuses to marry as she does not “need a certificate for that” (Atwood, *Surfacing* 80). He never realises that why she has phobia from marriage. Her over-sensitivity on the killing of Heron and emotional numbness at the news of her father’s death is related to her being socially unacceptable. Neither for, nor her friend Anna tries to understand her situation.

David relates this thing to her availability for seducing and Anna commits a sexual relationship with Joe. Her disorder is used as leverage by all. All of them have a colonizer's attitude towards her as they have for nature. Like trees she will "never be allowed to grow tall again, they're killed as soon as they're valuable..." (55). Thus like all other characters, her family stay indifferent towards her sensitivities and Depersonalizations.

Anita Desai presents a mixture of past and the present in her narrative. Her characters shutters between past and present as she wants to indicate that past and present has no boundaries. Her characters have depersonalization and having fluid identities and time and space has no solid identity for them. Recurrence of past memories triggers their depersonalization and made them aware of their incomplete existence. Second technique that she has used is she has presented male characters in direct contrast to female characters. For example Gautama's detachment is in direct contrast with Maya's longing for intimacy; Raman's rationality is in opposition to Sita's emotionality; and Nanda Kaul's loyalty is the binary to her husband's desertion. Fantasy is another narrative technique used by Anita Desai; this technique helps reader to explore the troubled mind of her character. These imaginative flights of their mind project the mental inertia of her characters. Maya's fantasy of moon and her father's home is her attempt to escape from her present worries. Nanda Kaul fantasies and project her perfect world of her father's house to Raka to project her desire for having a loving and safe haven. City-island or city-nature dichotomy is also a recurring phenomenon in her novels. For Sita in *Where Shall We go This Summer?* island is a place of miracle and an attempt to escape her existentialist ennui; For Nanda Kaul, Carignano is a place away from the expectations of her city life; For Sita in *Cry, the Peacock*, her father's adobe surrounded by natural beauty is

place away from city's practical life. Another technique used by Anita Desai is a flash back technique through which she gives glimpse of haunting past of her characters. Maya's dreaded Albano is projected in flash backs of her mind; Nanda Kaul's flashbacks present her husband's desertion and her dreaded past of ingratitude of her husband. Sita's flashbacks present her abnormal childhood. Anita Desai opens the fold of depersonalization of her characters through flashbacks only as she wants to present that these flashbacks are marker of mind, which presents their inner fears and other personality. Anita Desai uses symbolism at its best. Garden, cities, island and hills presents the psyche of her characters. Symbols of insects, reptiles, owls, lizards, bats, apes, fishes, snails, peacocks are derived from the world of animals to present abnormal concern of her characters with these animals and birds. It seems like that these characters incarnate themselves into these low-level creatures. They feel their agony is inhuman or more than human. Garden and landscapes presents physical desire of her characters and barrenness presents their benefit of emotionality. Structures of all selected novels are similar. All these novels are divided into three parts and symbolises three stages of these character is depersonalization. *Cry, the Peacock* is divided into three parts. Each part deals with the origin, development, and culmination of depersonalization in Maya. Interestingly the part three and part one are narrated in third person, as referring to Maya's otherness and part two is written in first person to refers her internal anguish, her attempts to avoid her depersonalization. In part one, Anita Desai highlights the surfacing of her depersonalization symptoms, part two symbolises Maya's attempts to achieve oneness with her real self and part three presents her loss of self. The novel *Fire on the Mountain* is again divided into three parts, Part One – Nanda Kaul at Carignano, Part Two –Raka comes at Carignano, and Part Three – Ila Das leaves

Carignano. Part One illustrates the alienated existence of Nanda Kaul and her inner struggles to maintain her sanity. Symptoms of depersonalization are forcefully kept latent, with the arrival of Raka in Part-II, she feels a new courage to fight against these symptoms and renarrate her life by her fantasies and truth. In Part-III, arrival of Ila Das shatters her palace of lies and with her departure her Forest of fantasies set into fire. The novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer* is also divided into three parts. Part-I – Monsoon 67, Part-II Winter 4? and Part-III Monsoon 67. Part-I portrays Sita's troubled life of city and her existential queries to run away from this hostile environment. Part-II refers to her childhood life and her Charismatic father and Sita's attempts to reconcile her past and present. Part-III all her hopes are dashed into reality. Her illusions are broken, but she maintains her sanity and her depersonalization is under control.

To highlights depersonalization syndrome and unmask inner demons of female protagonists, Atwood uses apt techniques. Her narration opens multiple inner layers of her characters' psyche. In narration, she uses multiples voices to portray the inner conflicts of character, which mostly arises due to the problem of choice between nature and culture. This technique is very apt. to depict depersonalization, because reader can observe both inner and outer voices of the characters. Reader can understand the conflict and contradictory impulses which characters employ to maintain their sanity. Atwood through her multiple voices of protagonists' create the binary. In *The Edible Woman*, she creates the binary of commodity and consumer whenever Marian feels like a commodity, she starts using plural pronoun and third person narration and as a consumer she uses first person narration. In *Surfacing* this dichotomy is created by referring American Colonizer and Canadian natural objects. In *The Handmaid's Tale* dichotomy is between past and present. To highlight the

depersonalization of female protagonist, Atwood uses some other characters that symbolises the complete surrender to culture and thus a big time difference surfaces between protagonists and other character. For instance Peter in *The Edible Woman* is always perfectly dressed and knows what he desires from his life. He symbolises structural power apparatus. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Gilead is in direct opposition to feminine authenticity. In *Surfacing*, symbol of American Colonization and Canadian natural objects are in contrast to each other. This dichotomy makes the readers aware about the psyche of their characters. Atwood uses archetypal image of Canada which is a symbol of safety, security and cultural heritages is often portrayed as colonizer. In *Surfacing*, USA's colonizing policy are used to signify every act of destroying nature. In *The Handmaid's Tale* Gilead is in US and Offred wants to escape to Canada. Unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing* wants to intermingle in Canada and Offred desires for the life in Canada. Her novel presents "Canadian victim complex" which refers to an attempt to "defining yourself as a victim" (Victim-Complex qtd. Gibson 11). Another major technique used by Atwood is intermingling of past and present. Her characters do not differentiate between past and present; they live as per their psychic time zone in which past and present are living together in fluid state. Any past event surfaces at any point of time and affects the current action of her characters. Deception is the technique that Atwood uses to forefronts the inner realities of her protagonists. These deceptions sometimes even baffle the readers. For instance, in *Surfacing*, there are deceptive narrative joints where reader cannot rely on the narration. Most of her narrators are incredible. Even they are not sure about their own narration. For instance Offred is confused about her state of mind and truth of her own narration. Namelessness or pseudo-name is another technique that Atwood uses to refer the lack of identity in her characters. In

the Republic of Gilead all Handmaids has pseudo name, people are known by their ranks. In *Surfacing*, protagonist never refers her name. It appears like these characters are telling stories of their distant related bodies to refer their depersonalization. Novels of Atwood are divided into three parts as referring to the psyche of her characters. In *The Edible Woman* second part uses third person narrative viwhich refers Marian's psychosis and part-I and Part-III, she uses first person to present her sane mind. *Surfacing* is again divided in three parts. *The Handmaid's Tale* is divided in 15 parts out of which 7 parts are referred as Night, 5 parts are named as per normal households and three parts refer theology. Thus refer three major parts of her meaningless life. Culture nature dichotomy is created by Atwood. Culture in her novels refers to colonial tendencies and reason of Depersonalization.

Depersonalization in the selected works of both the authors is the product of living inauthentic life as other self. These protagonists are defying their natural Self by living their lives as per the dictum of males or society. Depersonalization in them starts as defence mechanism- an attempt to escape from the hapless situation, but soon this wishful journey takes an ugly turn. These inner goblins start taking central stage in their life. These characters loose the status of subjects in their own lives. The indifferent attitude of their respective families, friends and other relatives also feed this goblin further. Both authors use apt techniques and style to foreground inner dark world of females' unconsciousness and unstable state of mind.

Conclusion

Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood both are the champions of portraying female sensibilities and point of views. Their women characters are normal overtly, but covertly these characters demonstrate multi-layers and their behaviour demand multiple interpretations. Anita Desai's characters are rooted in Indian context and Margaret Atwood has Canada at its backdrop. The context plays a major role in the depersonalization of their female protagonists. Depersonalization theorists state that depersonalization affects male and female in equal measure, but in the work of Margaret Atwood and Anita Desai male characters symbolize social sanity and somehow play a pivotal role in driving female characters into the dark dungeon of depersonalization, either actively or passively. One thing is common in all these works which is all male characters remain indifferent to female problems and their apathy as partner causes deep anxiety to female protagonists. Male characters in these novels are projected as the flag bearer of culture, which is patriarchal in its structure and anti-female in its nature. Most of the male characters (few exceptions like Duncan) present rationality and indifferent attitude towards these female protagonists. Their rationality is the product of the common sense that they are surrounded with and they categorise these female characters as irrational, because these protagonists defy the long established norms of male world.

First common element that is projected by Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood is the lack of coherent communication amongst the female characters. Most of the depersonalization theorists claim that subjects suffer from this disorder are unable to comprehend his or her experiences coherently. This failure in making a meaningful

interaction often leads to worsen of already existing syndrome of Depersonalization.

