



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Investigating Extended Kin as A Positive Psychology Amidst the Collectivistic Forces of Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting*

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Abstract

Anita Desai's formative work, *Fasting Feasting* is a commentary on both individual and collective system of values. It provides an emphasis on family as a group with a sense of interdependence and interconnectedness. But is this interdependence and interconnectedness a source of warmth, acceptance, comfortable personal space devoid of any conflict, recognizing the self not as selfish but as the necessary individual identity and autonomy. This paper is a study on how the individual priorities come face to face with those of the group such as family. How an individual is shaken to the core, loses one's confidence and will power through a repetitive pattern of onslaught from a group psyche. However, the argument is extended when one is able to find the emotional support of the redeeming fulcrum from the extended kin such as uncle-aunts, cousins. The paper will look into the presence of such a collaborative stimulus that can offer a balance to the aversive control of familial-groups and manifest a coping mechanism for the victim. It helps provide the space which is personal and respected. Desai endorses this argument in the wavering moods across the moments of joy, confidence, assurance and self-discovery to insecure, self-doubting, lack of assurance, timid silences of the main cast Uma in the presence and absence of the extended kin. She delineates, meticulously the ideals of positive psychology by allowing positive interactions and promoting emotional well-being of one through these associations. The novel candidly via the wholesome presence of these elements unveils the idea in the experience and perceptions of Uma, her struggles and a sense of entrapment in her efforts to combat the external, oppressive, collectivist forces that come in the way to her own path of individuality and personal happiness and how the transient reliefs in the presence of the extended kin emerge as redemptive comforting enforcement and provide a balanced sustenance periodically.

Keywords: Extended Kin, Individuality, Collectivism, Emotional support, Personal happiness.

Introduction

The family as a whole has been interpreted as an important institution in the Indian perspective particularly from the concerns of a collectivistic society. There is a larger emphasis on family as a group with a sense of interdependence and interconnectedness. There is focus on the needs and desires of the family or the group then on that of an individual. The

individual identities merge into the collective one emerging from a singular 'I' to a collectivistic 'we'. The group in the form of a family or a community plays the central role and people are required to act in the interest of the group. The adaptive behaviour is of a systemic kind in which the influences on family sets in motion the behaviour of each member. This in turn sets in priority the interests of the family over the interests of an individual. Such trends are known to have passed intergenerationally and assume the role of a dedicated belief system. It is further strengthened across collaborative and communitive initiatives spread across economics, social and cultural transmissions. Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* is a depiction of such a system per say a family built on collectivistic values. While the family is looked upon a collectivistic whole it operates under variegated ingroups such as parents, siblings, extended kin who are instrumental in the functional dynamics and socio-cultural transactions. While immediate family holds the significance of filial piety, the extended kin too embodies an equitable status in the lives of children. John Bowlby's

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Attachment theory says that “Bonds are vital for survival and emotional development, serving as foundation for future relationships”. (McLeod, 2025) He proposed that these bonds are essential for survival and emotional balance as they influence one’s evolutionary and inherent behaviour, their expectations of themselves and from others, ranging from infancy and existing throughout life. In the Indian spaces, the extended kin or a joint family as it has been known to be by earlier coinages, is a vital form of support system. Apart from financial cooperation they have performed towards providing childcare of the nuclear, emotional stability and installing safety and cultural values within their familial roles and relations. While in large families with increased number of children such a support system incentivises the functionality of the system through strong ties and regular presence of members such as grand-parents, uncles-aunts, cousins. They counteract the challenges of neglect, insensitive atmospheres, power imbalances, question of resilience, distress and frustration which often emerge in such domestic realms. The present study focuses on the first part of *Fasting, Feasting* which is in the form of two linked novellas. The emphasis is on Uma’s trajectory, who is also the main protagonist and to uncover as to how collectivism operates within assumingly assured ramparts of a familial structure. These safe assurances and parental piety are illusionary manifestations and in fact exist to impact the mental stability of an individual in a most stifling manner.

