CONCLUSION

Anita Desai is the foremost novelist who occupies distinctive place among the Indian English novelists. It has been tried throughout the core chapters of the thesis to make a critical and analytical study of the texts. Anita Desai’s fictional art can not be understood unless one is geared up with the various devices like myths, images and symbols with special reference to Indian context. Unlike traditional novelist she writes in such mode which becomes a unique expression. Her pattern based on her own experiences becomes her subject matter for expression. She does not use a method which can be called the technique in the traditional sense. She hardly bothers to develop a refined style in her expression. However she works on such method which becomes a technique comparable to the technique of Virginia Woolf. It is therefore one appropriate rationalization to say a few words about mode of her expression.

Thus the present work focuses on the uniqueness of Anita Desai as a novelist who has dissected the components of the feminine psyche like a crafty surgeon. What is significant in Desai’s novels is the gallery of complex portraits, neither types nor prototypes but specific archetypes. It is in the light of this fact that Desai’s heroines have been examined as questers for a great goal, as questers for a psychological integration and as questers for the sublime. The feminine sensibility always has been a subject of enquiry since ages. In the modern age while man is equipped with the psychological knowledge to unravel the complexity of mind or heart, to analyze and psychoanalyze the world of dreams and fantasy. I also gone
deeply and meditatively on these imponderable aspects of Anita Desai & such as her use of imagery, symbolism, stream-of-consciousness, her technique of flashback and flashforth, psychological language, schematization of chapter division or some other basis of division of the novel etc. One finds through a close study of images and symbols in her novels that these elements contribute to the structural pattern of the novels. Structurally, *Cry, The Peacock* is divided into three parts which can be literally described as the beginning, the middle and the end. The first part serves as a prologue while the third appears to be an epilogue - both sections being balanced by death. These two sections are taken over by the omniscient narrator while the second part is entirely Maya’s commentary, rendered in first person. As the title shows the peacock is an important symbol of the novel. The peacock in legend waits through the long arid summer for the monsoon. Its frenzied dance for a mate when rain clouds came is a portent of its own impending death.

Significantly, the symbol of the dance of peacocks merges with the symbol of Shiva’s dance which is used at the end of the novel before the final catastrophe. The meaning becomes clear when Maya views the peacock’s dance as the dance of death which symbolizes death and also liberation and freedom for her tortured psyche. The religio-cultural aspects of the symbol is depicted as to be the central symbol to the feminine psyche, having religio-cultural roots that enrich the meaning by providing undertones to the symbols. Desai also depicts on the hundred eyes on the peacock’s feather. Maya calls these eyes the eyes of wisdom which is to be seen in relation to eye symbolism, the eye which is window to knowledge. Another important symbol used is that of Shiva as Natraj, a symbol of
liberation. The Natraj reinforces Maya’s love of life; she feels that she has a
greater justification to live. In Maya’s memory the image of Shiva invokes
in her a Shloka about Natraj.

Maya’s overcharged sensibilities are described through animals. On
one hand there is the majestic image of the peacock, and on the other hand
the grotesque. This is how her neurotic state is described through a vision:
“Horrid arms, legs, tentacles threshing, blood flowing, eyes glazing. Storms-
storms at sea, at land.”¹ This morbid sensation in Maya is the result of fear
of death psychosis. She is obsessed with Toto’s death because she sees her
own death in it and prediction of the astrologer. The vocabulary is more
abrupt and broken. There are many exclamatory and interrogatory phrases.
Anita Desai follows indirect method is called the interior monologue. The
mental process at work in Maya and Gautama is expressed when the former
tells the latter “We work for fame, name, and money, all other evils put
together. Yet we do have our work.” The conflict that surges in Maya’s mind
is worked through the interior monologue where sentences are not logically
lined. They are marked by incoherence and disjointedness and have
colloquial colouring.

Anita Desai employs the first-person narrative with Maya, the
heroine, narrating her own story. Desai deliberately chooses this method of
narrating the story to explore its challenging possibilities. Maya’s narration
begins with her bemoaning the death of Toto, the pet dog. Love of life and
fear of death characterize her behaviour. The death of Toto reminds her of
something darker, deeper and menacing. Maya observes many vague ideas
flitting across her mind. There is a crucial passage in the second section
which conveys to the reader an intimation of what haunts the fringes of
Maya’s awareness. She lies back in her chair, breathing deeply and waiting; “for what?” she asks herself. She first answers, “I do not know.” But immediately afterwards contradicts herself saying: “Yes, I did.” The mysterious memory, which frightens Maya, is described in very vivid images. This “indefinable uneasy” is described as a “grain of sand.” The fear is as real as the giant shadows cast by the trees. The fear is imaged as a serpent which rusts through the grass and inexorably moves towards Maya “with a horrifying swiftness.” Maya experiences an acute physical sensation of snakes coiling and uncoiling their moist lengths all about her. Maya while staying with her husband recollects the memories of her childhood by which she links her past with the present.

