CHAPTER 4
TECHNIQUE AS EXTENDED COMMENT ON THEME

4.1 Narrative Technique

The thematic content and subject matter of the novel along with the perspectives of the novelists have shifted gradually with the development of postmodernism. Consequently the narrative technique of fiction underwent drastic changes. As the novel continues to reflect contemporary society and reality, the changes in the structure and concern of the novelists are a continuous process. The traditional method of monologic narration has gradually paved the way for innovative narrative techniques. Polyphonic narrative where the characters are given absolute freedom without any restrictions of the authorial views has been adopted by several novelists of the postmodern period. Polyphonic narrative with multiple voices of narrators in a non-linear presentation replaced the chronological form of narration. The ultimate concern of the novelist is realistic presentation of the narrative and the psychological mindset of the characters in an effective manner by using an appropriate narrative technique. Thus narrative technique can be explained as the way a writer applies tools and techniques necessary for creating a story, such as point of view, theme, character and setting.¹

Structural design and division together with studied use of style constitutes what is normally referred to as narrative technique. Whether novelists opt for a huge canvas with a wide variety of characters or concentrate attention on the emotional interaction of a handful of people, their very choice of narrative mode and point of view heightens the thematic import. K.R.S Iyengar in Introduction to the Study of English Literature observes that, novelists can choose any one of the following patterns of narration- grand chain pattern (stringing together of a number of episodes), the wheel pattern (several narrative strands emanating from a single centre), the hour glass pattern (reversing the directions of the plot) or the boomerang pattern (actions returning at the end to the point it started from), the stream of consciousness pattern (indicating the several waves of action that blow over a mind under focus). In recent times this technique has shifted its focus from simple unfolding of the story to highlighting the mental and emotional changes in the characters. Shresth states that,
the method adopted by a writer to present life in the process of living may be described as the narrative technique. \(^2\)

Anita Desai, Arun Joshi and Jhumpa Lahiri have their own unique style of narration and unraveling of the plot. Anita Desai’s preferred narrative technique is interior monologue style. She uses flashback technique of narration in *Fire on the Mountain*, Stream of Consciousness narrative mode with extensive use of symbolism and imagery in *Cry the Peacock*. Arun Joshi uses the flashback technique of narration in his novels, *The Foreigner* and *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*. Jhumpa Lahiri’s narrative technique involves sensitive, emotional interaction of very few characters.

Gopal\(^3\) observes that technique of a novelist is all encompassing it includes the perspectives of the novelists, their thematic content and also the style and technique of narrative. The use of symbolism and imagery arranged chapterwise and in chronological order.

In the postmodern period the novel became the most popular and powerful approach of literary genre in depicting the wide-ranging human emotions and views, the varied experiences and multitude of existential issues. The novel greatly succeeded in capturing the social, political and economic issues of Indian society and the impact of these factors on people’s lives and intellectual thinking. The prominent novelists of Indian English literature effectively exploited the form to present their thoughts and feelings. Prominent women novelists also used this medium to present the conflicts and struggles of women. Novelists like Ruth PawarJhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantra Sahgal, Anita Desai, Bharathi Mukherjee, Shashi Despande focused their concerns about women’s problems and probed the inner psychological tensions of women in particular. Powerful language, style and technique enabled these novelists to present their thoughts, conveys their deep felt emotions to the audience. Though Indians adopted a foreign alien language, they succeeded in mastering it and presenting their ideas and capturing the readers’ attention remarkably.

Anita Desai internationally acclaimed and one of the foremost Indian novelists opts for a narrow but profound and intense fictional canvas. Her main tool is use of wide-ranging all-embracing imagery and symbolism to present the overpowering psychological passions of her protagonists. Plot is not her major concern, bringing
forth the deep felt feelings of frustrations and existential angst in the changing social scenario of the male dominated Indian society appears to be her chief concern. She prefers the use of non linear form of narrative the omnipresent narrator is not given much importance. Desai’s first novel, *Cry the Peacock* has three distinct sections, structurally it can be analyzed as - part one: Introduction; part two: Complication of the plot, which is the main part of the story and Part three: Climax. The story is told in first person narrative, from the protagonist’s Maya’s perspective. Maya is directly communicating with the readers with her rhetorical questions, conflicts and arguments. The plot structure is always simple and the narrative with a combination of imaginary and realistic approaches. Chronological order is not significant the experiences of the characters are used to develop the story line. The sequencing of the story line is done in a psychological manner. Anita Desai has drastically limited action and movement in the novel, she progresses the plot and draws the readers’ attention with clever movement of her protagonist Maya’s thoughts. With the use of effective language and narrative technique and ample use of images she sensitively portrays Maya’s inner turmoil.

*Cry the Peacock* begins with Maya’s grief and emotional trauma at the death of her pet dog. The death of the dog is used as means of conveying Maya’s sensitivity and emotional state in contrast to Gautama’s rational attitude. The emotional reaction of Maya is further extended it is followed by a sequence of unpleasant thoughts and feelings, the plot proceeds to larger issues of emotional conflicts and struggles mainly the conflict between Maya and her husband Gautama. Desai resorts to flashback technique of narration and the plot progresses with the modulations of memory. The present is interwoven with Maya’s childhood memories of the past. Maya was brought up by her father with great love and care and protected from all sorts of unpleasant experiences. He made everything comfortable and pleasurable for Maya. Maya’s fond memories of her father in the first person narrative clearly reveals to the readers the comfort and care she enjoyed.

*When with my father, even the breakfast in the garden- for, on bright winter mornings, we have the servants bring it out into the flower beds – becomes a party, as good as the revel of elves and fairies who feast on melons and syrups by moonlight.*

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Interior monologues are used by Desai to illuminate Maya’s innermost feelings, her utter loneliness and helplessness. Maya gradually loses her sanity as there is no emotional bond between Maya and her husband. She longs for her father’s company and guidance, his reassurances and thus proposes to go to the hills for a trip to meet him but Gautama objects to that also. With no one to share her feelings of fear and frustration and the constant reminder of the prediction of the albino astrologer haunting her all the time, drives her to a state of madness.

Anita Desai uses deconstructive devices in her narrative style to bring about the storyline she does not develop the story, nor follows the traditional plot structure. She is more interested in characterization, projecting their existential quest and dilemma. As commented by Bhatnagar, What these protagonists strive for is self-realization, self fulfillment, carving at an identity.\(^5\)

Maya’s struggles to escape from the mundane realistic life but is constantly pulled back by the practical, detached life as propagated by her husband. Their inner turmoil, the intense psychological conflict within Maya is forcefully brought out by Desai’s excellent narrative technique. Her restlessness is conveyed in a simple yet compelling manner, *something, similar heaved inside me, a longing, a dread, a search for solution, despair and my head throbbed and spun.*\(^6\)

Anita Desai uses the technique of contrast in her narrative style to reveal Maya’s personality and character. Her encounters with realities are juxtaposed with her past. The antithetical technique between Maya’s pre marital world – her father’s world of love, concern, care, tenderness, flowers and Urdu poetry and the world with her husband Gautama where there is no love, no understanding, absolute detachment. The scenes in the novel oscillate in between Maya’s childhood and the present condition, the imaginary world of her childhood and the real world and Maya’s agitation about her future predicted by an albino astrologer. Maya considers Gautama not a loving husband but a father substitute due to her unconscious father fixation. Maya’s Oedipus complex is irritating to Gautama as she attempts to constantly look for a father substitute figure in him. It is one of the reasons of her marital discord.
Perhaps Maya’s main reason to marry Gautama, almost twice her age, was that she found in him the image of her father.

The mental agony of Maya is excellently portrayed by the technique of contrast. Maya and Gautama are projected as extremes throughout the novel. Maya is extremely sensitive, emotional and impulsive on the other hand her husband is rational, practical and realistic. He has absolutely no poetic imagination like his wife and believes in detachment. Maya believes in excessive involvement in everything. The differences between the two are too many to be surpassed and thus lead Maya to a state of neurosis. Moreover, Maya is obsessed almost from the beginning of the novel with the gloomy prophecy of an albino astrologer, his prediction of death in the fourth year after her marriage. As it is the fourth her of her marriage the prophecy agitates her mind and influences her so strongly that it leads to insanity. Maya has been a pampered child, a darling of her father always protected and surrounded by all the comforts of life. At the outset she appears to be a lucky child with a doting father but the fact was otherwise, the early death of her mother often made her feel lonely. Whenever she suffers from a sense of loneliness, she longs to see her father. Thus the technique of contrast is used in situations and characters. Anita Desai like the earlier Indian English novelists does not conform herself to the traditional technique of narration. Her narrative creates characters within the existential framework, their quest and crisis in turn unravels the plot. Maya in *Cry the Peacock* narrates her life story throughout the novel and in the process attempts to find some meaning in her life. She is all the while defending her actions and existential concerns. As commented by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar the narrative of *Cry the Peacock* is has a dominant sense of the inevitability of fate.