Literature Survey

In 2024 a study on “Exploring the role of Extended Family in Child Rearing Practices Across Different Cultures” was conducted by Veronica Longo, Nadereh Saadati, et.al to find the child rearing techniques across different cultures. The study underscored the role of extended family with child rearing practices across different cultures.

Emily Treleaven in her article “The relationship between extended kin resources and children’s healthcare utilization: An analysis of family networks” published in *National Library of Medicine*, February 2023 looked upon the role of extended kin through the lens of healthcare and mortality.

The studies conducted on extended kin have been a subject to social, economic and medicinal purposes. The current study is interdisciplinary with its main focus to understand as to how the psychological analysis of an individual’s bonds and behavioral patterns can be provided on the narrative canvas of literature. The lived experiences, dramatic tensions filled with cultural nuances can be contextualised within the pages of a novel. Hence here the focus is regardlessly on the role of extended kin within familial structures strongly imbibed in collectivism, in the life of an individual as depicted within the fictional story-telling arena of Anita Desai’s classic bestseller *Fasting, Feasting*.

Methodology

The study incorporates Narrative Analysis of the novel as a qualitative research technique to contextualise, reveal individual’s experience in story-telling and meaning-making.

It examines the social and cultural elements and discourses within the text using phenomenological and constructionist approach.

It looks into thematic analysis of the novel to identify the core themes and patterns related to the involvement of extended kin amidst collectivistic structures in an individual’s support and rearing.

Discussion

The story of *Fasting, Feasting* as stated above is in the form of two linked novellas written in two Parts. The first part deals with the story of Uma in India and the second part with that of Arun in America. The pattern of society depicted throughout the narrative is collectivistic in its cultural construct. The narrative proceeds both in the past (as flashback) and in the present. The novel makes a representation of a typified Indian family with very strong collectivistic elements embedded in its texture. Desai brings to fore the inherent tendencies of the Indian culture through a traditional household of the late 1970’s in the story. At the onset the novel establishes the priorities of the familial goals over an individual’s goal when Mama and Papa practice their undemocratic preferences in asking imposingly their middle aged daughter Uma, to perform certain house hold tasks such as pack a parcel of shawl and some goodies to be sent to Arun, their son who is in America along with the paraphernalia of the events. And so one observes vividly in Mama and Papa who while having lived up to the traditions of the society they belonged to and represented ardently, make a display of neglectful and abusive emotions towards Uma. Even their marriage of decades is the result of an exemplary collectivistic arrangement that Desai endorses symbolically in the portmanteau construct of MamaPapa in the novel affirming distinctly a collective entity, a form of a shared consciousness structured around control, manipulation and to an extent coerciveness dismissing the individual voices as weak, vulnerable and silenced. In fact their solidarity strengthens as their lives with time become intertwined more and more. In the deeper context the novel garners around both patriarchy and gender emerging as ideological forces that get organized collectivistically in constructing a pattern of life privileging one to subordinate the other. Desai has chosen to show the powerful imagery of these forces in the society through the lens of family and familial ties. The idea is strongly upheld in the dominant position of the father. The patriarchal ways of Papa become evident in the Park scene when he becomes impatient and scolds Mama and Uma for their slackened movements especially when they seemed to be distracted by the