Paul Bennett clarifies this in his book *Abnormal and Clinical Psychology*:

A more enclosed system that impacts on mental health is the family. Family system theorists consider the individuals within a family to form an interacting system. Each has a reciprocal influence on those around them. The behaviour of individuals within these systems, and the communication between them, can lead to individual members behaving in ways that seems 'abnormal'. (25)

These protagonists are staying in dysfunctional families and it also affects their communication. It is not only the verbal communication is marred with defects, but also their inaction in communicative acts that affect the psyche of these protagonists. These fragmented and de-real experiences of these protagonists by its origin defy the social discourse. Even when they try their best, they are often misinterpreted. These experiences are unprecedented and society has an indifferent attitude towards these symptoms. Anita Desai's protagonists Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, Raka and Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain*, and Sita in *Where Shall We go This Summer?* are suffering from depersonalization. The first and foremost cause their conditions is lack of communication. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* craves for companionship and marital discord is the cause which drifts her towards extreme anxiety. Root cause of this anxiety is lack of understanding due to age difference between her and her husband and childhood trauma. Maya's husband is of the age of her father and thus has dry emotions towards physical intimacy and passionate love. For him, relationship is a matter of utility. He follows the path of detachment and Maya is full

of life throbbing emotions. She feels that his detachment is an insult to her. She could have covered this gap, if she was having children, but after four year of marriage she does not have children. She wants to communicate her anguish, but like a peacock her cries remain unheard. She silently sobs "Pia, Pia". She tries to form other meaningful relationship with her mother-in-law or with her friends, but they also considered her incapable of doing any serious conversation. This communicational barrier due to gender, age and social norms drifts her inward. Nurtured by childhood unspoken dread, absence of communication abolishes her all control over her senses. She becomes two persons in one body. Her one Conscious Self is ready to compromise and live peacefully, but other Unconscious Self craves for immediate fulfilment. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* is social recluse. Her husband ignores her in youth and she always remains busy in house hold chores. Her children left her to live in recluse and she embraced this unwillingly on the facade of being alone. She has nobody to share her emotions with. She had succumbed to the social roles in past that were assigned to her, now she wants to evade any such responsibilities as these responsibilities brought her nothing except pain. In the absence of other to communicate, she drifts inwards. She has created a strong persona for outside world and deceived herself by saying time and again- I want to be alone. Her fears of attachment made a dividing line between her and others. Her communicative actions are incomplete and incoherent. Even when she starts talking to Raka, she speaks about the fancy world rather than realities. She creates a perfect male world through her imagination where she lives in harmony with nature. Raka is a recluse as she is a pure nature animal and she hates to communicates with others. Her disinterest in human interaction is the product of domestic violence. In

retaliation of a child and as a defence mechanism, she tries to escape from schools and parties. Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is an impulsive character, who is considered as theatrical because she is mortally scared of the violence which is innate for the citizens of city. Her husband considers her hyper-sensitive and irrational and never discusses about the future of their children with her. Her children also avoid her due to her theatrical display of her emotions. She spends most of her time sitting in the window and smokes. She considers visitors as intruders. Life of mainland brings her nothing except loneliness. Her lack of communication opens the door of Manori Island in her unconsciousness and she craves for old days. She craves for the days when she and her brother were allowed to be theatrical. She desires for a miracle to save herself from the dreariness of her existence.

Margaret Atwood's protagonists also suffer from similar lack of communication. Nameless protagonist in *Surfacing* has strained relationship with her lover Joe. She is not ready to marry him. They are incapable of having any discussions, she keeps on imagining about her non-existent ex-husband and aborted child. However she is on the island in group of four, but they lack belief in each other. They lie to each other; there is lack of credibility in their discussion. Protagonist believes that there are two types of people in the world- first type is colonialist and second type is colonised. She feels, she is in the opposite binary to all these character. People surrounded her are emblem of cultural anarchy and she believes she is the natural object. She dodges to communicate with them. She never openly expresses her feelings and major communicative action of her happen in soliloquies and monologues. There is an invisible barrier between her and her

companions at the very onset of the novel. This barrier grows stronger and wider with the time. Marian in *The Edible Woman* is not able to communicate her inner feeling to Peter, as Peter is a social person. He is party man, popular in his social circle. Marian craves for his attention and does insane act to get it. She always put a mask of submissive woman in front of Peter, so that she can be socially acceptable. Her masked deception to the world and to herself makes an adverse effect on her and she becomes anorexic. Her body rejects her demeanour. It is the revolt of her consciousness against her socially induced existence. She rejects radical ways of her friend, Ainsley, and passive acceptance of Clara; so to get a glimpse of meaningful interaction, she builds a relationship with Duncan. Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* is not allowed to have any discussion or camaraderie in this dystopian Gilead. She is living in imposed communicative alienation. She craves to have a real discussion with other handmaids. The lack of communication drives these characters inward and they start feeling like other. Offred feels a strong detachment from her body. In search of expressing their emotions these characters lose the track of their body and emotional. They suffer from emotional bankruptcy and incompleteness. Thus all these protagonists have trouble in having meaningful dialogues with others. This inability triggers depersonalization in these characters. The reasons of this inability are different. Maya is married with an older person and her in laws consider her immature. Sita's love for the unknown drifts her away from others. Nanda Kaul has been suffering from the loneliness that is imposed upon her in old age by the callous attitude of her family. Atwood's protagonist Marian's inability to communicate is the product of her indecision about her marriage, Nameless protagonist's inability is the product of her hyper-sensitivity and childhood traumas and Offred is suffering

from this inability due to the authoritarian rule of the Gilead. This handicap sorely affects Maya, Nameless Protagonist and Nanda Kaul. Nameless protagonist turns into a natural object unconsciously and starts acting weird as she is like any other object of nature, Nanda Kaul is forced to stay in Carignano alone in her old age, Maya turns insane and a murderer. Offred's inability is begotten by the rules of Gilead, once out of it there are chances that she will recover from this trauma; Sita is able to gain her sense ultimately withdrawing back into mendacity. Thus both of these characters are half-redeemed and most likely would be able to take their place back in society. Marian through her symbolic cake woman gains back the status of consumer and ability to perform an independent communicative action. Thus she recovers from the deadly depersonalization by defying male centric discourse, images and metaphors and replacing it with female discourse.

The second symptom, that all these characters share, is childhood traumas or pre-life phobias which cast a shadow on the present and future of these characters. All these characters have been suffering from avoidant personality disorder which further aggravates into Depersonalization. Giampiero Arciero and Guido Bondolfi explain this condition:

In the case of the phobia-prone style of personality, phobic disorder may emerge following an unexpected event that is perceived by the subject as an alteration of his own sense of interoceptive stability. In the subjective phenomenology of the patient, this alteration will correspond to a state of acute anxiety and fear, and to a mental anticipation of similar situations in the ineffective attempt to regain control over his emotional sphere. (218)

In the same manner protagonist in the selected novels try to gain control over their fears, but unable to hold the reins of their fear they fail to connect with the society and surroundings. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* has a childhood trauma, an albino's prophecy. This fatal prophecy is a part of her unconsciousness. It was latent till the care of her father was there, once she comes at her in laws' home, she always feel that she is haunted by the memories of her past. She scared from loneliness and wants, but due to an invisible barrier between her husband and Maya she never shares her emotions. She cries like a peacock under the shroud of this fatal prophecy. In her unconscious, she already has committed the murder of her husband several times. It is her defence strategy to save herself from the anguish that haunts us. Aggravated by the indifferent surroundings her fear nurtures itself on the expense of her insanity. Ultimately, it turns her into a murdered and ends in suicide. In *Fire on the Mountain*, Anita Desai presents Raka and Nanda Kaul. Raka has a troubled childhood due to her dysfunctional family and she turns into a recluse. Nanda Kaul herself has a troublesome marital relationship which drifts her into seclusion. Raka is phobia of domestic violence. This recurring activity at her home forces her to take the route of seclusion. She hates social gatherings and interactions because this reminds her plight of her mother. Nanda Kaul is scared from her inauthentic past and to avoid this unpleasant feeling, she stays in Carignano and concocts false stories to secure her dignity and prestige. News of Ila Das's death threatens her perfect world of lies and she dies of the shock of her horrid existence. Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* has an abnormal childhood where she had an extraordinary life which is in direct contrast with her present situation. She fears from the violence so much that she refuses to give birth to a child. In her pre-life she lived a different life of

peace and disturbing secrets; in her life of mainland, she feels insecure as violence is the part of their life. Sita at the end of the novel is able to retain her sanity by facing her phobia. Nanda Kaul is too old to face her fears and just a glimpse of these fears puts her into a fatal shock. Maya is the worst sufferer in this case even. Her fears bring death not only to her but also to her husband. She becomes the root cause of the destruction of her world.

On some streaks, Atwood's Nameless Protagonist in *Surfacing* has a troubled past- unreliable memories of rational husband, aborted child and father's loss. She is trapped into her own world of self-deception. She is always pre-occupied by her own thoughts. Her relationship with Joe is holding on a thin thread due to her past relationships. She dodges the question of marriage. She has phobia from American colonialism and she scares to become like them. In her attempts to avoid be like them, she turns into something else. She hates human so much that, she starts feeling affinity with nature. In her hallucination, she acts like natural objects. Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* thinks about her husband and child. She once has freedom and rights and in present scenario, she is reduced to an object. Her fear is the fear of the authority. She is brave enough to take bold and stupid decisions. She is forced to live like an object by the fear induced by images, symbols and metaphors. She like other handmaids is subject to brainwash. Movies, scriptures, news channel etc. are used to trick and create phobia from free world and to make them succumb to their miserable conditions. The height of this is that they are trained to fear from their own bodies. Marian in *The Edible Woman* feels fear from eating food. Food here is the symbol of patriarchal ideology. She feels that if she follows social norms, she will lose her identity. She becomes anorexic and starts avoiding social gatherings.

She runs away from the function organised by Peter. All these characters do not face their fears, but try to avoid them. The time when they come face to face their phobias, the symptoms of Depersonalization take backseats. Through the analysis of the conditions of all these characters, it seems that all these characters has seeds of depersonalization seed in them during their adolescences, what they required was a surrounding which can help these symptoms to resurface. Once these symptoms gets favourable conditions, these characters starts turning from bad to worst and in some cases it results into self-annihilation.