Anita Desai presents a very wide canvas of Maya’s mental landscape fragmented with the Maya’s childhood memories and her present state. In a very subtle manner she is able to bring out the appropriate feelings and emotions of Maya. Maya’s complete lapse into madness after she kills Gautama is brought out with great intensity. Her ecstatic cries of joy in when she is in her father’s place and her final cry while she commits suicide are all indicative of the smooth supple narrative style of Desai. As observed by Iyengar Desai is superb in her presentation of Maya’s characterization,
her portrayal of the psychotical conditions of sanity and insanity of Maya’s state is gripping.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, Anita Desai juxtaposes three different characters Nanda, Raka and Ila Das, all of whom prefer to live in exile, in seclusion and in alienation. The stories of these three characters are woven together in a compact and complete manner. Thus the harmony in style is maintained. The real life and the imaginary life are intricately and inseparably woven into a continuous narrative. The novel is divided into three distinct parts, ‘Nanda Kaul at Carignano’, ‘Raka Comes to Carignano’ and ‘Ila Das leaves Carignano.’ The first part is about Nanda Kaul, the main protagonist, her life past and present, her loneliness, alienation and self-imposed exile. The second part is about Raka and Nanda Kaul’s change in attitude. The last part is about Ila Das, Nanda Kaul’s friend and about her tragic death. Anita Desai brings out the structural unity of the novel by Carignano, and the linking of the three protagonists, Nanda, Raka and IlaRao to each other’s life. Desai’s innovative style of narrative is significant she uses the technique of narrating a story within the story in her novel, *Fire on the Mountain*. Kundu observes that Anita Desai use of narrative is brilliant, it not only speaks volumes about the narrator but also about the plot. The author and the implied author are one when Nanda Kaul’s narrates imaginary tales about her father to her great granddaughter, Raka. For instance Nanda Kaul says,

> He bought Tibetan horses with clipped tails and rode them as they did- with stirrups long enough to stand up in so he could shoot his arrows from horseback.  

Anita Desai in her novel, *Fire on the Mountain* perfectly balances the subjective and the objective, the internal and the external very smoothly in her narrative. She juxtaposes the reality and the aesthetic. She uses very limited characters and dialogues and the story is mainly conveyed by the omniscient narrator. Protagonists Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila Das share very few dialogues, the impact is brought by actions, gestures and symbols. The mental struggle of the characters is unfolded gradually by the authorial voice of the novel. Although silence is the dominant note, Desai
efficiently conveys the intense feelings, agony and the silent sufferings, frustrations and disappointments against the cruelties of circumstances by the characters. Nanda unfolds the story gradually, it appears as a monologue. Nanda Kaul communicates her loneliness and alienation, her desire for absolute isolation in wilderness completely in contrast with her earlier hectic domestic life. Raka also prefers silence and does not communicate at all. It appears silence is her way of revolt, her manner of rebel against the violence she has experienced in her life.

Arun Joshi like Anita Desai makes such effective use of language that based on the uttered words in his novels the readers can form a comprehensive idea about each speaker’s social background as well as his psychological state. Arun Joshi is particularly proficient in the use of incomplete or half-complete sentences, fragmented speeches and ironic pauses as indexes for the frame of mind of these speakers. Well knit plots in his novels are evenly matched by well-ordered syntax. All his novels use flash-back narration. The protagonist himself or a reliable narrator provides the flash-back into the sequence of events that have led to the emotional crisis that forms the centre of interest in each novel. The particular emotional stance chosen as the starting point of the novel is sought to be rationalized in the course of recollecting the various factors that gave rise to it. It should be remembered to the credit of Arun Joshi that in all in his novels though the present is constantly interspersed with the past to lend poignancy to the emotional ethos, it is never allowed to place the thread of logical continuity in jeopardy. The narrative tempo never slackens nor does the presentation of events appear disorganized or chaotic.

Each novel of Arun Joshi is primarily an endeavor to give artistic form to the novelist’s vision of life and each novelist has his own individual method of doing it. He chooses the structure best suited to do full justice to his subject, in other words, he has to decide upon the perspective from which the picture of life presented by him has to be studied. Even when he follows the roving camera method, namely graphic unfolding of the various events right in front of the reader’s eyes with little authorial intrusion, the imprint of his interpretation of the incidents described by him can be discerned in the attention he pays to the delineation of various characters and the note
on which each novel ends. In the case of psychological novels like those of Arun Joshi the novelist has to tread the tricky path of offering glimpses into the fears, drives and desires of his characters without snapping the semblance of objectivity or appearing offensively all knowing. The superstructure of the novels is built not by the traditional components of suspense filled intrigues and conflict ridden situations but by the inter-weaving of the impulses, interests, fears, fetishes dreams and desires flitting across the screen of his protagonist’s consciousness. The novelists of today are interested in playing the role of omniscient creators since that would reduce the characters in their novels, to the status of mere puppets. It is only by carefully maintaining proper aesthetic distance that novelists can safeguard verisimilitude and hold up the illusion of veracity and authenticity. In novels like Arun Joshi’s *Foreigner* which use first person narration the task of portraying psychic reality is easier as its entire narrative fabric is constituted by a recollection of experiences and emotion. But even in this type of novel the narrator’s comments have a limited authenticity since he has to take recourse to conjecture as far as reporting the responses and reactions of others are concerned.

Arun Joshi’s interest in psychology is clearly evident in selection of themes. In his novels, a sharp and in-depth study of the psyche both in its headlong confrontation with and hurt retreat from the turbulent forces of life are present. Arun Joshi strives through his protagonist to achieve an existential leap from the despair of pointlessness to the fulfillment of purposeful life and for this reason his narrative is geared to the depiction of the moods that wrought this change. Despite the zigzag and jumbled mode of his narration Arun Joshi’s novels demonstrate a structural cohesion based on his deft use of significant plot nodes that serve the dual function of indicating the furtherance of action and subtle transformation in character. The sudden shifts from present to past and again to the present are consummately dovetailed into one another and the best proof of his artistry lies in the fact that events in his novel seem to follow one another naturally and inevitably.

Action in *The Foreigner* oscillates between present and the past and that too against a changed social setting part of the time in America and part of the time in India. The novel begins with Sindi’s visit to the morgue to identify the dead body of his friend Babu Rao Kemka. As commented by Kumar, *the novel opens like a thriller in*
depicting the mutilated dead body of Baburoa Kemka. This is followed by descriptions of his trying to break the sad news to June Blyth and his leaving for India. Readers are given inkling into the emotional interaction of the three important characters not directly in the form of authorial statements but obliquely by the gradual compilation of various details provided in the course of Sindi’s recounting of his past. Sheela, Babu’s sister serves the function of a search light in Sindi’s voyage into his past. The emotional maladjustment of Sindi is shown as stemming from the contradictory traits in his own nature – his basic sensitivity and his casual approach to relationships. His ineffectual efforts to conceal his emotional alienation under the cloak of ‘detachment’ and the final remedy of his malady of detachment is established in a commitment to a life of activity and purpose as opposed to his earlier desolate ‘drifting’. Sindi’s ostensible philosophy ‘pleasure without involvement’ and ‘love without possession’ had to be exposed for what it really is – a pathological fear of emotional entanglements. Arun Joshi had to so arrange the presentation of Sindi’s life that readers should be able to grasp the significance behind the title, The Foreigner. On the one hand it is not mixed parentage or rootlessness as portrayed in the first part of the novel, that made him a foreigner but his own resolve to remain aloof from, and as such foreign to, all enriching emotional contacts. On the other hand till his blind groping for meaning in life, for learning how to lead a meaningful existence comes to an end and till the mist of his misguided notions of detachment clears Sindi is a foreigner from his own true self. In short the thematic import that freedom and choice have meaning only within the arena of human relationships had to be underscored and Arun Joshi’s selection and description of individuals and incidents that prove this point are apt and effective.

Arun Joshi’s use of first person narrative in The Foreigner enables the readers to understand the protagonist’s psychological relationship with society. It effectively brings out the alienated, disturbed psychological state of the minds of the protagonists. Joshi’s use of language with appropriate application of similies, satire and metaphors convey the emotional upheavals of the characters. Joshi conveys the existential thoughts of Sindi very appropriately in his reply to the chairman’s query after his doctoral research, whether there was anything else he had wished to learn at the college, *I wish I had been taught how to live, Professor*, Sindi’s heartfelt confession was laughed at by everyone. Even when he packs his belongings he muses
about their uselessness nevertheless, he goes through the process of packing considering them only as heap of unpleasant memories.

The existential crisis of Sindi is thus clearly evident at every stage of his life. His sense of a meaningless existence is conveyed effectively by the use of words such as ‘rotting memories.’ Arun Joshi uses the first person narrative with a series of flashbacks with systematic sequence of events to create interest and suspense. Arun Joshi intelligently quotes from a song of T. S. Eliot’s poem titled, ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ to highlight the confusion of Sindi Oberio, *To wonder, “Do I dare?” “Do I dare”*.¹³

Joshi in *The Foreigner* uses the narrative style extensively to bring out the existentialism of SindiOberio, Babu, June, Mr. Kemka from the perspective of the protagonist, Sindi Oberio. He is the omniscient narrator protagonist. Joshi follows a systematic pattern of narration. The first part of the novel deals with the developing of relationships between Sindi Oberio and June. Later, Babu is introduced he is gradually involved in the lives of Sindi and June. Babu becomes a good friend of Sindi and an admirer and lover of June. The second part projects the decay of the relationships, the stress and conflict between of Sindi and June. Sindi refuses to marry June because of his obsession with the philosophy of detachment. This section also deals with the conflict in the relationship of Babu and June and the subsequent tragedy ie. death of Babu and June. The last part of the novel deals with destruction and reinvention of Sindi.