colourful sight at the park, it was a outing the validates their dull, humdrum and routine lives of inner courtyards filled with domestication and deprivation. Such a dominance of Papa is not only stereotypically defined but collectivistically recognized and heralded across historical practices and localized beliefs. It is this collectivistic patriarchy that comes into play in his character that subdues the individualistic feminine desires of Mama and Uma. Also Papa taking a lead in the park is an inadvertent display of control and keeping everything under check, giving a continuous set of instructions to the driver and keep a track of activities at home is the retention of familial supremacy in a solemn and unchallenged manner. Their mutual bonds lack a sense of respect, emotional validation, support, negotiation or consideration towards each other's needs. Desai's narrative projects as to how these realities impact the factors of trust and intimacy through persistent anxiety, distrust, emotional detachment and reduced self-esteem. This weakens their mutuals bond further as there is a kind of interdependence created here where the idea of self depends and is guided by the group which in turn is driven by a patriarchal psyche in the novel. Papa as a man, here seems to be the sole and responsible bearer of such a culture in the family. The family becomes a space for patriarchal hegemony ingrained strongly in daily life, functions by an invisible consensus evolving into a systemic collective agreement. He therefore succeeds to make Mama and Uma in particular to embrace these beliefs and conform to the extent to make them sacrifice their own personal desires for the greater glory of the group or the society taken as a whole. Mama especially holds onto the one end of this patriarchal bargaining as a strategic choice to ensure her safety and survival in such a system. Hence the solidarity in "MamaPapa" surfaces to intensify the dominance, here portrayed as natural and inevitable.

The narrative that often flashes back in structure highlights a very crucial development in the plot, which is Mama's surprise pregnancy with Uma's little brother, Arun and that was kept as a secret. It was a turn of event that was going to impact drastically the trajectory of Uma. Owing to Mama's late age a lot of speculation takes place on this account and as the child turns out to be a boy sacrifices were bound to happen especially from Uma being the eldest of all the siblings. It speaks of another gesture of a collectivistic nature where the social relationship and takes the front seat to an individual's desire. Papa is elated and Desai points out once again at the patriarchal strategy of preference for a boy in a collectivistic environment. She highlights birth of a son in the light of contentment and celebration in such familial systems but it comes with a cost of personal likes and social anxieties. He names him Arun- when he says "Arun at Last""When the second daughter had been born, the name Arun had already been chosen in anticipation of a son. It had

to be changed, in disappointment, to Aruna."(Desai,2012, p.17) Uma's position at this juncture is encountered in such a way so as to question her choices, desires to be preceded by community desires. Her desperate struggle to secure a support system offering not only emotional stability but comfort and safeguard interests against conformity and compliance. A system where choosing freedom and individual choice can be risky and a punishing deviation.

Hence the birth of Arun implied that Uma will not be returning to school which supposedly was her choicest place of respite and retrieval. Instead, she will help take care of Arun. Such a decision enforces the dominance of a group over an individual, compelling Uma to adopt compliance over becoming an active decision maker by refusing to do so. The whole system revolves around personal interdependence emphasising upon shared responsibility which prioritizes group well-being over individual desire. It enforces the idea as to a way for people to be connected to one another, group cohesiveness and be able to protect the interests of the family. Desai weaves this tendencies intricately in the plot to represent the Indian familial system where, alike any collectivistic society, for an individual, acceptance and fulfilling group obligations becomes a survival mechanism. In this context, it can be observed as a pitfall of a collectivistic society, though the system of support, socially stands in its place but it mars the scope of growth, progress and identity in an individual just as it happens with Uma. She was made to fold nappies, prepare "watered milk, rocking the screaming infant to sleep"(Desai,2012, p.45) much against her wishes. The next shocking and blindsiding moment comes when she is forced to give up her school for domestication and thrust into a caretaking role as an elder sister, all of which seemed to move the ground beneath her feet. She feels unexpectedly abandoned by this news because she loved attending school at the local convent. It was like a respite from the oppressing atmosphere of home that defied her individual sense. Going to school became a personal ambition to her. But since she was not a good student and Mama never really having taken her studies seriously as she herself hadn't gone to school, Uma was refused from going to school. This was a turning point in her life. As her going to school did not impact group preferences and obligations till now and allowed her to practice autonomy untouched by the collective consciousness. The departure from school evoked a strong anxiety in her resulting in depression that she found difficult to cope up with. In sheer desperation and with a hope of wheel reversal she ran away to the convent to plead with her old teacher, Mother Agnes, to intervene and convince Mama and Papa to allow her to return. She tries all desperate means to convince Mother Agnes, but it all goes in vain resulting further into a fit or seizure, a physical manifestation of an extremely and unresolvable psychological stress. The fit is a cultural expression known