Structurally, The Voice in The City is divided into four sections—named after each character—“Nirode”, “Monisha”, “Amla” and “Mother.” Each part is devoted to a leading character of the novel. The title of the novel reflects the central theme i.e. voices of thousands of people’s heart struggling for life in the formidable city of Calcutta. The city is not only an object but also a symbol having an obsessive emotional and spiritual significance like Hardy’s Egdon Heath in The Return of the Native.

The image of train and journey while pointing to dilemma of Nirode, reveals total acceptance and joy of David. The realistic description of a train journey on the narrative level symbolically suggests Nirode’s conflicting emotions and search for the right vocation which might save him from disintegration. The train starts as though in preparation for a battle, sending jets of white steam violently in to the night sky. The sound of the train hoot-toot tooting with a long and melancholy whistle elicits varied responses from Nirode and David. While Nirode hears ‘good- bye’ in that sound mocking at
his indecision and inability to travel, David hears ‘invitation’ beckoning him to visit the far off wonderful places. Both are travellers going on a spiritual journey seeking peace and self-fulfilment but their ways and approaches to life are different. David finds pleasure and fulfilment in travel but Nirode lacks faith and is constantly assailed by doubts and confusion. The opposite temperaments of Nirode and David are thus conveyed through corresponding images. The meteorological images such as fog, mist and air reflect the inner confusion, suffocation and frustration of Nirode where as the “Muddy river air” conveys his sense of deep disgust.

The animal, bird and insect images that are used to describe Amla, Monisha and Nirode suggest some sense of movement of flight, of escape. The restless Nirode is like “a lost unhappy bat”, “a wandering caterpillar” and “an epicurean rabbit.” He is also helpless and vulnerable like “an unshelled snail”, and he himself says that he is “an outlawed hermit crab.” Monisha is “a wild bird” whose cry is chilling like “a night jar.” Amla is like an “agitated moth” and feels like “a rabbit in a trap” struggling and clamouring, while going to Dharma. She is like a “butterfly” to Dharma as he perceives gaiety and quickness in her.

The city of Calcutta represents the tempo of life. Anita Desai offers the reader a poetic glimpse of the various aspects of life in Calcutta. In the following passage Desai shows her descriptive and evocative powers and realistic style at the best in the novel:

Calcutta, Calcutta – the very pulse –beat in its people’s veined wrists. The streets where slaughtered sheep hung beside bright tinsel tassels to adorn oiled black braids...¹
Anita Desai shows city of Calcutta as a symbol of the three aspects of creation, preservation and destruction. As famous German novelist Gunter Grass sees a city made of slums, destitution and death- she emphasizes these aspects in her novel *The Flounder*. The identification of the destructive element in human relationship resulting in the death of Monisha, with the destructive forces at work in the city of death has been genuine and vivid enough. Anita Desai herself said that she was moved to write the book by the powerful impression the city had created on her.

This novel also contains a few different images of the river, the bird and the kite that illustrate a short release. Nirode, Amla and Monisha all crave for freedom from the terrible oppression of the city. This image, clearly expressive of Nirode’s craving for freedom from the claustrophobia of Calcutta, is really worth consideration. One must be a king kite wading so far away in the blazing empty sky as to be merely a dot, almost invisible to the urchins who stood below, stones in their fists, ready to be aimed and filling. The most suggestive animal image is that of bleeding doves. Monisha’s suffering and search come sharply through the image:

... cage of doves ... wounded and bleeding, but securing about their cages, pecking up grain, while over them flies blithe budgerigars like animaled splinters of rainbows ...
and bleeding how can they live, eat, work, sing, bleeding through life.²

Another striking significant image employed in the novel is that of goddess Kali. Watching the street singer, Monisha is reminded of the Eternal Mother, The Earth Mother. This merger of the image of the street singer with Kali is the successful merger of the realistic with the symbolistic. In her vision, the
street singer merges with the Eternal Mother, the Earth Mother, a face ravaged by the most unbearable emotions of woman and giving that large mouth a tortured and pitiful down-thrust, and the terrible black eyes, an eternally unfulfilled promise of vision, of understanding of boundless love. The instance of Monisha as a tragic character who also becomes expressive of Desai’s use of the stream-of-consciousness. Shifted from a town to Calcutta on her husband’s transfer, she struggles hard for her existence as a woman. She suffers untold miseries and feels mental turpitude because of her inner conflict. The novelist has skilfully merged past with present through her usual technique of stream-of-consciousness. Thus, the flashback technique is merged into the flashforth technique for the narration of the story. As Desai adopts the “stream of consciousness” technique in the limited sense of what Arnold Kettle calls “a mode of recollection”. She also uses in her novel the “language of the interior.” The language of the interior serves her purpose the best; she dramatizes the innermost feeling of a character in a long soliloquy.