Electra complex or hyper-connectivity to parents, pets or objects is another reason that causes depersonalization in these characters. For personality formation, it is important to have both the parents as they constitute two aspects of social life-masculine and feminine. Anita Desai's characters Maya and Sita are both motherless children. Due to the absence of mother, they develop father fixation. This disturbs the process of their personality formation. Absence of one parent is hazardous for children. Their Electra complex interferes in their daily lives. Maya lived a happy life till the time she lives in her father's home. She chooses her husband who is older than her to get father like protection and care. This decision does not pay off. She gets neither care from her husband or the physical love. Absence of Sita's mother left her only with her father, who was busy in his social life and never pays much attention to her daughter. Sita's secret visits to her father's room shatter his image in her mind and she starts living a theatrical life. She never accepts these things publically and continuous suppression causes her deep troubles. Raka in *Fire on the Mountain* is deprived of parental love which makes her socially recluse. Domestic violence at her home makes her wary from relationships. Even in the case of Nanda

Kaul, there is no reference of her mother. In her dream world, she talks about her father not of her mother. Margaret Atwood's unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing* craves for her mother and hopes that she might have left some traces; so that she can understand her roots. She tries to search her father, but never talks about her mother. Her desire to be a mother without having a relationship refers the same principle. There are no references of Mariam's parents and in Offred's case her father's reference is not given in the novel. It seems that both authors want to indicate that lack of proper parenting, especially in the absence of mother causes faulty personality formation. They are socially misfit and alienated; it develops some sort of psychosis; which later on manifest itself as depersonalization.

Anxiety and stress are another two common elements in the works Margaret Atwood and Anita Desai that cause depersonalization. Anita Desai's three protagonists have different reasons of anxiety. In *Cry, the Peacock*, Maya is under stress due to a childhood prophecy which casts dark clouds on her present life. This prophecy lives with her and makes her anxious for her future. Absence of kids and companionship, this prophecy causes her constant anxiety. Nanda Kaul is under stress due to her old age reclusion. Her husband cheats on her and in her old age, her children leave her alone. It causes a deep rooted malevolence in her. At the climax of the novel, she was able to recover a little, but the death of Ila Das unsettles her for forever. Sita's anxiety is her rejection of city life. She has an extraordinary childhood and she hates the violence of city life. She hates the violence that surrounds her and her pregnancy causes her anxiety. Margaret Atwood's female protagonists also undergo through stress and anxiety. Marian is anxious due to the existential choice. She decides to marry Peter as per social norms, but emotionally

she does not accept her own decision. This choice causes her stress. Unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing* is anxious because her father is missing and her troubled old marriage and volatile present relationship makes her anxious. Offred is living in slavery where her behavioural pattern is decided by outside forces and this causes anxiety and leads her towards depersonalization.

Another thing that is common among all these characters is troubled marital relationship. For these women, these relationships are centre of their existence and disruption in it affects them to its core. It seems that selected authors want to suggest that if woman keep somebody else at the centre of their world, they would be affected by trauma and disorders. Nanda Kaul in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* has a husband for whom, Nanda Kaul is an object to display. She is supposed to be well dressed always and attend all the guests. The mid-day court sessions with another lady suggests her husband's extra-marital affair which makes Nanda Kaul a recluse. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* has marital discords. Maya is a young lady; her heart is throbbing with emotions, passions and she craves for physical intimacy; her husband is middle aged person and for him, these desires are children. He responds to her pleas with cold philosophy of detachment it hurts Maya further and drifts her inwards. Sita in *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* married her husband in hurry. It was the only option available; there is no love in their relationship, put responsibilities. She is considered irrational by her husband and her children. Both of them have different sensibilities. These marital discords make them borderline characters and they are volatile. In their defence to the anxiety caused by these failed relationship- Nanda Kaul tries to make Carignano as their safe haven, Sita runs on Manori Island, and Maya creates a substitute of child in Toto. Once these substitutes are taken away from them, they lay expose to the disorder.

Margaret Atwood's characters also have male-female relationship at centre of depersonalization. Marian in *The Edible Woman* starts suffering from depersonalization after her engagement with Peter. She feels anorexic as her body rejects her decision to eat. Peter wants to make her model of femininity which is rejected by Marian psychologically. Unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing* never comes out of her obsession with incredible account of her divorce and her decision of abortion. She sees images of her aborted child. However, she appears normal at the surface; she feels pangs of abnormality due to failed marital relationships. Offred in *The Handmaids' Tale* craves for marriage and children. What available to her is mechanical sex which defies the union of soul; it is just like exercise. Her relationship with Nick is her only hope. Offred has a natural desire for family, but she never meets this desire as it is not available to her. She is reduced to a child producing machine and forced to live as other self. Marian is terrified from taking the next step of marriage. Her unconscious rejects this decision. All the protagonists due to their failed relationship try to find alternate and in this process depersonalization haunts them. They try to find authenticity by outward agencies. Maya in absence of love and care from her husband develops a very strong bond with her pet and it is the death of the Toto that triggers her depersonalization. Sita feels that she can avoid giving birth to her child if she lives in Miracle Island. She feels that island can provide meaning her existence. Nanda Kaul is attached to pine trees and Carignano is the centre of her old age life. She clings to what is left to her. Margaret Atwood's Marian keeps on going to Duncan in a hope that he can provide some reason to her life. Duncan and his stupid tactics give her relief from her anxiety and failing relationship. Offred tries to find meaning in late night visits to

Nick's room and by getting useable goods from commanders. Unnamed protagonist keeps on watching maps and markers drawn by her father. This gives her hope to disorder her own self.

Another similarity in the depersonalizations of these protagonists is escape tendency. All these characters rather than facing their problem, try to use escape as a defence mechanism. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* is fed up from relationship starts living the life of a recluse in Carignano, Sita runs to the Manori island to escape from the violence of the city and in her effort to escape from giving birth to the child, Maya's escape symbol is moon or other natural object which like her signifies passion and emotions. She finds killing her husband easier than facing her phobias. Atwood's protagonist also has same tendencies. Marian starts running away from Peter and her ventures with Duncan refer her tendencies to flee away from the impending fate. Offred is living in authoritarian rule, starts making her factious realities this to other her little unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing* uses her father's maps to run away from impending choice of marrying Joe. Their escape tendencies provide them initial ease, but in long terms do not solve their issues. It makes them more vulnerable to the disorder.

All protagonists of Anita Desai are modern and educated women and they spent their life in urban areas, but in their heart of heart they crave for nature driven habitats. Nanda Kaul in her old age starts living in Carignano; Sita runs to island to escape from the anxieties of city life; Maya craves for her father's home of natural abundance. Same is true about to Margaret Atwood's characters. Marian and Unnamed Protagonists are living in urban world. Unnamed protagonist of *Surfacing* comes to the island in search of her husband and herself Marian is also on urban

dweller, but she seeks peace outside the boundaries of city, where she visits with Duncan. Offred lives in dystopian world of authoritarian rule and she craves to live freely. Natural dwelling gives them peace in compare to the culture. It appears that these female rejects male culture which is anti- female self. The rejection of this culture is natural. Their other self is the result of living unnatural life being as a second sex. Their unconsciousness rejects this sort of existence and revolt against it. If these protagonists do not follow the path of their unconscious desires, it makes them double selves.

Above causes trigger depersonalizations in the female protagonists of the selected authors. Characters of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood are borderline characters in term of depersonalization. These protagonists suffer on all four levels referred by depersonalization theorists- on the level of cognition, emotional behaviour, physical and environmental. Symptoms of the disorder appear on all levels and haunt these protagonists in all spheres of life.

Emotional elements are more dominant in female depersonalized patients. All these protagonists are living a life that is more oriented to the emotions than to rationality, thus the trigger point of depersonalization is also at the level of emotions. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* develops a strong bond with her pet Toto and its death shakes her core. She starts living alone and behaves strangely. She becomes emotionally volatile and drifts away from the rational world of her mind. For her, if a person cannot accept nature, his life is not worth living. She scares from her Self, weeps at night, tries to strike conversation to avoid being alone. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* evades attachment to save herself from pain and suffering. She wears the mask of indifference. Both Maya and Nanda Kaul experiences emotional

numbness. Maya has acute desires and when she cannot fulfil these desires it makes her numb; Nanda Kaul, in contrast, has always had ingratitude so she stops expecting from people. Sita grows hyper-sensitive and she feels affinity with eagle and tries to save it from the crows. All these volatile emotions refer their instable state of mind. Margaret Atwood's characters also show same volatile emotional state of mind. Marian is so terrified by her decision of marriage that she feels emotionally wrecked. She feels as she is turning into an edible object and she is eaten by Peter. In her defence, she stops eating. Nameless protagonist feigned that she is the part of nature and cannot do what a natural object cannot do. She stops eating cooked food and cut all communication from the outer world. Offred's state of emotion is that she is not allowed to feel any emotion. Her body and her emotions are considered detached. These emotional violability induces inertness in the female characters. They feel that they are not the owner of their emotions. Marian's tears start flowing without her control, Sita weeps and laughs like some mechanical process, Nanda Kaul unable to bear the emotional outburst dies. These characters feel the lack of agency in their emotional part.

Cognitively, these protagonists are aware about the existence of second Self. They feel that there is a lack which was not in existence previously. They experience that their cognition has no control over their body. They experience dual personalities and lack of instrumentality. There is denial of autonomy in them as they are unable to determine their course of action. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* evades attachment, but once she comes in contact with Raka; she tries to hold her attention. Maya cannot stop thinking about Albino and Sita lives in Manori Island unconsciously. Marian wants to stop and wants to get caught by Peter, but her

body rejects her command. She wants to eat and relish food, but cannot order her body to do so. Mind has a very important role in maintaining solid personalities. Due to the lack of control by mind, these characters turn into fluid identities. They experience futility as their bodies are interchangeable. They have out of body experiences in all its negative senses. Their bodily senses reject their rational mind. They act like prisoners of their body rather than its masters. There is denial of subjective experiences, because subjective experiences emerge from authentic actions. Authenticity of these characters is intimidated. Their mind in crucial conditions is unable to control their body movements and sensibilities. They lost at some point of time control over touch, smell and eat. They are not able to fulfil basic requirement of being normal. Their bodies deny food, air and sometimes them.