to exist in the collectivistic cultures of many Asian societies in which extreme emotional distresses result into symptomatic outbursts. On being taken home she faces a harsh criticism and challenges at the hands of Mama instead of a trusted connection, understanding and a loving support to reduce the anxiety and help foster resilience in her so as to say that -all will be well. Though Uma did not fair well in her studies but her liking for the school was not only a getaway but a safe-space especially in the warm and tender accompaniment of Mother Agnes wherein the preference of home becomes null as ironically the safe spaces of home were demanding, unproductive, affecting negatively her well-being and taking away the sense of - self and identity in her consciousness. It was a place of denial, a negation of life that gave her a feeling of nothingness and losing herself by and by. The circumstances deepen instead of mitigating even when Aruna and Uma's childhood caretaker, whom they call *ayah*, or nanny, had returned to help with Arun, Mama continues to demand that Uma learn how to take care of the baby. (Desai,2012, p.30) In these helplessly grave moments Uma yearns for a support, a magical fulcrum that would hold her and comfort her. The novel seeks refuge in the reviving presence of extended kins Mira-Masi and cousin Ramu who provide a survival like support, emotional security, a rekindling of so very important 'self', diverse perspectives, combat hostility and foster an identity.

Mira- Masi is portrayed in the story, being a widow yet a woman who has a certain freedom to travel to religious places and shrines and be independent of the collectivistic influences of the family and society. Although Mama has distaste for Mira-masi's overtly religious devotion to the gods and goddesses, Uma on the other hand finds solace in these religious distractions. She finds her fascinating and inspiring. "Oh I love Mira Masi as "she makes the very best ladoos". "(Desai,2012, p.38) Mira masi would tell her stories about Lord Krishna. "Uma would listen to her relate those ancient myths of Hinduism that she made sound as alive and vivid" to her.(Desai,2012) She would take her along in the evenings to the temple for puja. They would serve as a much awaited outing for Uma when she could enjoy some pleasant partings from the collectivistic controls of the family, Mama and Papa in particular. It was as much as Uma was curious about the convent's religious rituals, she was curious about Mira-masi's spiritual seeking. She offered herself as a functionally adaptive unit against the familial dysfunctions. Uma found her point of equilibrium with Mira masi .This was a member that she would wait anxiously for her visits.The transported feeling gave her a sense of detachment from the obligatory surroundings where she seemed to lose the grip of herself in trying to satisfy the needs and desires of Mama and Papa over her own. Her deep craving to find herself is rooted when on one occasion Mira masi takes all the children to visit the holy-river, Uma as a child, lost in her thoughts

goes so deep into the water that she had to be rescued from the forceful current that could drag her away. (Desai,2012, p.44). Mira Masi as symbolical messiah comes to her rescue and support. She emerges a buffer against stress for Uma. Here the kin is looked upon as a caregiving unit in Indian systems where the larger emphasis is on a collectivistic culture over individual autonomy especially under critical and overwhelming situations. The discontinuation of school for Uma became intrusively a part of an unwanted memory resulting in deep sadness, flashbacks and cognitive freezing. Mira Masi appears a symbol of strength, hope, a calming influence to help recover from her intense emotional distress. Here, extended kin emerges an important pillar for recovery, a vein of compassion to stabilize these debilitating emotions. It is observed that the sense of belongingness gets fostered and nurtured amidst living with multiple relations of aunts-uncles, cousins and grand-parents. The company of Mira Masi balances the overwhelming, uncared and subordinated experiences of Uma at the hands of her own parents. She values Mira Masi both culturally and emotionally, a someone who helps her in reducing the existential bouts of a ghastly aimless, absurdist moments and promote emotional stability when her own normal coping mechanism was overpowered by the challenging situations around her.