*Bye-Bye Blackbird* traces the journey of two Indian immigrants towards their home. This novel is divided into three parts – “Arrival”, “Discovery and recognition” and “departure.” The third section is full of symbolic connotations. The metaphor of journey is aptly chosen and it rightly concurs with the theme of the novel. Adit is the black migratory bird that bids ‘bye-bye’ to the magic land, England. Sarah is no longer a white bird after her nuptial ties with Adit. Therefore the metaphor of journey engulfs her ‘departure’ too. The title has more in its fold. For Dev, it suggests the ‘departure’ of gloom that had engulfed him at the start of the novel which marks his arrival at Adit’s threshold in London. The mystical

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answer given by the narrator describes the working of foreign landscape which now has Dev in its trap. Somewhere, at some point that summer, England's green and gold fingers had let go off Adit and clutched at Dev instead. The language of this novel is not forceful and fails in the objective descriptions of the characters. Language should necessarily be a tool of visual images and emotional expressiveness. But here the language fails to embody the significance that the novelist desired to instill. This novel is breath wreathed with images which are not as powerful and symbolically significant, as the 'peacock' in Cry The Peacock, 'Kali' in Voices in the City and 'Fire' in Fire on the Mountain.

Anita Desai also analyses the inner properties of different languages. Sanskrit as a developed language serves the ceremonized purpose of the language. Mr. Miller finds Adit’s memory as a gift of Sanskrit language. He asks Adit that his memory must be as result of the training he has in memorizing those long Sanskrit verses. Adit Sen feels proud of his language for reading most of the Mahabharata, The Ramayan and a good portion of the Vedas as well.

Anita Desai uses the poetry to convey the meaning more effectively. The title of the novel itself is a line from a poem. On semantic level the line, Bye-Bye, Blackbird refers to Dev's farewell to immigrant Asians in England; it means farewell of an Indian - a “blackbird.” The poem is very important for thematical significance and it is used at different places in the novel with different intentions. By the poem Anita shows the mood of maladjustment and sorrow and obviously reveals changed mood of Adit in the alien country where people do not understand him So at this time he sings softly: “Blackbird, bye-bye.” Desai’s use of the poem suggests the
gradual change in Adit when he realizes his phoney existence in England that would ultimately lead to his decision to leave England forever. This poem is quoted once again at the end of the novel where we realize its significance in connection with the title. The novel also ends with this line of the poem: “Blackbird, bye-bye.”

Anita Desai follows the triptech structure in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* It is divided into three parts, namely “Monson 67”, “Winter 47” and “Monson 67.” Part I deals with Sita’s abnormal thoughts of escaping the process of creation. Part II depicts the reminiscences of her childhood. Part III depicts Sita’s return to the present. Sita moves through three stages, thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The structure of the novel compared to Virginia Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse*. This structure also refers to the world of reality, the world of fantasy and the world of reality again. Desai reveals the psychological probing of the mind of the heroine Sita who is pregnant but does not want to deliver the baby and wants to go the island of Manori where she has spent the childhood. Thus, Bombay represents the world of reality and Manori’s magical island represents world of fantasy and Sita’s return to Bombay represents reality. The island is the controlling metaphor and symbol in the novel. The city and the island symbolize the two different areas of the novel. The city and the island symbolize the two different realms of Sita’s existence and provide a necessary contrast to the symbolic action of the novel. Her life in the city is depicted mainly through the images of violence. Her island life is teemed with images of sea, sunshine, colour and flowers. In a highly symbolic animal image, where the crows cruelly attack and devour a wounded eagle, Anita Desai brings out the highly sensitive nature of Sita and also the victimization and exploitation of the
helpless. The entire incident is so vividly described that it crystallizes the tragic vision of the novelist herself:

With glu the crows whistled -- whee; in ecstasy they moved their wings, crra-crra.... It (the eagle) rose weakly, tried to crawl into the shelter of the wall’s shadow and its wings, leaf-red, scraped the concrete, then its head, gold-beaked, fell to one side.³

This is a vivid visual and acoustic image where the senses of sight and sound sharpen in order to perceive the rapacity, cruelty and sadistic pleasure of the crows. This sense of murder and mutilation is reflective of an all-pervasive violence and victimization, the two basic elements, the world seems to gloat over. The sea, which is symbolic of the ‘mystic unknown’ between the polaritiy of the city and the island, baffles her. The ‘sea’ near her flat does not seem to be a “symbol of liberation.” Another sea image depicts the marital discord between Sita and her husband. In the snarled moment of silence, time is a scummy sea, telling nothing.”³³ This is an apt metaphor signifying the gulf of incomprehension and incompatibility that separates them. The abundance of sea-imagery indicates the dominance of sea in Sita’s consciousness.

