

## **PREFACE**

This study aims at exploring the themes of alienation and survival in the novels of Anita Desai. It intends to offer a new insight into the novelist's mind and art, especially her philosophy of life and nature by considering an entire range of her published novels, from *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) to *Fasting, Feasting* (1999). Since the study of these novels cannot be approached through a single method, a pluralistic approach has been adopted in interpreting the texts. References to postcolonial feminism and existential notions of human quest have also been touched upon in this study. The most important feature of this study is to highlight the idea of alienation, quest and realization as essential clues to survival.

Attempts have also been made for a diligent rendering of the previous research on Anita Desai as informed by current and updated study in the area. A brief review of such critical heritage reveals that most of the critics have dwelt on the theme of alienation and frustration of the characters of Desai forming a pessimistic outlook. Even some existing studies appear to be inadequate in delineating the themes of quest and survival in the novels of Anita Desai. Along with the theme of alienation, the individual's search for identity and realization of self has not been treated exhaustively. The present dissertation concentrates on fulfilling this critical lacuna and explains the novels of Anita Desai as

anecdotes of human quest and survival through realization of truth and knowledge of the self. It also critiques those critical opinions, which produce a notion of pessimism as an essential feature in the novels of Desai. One of the primary motives of this study is to foil the negative interpretations of the works of Desai and to move towards an understanding of the profound idea of survival, which runs through as a scarlet thread in her novels.

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