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Impact of Time on Indian Social Life: a Study with Reference to Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*

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It is needless to say that Anita Desai has culled the concept of time from eminent modern poet Thomas Stern Eliot who personifies time as the destroyer as well as preserver as Shelley personifies the west wind as the "Destroyer and Preserver". Shelley also views time as a destructive and creative power or god what is vivid in his sonnet *Ozymandias* and *Ode to the West Wind*. W.B Yeats in his *The Second Coming* shows how time destroys one civilization and gives birth to others. Time causes great empires like Roman, Egyptian, Babylonian etc. flourish and decay at the same time. However, Anita Desai herself opines:

"My novel is about time as a destroyer, as a preserver, and about what the bondage of time does to people. I have tried to tunnel under the mundane surface of domesticity."

In *Clear Light of Day* Desai delineates her characters moving in past and present. She affirms that "Time is presented as the fourth dimension of human existence". The novel indeed revolves round 'Time'. It shows how time plays the role of destroyer and preserver particularly in the life of the members of Das family who represent all Indian victims of time and in wider sense the whole human beings who are some affected by time. For instance, the life of Mira-masi certainly experiences how much havoc time can bring in one's life. It is time that brings her an immature marriage as well as premature death of her husband and finally the premature death of masi herself. The tragic and pathetic time of her life brought her the intolerable pressure of suffering and sorrow from which she wanted to escape and therefore became addicted to drag which ultimately took her breath. Mira's time of suffering and pain is also the witness of the difficult time of Das family. Her entrance in the Das family in a transitional period shows how helpless Das family became after the time of parents. Though in the life-time parents were not so joyful for the children, but their existence gave them breath. Now the death of the parents or their absence is taxing events for the children what the bones of each member of the Das family realize. It is the absence of parents or the shelter less time of family when the closest relation of family members particularly of Bim and Raja is broken down. Time made Raja leave beloved parents' family for Hyderabad throwing Bim on hurt and frustration. Bim's difficulties in handling the family as a women show how Raja's absence-time destroyed the remaining happy mood of Das family. The following time is more destructive in terms of familial or brother-sister relation. Raja's humiliating letter to Bim demonstrates how the gap of time has made the gap of relation, how most beloved ones are now most hated ones and how they are far from each other in terms of mind even. If the time of family had been favored by parents and the society the sweetest relation might not be destroyed. But the family could not escape from the attack of destructive time. The precious relation of family is now cut into pieces by time. Time again universalizes its nature as a destroyer. The havoc of time is also noticed in the national life of India. During the period of independence from British India had to give a cost of blood. Separation of India by British based on religion led to the separation of beloved ones, loss of numerous lives of human being, loss of properties, relatives. Hyder Ali is the embodiment of Indian Muslims who being the victim of the wrath of Hindus lost everything and moved from place to place for secured living. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clear_Light_of_Day) This time that is the summer of 1947 became therefore unforgettable for

Muslims as a destroyer of their lives. And thus it also left Indian Muslims and Hindus permanently hostile to each other. Desai highlights the truth that how these Indians once lived in a house forgetting their religious identity and how time has made them eternal enemies now.

The novel also paradoxically presents the time as a preserver. In the destruction of time a few things are also saved as they are indestructible and imperishable and thus they have permanent value. The Roman and Indian civilizations were vanished before millenniums but the cultural aspects and effects still exist and adored by modern people of today. *Clear Light of Day* idealizes the same philosophy that there are some experiences of human being which time cannot destroy. Tara's memory of past, her guilty feeling of not helping Bim when she was bitten by a swarm of bees are vivid examples of how time makes the memory eternal and long lasting. Time also preserve other positive and remarkable events like the sacrifices of Mira Masi for Das family particularly for Baba, what she left as an ideal for all though she died. Besides, Bim's love for Baba, her sacrifice and struggle for the family living alone in the old house when all the family members are away from her except Baba as a burden upon her helpless shoulder, all these memories are preserved in the mind of Bim. She cannot also forget what the humiliating letter of Raja does to her relationship with him. She thinks over the pathetic matter while talks to Tara about the facts. But ultimately Bim's generosity and tenderness lead to the memorable and touchy event of recollection with Tata led her preserving of relationship with Raja. She meditates by the dying words of Emperor Aurangzab that prepares her to forgive all of Raja's ill treatment with her and reconcile with her beloved brother. She realizes that there have been flaws with her in terms of her love not only for Raja but also for Tara and Baba. She tears off Raja's letter but, she ensures Tara with a loving message for Raja from whom she had been alienated for long time. This impressive and sensitive time of realization allows Bim renew all her relationships with her beloved younger brother and sister. In this way time works for Bim as a preserver. In the final episode of the novel Bim also realizes how Mulk guru's harsh voice and the sweet voice of young Mulk are working together harmoniously what can be followed by her in terms of her relation with her brother. She realizes that all the family members have sprung from the same soil must be united and cannot escape from their natural bond. This realization of Bim gives the reader a message of natural identity or root of all human being who are originated from the same root that is soil and created by the same creator God; therefore they cannot be separated and must feel for others. It therefore would not be irrelevant to view time as the creation of the God or the God Himself, who separates and unites, creates and destroys and we as the creation of God are expected to cope with this reality or natural phenomenon.

Finally, it can be said that time has universal effects on human life which none can ignore. Time is bitter really; divider and destroyer. On the contrary, this time is ironically moderator, peace-maker, linker or preserver in human life. Role of time either as a destroyer or preserver depends on its mood, motion, and climate. Man feels for time either it is suitable childhood or miserable adulthood. These feelings give them pain or pleasure what they cannot escape from. The memory of time sometimes causes dispersion in men's lives at the same time these memories can also reunite them what is vivid in journey of the life of Das family.

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