Sita fury and feeling of horror, when she witness her father crushing the mother’s Jewellery and mixing it in the medicines, are well brought out in the images. Sita understands now that the true colour of the island is only ‘darkness’ and the ‘silver’ of her father is ‘blackened’ by the ‘moonlight’ of her revelation of his true self. She herself has become a bat, creature of the dark, for being his daughter, trying to ‘cut and slice’ the darkness around her for some semblance of meaning in her life. Her father’s use of crushed
jewels has a two fold implication. He is symbolically avenging himself on the wife who has dared to defy him by running away and simultaneously he is using the Jewellery to enmesh into his power the women folk of Manori even more firmly. The images she uses with reference to her mother's life in Banaras are thus associated with darkness and narrow alleys which simply forbid anyone's escape. There is a suggestive visual image. The 'white bull' that calmly chewed the garland is her own father. At another instance, Sita recalls him to be as loaded as a sacrificial bull with ringed mound of rose petals, marigold, jasmine and tinsel. The 'roots of the banyan tree' silently insinuating themselves through the doorways might be the arms of her mysterious and powerful father which can go to any length in order to capture a fleeing victim. Her riotous imagination and neurotic state of mind is the chilling vision of death. In this period of sudden insight and acceptance, Sita sees the island only as illusion an enrapturing hallucination:

She...saw the windowpanes of the house on the knoll lit by the setting sun to a mysterious brilliance so that the house seemed like a trick constructed of mirror.  

Sita's mind has been analyzed by the novelist here by the third person technique. The third person narrative is so arranged as to give more and more emphasis on objective analysis of human weakness and qualities. Occasionally, the first person technique is also used in this novel. When a character analyses herself or himself, the writer puts his or her analysis in the first person narrative. The dialogues between two characters are such first person narrative.

Anita Desai divides the structure of Fire on the Mountain into three parts: The first part, Nanda Kaul at Carignano, deals with Kaul's life in
isolation, marital discord and her forced choice as recluse; second part, Raka comes to Carignano, portrays the inhibitive traits of Smt. Nanda Kaul’s great grand daughter, Raka; The third, Ila Das leaves Carignano, shows the deterioration of human values when Ila Das is raped and murdered. Anita Desai writes on the principle of an iceberg in which only one tenth is above-water. In the present novel Anita Desai makes use of the themes of the underworld and delineates emotional deprivations to substantiate the theme in a language and imagery suggestive of submerged symbolical association and giving the work a poetic tone.

*Fire on the Mountain* is stylistically the most successful of Mrs. Desai’s novels. In this novel Desai portrays a kind of emotional wasteland and compares it to T.S. Eliot’s *Waste Land* and finds in it hardly anything good or happy taking place in a rocky background where the landscape is barren, bare and dismal with dry dust-storms rising and complicating movements. Nanda Kaul’s sense of identification with the pine trees suggests her desire for absolute stillness and withdrawal from life. Her withdrawal stands for emotional staticity, a kind of psychic frigidity that refuges to take note of any movement around. She ignores the ‘sweeping shivering sound’ of her sari which indicates movements. Her sense of oneness with the pines, which seem to sympathies with her desire for withdrawal from the world, is reflected in another image of pines. The apricot trees symbolically attract her as they soothe her nerves. The sight of a bright hoopoe unnerves her and teases her peace-loving mind. Here is a wonderful scenic imagery which brings forth the psychic state of Nanda Kaul. It was a sight that does not fill her with delight. Their screams atre shrill and can madden.

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Using the bird-image, the novelist brings out the gap between aspiration and experience. Nanda’s desire for absolute freedom is defeated in the face of her domestic responsibilities. Thus images clarify and make precise the emotional complexities of Nanda. The novelist weaves image after image with contextual appropriateness reinforcing every idea, every thought that is stated earlier. The reading material of Nanda Kaul is also very unusual and interesting. The *Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon and The Travels of Marco Polo* are significant, as they become metaphors of Nanda’s present existence. The description of the life of a lonely woman, given in *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon and The Travels* amuses and interests Nanda. Each time she reads it: “it went down her throat with a clear, luminous passage, like chilled dry wine.” She feels happy when she reads that book as she is living up to the ideas professed there. The other book *The Travels of Marco Polo* creates for her a world of fantasy which she wants to believe in and bewitch Raka with.

Image of rain has deep symbolical associations with the theme of regeneration, emotional relief, respite from desolate deat, safety from devastating fires. “But one shower of rain will bring out hundreds of flowers—lilies, dahlias— that she must have planted.” Flowers and vegetation will dry up if rains fail. Ultimately heavy rains come and the house Carignano becomes a shelter. Nanda Kaul remembers Tara’s merry song regarding rains when Tara was a little girl and used to sing “Rainy days are lily days.”