On the level of surrounding and culture- these protagonists try to evade social contact and defy cultural norms. It appears that depersonalization is the product of their surrounding and culture. Its direct example is Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the Republic of Gilead, depersonalisation is induced through culture. Women are put under wail, complete inward and outward scrutiny, through punishment and theology. They are forced to have peace with their surroundings. Same is with other characters, male in the life of these women has superior position and they force these women to accept subaltern position. The concept of femininity is imposed upon women and like Marian women are time and again are reminded about that. They are the middle dwellers like the working place scenario of Marian's place. Their subjectivity is denied on the basis of female behaviour.

The anatomy of male and female are complementary to each other; but due to male centric culture, female biology is considered inferior to male. Maya lives her

life by her sensory pleasures and she is ridiculed by her husband by the lesson of theology. For Offred, her biology is her prison house; whatever turn she takes to escape from it, she ends up at the same corner. Nameless protagonist of *Surfacing* is ridiculed for not accepting the fate of women. These women are considered an object to satiate the desires of males. Nanda Kaul's husband in *Fire on the Mountain*, Commander in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Joe in *Surfacing* also commits the sins of senses, but nobody questions them. It is considered natural for male, but from women it is expected that they should behave different to their bodily demands. Thus the anatomy of female is culturally formed prison-house. The surveillance in case of these women has been turn inward.

The levels of depersonalization are different in all these characters. Worst affected characters are Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*, Unnamed Protagonist of *Surfacing* and Nanda Kaul of *Fire on the Mountain*. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* has a latent depersonalization and she since her childhood carries phobias. She has predictions about fatal-fate and she feels that she cannot undo it. Once triggered, her depersonalization starts growing in leaps and bounds. She establishes her anchor in nature and natural objects. For her real people, for example her husband does not deserve to live according to her; their death not matter. In such a moment of depersonalization, her husband comes between her and view of moon; in repulsion she pushes him from the roof top and he dies. With the murder of her husband, she loses the hope of companionship and any chance of recovery. She becomes insane and ultimately commits suicide. Unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing* also lost control over her mind and starts thinking and living like animals. She hides herself and lives among natural objects like them. Both of these characters never able to win over

their depersonalization are doomed due to this. Nanda Kaul suppresses this order for a long time by living aloof from the society and into the villa of lies. She secures this deceptive safe place by grit and determination. The final blow to her deceptive world is received by the death of her close friend- Ila Das. She experiences the horrifying visual of her disorder. All her lies shatter in a moment and her defence mechanism fails to control the overwhelming emotions of defeat.

Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* is depersonalized due to external factors which is authoritarian system of the Gilead. Once she is out of that there are hope of her redemption; however, novel is open ended and it is left to the imagination of the readers. Sita of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* at the end of the novel also faces harsh reality and get ready to return to city life, however she also never conquer her depersonalization, but she is able to reconcile with her present. The character which completely overcomes her depersonalization is Marian of *The Edible Woman*. She at the end bake a cake with the image of woman asks Peter to eat it. Her refuses and thus she decides to break her engagement. She eats the cake with Duncan and overcomes her anorexia. She becomes a subject again and gains control over her mind.

The characters portrayed by the selected authors can be divided as per the division of the critics of depersonalization. First types of protagonists are avoidant. These protagonists try to use escapist tendencies to avoid the scenarios where they feel uncomfortable. They try to keep their depersonalization at bay through avoiding circumstances that cause anxiety and distress to them. Epitome of avoidance is Nanda Kaul, throughout her life she lives like a recluse to cover her past. She lives in Carignano to avoid her bleak past experiences. Once she faces her past

unwittingly, she fails to observe the shock and die. Sita is also an avoidant. She feels that she can avoid depersonalization by either smoking or by living on Manori Island. At the end of the novel, she understands her foolishness and accepts the practical aspect. Offred is culturally induced avoidant. She is trained to avoid her true traits of self. For her the cure was easy, she just needs to go out of the prison house of Gilead. For the people, who are avoidant, if they face their neurosis, there are chances of their recovery. Like in Sita's case, once she realises the futility of avoiding, she cures and goes back to civilization. Second types of protagonists are suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder. Marian suffers majorly from obsessive compulsive disorder. She starts thinking about her marriage and impending loss of freedom, it makes her anorexic. Like avoidant, this sort of person can be cured once they realise the futility of their actions. Once she realises it by conversing with Duncan, she bakes the cake that refers to her authenticity, she gets cured from her depersonalization. Last and worst type of disorder is depersonalization is of border-lined persons. Unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing* is border line persons. At the end of the novel she breaks all her ties with civilization and starts living like a natural object. Worse than her is Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*, who turns into a murderer and commits suicide. These types of persons are highly volatile and have no control over their actions. These types of persons should be sent for therapy immediately and need to be dealt with caution.

It is important to notice that none of the characters goes to doctor as they consider themselves pretty normal. Their family members call them impractical, stupid and lunatic; but they never refer to doctors. This accelerates their depersonalization syndrome. Like these textual characters, there are many females in

the society, who are living inauthentic life as per the social definitions of femininity. There is a clash of conscious and unconscious in them. Apart from that society is ignorant about psychological issues faced by the individuals. Most of the time either they become superstitious or simply ignores the disorder. This ignorance cost many lives or many lose peace and tranquillity of their life.

To escape from this syndrome is possible by becoming the centre of one's own life and living life as a subject. Inaction feeds depersonalization and other inner demons. Inaction is the path that leads to the destruction of natural self. The communication and camaraderie are the crucial part in this journey. Women, unlike other proletariats, are classless, but are Universal phenomenon. Creating communes and cultural hegemony is very important to escape from the trap of male-centric ideology, which acts like a stimulator and guiding force to maintain the status quo. Feminism has already opened the door to female and feminist writing provided a window of relief to women. Economy, the superstructure of society, is no more completely male-centric; female has drawn a niche for themselves. Literature played a crucial part in these changes and this study will be another addition to the same venture.

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Synopsis

An Analysis of Depersonalization in the Select Novels of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood

Mental health and mental conditions are the major concerns of the humanity from the time immemorial, but in 21st century these concerns are the centre of intellectual and medical discourse. Open any newspaper, television channel or any other source of information; stories of problems in human behaviour are circulated invariably. Mental illness, abnormalities and disorders are real and need our attention equivalent to the illness of body. These mental disorders are largely ignored; however vast troubles are originating from these disorders. Whereas physical illness is considered normal and real; mental illness are still shrouded under social taboos. Due to the ignorance of the society in general, many mental disorders remain undiagnosed, untreated, and unreported. Depersonalization is also one of such disorders, which is still remaining unreported or people confuse this disorder with other diseases due to the lack of information. Depersonalization is a mental disorder of the self. It is related to sensory perceptions (which are the fundamental aspects of average human's existence); in this disorder, unreal seems dramatically true or fader and nightmares are visualized like reality. It results into the "altered sense of selfhood" (Abugel 6). Ludovic Dugas, a French psychologist, has coined the term depersonalization. He refers this state as alienation of personality. Human mostly lives in one dimension (apart from conscious meditations) where past, present and futures are perceived in a linear and coherent manner. The stability, sanity and reason are relational, so does the time and space. The identity of social subject is also dependent on relative terms and relationships. The attachment to the

body is one of the most basic elements for a sane personality, but in depersonalization body seems like a foreign object, unrelated to mind. Initially, Depersonalization emerges as a part of defense-mechanism of mind to save human from shock or stress; it is an escape route of the mind to avoid the situation which can cause anxiety to the human.

Medical textbook entitled *Modern Clinical Psychiatry* defines depersonalization:

Depersonalization, a pervasive and distressing feeling of estrangement, known sometimes as the depersonalization syndrome, may be defined as an affective disorder in which feelings of unreality and a loss of conviction of one's own identity and of a sense of identification with and control over one's own body are the principal symptom. (Depersonalization qtd. Abugel 11)

The psychologist Ludovic Dugas, a French psychologist, has coined the term depersonalization in 1894. He refers this as a state of alienated personality. Dugas and Moutier define it as a "state in which there is the feeling or sensation that thoughts and acts elude self" (13). According to Maurice Sierra, there are three major different theories of depersonalization-Sensory theories, Psychodynamic Theories and Theories of self-experiences. First theory is based on psychoanalytic analyses which concentrates on ego principle and relate itself to altered awareness of self. Second theory is based on Cognitive Behavioural Approach which relates to anxiety disorder. Third theory is based on the subjective encounters of people with depersonalization. Present study uses a blended model of Sensory theories and Psychodynamic Theories. This study focuses on dissociative conditions which includes temporal or permanent alteration of identity and reality, memory distortions, heighten sensibilities, phobias, detachment from the self, context and world, anomalous body experiences, de-affectualization or emotional

numbness, hypo-emotionality (over-affectualization), visual distortion and disturbances, Obsessive disorder or acute self-observation (self-objectification), Alternation in the perception of time and duration and space, and derealisation as symptoms of depersonalization. Major causes of depersonalization are drugs, anxiety and stress, pre-life experiences, culture and surroundings are studied in context of the select novels.