Sindi’s character clearly has a close affinity with the protagonists of Camus’s *The Outsider* and Kafka’s *The Trial*. Sindi’s suffering is psychological, an intense feeling of alienation like that of Meursault, the protagonist of *The Trial*’s endless quest for meaning in life living within the society and his sense of alienation resembles Sindi’s search. Similarly Joseph K. Meursault’s psychological condition on arrest, his unconscious condition and alienation from society is comparable to that of Sindi’s
condition. The novel however does not end in disaster like *The Trial* there is a positive note to the existential crisis of Sindi Oberio. Sindi’s struggle to be true to him without any personal desire of reward is finally achieved. However, according to Naik, the abrupt transformation in the character of Sindi is inappropriate as the readers are not prepared adequately for it and it does not make the ending effective. Naik rightly points out the improbability of the situation but it is not completely unacceptable, given the unpredictable temperament of Sindi, his abrupt change from un involvement to involvement is a workable suggestion.

In the case of Billy of *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, his yearning for a more adventurous and satisfying life than the stilted artificial life of civilization had to be shown not as erratic whim but as a profound quest and to heighten the heroism of obeying one’s heart in the face of formidable opposition. Billy’s defiance had to be set off against a figure symbolic of convention bound society. Arun Joshi’s selection of Romi as the ‘narrator’ is made to serve that purpose. Over and beyond offering an interesting foil to Billy’s animal spirits and abundant vitality Romi is used by Arun Joshi to contrast the life of conformity with the life of fearless freedom. In keeping with this thematic concern for two voices – the public and the individual- the two attitudes to life, the conformist and the rebellious- the novel is divided into two sections. The first section does not introduce Billy directly but it describes his salient personality traits, his love of the primitive world and his sudden disappearance from the world of civilization. The second section of the novel deals with Romi’s chance encounter with Billy and in Romi’s recapitulation of the past is relived and explication is offered for the past decisions and past actions. The narrative line follows a meandering course bridging past and present and covering a wide range of locales including New York, Delhi and the forest range near Satpura hills – Romi’s reminiscence of his friendship with Billy in New York and his return to Delhi highlight two important aspects in Billy’s life that added to his contempt for the so called civilized life. The gradual withering away of all Billy’s life assets, his intelligence, his zest for life, his fund of good humour under the cramping impact of his humdrum artificial life and their being replaced by soul killing listlessness and lethargy is beautifully brought out by drawing a comparison of Billy death to candle which is abruptly put off in the rains.
Joshi’s rambling conversational tone in the novel, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* greatly augments the appeal of the narrated events while diverting attention from possible doubts about the feasibility of lengthy bits of conversations being accurately recalled by Romi. Romi’s remembrance of his talks with Billy also contains an implicit inference about the supremacy of tribal life over shallow civilized life thereby buttressing the central meaning of the novel. Additional light on Billy’s mysterious disappearance is provided by the letters sent to Romi by Tuula. These are letters written by Billy to Tuula and they give clear expression to the seething discontent in his heart and to his irrepressible love for nomadic life. These letters also clarify to the readers the real nature of Billy’s problem – his inability to relate in any meaningful way to the materialistic society around him. In spite of following the complex pattern of the zigsaw puzzle where events have to be pieced together by the readers, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* leaves an impression of singular technical excellence. Joshi presents the existential note of death and absuduty of life and the unsympathetic attitude of society towards people who dare go against its norms. As concluded in the last chapter after Billy’s death, in the emotional reminiscence of Romi, as he observes that,

*It seemed to me that nothing but blind blundering vengeance, howsoever camouflaged, awaits all those who dare to step out of its stifling confines.*

Arun Joshi’s technique of making different characters to recount their individual responses to Billy’s exit fully realizes its extended goal of building up a composite image of the various personality traits of Billy. Narrative technique meant for Arun Joshi not a mere design for his vision but an integral part of that vision directing and controlling plot movement and endorsing and adding to its essential import. However M. K. Naik observes that Arun Joshi fascinating narrative technique,

*is not in the final analysis informed with sufficient imaginative power to make so unusual a narrative absolutely convincing, especially in its picture of the tribal society.*
Arun Joshi’s technique of division of clear cut chapters to convey specific ideas is also used by Anita Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri. Simple plots are woven around simple subjects and their inner psychology is portrayed by Desai, Joshi and Jhumpa Lahiri.

Jhumpa Lahiri in *The Namesake* uses the third person narrative pattern. The narrative’s perspective shifts smoothly in the course of the story. Sometimes it enters the perspective of the protagonist Gogol and at times his mother Ashima or Ashoke. As commented by Ebina, Jhumpa Lahiri reveals great mastery over her narrative by smoothly shifting it from the Ashoke and Ashima to Gogol. Moushumi’s perspective is different from the perspectives of Ashoke and Ashima on the one hand and Gogol and Sonia on the other. Thus the narrative has different strands, Jhumpa Lahiri is very innovative, she style and structure are very carefully chosen. *Her narrative voice is elegant, bitter sweet and gentle.* Lahiri conveys Gogol’s scorn for traditional functions celebrated by the Indian association as against his mother’s obsession with them in a casual but effective style. In the novel she observes that,

*He can think of no greater hypocrisy than joining an organisation that willingly celebrates occasions his parents forced him, throughout his childhood and adolescence, to attend.*

Jhumpa Lahiri uses flashback technique of narration is used to recount Ashima’s past, her fond memories about Calcutta and Ashoke’s survival from the train accident seven years ago. In fact, in the very first chapter of the novel itself, when Ashima is admitted in the hospital for her delivery she recollects minute details of her past, her meeting with Ashoke and her subsequent marriage and immigration. She recollects how she was instructed by her mother to rush to her bedroom and prepare meeting her prospective husband by simply saying that, *a man was waiting to see her.*

Jhumpa lahiri’s style of contrast of the values and beliefs of first generation and second generation immigrants is comparable to that of Desai’s novel, *Cry the Peacock*. The outstanding feature of Lahiri’s style is to bring out the similarities and dissimilarities between the Indian and Western culture. The first generation
immigrants like Ashima and Ashoke have emotional attachments with their own culture while at the same time they try to assimilate with the adopted culture their living ‘in – between’ situation is painful and baffling. While the second generation immigrants like Gogol and Sonia experience no such ambiguity, in spite of parental pressure they try to assert to assert their individuality. Sonia pursues a double major in French without informing her parents. Her confusing cultural identity prompted her to take refuge in a third culture, he refuses to confine herself to her parents’ decision, she simply collects all cash she possessed and goes off to Paris unplanned and unprepared. 22 In Paris Sonia leads a lifestyle completely in contrast with the values inculcated in her by her parents. 23 Lahiri’s use of simple, straight forward narrative conveys the feelings and emotions of her characters effectively.

In Interpreter of Maladies Jhumpa Lahiri uses multiplicity of narrative techniques but each story by itself is independent and consistent in its temporal and spatial setting. The narrative moves from first person to third person smoothly. The third person omniscient narrative technique by using the authoritative authorial voice Jhumpa Lahiri conveys the thoughts and feelings of all the characters. For instance in the story Interpreter of Maladies, the opinion of the protagonist, Mr Kapasi about his tourists is well narrated highlighting the irresponsible behaviour of Mr. and Mrs. Das and their characteristics. The simple narrative reflects the parenting styles of Indians in contrast to the immigrant Indians. The over protective behaviour of Indian parents is not seen in the Indian Americans. Mr.Kapasi notices that the American Indian tourists Mr. and Mrs. Das did behave like Indian parents do, but conducted themselves as the older brother and sister of the children. 24

Lahiri point of view is conveyed as Kapasi’s thoughts, when he observes that the accents of American Indian, Mr. Das and Mrs. Das sounded like Americans. 25 It conveys to the readers the personality of Mr. and Mrs. Das. JhumpaLahiri employs several strategies to connect the different stories together to make an emotional impact. She uses first person and third person narrative alternatively with limited use of dialogues. She like Anita Desai does not employ the traditional style of narration such as introduction, complications, climax, etc. She adopts the technique of driving home the opening sentence by giving important information which is crucial to the
story. For instance, the opening sentence of the short story, *A Temporal Matter* arouses the curiosity of the readers and presents an idea of the conflict in the story. Lahiri begins the story by stating that, *the notice informed them that it was a temporary matter: for five days their electricity would be cut off for one hour.* Similarly another story, *When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine* begins with a suggestive opening. Lahiri in the opening sentence itself she introduces the forthcoming cultural conflicting situation when she mentions about Mr. Pirzada visit in 1971. Lahiri states that, Pirzada had come from Dacca which was earlier a part of Pakistan and now the capital of Bangladesh. Almost all the stories of the collection have indicative beginnings, an innovative stylistic technique of Jhumpa Lahiri.