The bronze Shiva in *Cry The Peacock* is a symbol of destruction and liberation. The figure of Buddha here is a symbol of serenity, a trait that eludes both Raka and Nanda. Raka does not understand the symbolic purport of Buddha and his still posture as she never know serenity in her life. Even
Nanda’s outward serenity is only a self-deceptive mask. She too has never known the peace of meditation. So they both stare at Buddha without comprehending his message.

Raka is not enchanted by the beauty of moon; rather she prefers a forest fire. Moon is a metaphor for Raka (‘Raka’ means ‘moon’). But there is nothing pretty or gentle about her. Nanda’s mistaking forest fire for moon even for a short while is symbolically suggestive of her expectations of Raka. But later she understands that Raka is a volcano, waiting to burst on the world in full fury. The sight of the forest fire fascinates Raka so much that she becomes obsessed with it. But at the same time she does not want to be caught in it “The fire might creep up and each her unawares.” The thematic image of “fire” with its connotations of violence and urgency occurs at regular intervals, warning the reader of the impending tragedy. It is not the forest fire she is afraid of, but the ‘fire’ within her that might consume her anything. It is because of her inner fire that she feels so excited about the forest fire as it is a physical reality, an external manifestation of her inner urge.

A symbolic correlation between the external and the inner world of the protagonist is portrayed. Critics held different views on the forest fire set by Raka. By setting the forest on fire Raka is able to free Nanda from her fragmented self and quench her own inner rage. She believes that after the total annihilation, a new world of love, hope and peace will be born. Her satisfaction at her act and her deep-rooted concern for human values are evident, when she whispers to Nanda, “Look Nani, I have set the forest on fire. Look, Nani-Look-the forest is on fire.” The following line at the end of the novel reveal of fire on the dry mountain after the death of Ila Das:
Down in the ravine, the flames spat and cracked around the dry wood and through the dry grass and black smoke spiralled up over the mountain.⁵

*In Village By The Sea* Anita Desai delineates the inner motives and ambitions of her protagonists by the technique of the stream of consciousness. Desai peeps into the hidden and untrodden regions of human psyche. Hari, the chief protagonist, arrives at Bombay in quest for his identity. His departure from Thul village creates two streams in the story. One shows the struggle of Lila in her economic crises. She plays an equally important role in the uplift of the family; the other runs with Hari at Bombay in his untiring effort to exist in society. He pleases Jagu, an owner of Sri Krishna Eating House, by hard work and Mr. Panwalah by his simplicity and earns money also by watch mending. Hari’s yearning for the uplift of his family combined with that of Lila’s imparts another unifying effect to the tale. The images like “street light”, “fire”, “smoky”, “damp”, “gloomy”, “large - leafed Sal tree”, “coconut palms”, “the banyan trees” and “feathered house” link the unconscious and the conscious streams of Hari’s thoughts. Whenever he feels pain, he becomes nostalgic about the scenes of the past. In the novel, no complex emotional or mental states are to be conveyed. The images are only literal and descriptive. Here there is no symbolical implication except that of the village. Thul and the surrounding areas are a symbol of the virgin soil under the threat of violation in not only India but the whole world. Images are taken from land, sea, air, insects, birds and fish. The sea is studied in different moods as though playing with sea coast visitors at occasions. The image of “three rocks” in this novel becomes both
the beginning and ending points and binds together the entire narrative. A
great role is played by religion in the life of Thul village.

Hari’s house is the symbol of the other houses in a village of India.
There’s no hospital in the village. “We have no one but the magic man to
help us. Magic!” This is a hospital practice remnant even now in most of the
backward villages in India. Paucity and poverty of the world type are
reflected by a picture of Hari’s house in the village Thul. The encapsulated
world of the village can not continue an isolated existence. The next building
activities of the birds, at the end of the novel, symbolize the human situation.
Anita Desai successfully explains the meaning and symbol though the bird-
image of next building. Hari has to practice many times like birds before
actually plan to build and raise his family above the poverty. In this Anita
Desai shows a clear philosophy of optimism. In Hardy’s novels chance
always goes against man. But here chance always favours Hari. Mr.
Panwalah suggests the remedy of learning and changing: “Learn, learn, learn
.... If you want to survive, you will have it change too. The wheel turns and
turns and turns: It never stops and stand still.”6 This idea of universal growth
is acceptable to all. Mr. Sayyed Ali harps on the same string: “Adapt!
Adapt!.... Adapt- that is what you are going to survive.... The wheel turns
and turns and turns.”7 Dynamic adjustment with changing circumstances is
the philosophy for survival of man on the earth. It reminds us of a stanza in
Tennyson’s renowned poem ‘In memoriam’ –

    There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
    O earth, what changes hast thou seen:
    There where the long street roars, hath been
    The stillness of the central sea.8
Clear Light Of Day has been divided into four parts for its narrative pattern. Part I deals with the record of the past and the present events. In part II Desai deals with the memories of the past. Part III deals with the memories of Tara and Bimla. The opening of the novel deals with a few lines from T. S. Eliot’s Four Quartets signifying the “four dimensions of time.” Anita Desai also accepts that the narrative pattern of this novel is based on the moving wheel of time as the destroyer and the preserver. This novel has another achievement as it has a unique theme of time in relation of eternity. The whole novel revolves round ‘Time’ drawing different impressive from the characters.