Main objectives of the study are -

- To analyse the importance of practical and theoretical application of depersonalization theory
- To establish the link between self-objectification and conditioning of women
- To investigate the causes of depersonalization disorder among women
- To analyse the role of language, culture and society in the depersonalization of women
- Application of the theories of self-objectification in the selected literature of women
- To explore a possible cure for depersonalization
- To evaluate the of male and patriarchy in the degeneration of female into depersonalized

Depersonalization as per se has a very unique relationship with literature. Literatures reflect societies as it is- at its best and worst both. Literature is always a substantial medium to express the unexpressed thoughts and abnormal psyches. Literary depiction of different dilemmas of depersonalization like phobias, dilemmas, panic gets its expressions in different modes. In different cultures and histories depersonalization is projected in different manner. If we analyse ancient lore structurally and content wise, we will be able to locate many myths and stories where Gods or demi-gods promise to human being to give glimpse of other world, which create panic or fear in the mind of the onlooker. Examples of Mahabharata, where Lord Krishna shows numerous universes to

his mother and shows his multi-dimensional existence to Krishna can be cited. In both cases, impact on the onlooker is discomforts and panic; reason is the violation of the perceptions induced by common sense. Many sci-fi movies claim to explore another world. These other worlds are attributed with super human power to human agent by opening different realm of human consciousness. For example Superman, Thor and many other superheroes are projected as the part of alien civilizations. For them culture and life of Earth has different meanings. As the studies will continue new result will come out but one thing is sure that the experiences that are by deliberate meditation and a patient who suffers it unconsciously have sea differences, because these experiences are neither desired nor voluntarily. Apart from above examples, Hamlet's troubled utterance "to be or not to be?" Iago's disturbing declaration "I am not what I am"? all are the reflection of the existence of other inside the surface of simpleton. The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, whose poetry and prose is rich with esoteric meaning and intuitive perspectives on the nature of existence and nonexistence, a *real* self-versus *no self*, provides his own speculation as to the mystery of Shakespeare, with thought provoking relevance to the subject at hand. According to Michael Foucault, "All knowledge is an expression of the 'Will to power'. This means that we can speak of any absolute truths or objective knowledge. People recognize a particular piece of philosophy or scientific theory as 'true' only if it fits the descriptions of truths laid down by the intellectuals or political authorities of the day, by the members of the ruling elite, or by the prevailing ideologies of knowledge. We speak from our unconscious. Browning is the master of projecting morbid psyches and his Lover of Porphyria is still an enigma- what makes him to strangle his beautiful girlfriend is a matter of the study of his darker unconscious. The

unconscious part of our mind is dominated by our past or unfulfilled desires. When we speak or write, our writings are dominated by our unconscious, which in turn is effected by society. Literature is the right place for the expression of these unsaid morbid experiences. In literature depiction of depersonalization is done in different disguises.

Works of existentialist philosophers are very close to Depersonalization behaviour. Sartre, one of the famous existentialist writers, in his first novel *Le Nausea* published in 1938 presented with bone chilling accuracy, but rather than calling it depersonalization, depicted it under the label of existentialist dilemma.

I am. I am. I exist, I think, therefore I am; I am because I think, why do I think. I don't want to think any more, I am because I think that I don't want to be, I think any more, I am because I think that I don't want to be, I think I...because...ugh! I flee. (Sartre, *Nausea* 100)

The term existential angst is one off shoot of depersonalization, which also refers to the dehumanization of modern man. Sartre's portrayal of hypersensitive and over-conscious Roquentin in *Nausea* is the portrayal of a depersonalized character. Albert Camus in *The Stranger* portrays the emotional numbness and dead feelings. Mearsault is the epitome of depersonalized elements as he fails to react to emotional situations. For him, reality is non-existent. Franz Kafka's portrayal of Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* is also a portrayal of a depersonalized man, who is transformed into a vermin and feels apathy towards human world.

Psychoanalytic critics also have cited examples of these darker secrets of unconscious. Although Freud refers to depersonalization only once, in the Acropolis

paper, it appears that he was not unconcerned with the phenomenon *per se*. Freud refers in his work, "this veil was torn only at one moment - when, after an enema, the contents of the bowel left the intestinal canal; and then he felt well and normal again" (Freud 75). Experiences of wholeness and integration are usually understood as being due to the self in Jungian literature. It is argued here that this is due, in part, to the fact that Jung takes a very narrow view of the ego. As quoted above Jung sees the ego as the center of the field of consciousness but says "it is questionable whether it is the center of the personality" (Jung, *Self* 11). Jung sees the ego as "the conscious personality" (7–8), while recognizing that the ego is not wholly conscious, by which he can be understood to mean that the ego includes all those elements of the personality of which the individual has become conscious, even though not all will be present to consciousness at any one moment. In contrast, he sees the self as "the total personality which, though present, cannot be fully known" (9). For example, in *The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious*, Jung describes the way that certain individuals identify (their ego) with particular elements of the unconscious with resulting "psychic inflation". He cites the optimist who becomes overweening and arrogant, and the pessimist who becomes overanxious and dependent. Jung writes, "each in his way steps beyond his human proportions, both of them seem a little 'superhuman' and therefore, figuratively speaking, godlike" (*Unconscious* 227). On the other hand, Jung gives the example of those who make one-sided identifications with the intellectual and rational aspects of their personality.

Apart from above referred authors Marxists theorists Tolstoy, Shklovsky, Brecht and Karl Marx in their theory of Estrangement also express same sort of ideas of depersonalisation. Douglas Robinson states:

If Tolstoy's utopian imagination of the smooth literary transfer of shared feeling is born out of a wishful negation of depersonalization, and Shklovsky's and Brecht's utopian imagination of repersonalization is based on the interruption or obstruction of shared feeling, clearly "shared feeling" will have to shuttle both dystopian disorders and utopian cures back and forth across the shifting boundary between the familiar and the strange, the local and the foreign, the "own" and the alien, the conventional and the experimental—a boundary that is continually being created, or at least temporarily stabilized, by the somatic shuttle. (XII)

All this suggests that estrangement for Tolstoy, so far from being a mere literary device that he used to great effect in his fiction, was a debilitating psychological disorder—what the psychiatric community refers to as *depersonalization*. But before we begin to psychoanalyze Tolstoy, let's first review the signal events in his life. As Vadim Rudnev describes the disorder, "From the physiological point of view, depersonalization most often appears as the brain's answer to a sharp emotional shock by way of an increased secretion of endorphins, which anesthetize consciousness. From the point of view of the behavioral strategy of consciousness, depersonalization appears as a powerful defense against stress" (55). They are narcissism, depersonalization, derealization, *deja vu*, sadness over transience; all of which are, in my opinion, related themes.

Thus the literature always has been a medium of the expression of unconscious desires. Through the lens of literature dark worlds of psyche can be observed as onlooker as literature gives a clearer vision than the real life. This thesis deals with the analysis of depersonalization in the select novels of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood. Both of these

authors are prominent female writers who describe female psyche and inner pangs in a vivid manner. Their approaches and methods, to depict female psychology, pave ways to analyse depersonalization syndrome in their female protagonists. As per the theorists, this disorder has no link to the gender, but still for women this disorder comes more naturally. Most of the societies are patriarchal in nature and women are marginalized. Secondary position for a woman is considered a natural position. They are devoid of many rights and if they express their desires- they are termed as whores. In traditional societies, where female are forced to stay inside the four walls of home, depersonalization has easy entry. Alienated from their self and emotions, often the experiences of depersonalization become a natural residue for them. Marilyn French states:

This contradiction between orthodox definitions of femaleness and women's actual willful behavior leads men to divide women into categories of madonna or whore, a division that has always reflected not actual women but men's sense of the hostility and personal will that lie beneath women's compliant surfaces. (309)

Women always faced this male branding and male gaze, which turns their self-scrutiny inwards. They try to become socially acceptable and thus behave like other to their natural self. Virginia Woolf states, "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glass possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice at its natural size" (41). Women, serving as looking glass, have no identity, but they are the reflection of male centric ideology. Depersonalization, as disorder, affects inauthentic subjects and such conditioning provides a fertile ground to the disorder. The selected novels to achieve objectives of the study are Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* (1963),

Where Shall We Go This Summer? (1975), and *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) and Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). On the surface level these authors belong to different countries and portray different cultures and traditions, but at the level of theme and portrayal of female psyche these authors are at par. Both of these authors portray abnormal psyche of females in their selected novels. The present study explores depersonalization, which is a modern phenomenon and did not receive required consideration from the patients and theorists. These authors predominantly use stream of consciousness which also provides window of their inner psyche to the readers. It is important to study their literary field before going into the detailed analysis of similarities and dissimilarities of their works.

Anita Desai, born in 1937, is a distinguished post-independence Indian English novelist and has worldwide recognition. She is born from a German mother. She has received her education in Delhi and started writing at very early age of seven. She lives in Delhi, married and having four children. Her published works include novels, collection of short stories, children literature and her interviews. She has won Royal society of Literature award, Winifred Hobby Memorial Prize for her *Fire on the Mountain* and the National Academy of Letter Award (1978), Neil Gunn Prize (1993), and Padma Bhushan (2014). She is shortlisted many times for coveted booker prize. Apart from a writer she is an accomplished academician. She teaches writing programme at MIT. She is a prolific writer of serious fiction. She began her literary career in 1963 with *Cry, the Peacock*, although she had been writing and publishing short stories since her adolescence. Her stay in Mussoorie gives her the experience of nature and natural habitats. Her personal proximity with nature reflects in her fiction too. Her list of novel includes- *Cry, the*

Peacock (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaca* (1996), *Fasting Feasting* (1999), and *The Zigzag Way* (2004).

Anita Desai belongs to the second generation of Indian Writing in English. Whereas pre-independence writers for instance trinity of Indian fiction (Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao), depicts socio-economic conditions of the time, post-independence writer infuses new challenges, problems and dilemmas through the powerful medium of literature. They are keen to explore psychological and sociological strains in the social and individual life. Their characters are more individual in nature than a typecast. The characters portrayed by Anita Desai are westernized and urban. She herself states, "If my writing is westernized there is a whole section of Indian society that is westernized. Whole range of people brought up in urban areas have been exposed to western ideas through literature" (Unyal 251). Her choice of westernized characters makes her an apt choice for the study of depersonalization, as it is inflected more on educated and modern women than the villagers. As modern dwellers, these women are educated and crave for independent existence, but chained by the traditional society, their dreams are not able to see the daylight. Double standards which are the part of male dominated society foster dual personalities in these protagonists.