Lahiri’s endings are also significant, very subtly she leaves to the readers to interpret and arrive at a conclusion. They are sometimes abrupt, sometimes positive or negative or ambiguous. They are not conclusive but contemplative. The ending of the story ‘A Temporal Matter’ is left for the readers’ interpretation, whether the marital discord of an Indian couple in America resulting due to their incapability of handling grief is ultimately resolved or not. When finally Shoba tells her husband Shukumar about leaving him, he in anger and grief mentions the sex of their still born child which she had never wanted to know. She breaks down and Shukumar also starts weeping, the couple mourns together silently. Similarly the ending of the story, ‘Mrs. Sen’. Mrs. Sen, after the accident shuts herself in the room under the pretext of resting. Her attempt to learn driving was unsuccessful signifying that she could not adapt to the alien Western culture. The readers are left to speculate about the plight of the protagonist, her problems of assimilation.

Another significant characteristic of Jhumpa Lahiri’s writings is that her stories revolve around distinct groups of people- Indians in India like Boori Ma; Indian immigrants in United States like Ashima, Mrs. Sen, Sanjeev, and others; Americans of Indian descent like Gogol, Twinkle, Moushimi, etc. Mrs. Sen, Shoba and Sanjeev belong to first generation Indian immigrants trying to cope with the American culture. Boori Ma and Bibi Haldar are Indians in India unaffected by the changes in the outside world. Where ever the characters are placed in her novel, *Namesake* and in the
collection *Interpreter of Maladies* they are all troubled and distressed by their existential issues, their search for their own identity. The overwhelming concern is effectively brought out by Jhumpa Lahiri by her innovative narrative strategy. Simple third person narrative and apt impressive brief dialogues easily focuses the attention of the readers.

Lahiri’s technique of storytelling is unique, she always begins by mentioning a particular issue or situation a character is facing and then proceeds effortlessly to the storyline. This exceptional technique is found in almost all her writings. The plots appear trivial but they are very serious issues of individuals, they are focused on conflicts between characters or characters and society or conflict within the minds of the characters. In the story ‘This Blessed House’ the plot centers on a very subtle conflict of a couple who had an arranged marriage. Twinkle’s obsession with the Christian artifacts and Sanjeev’s reaction to her discovery in their new house are used as devices to illustrate the difference in their attitudes. In the story, ‘Mrs. Sen’, the protagonist’s friendship with an American boy whom she is babysitting is used to provide an experience for each to explore the other’s alternative culture. Lahiri also uses significant titles which provide a clue to the stories content. The title of her novel, *The Namesake* and the titles of her short stories, *A Temporary Matter, Interpreter of Maladies, The Treatment of Bibi Haldar, This Blessed House*, etc are all significant titles, giving an hint to the readers about the subject matter of the literary works. Anita Desai and Arun Joshi also convey a lot in their selection of titles. The self explanatory and significant titles of Desai’s and Joshi’s novels convey the existential tenets in the novels at the outset. *Cry the Peacock* is obviously the cry of agony of Maya and *Fire on the Mountain* visibly reveals annihilation and destruction. Arun Joshi’s title, *The Foreigner*, evidently indicates identity crisis, existentialism and lack of a sense of belonging. *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* perceptibly about the unique strange behavior of Billy. The role of imagery and symbolism in literature is of outmost importance and conveys a lot about the writers’ style.
4.2 Stream of Consciousness Technique

In literature Stream of Consciousness style is adopted by the writers to convey their viewpoint and opinion to the readers in an effortless manner, through characters’ thought process in the form of interior monologues. The postmodern writers were greatly influenced by the stream of consciousness style of writing adopted by well known novelists like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and others who confidently explored this innovative style of narration. They offer the readers an exploration into the lives of their characters without being judgmental and at the same time maintain an aesthetic distance. The novelists record the multifarious thoughts and feelings of the characters without following any logical movement of thought, argument or sequence. Indian English novelists have also applied this technique in an experimental manner to portray the nuances of the inner psyche of their characters. We can understand and appreciate the stream of consciousness technique in the writings of the earlier Indian English novelists like in R. K. Narayan’s classic novel, *The World of Nagaraj*, Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* and even in Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*.

Mulk Raj Anand used stream of consciousness narrative technique like James Joyce’s style in *Ulysses* in his first novel, *Untouchable*. In his classic novel, *Untouchable* he covers the actions of one complete day in the life of an underprivileged man, Bakha, a victim of caste conscious society in the nineteen thirties. Raja Rao adopted the technique in his novels, *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*. Raja Rao however did not use the technique as elaborately as R.K.Narayan. Narayan adopted the technique to portray the tensions and conflicts of Raju in *The Guide* and the psychological sufferings of the tormented wife in a patriarchal dominated society in *The Dark Room*.

Anita Desai is the most prominent novelist of the postmodern novelists who adopted the narrative technique with ‘stream of conscious’ style of narration in an extensive manner. Her experimental style of writing gave a new outlook to Indian English novel. As the mental struggle of her women protagonists is Anita Desai’s main concern she often switches to ‘interior monologue’ technique of narration. This helps us to probe the minds of her characters and understand the conscious and subconscious happenings in the minds of the characters.
K. R. rinivasa Iyengar in appreciation of Anita Desai’s narrative style i.e. Stream of Consciousness technique stated that she has projected the inner sensibilities of her characters by using a simple yet graceful and flexible style of narrative essential to state the fever and fretfulness of the stream of conscious of her principal characters. In *Cry the Peacock* Anita Desai by her adept use of the stream of consciousness technique of narration involves the readers in the psychological turmoil of the protagonist, Maya. The plot moves swiftly with Maya’s modulations of memory, without any action, with the interior monologues and with the conversations between Maya and Gautama. The first person narrative of Maya, her story of the present circumstances and the happy days of her past reveals her inner world, the cause of her suffering and the growth of her despair. Anita Desai is considered to be a pioneer in psychological fiction in India, her allusions to Electra complex in Maya’s excessive father fixation is also mentioned by her husband Gautama. It is perhaps one of the reasons responsible for marrying Gautama, a much older man. Desai makes use of other characters like Gautama, Lila, Pom, Maya’s father, Gautama’s mother and sister, etc. to further delve into the inner turmoil of Maya, to understand the development and culmination of Maya’s neurosis, her gradual movement from sanity to insanity. The final state of neurosis is Maya’s final indulgence of violence, pushing Gautama from the parapet of their house. Desai had meticulously prepared the readers to this final disaster it was the result of intense, prolonged psychic struggle of Maya. Her unwavering faith in the predictions of the albino astrologer was responsible for her horrors, fears and hallucinations. She could not understand Gautama’s practical attitude to life. Gautama was incapable of supporting or consoling her emotionally. Moreover, Maya was very secretive she never shared with anyone the albino astrologer’s predictions. M. K. Naik in appreciation of Desai’s stream of conscious style of writing comments thus–

*If her fiction is able to advance from the vision of ‘aloneness’ as a psychological state of mind to that of alienation as a metaphysical enigma-as one hopes it will- Anita Desai may one day achieve an amplified pattern of significant exploration of consciousness comparable to Virginia Woolf at her best.*
Virginia Woolf in her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* details the thoughts and actions of one day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway. She uses the stream of consciousness technique of narration to portray the protagonist’s conflict and frustrations. Although the philosophy of existentialism developed after World War II, Virginia Woolf far ahead of her time presented the tenets of existentialism post World War I. With effective use of stream of consciousness narrative she brings out the existential angst of Clarissa. Anita Desai like Virginia Woolf uses stream of consciousness narrative technique with extensive use of visual, olfactory and auditory images in her novels to paint a mental picture of the scenes and situations for the readers. This style of Desai makes her novels extremely interesting and gripping as it makes the readers practically feel as if they are inside the story experiencing the feelings of the characters. The restlessness of Maya experienced in the spring, the agitation and sleeplessness which Gautama could not deal are glaring incidents of contrast to the spring time spend with her father in Lucknow. Desai paints a beautiful picture of an imaginary world in which Maya lived with her father in contrast to the present world. The contrast of Maya’s present frame of mind with that of the past is evident in the two sections given on the same page of the text clearly states Anita Desai’s excellent technique of presenting glaring contrasts with visual imagery to the readers. The visual imagery in the following lines portrays vividly Maya’s thoughts, Desai states that,

*I watch a small butterfly flicker amongst the flowers: it has white wings, each
with an orange fleck. Bright and fluttering, it is as much of a gay paper-cut as
the flowers.*  

Maya’s interior monologue elaborates her psychological workings of her mind. Akin to that of Raskolnikov’s the protagonist of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky uses interior monologue technique to portray the personality disorder, dreams and hallucinations of Raskolnikov after the murder an old pawnbroker and her sister. His justification of his action, his mental anguish after the murder, his moral dilemma, his feverish state of mind are all excellently brought out with the use of stream of consciousness narrative style. Desai skill of projecting the inner thoughts of her characters is commendable. *Cry the Peacock* is an excellent example of the use of stream of consciousness technique by Anita Desai. Prasad
compares Desai’s style with that of Virginia Woolf and appreciates her appropriate use interior monologues to present an easy approach to understanding the conflicts of the disturbed minds of her protagonists.