The images of birds, animals and insects are part of the landscape of the house. They evoke the atmosphere, participate in the emotional turmoil of the protagonists and throw their mental states into sharp relief. Anita Desai’s zoological images put together servie as significant objective correlatives. The novel begins with the call of the koels evoking the spirit of the daybreak: The koels begin to call before daylight. Their voices ring out from the dark trees like an arrangement of bells, calling and echoing each other’s calls, mocking and enticing each other into ever higher and shriller calls. The image of koel’s calling is always associated with emotional situations. On her first morning in Delhi, Tara woken up by the koels, runs to meet her sister on a favourite spot in the garden. But she finds only a neglected garden with some miserable looking flowers here and there. The garden seems to symbolise Bim’s own life. She too is abandoned by both her sister and brother and is left to struggle against the odds of life as best as she can. Bim’s distress of being trapped alone in the house is indicated in a similar situation faced by her cat “crouched in the fork of the blue and pink
tree, black and bitter at being stranded where she could not make her way down.” Another image of pigeons represents Tara’s inner conflict. She indicates herself with the pigeons on the veranda. Tara’s visit is linked linguistically with the repressed and latent feelings of Bimla. It arouses in her the slumbering instincts which she had restricted to as a young lady. Here Bimla uses the language of paradox-Love and hostility, resentment and acceptance, forgiveness and hate. ‘Grey mass’ of the house imagery is nothing but their own house associated only with sickness, indifference, unnaturalness and apathy. Raja alone breaks through the ‘mass’ and gets into the pleasant atmosphere of Hyder Ali’s house, ringing with poetry and music. Bim and Baba are overcome by strange sensations when they walk into that deserted house. They could feel a cobweb on their faces, a clinging, a slightly moist net which they brushed at with ineffectual fingers. The image of “cobweb” prefigures Bim’s desperation and helplessness when that house claims Raja and takes him away from her and their house. It is this dominant static image of the house that symbolically suggests the suppressed anger bitterness of Bim. Anita Desai introduces the phenomenon of memory too, which transcends time itself. It is the old house, steeped in memories that stands as a staid bulwark in the turbulent lives of the characters in a world of swiftly-changing values.

Structurally In Custody is divided into eleven chapters. The action of the Novel has a pendular motion as it shifts back and forth between Mirpore and Delhi. The novel deals with the issues of language and poetry with monitory problems. Portraying the character of Deven Sharma, Desai reminds us of Goldsmith in the The Vicar of Wakefield weakening the novel by thrusting sentimental morality and of Hemingway in The Old Man and
The Sea showing strength by leaving the old man with the words “A man can be destroyed but not defeated.” She shows Deven struggling with a world where evil dominates and the innocents suffer in poverty, degradation and desolation. The novel does not have much use of imagery. However, we find certain images scattered here and there. Images of prison in different forms, suggesting Deven’s over powering desire to escape from the stifling monotony, are shown all over the novel. Deven regards Mirpore as a prison where he is doomed forever to live a dull and empty life. He is so resigned to his fate that a simple journey from Mirpore to Delhi becomes a big event luring him with exciting possibilities. He has no existence outside it, a prison from which there is no escape. So Mirpore represents reality and Delhi becomes symbol of fantasy. Deven is so obsessed with a sense of failure that he sees himself always in a trap, struggling for freedom in conscious as well as unconscious states:

He often had nightmares in which he struggled towards an unspecified destination but was repeatedly waylaid and deflected, never in any stretch of sleep arriving at it anymore than he did in walking. His feet seemed to be enmeshed in the sticky net of nightmare that would let him escape at any level of consciousness.⁹