Anita Desai is often pitted along with Kamala Markandya, Ruth Pawar Jhabvala, Arun Joshi in voicing human predicament by exploring deeper psychic and mental states. Anita Desai is influenced by the works and techniques of D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Henry James and Marcel Proust, Anita Desai portrays inner turmoil of her

characters and give more importance to their psychological aspect than the physical existence. She delineates the psychological realities, explore the dark recesses of anxiety, depict psychological crisis. Like Virginia Woolf, Anita Desai's characters feel that their psychological reality is more vital to their existence than their physical existence. They disobey social taboos and perceptions to support their individualistic essence. In her interview with Yashodhara Dalmia, Anita Desai states:

I am interested in characters who are not average but have retreated or been driven into despair and so turned against the general current. It is very easy to flow with the current, it makes no demands, it costs no efforts. But those who cannot follow it, whose heart cries out the great 'No,' who fight the current and struggle against it may know what demands are and what it costs to meet them. (13)

Anita Desai's protagonists present transition from tradition to westernization. Her characters face anxiety due to changing family set up, industrial scene and changing social values. The depersonalization also flourishes in transient social subjects as they are prone to have double identities and personas. Her main themes are reclusion, alienation existential boredom, anxiety dread, despair, emotional bankruptcy, social and moral hypocrisy, failing interpersonal relationships, marital disorders, nothingness, meaninglessness, in-authentic existence and loss of essence. For Anita Desai psychological reality is the centre of her novel. K.R.S. Iyengar states:

In her novels the inner climate, the climate of sensibility that lours clear of rambles like thunder or suddenly blazes forth like lightening it more

compelling than the outer weather the physical geography or the visible action. (464)

To study depersonalization, it is important to have internal insights as depersonalization has very less overt symptoms. Anita Desai provides this opportunity as she exposes her characters' inner fears, traumas and sensibilities. Her women characters are epitome of psycho-social realities. Her narrative brings social contexts as a background of psychological activities. She carves and inscribes multi-dimensional pluralistic domestic and familial world, where women are still entrapped into male world women characters are always the subtext or the subterranean unconscious of her novels. She is a critique of patriarchal family. In her interview with Yashodhra Dalmia, Anita Desai states:

I think of the world as an iceberg-the one tenth visible above the surface of the water is what we call reality, but the nine-tenths that are submerged make up the truth, and that is what one is trying to explore. (13)

Her novels have two dimensions of time clock time and psychological time like all noted psychological novels. She merges past and present in her narrative. Her characters are isolated and suffer from existentialist pangs. Harish Raizada remarks, "Desai's novels, like those of Franz Kafka, are thus about human fate, human bewilderment and human suffering" (129).

Structures of her novels are also very helpful in study depersonalization. Her style and techniques are more functional than decorative. Her plots are not much deliberated on action part because she is more concerned about inner realities. She often presents fusion of form and expressions. Anita Desai in her interview to Atma Ram Sharma states:

I start writing without having very much of a 'plot' in my mind or on paper-only a very hazy idea of what the pattern of the book is to be. But it seems to work itself out as I go along, quite naturally and inimitably. I prefer the word 'pattern' to 'plot' as it sounds more natural. (101)

Anita Desai portrays life as it is. She presents her themes organically. She uses artistic devices like images, symbols, landscapes and myths to delineate the psychic states and psychic reality. Her language is lyrical in nature.

Second selected novelist is Margaret Eleanor Atwood, born on 18 Nov. 1939 in Ottawa Ontario (Canada), is one of the internally acclaimed writers who articulate contemporary dilemmas through her fiction. Her critical works include wide range of genres which include- novels, poems, short stories, essays, children's literature, caricatures and criticism. She is a prominent figure in Canadian literature. She has won many awards like Arthur Clarke Award, Science Fiction Award, Prince of Asturias Award, and Booker Prize for *The Blind Assassin* (2000). She is founder of Writers' Trust of Canada and founding trustee of Griffin Poetry Prize. She is a noted humanist too. Her novels have a long list- *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Lady Oracle* (1976), *Life before Man* (1979), *Bodily Harm* (1981), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Cat's Eye* (1988), *The Robber Bride* (1993), *Alias Grace* (1996), *The Blind Assassin* (2000), *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Penelopiad* (2005), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), *Maddaddam* (2013), *Scribbler Moon* (2014), *The Heart Goes Last* (2015), *Hag-Seed* (2016). Apart from novels, she has 10 short fiction collections, 20 poetry collections, 7 children books, 10 non-fiction works, she is editor of 5 anthologies; and she has also written 3 television scripts.

Along with Alice Munro, and Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood presents Canadian feminist tradition. Atwood focuses on the portrayal of new-women who are self-aware, independent and defy patriarchal norms. She uses her novels to explore inner reality. As she states in *Survival*:

Literature is not only a mirror; it is also map, geography of the mind. Our literature is one such map, if we can learn to read it as *our* literature, as the product of who and where we have been. We need such a map desperately; we need to know about here, because here is where we live. For the members of a country or culture, shared knowledge of their place, their here, is not a luxury but a necessity. Without that knowledge we will not survive. (15)

Her novels focus on contemporary social and political issues with. She confirms it by stating, “I do see the novel as a vehicle for looking at society an interface between language and what we choose to call reality” (246). She denies labels, but she is often referred as a political writer. Her novels often have references and cross references of political elements, social discriminations, disputed borders, human rights violations etc.

She has gothic fervour in her novels along with futuristic vision, but her characters are historically and socially deep rooted. She uses deceptive metaphors and ambiguous symbols. Language is a vehicle for Atwood to convey the intricacies of mind, it is full of allusions, fantasies, double dealings and double viscous. Canadian is not a geographical element only in her fiction it is a perception a place for free thinking. Atwood’s narration is witty, ironical, politically and normally dialectical. Atwood novels

are seen as proto-feminist. Boundaries between public and personal world blurred in her fiction. In her notes on *Power Politics* she confirms this:

We would all like to have a private life that is sealed off from the public life and different from it, where there are no rulers and no ruled, no hierarchies, no politicians, only equal free people. But because any culture is a closed system and our culture is one based and fed on power this is impossible or at least very difficult. (7)

Atwood presents female bodies as a battlefield for power discourses. Surveillance and self-surveillance are the control point in creating tension in her novels. This makes her novel as an apt subject for studying depersonalization.

Most of Atwood's novels are trickster in nature. Their communication never surfaces their inner realities. Their deceptive narration is representation of their unsettled mind. This is very relevant to study depersonalization as their psychological realities and physical realities are in contrast to each other and most of them live double lives. They have labyrinth within labyrinth. Atwood's protagonist tries to escape from these labyrinths. Failing to evade the inevitable, these protagonists start living double lives. They have hybrid personalities which are amalgamation of personal perception and social expectations. This hybrid demeanour is their plan to satiate their volatile psyche, but it often ends into disaster.

Atwood's themes, according to Pilar Cuder, can be divided into six categories of critical approaches- feminist criticism, feminist psychoanalytic criticism, archetypal and mythical criticism, postcolonial themes, Canadian nationalist criticism, and

postmodernism. Apart from these approach eco feminism is another major approach that is associated to Margaret Atwood. Both of these authors are renowned author and substantial research is available on their works. Most authors concentrated on their symbolism, narrative techniques, themes, critical study etc. Some of the major works are referred below chronologically:

Kajali Sharma in her book *Symbolism in Anita Desai's Novels* (1991) explores symbolism in all her novels. She attempts to portray Anita Desai as a symbolist who employs symbols “functionally and artistically” (146). Symbols are integral part of her novels by which she foregrounds the inner being of her characters. Kajali Sharma compares Anita Desai to D.H. Lawrence in terms of modernity and psychological exploration. According to Kajali Sharma “Symbols endow her novels with a rare compactness and richness” (151).

N. R. Gopal in his book *A Critical Study of the Novels of Anita Desai* (1999) studies themes and techniques of Anita Desai's fiction. He states aspects of theme and techniques are inter-related at many levels of structure and texture in Anita Desai's Fiction. She is not a “technical innovator, but her use of poetry is not something very common” (102), for Anita Desai “The theme is warp and technique is woof” (102). In this book N.R. Gopal explores the depiction of Feminine psyche, Familiar relationships, and women as a social being by Anita Desai. Her novels are not political or sociological in character but are psychological.

Neeru Chakraverty in her book *Quest for Self-Fulfilment in the Novels of Anita Desai* (2003) states that Anita Desai's fiction dismantles the “doctrines of the unified

self” (227) and projects the quest of its characters for self-fulfilment. Her fiction utilises certain inherent philosophical ideas to highlight existential dilemmas of the characters. The tragedy of her characters stems out of their inability to reconcile with the social conventions.

Shubha Tiwari edited the book entitled *Critical Responses to Anita Desai* (2004) this book is consist of 35 essays related to Anita Desai’s Fiction in two volumes. S.P. Swain in his essay “Where Shall We go This Summer?” – Sita’s incarcerated self” explores the themes of incertitude, alienation and in communication. According to him Sita is an introverted character and her “alienation is natural and dispositional” (320). Another essay “A clash between Male Chauvinism and Existential concerns in Anita Desai” written by Devika explores neurotic behaviour of Desai’s protagonists when they suffer from existential pangs. She also states that in Anita Desai’s fictional world male rule over women.

Sudhakar. T. Sali in his book *Anita Desai’s Female Protagonists* (2006) explores the psyche of all female protagonists of Anita Desai and vertebrates that Anita Desai portrays “modern Indian sensibility” (161) but registering the mental vibrations of her characters. She delineates the inner lives of her character. Her women characters suffer from insecurities and desperately want belongingness. They have traumatic interpersonal relationships, “peculiar childhood, ungratifying adolescence and dissatisfying middle years” (163). Her characters belong to upper middle class. For her emotions matter more than character Desai uses images from nature to highlight the inner turmoil of her characters.

B.L. Tripathi in his book *Anita Desai: Dimensions of the Inner World* (2007) observes that Desai has a liberal humanist worldview which portrays “not only art, aesthetics and liberalism but to psychoanalysis” (130). Desai’s cultural determinism affects adult lives and lends these characters, “psychological reality” (131). She depicts institution of family and exposes familial discords and disagreements. Her narratives reveal “how parental authority accelerates schizophrenic problems” (140). Her characters are intense creature.