Her sense of self is further enhanced during Ramu, her cousin's visit. Although Mama and Papa would look upon Ramu with remorse on account of his lucidly casual and carefree ways. Moreso on account of his unannounced arrivals and his unconventional, self-consuming, liberal ways which inspire Uma who simply admires him. She welcomes him with her warm and excited gestures. Her hospitality would know no leaps and bounds. She would rush to provide him "hot water for bath, puris for breakfast much to the disapproval of Papa."(Desai,2012, p.47) Ramu's offer to take her out to dinner to a restaurant that "she has never been to one in her life"(p49), certainly scandalizes Mama and Papa as it enrages the collectivistic forces of patriarchy and community who exclude women from such recreations. In these moments Uma finds that support in Ramu to make her feel free from the shackles, to get to explore oneself even if it meant to get drunk in a public space and bring all the wrath to Mama and Papa who take a blind eye to her emotions and desires and in their collectivistic psyche allege her for bringing "disgrace to the family". (Desai,2012, p.53) However with Ramu it becomes a redeeming experience which offers her moments of joy, solace and self-discovery. She waited with anxious breath for these extenuating respites in the presence of the extended kin Her longing to find herself is intensified during her visit with Mira Masi to an Ashram. It was exciting and "exhilarating" for Uma for these were the occasions when she could get away from the unavoidable "servile existence at home".(Desai,2012, p.56) Uma enjoys

this getaway as she has no obligations or commitments towards others. She finds a way to explore herself both in the company of Mira Masi and the accompaniment of nature where she enjoys the serene and pensive moods in her walks down the river. Apart from the epileptic fit which brings her departure from the fulfilling life at Ashram she experiences a complete rebuilding process emotionally, situationally and relationally. The visit to Ashram was utterly healing for Uma, a commitment to self-prioritization as she felt complete in herself and "perfectly happy not to be noticed" for "she had never been more unsupervised or happier in her life." (Desai,2012,p.58). While in Asharam with Mira Masi she feels moving from a life of stagnation towards a life of agency, shifting her inner dialogue to one that of strength. However, she avoided entering the temple and the recitation of hymns and prayers by the priest as it pushed her strongly into a feeling of abandonment by herself. She "tried not to look into the priest's face or listen to the words of the hymn either."(Desai,2012, p.64) This reminded her of Mama Papa and the moment when she had to run to the convent to plea not to stop her school and Sister Teresa had brought her back in the school van and Mama was full of rage. Desai uses the Priests Chanting as an objective correlative for Uma's deep sense of loss and rejection on account of the incident of the convent. She again finds herself "uneasily caught ... between powerful forces pulling in different directions." (Desai,2012,p.59) But the "wandering down to the river" (Desai,2012,p.64) environment cleanses her surrounding acting as a mental reset towards a fresh start. And when Ramu and Arun come to take her at Ashram she resists as she is desperate for her freedom and fears of losing it on departure. The interactions with the extended kin is rejuvenating for Uma. These interactions provide reduced stress, resilience and adaptation in hostile, aversive spaces. Bronfenbrenner in his ecological system's theory places the extended kin in the exosystem of family orbit. They play a significant role by providing an emotional support which acts as a buffer against the stress. They are also instrumental in passing down cultural traditions that form a part of the larger ecological context and this impacts the development, growth and well-being of an individual. Both Mira-masi and Ramu's involvement have a positive influence of Uma to evolve in her a coping mechanism and ensuring her well-being. Even Bowlby in his Attachment theory comments on how important bonds are for both survival and emotional well-being and how a loving care-giving atmosphere is vital for an individual's cognitive-perceptive abilities.