In *Fire on the Mountain* Desai frequently moves the narrative from the past and the present with interesting and informative anecdotes about Nanda Kaul and Carignano. The past of Nanda Kaul is unfurled by Desai in lengthy interior monologues with authorial interruptions. Nanda’s preference for a lonely life is explained with the use of stream of consciousness technique of narration. Her existential struggle against the hostile environment, her husband’s unfaithfulness, her children’s unreasonable demands and ungratefulness, her extremely busy life, etc. are all effectively conveyed to the readers in a genuine, sensitive tone. As Nanda recalls her past,

*The most difficult had been those years in that busy house where doors were never shut and feet flew, or tramped, without ceasing.*

Desai uses interior monologues to convey Nanda Kaul’s imaginary tales told to Raka, her great grand-daughter. At times she gets carried away by her own imagination and invents stories about her childhood. On a rainy day Nanda attempts to engage Raka by telling her heroic tales about her father, it is full fantasy, she states that her father had travelled to Tibet and had bizarre encounters.

*He spent nights in tiger-infested bamboo forests where the people used to burn green bamboos that would burst at the joints with such loud explosions as to frighten off wild animals for miles.*

Desai makes use of interior monologues when using Ram Lal as a oral narrator. He spins a number of tales for Raka amusement. Raka an adventurous girl gets greatly interested in the fantasy and imagination of Ram Lal. His stories are like thrillers about ghosts, mad dogs and foxes, *churails*. Desai is able to capture the attention of the readers by using interior monologues. Arun Joshi like Anita Desai deals with the existential crisis of his protagonists and probes their inner turmoil, their inner reality. Arun Joshi as a novelist is chiefly concerned with the depiction of psychological
reality he deals with the various levels of consciousness of his protagonists be it Sindi Oberio, Billy Biswas, Ratan Rathore or Som Bhaskar. Joshi uses psychology as a powerful tool in all his novels. Arun Joshi deals with the futility of life and existential agony of man like the western existentialists and is intensely concerned with projecting the inevitability of situations and circumstances. The flashbacks and Stream of Conscious technique is best suited for the purpose, he adopts the technique consciously, by frequently resorting to interior monologues in his novels. Arunjoshi’s adept use of the Stream of Conscious technique enables him to convey the psyche of his characters appropriately. According to Trimbakrao\textsuperscript{35}, Joshi constantly shifts his characters’ levels of consciousness to present his viewpoint. This type of narrative techniques was adopted by well known proponents of the stream of consciousness style of narrative. Arun Joshi in \textit{The Foreigner} uses first person narrative to illustrate Sindi’s predicament, his sense of foreignness, lack of belonging to any particular country or culture. His mental agony is brilliantly portrayed in his contemplation when he contemplates on the purposeless of his life and his sense of foreignness where ever he went.

The first person narrative technique, in which series of flashback are used to tell the story, instantly connects the readers, emotionally and sentimentally to the existential angst of the protagonist. In the beginning of the novel when Sindi was called to identify Babu’s body, his grief and sense of guilt is evidently noticeable in the following lines-

\begin{center}
\textit{All along I had acted out of lust and greed and selfishness and they had applauded my wisdom. When I had sought only detachment I driven a man to his death.}\textsuperscript{37}
\end{center}

\textit{The Foreigner} is the story of Sindi Oberio narrated from his point of view. The first part is about Sindi’s relationships, the second is about his growth and defeat and the third and last part deals with his reconstruction. Arun Joshi uses the interior monologue, stream of consciousness technique while exploring Billy’s journey into his inner psyche, his analysis of his purpose of his existence, his quest in life, his
innate sense of identity crisis. As commented by Prasad the interior landscape of Billy explored by Joshi, is an investigation of the past with a justification of the present. He emphasizes that the present is an outlook of the future.  

Arun Joshi blends the narrative technique of stream of consciousness of Billy and the role of an omniscient narrator. He has very skillfully used the main trait of stream of consciousness by exploring the inner lives of his protagonists. However his style is not poetic like Anita Desai, it is a philosophical and metaphysical stream. Anita Desai adopted the stream of consciousness technique when it was in the experimental stage in Indian fiction. However, later several fiction writers have used the technique effectively to convey the inner consciousness of their characters. Shouri Daniels in *The Salt Doll*, Shashi Despande in *That Long Silence* has also skillfully blended the narrative and imaginative to use the stream of consciousness style. Arun Joshi continued his efficient use of stream of consciousness narrative technique of even in his second novel title, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*. Billy’s strange existential quest in spite of having all material benefits of life is brought out appealingly by Joshi with skillful use of stream of consciousness technique. The narrator is Billy’s best friend Romi, whose views further enhance the existential crisis of Billy. Another significant character Tuula’s narrative also helps in understanding Billy restlessness. Billy confession to his Romi about his sudden disappearance from civilized society clearly gives an explanation to the strangeness of Billy abrupt decision of running away to the forests completely abandoning his family and friends. Arun Joshi makes effective use of stream of consciousness technique to project the existential angst and the innermost thoughts of Billy. Joshi brings out the inevitability of Billy’s exit from civilized society by a number of interior monologues in the form of letters written by him to Tuula, they appropriately reveal Billy’s mental agony and confusions.

Billy primitive urge, his strange cravings, his fascination for the forests cannot be subdued even after his marriage or even after becoming a father. The above quote clearly shows the psyche condition of Billy. He makes several attempts to lead a normal life but his quest for being true to his innate self cannot be quenched. Arun
Joshi uses stream of consciousness technique in both the novels and remarkably brings out the internal conflict of his protagonists, Sindi Oberio and Billy Biswas. In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Romi’s and Tuula thoughts about Billy and Billy's soliloquies and interior monologues are all conveyed to the readers through the stream of consciousness technique. The flashbacks and interior monologues of Sindi draw the readers to a sympathetic judgment towards his detachment philosophy. His detached attitude of life is offensive and irritating at times but the readers are emotionally drawn towards Sindi pathetic condition. Nawale's observations can be aptly applied to Arun Joshi’s technique. The readers are able to read the intense psychological conflict of Sindi and Billy. Nawale appropriately observes that, Joshi has so effectively used his narrative technique that the readers get a complete picture of the characters’ personal flow of thoughts, their innate emotional sense.

Jhumpa Lahiri unlike Anita Desai and Arun Joshi makes very restricted use of interior monologue technique. Her predominant concern is to portray the characters perception of themselves in the relocated country, their identity crisis, their multiple consciousness their inner turmoil in an alien country and surroundings. In her novel, *The Namesake* Lahiri narrates the story from the perspectives of four main characters, Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli, their son Gogol and his wife Moushumi. However the prominent narrators are Ashima and Gogol. Ashoke is the only character in the novel who has achieved a sense of steadiness and balance in his adopted surroundings. Ashima is not happy with her immigrant status but does not complain adapts quietly to the American way of life but throughout the novel she struggles to retain her ethnic identity. The second generation immigrants Gogol and Moushumi possess dual identities, in this complex and challenging situation they know how to balance their varied perspectives.

Lahiri successfully conveys to the readers the different perspectives of all the four characters moving smoothly one to another and from the present to past. Lahiri’s voice is present firmly through the novel along with the characters. Descriptive technique is employed by Lahiri to present a lot of information in a limited manner. She begins the story with Ashima’s pregnancy and delivery of her son and the past of Ashoke’s train accident, his marriage and immigration are efficiently blended in the
narrative. Gradually the story of Gogol takes centre stage. The existential dilemma of Ashima and Gogol is conveyed by Lahiri through her innovative narrative style.

Narrative technique of short stories needs to be effective as they are meant to be read in a single sitting. In order to be effective and interesting to the readers short stories mainly focus on a single incident or idea and related actions. Lahiri thus gives great importance to dialogues in the stories from her *Interpreter of Maladies*, which are written in third person omniscient narratives. Only two stories in the collection, *When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine* and *The Third and Final Continent* are written in first person narrative. The short stories deal with a variety of subjects, Jhumpa Lahiri presents various different perspectives and multiple view points for the readers on issues and concerns of her characters. Lahiri’s style of narration is straight forward and direct concerned with the exposition of character and movement of plot. *Interpreter of Maladies* begins with the story, *A Temporary Matter* which is about the complicated personal lives of a couple, Shukumar and Shoba. The narrative voice of the author is unfolds the story in direct simple narrative. The subject is interesting but not much attention is paid to the aesthetic sense or richness of language. Very few and brief dialogues are present. For instance before the commencement of the confession game, the conversation of Shukumar and Shoba is casual, brief but direct.

