



Anita Desai was born in 1935 in Mossoorie, India to a German mother and a Bengali businessman.

- ▣ She grew up speaking German at home and Bengali, Urdu, Hindi and English at school and in the city streets.
- ▣ Although German is her first language she did not visit Germany until later in life as an adult.
- ▣ She first learned to read and write in English at school and as a result English became her "literary language".
- ▣ She began to write in English at the age of seven and published her first story at the age of nine.

- ▣ She was a student at Queen Mary's Higher Secondary School in Delhi
- ▣ received her B.A. in English literature in 1957 from the University of Delhi.
- ▣ In 1958, she married Ashvin Desai, the director of a computer software company and author of the book: *Between Eternities: Ideas on Life and The Cosmos*.
- ▣ They have four children, including Booker Prize-winning novelist Kiran Desai.

- ▣ Her first book, *Cry, the Peacock* was published in England in 1963, and her better known novels include *In Custody* (1984) and *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988). She once wrote: "I see India through my mother's eyes, as an outsider, but my feelings for India are my father's, of someone born here" (Griffiths).

- ▣ She only writes in English.
- ▣ Desai is considered the writer who introduced the psychological novel in the tradition of Virginia Woolf to India.
- ▣ Included in this, is her pioneer status of writing of feminist issues.
- ▣ she says, her writing is realistic
- ▣ Her fiction has covered themes such as women's oppression and quest for a fulfilling identity, family relationship and contrasts, the crumbling of traditions, and anti-Semitism.



- ▣ Desai considers *Clear Light of Day*, her most autobiographical book, because she was writing about her neighborhood in Delhi, although the characters are not based on her brothers and sisters.
- ▣ She had wanted to start the book at the end and move backwards

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- ▣ She earned her Bachelors of Arts Degree from Delhi University in 1957.
- ▣ Since 1963 writer;
- ▣ Purington Professor of English, Mount Holyoke College, 1988-93
- ▣ professor of writing, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1993 –



- ▣ her novels are not populated by heroic characters, whether male or female, at least in the traditional sense.
- ▣ Her protagonists are marked by a certain passivity and have been criticised as being swept away by historical and social forces rather than being able to face and control them.
- ▣ In spite of the heroic nuances of these survivals, Desai's characters often meet tragic endings