The narrative briefly highlights the dominance of the collectivistic ideology over personal interests in case of Uma's cousin Anamika too. Anamika is Ramu's sister who is an embodiment of grace and beauty. She is a contrasting image of her brother Ramu who honours his individuality above all. For Anamika it was like "wherever she was, there

was peace, contentment, well-being." (Desai,2012, p.68) She placed the common familial interests before her own and so when she did "brilliantly" in her exams that she had been accepted on scholarship to Oxford University.(Desai,2012, p.68) her parents forbid her from pursuing her dreams as she had reached the age of marriage. Desai once again brings to fore the question of a women's role in a patriarchal set up where Education takes a backseat for a woman in particular to appease the collectivistic social commitment of 'marriage'. Anamika, does not challenge her parents decision because of her conditioning in such a set up and so she is not able to "bring herself to contradict her parents or cause them grief".(Desai,2012, p.70) Hence she gives up the priority of her own desires to that of the group through the acceptance of marriage to a man much older than herself. "The marriage is full of inflictions and sorrows despite all her "beauty, grace and distinction", where "She is often beaten and suffers the miscarriage of her child.(Desai,2012, p.70,71, 72) Desai brings to fore that how traditions and customs driven by group ambitions target upon the individual well-being of a person, here in this case is Anamika who pays with her life in having to choose the group and community over her own individuality.

The community influences typical of collectivist cultures is reiterated in search for a suitor for Uma too. Desai in these episodes presents the oddities and awkwardness of such practises in the Indian context. She satirizes upon the commercialised aspects of marital alliances in collectivist cultures where an individual is denied the opportunity to choose and these "relationships are usually formed due to factors such as family.....rather than personal choice." (Cherry,2022,p. 5) In the first instance the moderator Mrs Joshi relays the boys preference for Aruna, Uma's outgoing, beautiful younger sister. Then there is the Goyal family that comes in search of a bride where the engagement takes place and the deal is done with Papa having paid the dowry money as a mark of fixing and endorsing the alliance . However, after the engagement, the Goyal family tells Mama and Papa that the son has decided to go to college rather than marry. The family played a trick with them and swindled off the money received as dowry. Desai displays the institution of marriage in the light of sarcasm and mockery. She satirises marriage is a must psyche in the normative structure of the Indian society. It also garners a "socially reticent and withdrawn behaviour" as an individual hardly has a say in the decision making for instance Uma who is predominantly positioned at the receiving end. (Cherry,2022,p. 8). Studies have shown that collectivist cultures "displayed higher levels of social anxiety" in persons than individualist cultures. (Cherry,2022,p. 8). Uma's trajectory is built upon such attributes due to lack of freedom, recognition and support. Mama rants about the failure of alliance even when Mrs. Joshi tries to mollify

her—"Be grateful, that Uma was not married into a family that could have burnt her to death ... to procure another dowry!" (Desai,2012, p.84) Aruna too takes digs at Uma as there were "So many marriage proposals for Aruna that Uma's unmarried state was not only an embarrassment but an obstruction". (Desai,2012, p.70) The treatment of Uma at the hands of her family changes, which further enhances the anxiety levels in her. She wonders if she is the cause of the "holes and gaps" in the family's solidarity. Uma concerns that "the fabric of family would not hold." (Desai,2012, p.89) She apprehends if they would give up on her. And finally when the marriage is materialised with a man named Harish, he turns out to be much matured and older than Uma who frustrated enough from the family pressures, agrees without even a meeting before the wedding. Harish's deception is nuanced on the day of wedding when he appears in a "state of unenthusiasm" with a "sullen expression" that made Uma relinquish any hope she could fall upon.(Desai,2012, p.90). Her world comes crumbling down when it gets unravelled that Harish is a married man and he married Uma for her dowry because he needed the money. With the revelation of the betrayal, Uma disappears into her room to cover her eyes and ears "to block out a memory she could not have lived with."(Desai,2012, p.96) Uma feels the pain and shame of this yet another disappointing experience that would spare her completely of any further hopes and dreams. The silence maintained on the issue confirms the shame and embarrassment and lack of support from within the family. Desai mocks at the hypocrisy of the Indian society where the failed marriage is not actually Uma's fault but she is blamed in a subtle manner for bringing shame and dishonour upon the family. "Having cost her parents two dowries without a marriage to show in return" no further attempts were made for her marriage. (Desai,2012, p.98)