Lahiri continues with the same direct narrative technique in the story, *Interpreter of Maladies* and also in only two stories in the collection titled, *When Pirzada Came to Dine* and *The Third and Final Continent* are written in first person narrative offering little richness of style. Her strength lies in characterization. She projected very strong characters such as the Indian tour guide, Indian American woman of *Interpreter of Maladies* or Mrs. Croft and the Indian student in *The Third and Final Continent*. The narrative of the compilation of the stories advances smoothly from action to action presenting interesting characters and stories.
4.3 **Symbolism and Imagery**

In literature symbolism is used to give a deeper meaning that goes beyond what is stated by the writer. Symbolism can be subtle suggesting something without making obvious and overwhelming statements. It is used as a means of communicating something more beautifully. Sometimes understanding symbolism may be difficult because a simple symbol is used to convey some serious views and at times multiple symbols are used to convey simple feelings and thoughts. It is inclusive of various forms, it can be a figure of speech giving multiple meanings to an object, person or situation or metaphors. The symbols used by writers have a figurative meaning along with its literal meaning. It is a very strong and powerful device to present a mental image of something. To give a visual presentation several other literary forms such as metaphors, similies, allusions can also be used. The writers make use of different forms of imagery such as olfactory, tactile, gustatory and auditory along with visual imagery depending upon the necessity of the context and the style of the narrator.

Symbols are the images used by writers to convey or suggest something in much more detail. A common trend among writers is to use symbolic names, the advantage of using symbolic names is that automatically the readers get an idea about the characters which the writers suggests through them. Symbols also help to convey the writers’ purpose of transmitting ideas and thoughts convincingly to the readers. Moreover it enriches the language and style of the writer making it creative and interesting. Existential novelists like Albert Camus’ *The Stranger*, Franz Kafka’s novels, *The Metamorphosis, The Trial*, Jean Paul Sartre’s, *Nausea* are symbolic titles depicting the symbolically the fate of the protagonists.

Anita Desai’s not only makes frequent use of symbols and imagery in her narration but also uses symbolism in the titles chosen. *Cry the Peacock* uses symbolic title and aptly conveys the disturbed psychological state of Maya. The title, *Fire on the Mountain* signifies the total destruction of the unpleasant world of her protagonists, Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila Das. The title of Arun Joshi’s novel, *The Foreigner* indicates the mental state of the protagonist who feels like a foreigner wherever he goes. In comparison with Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake* are symbolic titles. The concept of using symbolism existed in literature for a long time.
American poets like Henry James, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and others had made extensive use of symbolism as against naturalism and realism. Virginia Woolf in her novel, *To the Lighthouse* uses keys symbols as lighthouse, the sea, Lily’s painting, the window, etc. Nathaniel Hawthorne in his 1850 romantic fiction, *The Scarlet Letter* uses symbolism as a unique device to convey his views of the fictional Puritan society.

Desai has used not only symbolic titles but symbolic events in *Cry The Peacock*, the novels begins with the death of Toto, the pet dog of the protagonist, Maya. Here the novelist makes use of visual imagery to bring out the sensitive characteristics of Maya, her loneliness, alienation. It also helps the readers to understand the empty space in the relationship of Maya and her husband, Gautama. The gulf between the two is also conveyed by several significant incidents when Gautama never relents to Maya’s pleas. For instance, when Maya wanted them to have dinner in the dining hall with lights switched off, he refuses and convinces her to have dinner outside irrespective of her strong aversion to it. Even when she is lonely and longs for Gautama companionship she is hesitant in calling out to him, she waits patiently for him to finish his reading however long it might take. She does not dare to annoy him by talking about her sense of loneliness. Moreover she is aware that he will only make fun of her fear of loneliness due to his incapability of understanding her sentiments.43

Anita Desai does not adhere to the traditional style of writing. She gives great importance to characterization rather than theme or plot with immense focus on style. As her main concern is projecting the various nuances of her characters, she makes use of symbolic names. Maya’s name indicates illusion and true to her name she is all the time in a state of delusion, daydreaming and tense with her imaginary fears. She is haunted by her day dreams which realistic and on waking up she tries to analyse them. This leaves her mentally exhausted and frustrated as she cannot share them with her husband. She is aware that he will never be able to understand them. She had herself admitted44 that her name had no meaning it meant only illusion. Desai’s use of the name, Gautama is also symbolic, he represents the detached person he is. The albino astrologer is another symbolic character who is omnipresent through- out the novel. He is presented to the readers through Maya’s recollection but he has a very powerful
impact on the Maya’s psychology. She cannot forget his appearance or his predictions which is the main cause of Maya’s madness and the climax of the novel.

The visual image of Maya’s dead pet dog, turbulences of nature, images of peacocks fighting, *they will rip each other’s breasts to strips and fall, bleeding with their beaks open and panting*⁴⁵; pigeon’s nest filled with babies, snakes, lizards. Desai states that *the lizards that come upon you, stalking you silently, upon clawed toes*⁴⁶ etc. which clearly conveys the psychological states of Maya at different periods of time, both past and present. Her restlessness, fears, alienation, loneliness, sense of imprisonment and obsession with death are all conveyed to the readers with the help of images. Another prominent image which occurs repeatedly in the novel is that of the dance of peacocks representing the longing of Maya to be with her husband Gautama. The intense longing and subsequent frustration of Maya are all presented with the use of peacock imagery.

Auditory images along with visual imagery enhance the style of Anita Desai. The blood - chilling cry of the peacocks⁴⁷, the beating of the drums, etc. effectively conveys the gradual drift of Maya into insanity. Maya’s actions, her over sensitiveness, her unreasonable demands, and her unpredictable reactions are all vividly projected and the readers develop a sense of empathy with her. There are several such incidents which reveal the rift in the husband-wife relationship. While Maya desires to go to a hill station in summer, Gautama blandly refuses. Gautama’s insensitiveness to Maya’s cries for love and understanding is well presented by Anita Desai symbolically in the guise of the peacock’s cries, in fact the novel centres around Maya’s pathetic condition, her angst- ridden cries for a loving relationship and involvement with all the pleasures of life. Anita Desai even uses symbolic names for her characters. The name of the protagonist, Maya is used symbolically to convey excessive love and involvement in life. While her husband’s Gautama is symbolic of the philosophy of detachment. The disparity between Gautama and Maya is brought about symbolically by their names.

Anita Desai also uses symbolic scenes such as cabaret dancers, dinner parties, storm scene, etc. to portray Maya’s inner state of turmoil, the vibrations of Maya’s thoughts. Several dance images like Kathakali dance, cabaret dance and bear dance are used to
show the turmoil, the subconscious frenzy of Maya. Desai not only uses images but presents simple day today incidents to portray Maya psychological state of mind. Maya happy at the prospect of meeting her friend searches for the right kind of sari, searches her cupboard hurriedly for some bright and pleasant coloured sari but unable to find one she gives up the search, she simply stops planning and lays down. It is a symbolic of Maya mental state.

The entire novel, *Cry the Peacock* from the beginning to end is enriched with symbols having profound meanings and visibly conveying the sensitivity of the novelist. Significant details about Maya’s feeling lonely and lost in the big sprawling house, the inability of the elderly husband to cope with the emotional tantrums of his young wife, his inability to commiserate with her fierce attachments to her plants and pets are the tools deftly used by Anita Desai to prepare the readers for the ultimate climax. *Cry the Peacock* can be studied as a psychological novel concerned with the existential crisis of the Maya, the female protagonist. It is presented with elaborate use of images and with great mastery of language and by the use of stream of consciousness style of narrative and flashback technique of presentation.

Anita Desai’s fondness for use of symbolism is evident in all her novels, some of them are *Bye Bye Blackbird, Voices in the City, Cry the Peacock, Fire on the Mountain*. In the much acclaimed novel, *Fire on the Mountain*, Nanda Kaul’s house Carignano is symbolic of isolation. Anita Desai uses it as an imagery to indicate the loneliness of her protagonist by her description of its location. Desai does not concern herself with presenting any particular story or action to the readers. Her attention is focused in bringing out the existential crisis in the three lonely protagonists the novel. The existential elements are prominently brought about by the effective use of imagery and symbolism. Anita Desai uses distinctive symbols to highlight the existential tone of the novel. She makes frequent use of nature imagery especially the pine tree. Images of loneliness, alienation, ugliness, destruction and finally annihilation are used all through the novel. Nanda Kaul’s decision to settle in Carignano itself is symbolic of barrenness and loneliness. She was in a compelled by circumstances to lead an isolated life. Nanda’s past is narrated in flash- back technique with ample use of imagery. Postman, letters, messages, telephones, etc. symbolize the outside world which Nanda shuns. Nanda Kaul is compared to a pine
tree indicates her aspiration for complete withdrawal from people, be it family or friends. Her innate longing is for a stillness of her life. Just like the pine trees she was old, thin and tall.

Anita Desai’s penchant for use of animal imagery is amply displayed in her novels. Desai uses the symbols of insects, lizards, crickets, etc. to indicate low esteem. Raka is ‘lizard-like’. Symbolic images of jackals and wild animals are used to present the wild, unruly character of Raka. Unpleasant memories of her past are used as a contrast to the wild cries of the jackal. Instead of being frightened by the chilling cries of the jackals, Raka goes deeper into the forest to figure out the wild realities. Her quest for understanding the jungle, to unravel its mysteries inspires to explore deeper into the jungles to places not frequented by people. The existentialism of search for meaning in life is pursued by Raka in a fearless manner. The forest fire is an excellent imagery used by Anita Desai, it appears as an external manifestation of Raka’s inner turmoil, her anger and revolt against the existing pattern of her life and her search for her own values. As observed by Vandana,

"Anita Desai adopts the strategy of the sustained use of imagery. Through the imagery she illumines, clarifies and crystallizes the experience of the protagonist of her novel."