Deven’s dreams always turn into nightmares because of his unsuresness. The Nightmares symbolize his inadequacies and his repressed desires. He hopes for fame in the literary world, the only love for Urdu poetry. But he is not sure of himself and his capabilities; that even in sleep he cannot comfort himself dreaming about success and achievement. He feels that he is trapped in the net of mediocrity and inadequacy from which he can never
gain freedom to be decisive and determined in order to elevate himself to literary heights. Deven's deep dejection is externalized in a series of images. The "emaciated cattle" symbolizes Deven's self, which too is "withered and grey." The shelter of thorn trees is as inadequate for the cattle as is the glory of poetry for him. It is neither satisfying nor soothing. The image of neem tree also hints at the predominated emotion of the novel-disappointment and bitterness. In this novel, Desai makes a considerable progress in the use of zoological imagery. The image of the 'comet' foreshadows the frightening trap Deven's going to be caught in. The opportunity of interviewing Nur appears so fantastic in the beginning as if he were able to see a 'comet' but he remembers immediately that the comet is something to be feared because it is a bad omen, not lucky and frightened. There is the figure of a dog to describe Deven's dejected and futile life. He identifies his fate in the "form of an agonized dog." There is a consistency in the use of images. Deven is referred to as "a stray dog" by Siddiqui. Deven's miserable life with an unsympathetic and sarcastic wife makes him to think "he must look like a caged animal in a zoo. Nur's white dress and white beard symbolize his imaginative world and illusory status. Nur's house with its semidarkness evokes Nur's as an antithetical figure. Therefore significantly he is seen through the "shadowy gloom." The stairs of the poetic house symbolize his moral and material prosperity. He mounts the stairs as if sloughing off and casting away the meanness and dross of his past existence and steadily approaching a new and wondrously illuminated era. Nur's gorging is aptly suggested by comparing him with "a great blaster. Therefore, he is compared with "fish like skin and fish like spattering of the brown freckles of age" and
his imaginative urge to live beyond his means is hinted at by calling him a "whale in a pail of water."

Anita Desai sometimes works on the "language of the interior." Deven asks Mr. Trivedi, the head of the department of Hindi, for a weeks leave. The reply of Mr. Trivedi reflects a language that comes from the unconsciousness level of human psyche:

Deven stood is ground-being firmly seated on a chair across the disk from Trivedi... and mumbled a long incoherent explanation while Trivedi pulled dreadful faces, like an actor practicing the rudrarasa, the furious temper-opening his mouth, baring his teeth, narrowing his eyes, cupping his ear with one hand and scowling; his student found this a subject for hilarity but Deven’s risibility had long ago numbed and paralyzed.10

Structurally, Baumgartner’s Bombay, is divided into seven chapters alternatively focuses on the past and present of the two isolated Germans without family and country. The stories of these two characters, Hugo Baumgartner and Lotte, run parallel. This novel portrays an authentic picture of intense mental torture. Srinivas, the protagonist of Kamla Markandaya’s The Nowhere Man, can be termed as the soul brother of Baumgartner as both are unwanted aliens even after staying for fifty years in their adopted countries. This novel bears comparison not only with The Nowhere Man but also with Ruth Prawar Jhavala’s A Blackword Place. For Desai the initial impulse to write Baumgartner’s Bombay was the result of an inner compulsion to explore her German. The very name of the novel comes to Mrs. Desai’s mind through an accident during a walk in Lodi Garden in New
Delhi. The novelist has used the flashback as well as the flash forth techniques in the narration of this novel. The flashback technique runs in this novel in the form of memories and the stream of consciousness. Desai gives flashback of Hugo’s childhood through memory to make it plausible. As a schoolboy, Hugo experienced highly cosmopolitan companions. He used to fall into inertia. The flashforth device occurs in the form of dreams, nightmares and intuition. Kurt comes to the flat of Baumgartner and decides to kill him. Baumgartner, before his murder, dreams a bizarre world of human relation and the stream of the blood. Here is an example showing the perception of the coming doom in his life:

In his sleep, in his dream, the blood was Mutti’s not the boy’s. Yet his mother—so small, weak—could not have spilt so much blood or had she? The blood ran, ran over the floor and down the stairs, soaking his feet, which stood in it helplessly.11

The auditory images in Anita Desai’s novels are highly suggestive and often carry a violent tone. Describing the scene at the station swarmed with soldiers, the novelist makes use of onomatopoeia very effectively: “The clink of army boots. The image of ants thus symbolizes the fate of all the Jews in Germany whose life vacillates between “Nacht and Nebel. Night and fog, into which once cast; there was no return, no return. No return.”95 The repetition of the words asserts the painful, poignant truth of the terrible fate of his mother along with the other Jews. As in Cry, The Peacock where Maya’s pet cat stares at her with shock and alarm before she commits murder, here too the cats sniff the young boy’s body creasing their nose with distaste, perhaps mistrust. This is certainly a ring of warning bell. The young
Germans accounts of his various thrilling experiences in India are full of grotesque images. They are so bizarre and weird that anyone would feel sick with dismay and horror. His stay in Benares with the doms in the burning ghat, using the heat of the flames of the funeral pyre to cook his food and dry his clothes, eating human meat to become strong and powerful is the beginning of his weird journey through the dark, horrible repulsive regions that India offered him. The descriptions of these bizarre events are full of blood – chilling images. Anita Desai’s *Journey To Ithaca* is an addition to the novels of encounter in the field of Indian novel that describes the quest theme. Like in the Greek drama, she has for the first time introduced the technique of Prologue and Epilogue in this novel. The entire structure of the novel has been divided into four chapters, which makes the running of the story.