Further, a disharmonious intervention is reflected in Mama and Papa's disapproval of Mrs. O'Henry's invitation to Uma for a tea-party. It is also extended when Dr, Dutt comes with the proposal of a job of the Matron in her Women's Nursing Institute, MamaPapa at once refuse it with subtle cruelty disregarding callously her choice of things. Cherry says-

Maintaining harmony within interpersonal relationships is of utmost importance in a collectivistic culture. This is likely because these relationships are extremely difficult to change. Failing to keep the peace can mean long-term unhappiness for everyone involved.(Cherry,2022,p.6)

Human sensibilities occur at the centre of almost all of Anita Desai's works. She brings to fore certain uncomfortable and pathological aspects of normatively structured collectivistic society. It becomes the burden of Uma to maintain the peace and harmony within the family through sacrifice, suffering and unhappiness on her part alone. There is an internalisation of narrative as Desai presents her

characters caught in the weariness of the Indian way of life. She explores the issues of quest for a fulfilling identity and existential anguish.

The observation foregrounds upon the fact, that while Uma cannot change instantly the age old traditions and beliefs rooted rigidly in a typical collectivistic structure in order to pursue her personal desires and dreams, she finds temporarily staged amending alternatives as coping mechanisms through the extended kin. Hence obedience stands at the centre of collectivism and any regard for 'self' becomes a symbol of selfish pursuit.

A similar dynamics is observed in the sacrifice of Sita in Ramayana. She continues to remain a symbol of both sacrifice and devotion. From exile to captivity in Lanka, to proving her purity through burning fire, she succumbs to the collectivistically borne social pressures at every level. Even in a revered position as a Goddess ,she epitomises both sacrifice and lack of individual choice along with being a female she bears the brunt of double marginality.

Uma's helplessness also emerges from being poorly stationed as a woman and her inability to challenge the laws (smriti) of the patriarchal collectivism who advocated only obedience. For her the redeeming moments were by way of spending time with her extended kin. These were the moments of solace and comfort for her.

Conclusion

The novel has depicted the Indian social space and ethos through its characters in terms of their longing individuality, displaced and out of place spatially and culturally. A westernised, Eurocentric approach is held strong that points towards a struggle, a sense of uprooted and marginalised identities. The struggles of protagonists are representational conforming social realism and show how they try to grapple between the individual desires and aspirations, and the familial, external community's expectations. It becomes a critical question of their own personal realisations and standings sometimes the inevitable threats and precarious survival . How does one perceive the sense of mental well-being having situated in an insensitised uncaring expanse. There is a certain passivity in behaviour observed through the lens of Uma being overpowered by the collectivist forces in family and outside that make her strive to locate herself in the zone of her own personal being. She yearns for a tract of freedom but often finds herself in a void which sparingly uses isolation, confinement and emotional instability to quell every voice of her personal zeal and expression. However, the messiah emerges in the form of extended Kin which is used as a strategic introduction like an antidote, who act as a crucial support in a space lacking one. Desai addresses these pursuits through the close involvement of Uma with Mira masi and cousin Ramu. Their presence is nurturing and help Uma to find intermittent respite and respond with

strength and vigour to difficult situations. The crisis fosters in her a sense of resilience, through a formidable course of endurance but the feeling is doused and she nourishes her strength in the fulfilling bonds with her extended kin. She evolves and survives through the experience of life in close adherence to a bildungsroman where their mind and heart emerge as whole and complete.

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