Anita Desai uses nature images to examine human relationships and their significance. Symbols of eagle soaring high with wings outstretched indicate of Nanda Kaul’s and Raka’s existential philosophy of quest and freedom from the confines of mundane life. The monkey point is another poignant example of quest. Nanda Kaul’s thoughts about Raka who comes to Carignano to recuperate after her typhoid attack is appropriately conveyed, to her irrespective of her realationship with Raka, she was an encroacher of her privacy. Anita Desai also makes use of fantasy in a very innovative manner. Nanda, an elderly widow, lives alone by choice in an old bungalow in Kasauli, in a world of fantasy. Both Nanda Kaul and Raka suffer from existential crisis and live in isolation, in spite of being in the same house. But gradually Nanda Kaul finds herself drawn towards Raka, it was completely
unexpected. But Raka is an extreme case of wild independent spirit, she refuses to be befriended. Nanda Kaul consciously weaves a world of fantasy to interest her granddaughter. She tells Raka that her father had a private zoo, he collected animals, *he had a bear, you know, a great big Himalayan bear that he had found as a cub in the forest when he was out hunting.*

Anita Desai’s use of symbolism is an integral part of her fiction it seems to blend effortlessly with her text. Arun Joshi’s also efficiently uses symbolism to convey the restlessness of his protagonists. In *The Foreigner*, the title itself is symbolic; at the very outset the readers are given inkling about the character of Sindi Oberio. Sindi’s sense of foreignness wherever he is, in Kenya, Boston or in India is then gradually developed along with the plot with the help of metaphor and similes. He is extremely sensitive and intelligent and experiences a sense of foreignness in any country and in any circumstance. The readers are constantly made aware of Sindi’s existentialism by his strange feeling of foreignness resembling Albert Camus’s, *The Outsider*. Sindi’s meaninglessness of life and his anxieties and ultimate involvement with worldly affairs is effectively conveyed to the readers with simple and apt use of symbols. June’s gracefulness is ‘cat-like’ while Babu’s devotion and love for June is ‘dog-like’. Sindi the main protagonist is extremely stubborn in preserving his theory of detachment; he is referred to as ‘a mule’. Kemka a shrewd business man, father of Babu is referred to as a ‘jackal’. Joshi use symbolism sparingly but with great impact. Sindi’s refused to marry June as he supposed marriage to be only a desire for possession. Joshi’s remarkable use of language can be seen in this simple statement of Joshi, he says compares people getting married to buying new cars.

Arun Joshi’s description of Sindi’s flat reveals his personality and his lack of interest in life and philosophy of detachment. During one of his visits to June’s house Sindi experiences a strange sense of warmth, his conversation with June reveals his detachment philosophy, when he plainly states that his flat had no mark of his individuality. Similes and animal imagery are appropriately used throughout the novel, *The Foreigner* to enhance the readers’ imagination. The use of symbolism in *The Foreigner* is restricted however in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Joshi makes use of extensive imagery. Billy preference to stay in Harlem, the home of Black
Americans though he could afford a much better area symbolizes his uniqueness, his resentment of civilized systematic society. Billy's mental trauma, his hatred for the civilized way of life, his inner urge compels him to escape into the tribal world of the Bhils. His relationship with the tribal woman, Bilasia fulfills his quest for freedom and communion with nature. Billy who was frustrated with civilized society, finally finds his peace, achieves his existential quest in the company of the Bhils and Bilasia. The character of Dhunia is also used as a symbolic figure he represents the mysterious world of the universe. Joshi's predominant theme of alienation and isolation and existentialism is well represented with ample use of symbolism throughout the novel, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*. Billy attains his quest for self identity the moment he comes into contact with Bilasia and the tribals. For the tribals of Bhil, Billy represents the universal light of enlightenment, he was considered to be the flame of their God, *Chandtola* rock of *Kala Pahar*. Billy's friend and the narrator, Romi's description of Billy's exit from civilized world is conveyed to the readers superbly, Billy appeared to have lost all his earlier charms, his intelligence, his interests and even his sense of humour. Romi states that *the Billy Biswas I had known was finished snuffed out like a candle left in the rain.* The inevitable death of Billy in an attempt by civilized society to retrieve him back is a projection of the conflict whose end is expected. Joshi compares it the condition of solitary boats in troubled waters which are bound to be destroyed by the storm. The extensive images and symbols used by Joshi as a technique are apt and effective in all his novels.

Maya the protagonist of *Cry the Peacock* is like Billy, drawn towards madness in the civilized society. His strong desire to isolate himself and be true to his innate urge can be compared to Nanda Kaul’s intense craving for isolation. Anita Desai beautifully used nature and animal imagery to convey Nanda Kaul’s thoughts. Similarly Arun Joshi makes use of nature imagery in the *Strange Case of Billy Biswas*. The forest is used symbolically to convey freedom and nonconformity. Billy strangeness is gradually developed with visual and auditory imagery. Jazz music is used symbolically for Billy’s tribal aspirations of liberation from all forms of bondage of civilized society. Arun Joshi portrays the qualities of Billy through Dhunia’s
description with ample symbolic meanings. Dhunia likens Billy to the rain, which relieves the dry lands and eases them like ointment on an injury.\textsuperscript{57}

Billy’s sudden disappearance from the civilized society, his running away to live with the Bhil tribals of Maikal forest indicated Billy freedom and courage to give up everything; family, prosperous career, wealth and status to fulfill his quest to lead ‘uncivilized’ jungle life. Arun Joshi’s style of drawing a contrast between uncivilized primitive lives with civilized superficial society with ample use of symbolism makes \textit{The Strange Case of Billy Biswas} an excellent study.

Anita Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri are adept at using imagery as a literary technique in their writings. Like \textit{The Foreigner}, the title \textit{The Namesake} indicates the central idea of the novel. Gogol’s identity crisis, his existential quest is symbolically represented by his name. Ashoke, an Indian Bengali named his son Gogol in remembrance of a train accident from which he was miraculously saved on account of Nikolai Gogol’s book, \textit{The Overcoat}. Gogol struggles because of his ethnic past and westernized present. Karen M. Cardozo appropriately observes, \textit{Is ethnic identity an inheritance that ‘could not have happened otherwise’ or is it perhaps not ‘out of the question’ that we may choose and change our destinies?}\textsuperscript{58}

After the death of Ashoke, Ashima decides to divide her time between India and America. It is symbolically used by Jhumpa Lahiri to convey the connection between the two countries and two identities, between Ashima’s ethnic identity and her adopted identity. The train is used as a symbol of catastrophe to recount Ashoke’s tragic accident and also it signifies movement. The relationships and the journeys of \textit{The Namesake} are symbolized by the train. Gogol’s introspection in the novel clearly indicates the significance of the train in his family’s life. His father’s migration was due to the train accident as it served as a source of inspiration to him to seek a new life far away from home. Then the letter which was supposed to contain the name of Gogol which his great grandmother had given him was lost, it could not be traced it was somewhere between Calcutta from where it was posted to Cambridge where it was supposed to be delivered. \textsuperscript{59}
In *The Namesake*, the book *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol* is used as a subtle symbol. The book which was presented as a fourteenth birthday gift to Gogol by his father was earlier discarded but Gogol’s final attempt to seek the book indicates his attempt to relate to his ethnic identity and giving up the pretensions of the acquired western culture. Jhumpa Lahiri like Anita Desai makes elaborate use of symbols as a tool to enrich her narrative. As commented by Vanadana it becomes a fundamental part of her style, it presents her perspective more intensively she states that, *Anita Desai presents kin aesthetic study to suggest inside revolution and to understand the reality of mind.*

Lahiri makes use of names as symbols they imply significant meanings to the characters and provide them with a distinct identity. Lahiri *The Namesake* deals with immigrant issues so names are used as representative of cultural conflicts and identity crisis of the immigrants. Gogol is a second generation Indian immigrant, his crisis is different from his parents Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli. Gogol is symbolic of the community he changes his name to Nikhil symbolizing his attempt to redefine his ethnic identity. His embarrassment with his Gogol identity symbolically implies his discomfort with his Asian identity in an American cultural upbringing. An existential longing for a self definition makes him give up his Gogol identity. However identity question is a very complicated one, he is culturally displaced as he is brought up amidst two simultaneous cultures unlike his parents. His parents have their roots in India, even after their immigration they attempt to create an Indian atmosphere in their adopted country. But their son Gogol cannot relate to the ethnic culture, he is an Indian American imbibes multi cultural values.

While use of animal imagery is Anita Desai’s expertise, Jhumpa Lahiri’s favourite imagery is food. As her fiction prominently revolves round the theme of diaspora and existential crisis of her characters, who are immigrants and non-resident Indians she uses the metaphor of Indian food to serve as a sense of belonging, a bonding in a foreign country. Even in *Interpreter of Maladies* Lahiri gives great importance to the metaphor of food. The story, *A Temporary Matter* deals with marital discord but food is used as an imagery to signify Shoba’s disinterested state of mind as a consequence
to the birth of her still born baby. When Shoba and Shukumar shared a happy relationship again food is used to signify their blissful state. Shoba was habituated to stocking large quantities of food and provisions in her happier days.  