The book *Critical Essays on Anita Desai’s Fiction* (2007) edited by Jaydipsinh Dodiya is consist of 20 essays, out of which 4 deals with *Cry, the Peacock* and 3 with *Fire on the Mountain*. Purvi N. Upadhyay in her essay “Cry, the Peacock : A Psychological Study”, observes that Desai emphasis on interior characterization and gives psychological dimensions to her novels. Desai explores Maya’s mind through images- conscious and unconscious. P.D. Dubbe in his essay “Feminine Consciousness in Anita Desai’s *Fire on the Mountain*” observes that Desai spreads “a burning awareness of woman’s condition in our society” (121) and the novel is suggestive of the revolt of new generation of women against patriarchy. Alka Saxena in her essay “The Impending Tragedy in *Fire in the Mountain*” suggests that the impending danger is created in the novel through various images and symbols. All the stories fabricated by Nanda Kaur are like tranquillizers pills” (129).

Anita Singh in her book *Existential Dimension in the Novels of Anita Desai* (2007) explores Desai’s “unquestionable existentialist concerns” (138). Desai is influenced by Emily Bronte and her characters highlight the existentialist issues. They go through an inward journey for existence, a search of identity and a struggle for self-

expression. Anita Desai explores “the intricate fact quoted of human experience bearing upon the central experience of psychic tensions of characters” (15).

O.P. Budholia in his book *Anita Desai: Vision and Techniques in Her Novels* (2010) observes that Desai’s vision and search for self-run parallel to each other and the protagonists fall a “prey to their inordinate desires and impulses” (250). Desai’s female protagonists fail to reconcile with their social surrounding and obligations. Their failure brings them isolation. Male counterparts in Desai’s visionary scheme appear to be weak. Desai’s characters are caught in a state of mental and emotional crisis and having psychological obsessions. Desai’s work reveals “varying mental states, psychical aberrations inner motives and existential pursuit of man” (259).

Anita Desai’s Fiction edited by Arvind M. Nawale (2011) is consisting of 20 articles, out of which five articles are about *Cry, the Peacock*. All these articles portray different perspectives of *Cry, the Peacock*. Article “An Escape from Madding World: Maya in Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock*” is written by Arvind M. Nawale explores the conditions of Maya and reckons that Maya is deprived from overall development and is totally out of tune from her surrounding and she suffers from violence inflicted upon her by her near and dear ones. Another article explores feminine sensibility and sociological aspects in *Cry, the Peacock*.

The book *Margaret Atwood: Language, Text and System* (1983) edited by Sherrill E. Grace and Lorraine Weir is consist of nine essays covering different genres of Atwood’s literary world. The essay “From Poetic to Narrative Structures: The Novels of Margaret Atwood” gives insight that narrative world of Atwood reveals in the “treatment

of the static/ dynamic paradox” (17). Possession is the central theme in most of her novels and *The Edible woman* is a lyrical poem that projects layers of feminine self. Another essay “*Surfacing: Amerindian Themes and Shamanism*” by Marie, Françoise Guedon suggests that in *Surfacing*, Atwood presents fragmented western culture in contrast of aboriginal traditions. She insists that, “Narrator’s return to a silent community is evidence of the failure” (110) of civilization. Americans are presented as living dead because they use machines to kill.

Barbara Hill Rigney in her book *Women writers: Margaret Atwood* (1987) states that Atwood teaches through negative example and her protagonists are not heroic. Canada and being Canadian is “a state of mind” (3) for Atwood, which she depicts as a house for freedom and artistic liberties. Her images and archetypes are derived from Canadian tradition and culture. Her male characters are not romantic in nature. Atwood is a political and moral writer. She creates a supreme fiction “which transcends religion” (134).

Another essay “The Uses of Ambiguity: Margaret and Hubert Aquin” by Philip Stratford draws a parallel between both authors as novels of both contain “the same cultivated ambiguity” (113) which stems from paranoid schizophrenia. Aquin by his ambiguity draws uncertainty, Atwood uses it as a tool for revelation. Characters of both authors are alienated but Atwood’s characters are able to resurface whereas Aquin’s character drowns into the sea of self-created labyrinths.

David Ward in his essay, “*Surfacing: Separation, Transition, Incorporation*” (1994) explores the idea of multiple interpretation in the novel- *Surfacing*. He observes

that transiting from one level to another causes separation and questions incorporation of ideas and desires. At the heart of novel there is notion of the in-competency of language. Desai portray “separation is from linguistic habit and from the social and cultural deformation that accompany it” (101).

Peter Quartermaine in his essay “Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*: (1994) Strange Familiarity” states that novel is obsessively private in its narrator’s focus” and “authorial intent” (119). He emphasizes that linking of sanity and death is troubling and Colonial undertone is nightmarish. It is like a ghost story and full of disturbing images and memories.

Coral Ann Howells edited book *Margaret Atwood* (2006) is consisting of 12 essays which highlight Canadian context, biographical elements, historical element, elements of humour, and dystopian visions in the novels of Margaret Atwood. In the book, Madeleine Davies in his essay “Margaret Atwood’s Female Bodies” explores writing of the female bodies. He states that Atwood dips into “gothic parody” (58) to stress on the relationship of body and mind. Coral Ann Howells in her article “Margaret Atwood’s dystopian Vision” states that Atwood displays two sides of same coin.

Coral Ann Howells in her book *Modern Novelist: Margaret Atwood* (2006) states that “Atwood’s novels, situated at the interface between language and what we choose to call reality” (162). She emphasises that Atwood questions social myths. She explores Canada as a symbol of own space in Atwood’s fiction and relates phases of Feminist movement with Atwood’s different novel. She explores the definition of feminine, female and feminist in Atwood’s fiction.

Ellen McWilliams in his essay “Margaret Atwood’s Canadian Hunger Artist: Post-Colonial in *The Edible Women*” (2006) concentrated on “Atwood’s preoccupation with the relationship between feminist and nationalist discourse of power” (71). He observes that Marian’s loss of appetite has a direct connection with her loss of identity. He refers that Peter is often referred as hunter and Marian’s refusal to eat is a symbol of female hunger strike.

Cinda Gault in research paper “Not even a Hospital: Abortion and Identity Tension in Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*” (2007) concentrates on conflicting relationship of national and female autonomy. According to her, illegal abortion of the protagonist represents personal dilemma and “a national moral hierarchy” (18). Protagonist recollections of her abortion are about the misperception of the personal and national identity. She relates national purposes and personal identity as anti-female.

Harold Bloom edited the book entitled *Margaret Atwood* (2009). This book is consisted of eleven essays, out of which two are worth mentioning. Alice M. Polumbo in her essay “On the Border: Margaret Atwood’s Novels” states that Atwood uses double voices in narration to expose double struggle of her characters. According to her Atwood’s characters are in the process of “learning to negotiate all the edges there are” (33). Barbara Hill Rigney in her essay “Alias Atwood: Narrative Games and Gender Politics” explores her novels as “narrative exercise” (65). She also states that her women characters establish a close relationship with each other and “Atwood’s narrative blades are sharpened and ready lest we sink her into sentiments” (65).

Ambika Bhalla in her research paper “Eco-feminism in Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*” (2012) discusses about the oppression of nature and women. Protagonist has created two selves, natural and artificial construct. Her affinity with the nature is her affinity with the female self. She termed it as “eco-feminist novel” (6) without propagation female superiority. It seems like that Atwood advocate balance and harmony. Same ideas are pointed out by Dr. Darsha Jani in her article “Proclamation of Ecofeminism” in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* in the context of the novel. She assesses role of patriarchal forces in the oppression of women along with capitalistic exploitation of nature.

Sonika Sethi in her research paper – “Self-realization through Nature: An alternative narration in Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*” (2016) discusses about Canada’s biocentrism and America’s concentricism” (12) in Atwood’s *Surfacing*, David is the symbol of male domination like America. She reveals that the wilderness is the “other” in the novel. She states that traumatic experiences of the protagonist makes her oversensitive and she feels hurt if animals hurt. Protagonist struggles for “self-realization and self-approbation” (13).

After going through all these books, essays and research articles, one thing is clear that most of the literature available on Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood concentrates either on female sensibilities portrayed by them and her themes. Most of the time researchers concentrate on feminism while analysing their fiction. All critics consider them the champion of female causes. Some of the critics also pointed out toward the abnormal psyche of her female protagonists, but not even a single research is available on depersonalization in context of the selected authors. Most of the critics

concentrated on abnormality and psychosis in general, but they did not pinpoint the psychosis of these characters. Moreover, there is a wide lacuna in the available research as critics did not specifically trace the structural and chronological journey of the characters from neurosis to psychosis. This study will fill this lacuna and will pave way to study the relation of women's conditioning with their personality formation. A typical patriarchal setting dents female behaviour and their perception about themselves. These setting will be critically explored to foreground female exploitation in proceeding chapters.

Characters of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood are suffering from depersonalization on all four levels referred by depersonalization theorists- on the level of cognition, emotional behaviour, physical and environmental. Protagonists of all selected works are living a life that is more oriented to the emotions than to rationality, thus the triggering of depersonalization is also at the level of emotions. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* develops a strong bond with her pet Toto and its death shakes her core. She starts living alone and behaves strangely. She becomes emotionally volatile and it drifts her away from the rational world of her mind. For her, if a person cannot accept nature his life is not worth living. She scares from her Self, weeps at night, tries to strike conversation to avoid being alone. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* evades attachment to save herself from pain and suffering. She wears the mask of indifference. Both Maya and Nanda Kaul experiences emotional numbness. Maya has acute desires and when she cannot fulfil these desires it makes her numb; Nanda Kaul in contrast has always received ingratitude so she stops expecting from people. Sita grows hyper-sensitive and she feels affinity with eagle and tries to save it from the crows. All these volatile emotions refer their instable

state of mind. Margaret Atwood's characters also show same volatile emotional state of mind. Marian in *The Edible Woman* is so terrified by her decision of marriage that she experiences emotional wretchedness. She feels as she is turning into an edible object and she is eaten by Peter. In her defence, she stops eating. Nameless Protagonist in *Surfacing* feigns that she is the part of nature and cannot do what a natural object cannot do. She stops eating cooked food and stops communicating. Offred's state of emotion is that she is not allowed to feel any emotion. Her body and her emotions are considered detached. These emotional violability is induces inertness in the female characters. They feel that they are not the owner of their emotions. Marian's tears starts flowing without her control, Sita weeps and laughs like some mechanical process, Nanda Kaul unable to bear the emotional outburst dies. These characters feel the lack of agency in their emotional part.

