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Nanda Kaul, The Most Marginalized Woman in Anita Desai's 'Fire on the Mountain'

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Abstract

This research paper aims to do a study of subaltern female in Anita Desai's novel *Fire on the Mountain*. Anita Desai is an Indian novelist and short story writer. She is best known and celebrated indo-Anglican novelist of the post-independence era. She has been honored for her work by many national and international prestigious awards. Going deep into the complexities of human life, she seeks to evaluate many formidable factors related to women which make their life uncomfortable and unbearable. Women suffering is common theme of her novels. Patriarchy system in India has created an image of docile, vulnerable, subordinate, powerless and subaltern women. Anita Desai's novels throw light on this subordinate condition of Indian women. *Fire on the Mountain* is published by Anita Desai in 1977 and received Sahitya Academy Award. It is a story of Nanda Kaul, her great granddaughter Raka and her friend Ila. All this female characters suffer due to lack of communication, alienation, male dominating society and inferior treatment by family members. Nanda Kaul is the most The most Marginalized Woman in Anita Desai's '*Fire on the Mountain*'.

Keywords : Patriarchy, Formidable Factors, Subaltern

Anita Desai's novels are based upon social situations. Most of her characters are women who suffer due to loss of dignity, respect and self-identity. Desai's women characters accept the bitter realities of life because of the sense of their responsibility. But in the course of time, they rebel against the miserable condition either by committing suicide, murder or living a life in isolation.

The present novel *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) deals with the isolated life of Nanda Kaul. She is happy in her present life of loneliness and detachment. She has given up all the unbearable family responsibilities due to the inferior treatment she receives and heart breaking events of the illegal extra marital affair of her Vice-Chancellor husband. Desai has portrayed the character of Nanda Kaul to showcase the typical problems of Indian women in their old age. Nanda Kaul is an old by age but not by strength. It is highly appreciable that at this age, Nanda Kaul stays alone far away from her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Nanda Kaul is a very family oriented woman, who takes care of all the responsibilities towards all the family members. Unfortunately, the communication gap and forced responsibilities make her withdraw from all the roles that she performs in her husband's family. The incidents transform her from an emotional and self-less woman into a solid and self-centred woman. Like Sita, the central character in *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975) Nanda Kaul becomes the victim of the conventional Indian mind-set about women. Nanda Kaul, being a wife of highly a qualified person who is a Vice Chancellor by profession has to face the bitter realities of life. It is very unfortunate that she has to face the unavoidable, problems of the old age. Desai has shown that the Indian woman, even being the wife of such a highly qualified person, has to suffer for no fault of her own. The changing patterns of modern life, puts many