The couple’s lack of communication and inability to deal with the grief of their still born baby is again conveyed through the imagery of food, while Shoba cannot bring herself to cook, her husband Shukumar could only cook to make feel useful. In the story, *When Pirzada Came to Dine* again food is used symbolically, it serves as bond between Mr. Pirzada and Lila’s family. Mrs. Sen, a typical Bengali housewife enjoys buying, cleaning and cooking fish to deal with her cultural alienation. It becomes an obsession with Mrs. Sen, the metaphor of food here is used to convey to the readers Mrs. Sen’s homesickness. She hates driving but is learning to drive so that she need not wait for her extremely busy husband to take her to the fish market. Jhumpa Lahiri’s uses the fish as symbol to characterize Mrs. Sen’s longing for her family in India. The Bengali immigrant of *The Third and Final Continent* enjoys the sumptuous meal of chicken curry with Indian spices. Indian food helps the narrator to retain his cultural identity. 

Jhumpa Lahiri in the story *A Temporary Matter* visibly portrays Shukumar’s feelings by the use of ordinary, mundane images such as the last sight of his pregnant wife, the autumn leaves, the cab, etc. Shukumar’s initial apprehension at the thought of being a father and later his accommodating attitude is well presented by the use of visual imagery, when Shukumar imagines his wife as a mother attending to their children’s needs. Jhumpa Lahiri uses imagery both to entertain the readers and at the same time to bring out the sensitive emotional feelings of her characters. Shukumar’s description of their still born baby is very touching, he quietly presents a visual image of the baby describing the colour of his skin and hair, and he explains to his wife that the weight of the baby, his appearance, skin colour, etc. The description of the still born baby emotionally affects Shoba so intensely that she was able to finally vent her pent up feelings. Lahiri’s clever use of symbolism to drive the home the predominant theme of her stories is again prominently displayed in the short story, *The Blessed House*. The Christian artifacts like the effigy of Christ, a tile trivet of Jesus, etc. found
by Twinkle, a second generation immigrant in their new house are readily accepted by her. For her they are admirable pieces of art without any religious significance, to be showcased in her new house. While her husband, a first generation immigrant cannot do so, he kept reminding his wife that they were not Christians. For him they represent Christianity, symbols of religious belief, representative of one’s religion. However, due to his sincere love for his wife he accedes to her wishes. As he is only concerned with maintaining a peaceful harmonious relationship at home he develops a more tolerant attitude. Thus Lahiri symbolically and subtly advocates that the immigrants must develop a balanced attitude between the host culture and ethnic inherited culture to adapt comfortably to the adopted Western lifestyle. Moreover the story with ample use of symbols clearly indicates the psychological acceptance of American lifestyle by the second generation of Indian immigrants. The story *Interpreter of Maladies* deals with the journey of an Indian American family and Mr. Kapasi their taxi driver. A number of symbols are used throughout the text to provide a better understanding of the plot. For instance, Lahiri uses the small slip of paper on which Mr. Kapasi’s name and address are written in a symbolic manner to convey the loss of communication between the two. Earlier the slip in the pocketbook of Mrs. Das signifies a connection between them. They easily communicate and bond with each other. In fact Mr. Kapasi believes of having further communications with her in future. Later when Mrs. Das confesses about her infidelity and hopes for a solution to her misery, Kapasi is offended and expresses his inability to help her. Lahiri uses the symbolism again to convey the rift in their relationship by stating that the slip of paper given by Mr. Kapasi fluttered away in the wind, blown out of Mrs. Das’s pocketbook. The naked statues of Konark temple, Mrs. Das’s strawberry necklace, etc. are used as symbols to convey the sensuality of Mrs. Das. Lahiri also makes use of the symbol of monkeys to highlight Indian cultural values and beliefs.

Jhumpa Lahiri makes extensive use of food imagery which is prominently present in all her works. Lahiri as a fiction writer deals elaborately with the existential issues of immigrants and their diasporic experiences. The Indian immigrants’ staunchly cling to their ethnic food habits and culinary practices to assert their national identity. Lahiri focuses on ethnic cuisines to symbolically present the sense of nostalgia in an alien community. The novel, *The Namesake* begins with Ashima Ganguli’s preparation of a
palatable dish mixing various ingredients such as rice crispies, salt, lemon, green chilli, red onion, etc. which is a very common snack in India. This very simple preparation gives her the feeling of her home country, memories of her home town, Calcutta. Lahiri use of this simple imagery speaks volumes about Ashima’s thoughts, her loneliness, longing and nostalgia. Her husband, Ashoke easily adapts to the lifestyle of the Western culture and never exhibits any sense of longing or nostalgia for his ethnic culture, occupies himself with his research and work. However his preference for only Indian cuisine consisting of rice, dal and lamb curry is significant. The recurrent use of food as a symbol throughout the novel indicates the adherence of the first generation immigrants to the retain ment of their ethnic Indian culture and the second generations’ confusion and carefree attitude.

The significance of the food imagery, buying ingredients essential for Indian cooking and elaborate procedures of cooking Indian dishes are all prominently and repeatedly conveyed in the stories of Interpreter of Maladies. As observed by Garg the Indian migrants far away from their own country do not easily adapt themselves to the foreign food habits, they are reluctant to accept or develop their roots in the culture of the adopted country, instead they very earnestly preserve their symbols of self identity in the form of traditional food habits.

The daily routine of the immigrants’ cooking Indian cuisine procedure is extremely important not only for the purpose of relishing delicious Indian cuisine but also for reminding about home and the nostalgic past. The first story of the collection, “The Temporary Matter” makes use of food imagery to show the rift between the couples, Shoba and Sukumar. Lahiri presents a contrast in the manner of cooking food and dining before the couple’s strained relationship. Shoba and Sukumar cooked together and dined together before the miscarriage of Shoba. The change in their habits after the miscarriage clearly indicates the differences in their attitude. They no longer had meals together nor was Shoba anymore interested in cooking. The story, “When Pirzada Comes to Dine” is full of food imagery as suggested by the title itself. It shows how integral food is in Indian culture. Lila the child narrator notices the pains and the elaborate attempts of her mother in preparing a meal. Lila associates Pirzada’s
visits to sweets which he regularly brings. The story, “This Blessed House” is about a couple, Twinkle and her husband Sanjeev. This short story is also enriched with beautiful food imagery. Though the story is about the new house, the discovery of Christian relics and the contrasting reactions of the couple, food play a prominent role. When Twinkle happens to find a bottle of vinegar and intends to use it in cooking Sanjeev immediately rebels. The idea of using vinegar in Indian cooking is not acceptable to Sanjeev but Twinkle keeps it and uses it in cooking fish. The reactions of the couple help the readers to understand the characters clearly. Similarly, the story, Mrs Sen reveals the symbol of food as ethnic identity, Mrs. Sen’s fondness for fish is explained in detail. She enjoys buying fish from the local fish market, takes great care in cutting and cleaning them and also enjoys the elaborate process of cooking fish. All these mundane acts are done meticulously in a foreign country to come to terms with her new life by associating with the past habits. Sexy another story in the collection is about an American woman named Miranda and her relationship with Dev, an Indian. To understand Dev she wants to experiment with Indian food and visits an Indian store to check out the ingredients. The story, The Third and The Final Continent is a simple story about an Indian immigrant and the role of food imagery is well established, it is used as a symbolism of love and affection.

Critical analyses of the stories of Lahiri reveal her technique of using symbolism and imagery. All the stories of the collection, Interpreter of Maladies, are enriched with undertones of meanings with elaborate use of symbolism. The collection of stories deal with the existential tenets which Lahiri calls maladies as suggested symbolically in the title. The maladies are actually pain, sorrow, isolation and loneliness as a consequence of a number of relationship tribulations like communication problems between couples, cultural conflicts, failed marriages, etc. Lahiri’s narrative deals with all the issues and problems of relationship with extensive use of symbolism which is a fundamental part of her fiction.

In conclusion we say that all the three novelists, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi and Jhumpa Lahiri revealed their mastery in the use of appropriate symbolism in their novels. It is an integral part of their literary works. The technical device of symbolism to present
the novelists' views and concepts was adopted successfully by earlier writers also. Raja Rao had successfully used the device in his prominent and greatly acclaimed work, *The Serpent and the Rope* and also in his philosophical novel, *The Cat and Shakespeare*. Abstract ideas were made richer with symbolic connotations. The tread continued in the later writers in a successful manner. Not only the titles chosen were symbolic but also the names of the characters were carefully chosen by the writers each having a symbolic undertone. Symbolic titles, names and extensive use of imagery enabled the writers to successfully project their view points and the existentialism in their writings.

Contemporary Indian English fiction though greatly influenced by Western thoughts and philosophies takes into its fold Indian philosophical beliefs, the richness of Indian culture and genuineness of characterization. Since symbolism is an integral part of fiction, the literary texts can be studied and critiqued from different perspective. Various different shades of meanings can be drawn and different interpretations can be analyzed.
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