Cognitively these protagonists are aware about the existence of their second Self. They feel that there is a lack which was not in existence previously. They experience that their cognition has no control over their body. They experience dual personalities and lack of instrumentality. There is denial of autonomy in them as they are unable to determine their course of action. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* evades attachment, but once she comes in contact with Raka, she tries her best to establish a meaningful relationship with her. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* cannot stop thinking about Albino and Sita lives in Manori Island unconsciously. Marian in *The Edible Woman* wants to stop and wants to get caught by Peter, but her body rejects her command. She wants to eat and relish food, but cannot order her body to do so. Mind has a very important role in maintaining solid personalities. Due to the lack of control by mind, these characters turn

into fluid identities. They experience fungibility as their bodies are interchangeable. They have out of body experiences in all its negative senses. Their bodily senses reject their rational mind. They act like prisoner of their body rather than its masters. There is denial of subjective experiences, because subjective experiences emerge from authentic actions. Authenticity of these characters is intimidated. Their mind in crucial conditions is unable to control their body movements and sensibilities. They lost at some point of time control over touch, smell and eat. They are not able to fulfil basic requirement of being normal. Their bodies deny food, air and sometimes them.

On the level of surrounding and culture- these protagonists try to evade social contact and defy cultural norms. It appears that depersonalization is the product of their surrounding and culture. Its glittering example is Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the Republic of Gilead, depersonalisation is induced through culture. Women are put under wail, complete inward and outward scrutiny, through punishment and theology. They are forced to have peace with their surroundings. Same is with other characters, male in the life of these women has superior position and they force these women to accept subaltern position. The concept of femininity is imposed upon and like Marian time and again they are reminded about that. They are the middle dwellers like the working place scenario of Marian's place. Their subjectivity is denied on the basis of female behaviour. The anatomy of male and female are complementary to each other, but due to male centric culture, female biology is considered inferior to male. Maya lives her life by her sensory pleasure and she is ridiculed by her husband by the lesson of theology. For Offred, her biology is her prison house, whatever turn she takes to escape from it; she ends up at the same corner. Nameless Protagonist of *Surfacing* is ridiculed for not accepting the fate of

women. These women are considered an object to satiate the desires of males. Nanda Kaul's husband in *Fire on the Mountain*, Commander in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Joe in *Surfacing* also commits the sins of senses, but nobody questions them. It is considered natural for them; but from women, it is expected that they should behave different to their bodily demands. Thus the anatomy of female is culturally formed prison-house. The surveillance in case of these women has been turned inward. Thus the socially induced roles push women towards the goblin of depersonalization.

The characters portrayed by the selected authors can be divided as per the division of the critics of depersonalization. First types of protagonists are avoidant. These protagonists try to use escapist tendencies to avoid the scenarios where they feel uncomfortable. They try to keep their depersonalization at bay through avoiding circumstances that cause anxiety and distress to them. Epitome of avoidance is Nanda Kaul, throughout her life she lives like a recluse to cover her past. She lives in Carignano to avoid her bleak past experiences. Once she faces her past unwittingly, she fails to observe the shock and die. Sita is also an avoidant. She feels that she can avoid depersonalization by either smoking or by living on Manori Island. At the end of the novel, she understands her foolishness and accepts the practical aspect. Offred is culturally induced avoidant. She is trained to avoid her true traits of self. For her the cure was easy, she just needs to go out of the prison house of Gilead. For the patients, who are avoidant, if they face their neurosis, there are chances of their recovery. Like in Sita's case, once she realises the futility of avoiding, she cures and goes back to civilization. Second types of protagonists are suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder. Marian suffers majorly from obsessive compulsive disorder. She starts thinking about her

marriage and impending loss of freedom, it makes her anorexic. Like avoidant, these individuals can be cured once they realise the futility of their inactions. Once Marian realises it by conversing with Duncan, she bakes the cake that refers to her authenticity, she gets cured from her depersonalization. Last and worst type of disorder is depersonalization is of border-lined individuals. Unnamed Protagonist in *Surfacing* is border-lined individuals. She is at the brink of insanity and At the end of the novel she breaks all her ties with civilization and starts living like a natural object. Worse than her is Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*, who turns into a murderer and commits suicide. These types of individuals are highly volatile and have no control over their actions. These types of patients should be sent for therapy immediately and need to be dealt with caution.

It is important to note that none of the characters goes to doctor as they consider themselves pretty normal. Their family members call them impractical, stupid, arrogant, but they are never referred to doctors. This accelerates their depersonalization syndrome. Like these textual characters, there are many females are in the society, who are living inauthentic life as per the social definitions of femininity. There is a clash of conscious and unconscious in them. Apart from that society is ignorant about psychological issues faced by the patients. Most of the time either they become superstitious or simply ignores the disorder. This ignorance cost many lives or many lose peace and tranquillity of their life.

The Thesis is divided into 5 chapters and conclusion. Chapter 1, Brief Candle deals with brief history of the depersonalization- origin of the term, causes, symptoms, treatments- introduction of authors and the selected novels, and literature review. Chapter 2- “Ubiquitous Male Branding and Inner Goblin of Depersonalized Electra Females in

Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* and Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*"- is a study of the impacts of ubiquitous male centric ideology on the psyche of females. This chapter explores the effects of hyper-connectivity on the psyche of females, which also become a cause of their depersonalization. This chapter highlights that male ideology and male supremacy is the matter of common sense and is ubiquitous. Dominance of male culture and ideology does not revolve only around physical control. The root cause of this control is in the prevalent value system. Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* States, "Male Supremacy, like other political creeds, does not finally reside in physical strength but in the acceptance of a value system, which is not biological" (27). This value system is endorsed and propagated through cultural events, customs, regulations, social and political laws etc. It also has its roots in the control over economy. The control of economy provides the status of superstructure to male ideology. All objects are branded according to male centric perspective. In this male branding, women are others and for them recognition by males is center of their existence. In case of the select novels male branding of the female branding affects the mental condition of females and works as stimulator to the inner goblins of depersonalization. Chapter-3- "Depersonalization of Ennuyéx Females and Coercive Male Gaze in *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* and *The Edible Woman*"- analyses the role of boredom and male gaze. Ennui is defined as incapacity and incompetence of an individual against his free will. It is a crime against spiritual self. This chapter foregrounds the role of mimicry of male by females in shaping the identity and existence of females. Boredom signifies an ideological crisis that reaches its zenith in the twentieth century. Modernity is often associated to ennui because in modern era, human are deprived from heroic deeds because all that is heroic is already

done. Modern life is also more individual centric and nuclear family life style intensifies the rate of self-scrutiny. Conscious boredom may be just a part of the body and if you remove the body from those situations, the body can come out of the boredom and can escape from ennui, but unconscious ennui is more fatal. In the novel *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* and *The Edible Woman* we have protagonists who are ennueyex and searching for an escape from the male gaze. The male gaze is a bullyingly present in female life. Gaze is like a physical emblem of male centric ideology. It is the part of male branding, this all pervasive gaze of males put women in the spot from where they cannot run. Chapter- 4- “Multifaceted Loneliness: Subversion of Feminine self and Facets of depersonalization in *Fire on The Mountain* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*”- highlights the role of loneliness in stimulating depersonalization, which ultimately results into depersonalization. Majorly loneliness has been studied in these novels at three levels- Level of vulnerability to social disconnection, ability to self-regulate the emotions associated with feeling isolated, mental representations and expectations of, as well as reasoning about others. Loneliness can be physical, a state of mind, or cultural. In this condition of impaired regulation, all attempts of the subject induce and reinforce loneliness. Subject starts running from interpersonal encounters and draws within. He starts nurturing two selves one that is in tune with his conditions and another that he actually is. Unwilling loneliness creates wariness and triggers hypersensitivity or emotionally numbness. The art of socializing starts getting weakened. Chapter-5- Depersonalization in the Select Fiction of Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood: A Comparative Study- concentrates on the comparative study of the select authors. This chapter studies social variables in all novels, which make women victim of

depersonalization and allow male characters to maintain their sanity. Characters portrayed, by both authors, are victim of the biased attitude of their respective societies. This tendency also highlights the role of social conditioning and social set up in the depersonalization of these characters. This chapter highlights off-center position of women, their inauthenticity in social contexts, and loss of agency. This chapter reflects how protagonists have been suffering from excessive introjections and excessive projection of external world. And the Conclusion part of the thesis compares and contrasts the symptoms of depersonalization. This part also highlights that like these textual characters, there are many females in the society, who are living inauthentic life as per the social definitions of femininity. There is a clash of conscious and unconscious in them. Apart from that society is ignorant about psychological issues faced by the patients. Most of the time either they become superstitious or simply ignores the disorder. This ignorance cost many lives or many lose peace and tranquillity of their life.

To escape from this syndrome is possible by becoming the centre of one's own life and living life as a subject. Inaction feeds depersonalization and other inner demons. Inaction is the path that leads to the destruction of natural self. The communication and camaraderie are the crucial part in this journey. Women, unlike other proletariats, are classless, but are Universal phenomenon. Creating communes and cultural hegemony is very important to escape from the trap of male-centric ideology, which acts like a stimulator and guiding force to maintain the status quo. Feminism has already opened the door to female and feminist writing provided a window of relief to women. Economy, the superstructure of society, is no more completely male-centric; female has drawn a niche

for themselves. Literature played a crucial part in these changes and this study will be another addition to the same venture.

Anita Desai and Margaret Atwood substantially contributed in literature in general and feminist writing, particularly. Their writing created new waves in feminist writing. Their creation of female characters is unorthodox and techniques used by them, in the delineation of female characters, are unconventional. Still research related to their writings is pretty less and conventional. This study will fill this lacuna by analysing the unorthodox protagonist of these two eminent writers. The present study will contribute in literature from many perspectives- it will open new dimension in the analysis of characters; it will add another feather in the feminist literature; and will explore another covert dimension of female oppression thus will help women to safeguard their interests.

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