The novelist analyses the psychic depth of the characters. For example, the conversation between Sophie and Matteo becomes a good piece of symbolic and psychological language. Matteo as a seeker after the truth finds two kinds of paths while reading the story of *Katha Upanishad*, the path of joy and the path of pleasure. The linguistic meaning of these two words for the Sophie is more or less the same. She appears awe-stricken when Matteo distinguishes the linguistic properties of these two words:

Sophie’s lips felt dry, and she spoke through those dry lips hoarsely. I can’t understand what you mean. The path of pleasure, the path of joy. To me, they are the same, they are no separate.¹²

Thus the husband and the wife are in sharp contrast with each other. Matteo comes to ashram which is run by a lady who is known as the mother,
who follows the religion of humanity. The mother comes from a Muslim family, but her master Swami Premananda as a Hindu. Mother as Laila was a dancer. Here, in this ashram, the devotees come from all sides and from all castes. So the novelist thinks that God may be realized through love, not through a ritualistic religion: “This is no church, my friends, this is no temple or mosque or vihar. We have no religion, Religion? Like the black crows up in the tree, caw-caw-caw, scolding, scolding!” The image of ‘the black crow’ brings forth the hollowness and darkness of all religions. The sound of the crow caw-caw-caw is linked with the meaningless sound of different religions which has nothing to do with the absolute reality. When a protest is made against Laila’s role, the master shifts from this ashram and comes to another in the Himalayan region. He gives an example of Kabir who was himself a Muslim by birth but led his entire life in the holy city of Banaras and he wrote songs of Rama. So the teaching of the Mother to disciples is noteworthy. While exhorting her disciples for full dedication to the master, she comes near to the Gita’s ‘Niskama Karma’, which Lord Krishna teaches to Arjuna. Despite Sophie’s protest, Matteo becomes a true disciple of the Mother. Mother exemplifies the image of ‘bee and honey’. She delineates the essence of spiritual life. She emphasizes on the point that a hive without honey has no essence of it, nor can it give any joy to others. Mother links the honeybee metaphor with the progress of the seeker:

Everyone is busy as a bee over here, she said happily to Matteo. So many busy bees in my hive...spiritual nectar, nectar to nourish your souls.\(^{13}\)

Here Anita Desai becomes quite poetical. The ‘nectar’ symbolizes the essence of the soul. The thrice-repeated word “rich” stresses on the purity of
the soul. And this purity can be gotten through the choice of one’s Karmas. So Matteo does work on the advice of the Mother with patience. The western world pleads for the fruits of work. But the Mother teaches Matteo the importance of fruitless work. Sophie also perceives the higher position of Matteo as a seeker in the guidance of the Mother. The “wheel” images give the metamorphosis of Matteo as a regenerate Man.

The entire structure of Fasting, Feasting has been divided into twenty-seven chapters which make the running of the story. The most memorable metaphor employed in the novel is that of the “the swinging” of the parents. The action in the novel, though using a third person narrative, is presented from the point of view of the handicapped daughter Uma, the sole underdog in the family. Uma’s psychological health, academic carrier and prospects of marriage are all ruined by her parents. The imagery of the swing in the novel has multiple significance. It defines the gregarious relationship of the parents and they sit, rhythmically swinging, back and forth. They can be asleep dozing-their eyes are hooded – but sometimes they speak with increasing impatience, they swing and swing.

Besides bringing in sensual associations, the swing marks the mutual emotional and psychological bonding of the parents. The swing also suggests a to-and-fro movement. Like the phonal and the antiphonal verbal combinations in the very phrases, A MAMANDPAPA, Mamanpapa, Papamama. It is hard to believe they had ever had separate existence. The swing suggests not only fixity of relationships but also a stasis in respect of the collective relationship they bear to the world. In short, the swing connotes a deceptive dynamism, surely an ironic, paradoxical paradigm. Even more significantly, the swing is essentially something of a toy,
primarily meant to delight any children. In the novel, it is precisely the children who are not associated with the swing, it underlines immaturity and lack of development on the part of Uma’s parents. It also suggests a reversal of roles as far as the parents and children are involved. Ironically Uma is a so-called handicapped child in the family, who senses intuitively, with another handicapped cousin in the family, Ramu, Bakul uncle’s son. Perhaps the only moments of joy Uma experiences in her youth are those fleeting hours she spends with Ramu. The aural imagery is employed by the novelist on this occasion as ‘hiccups’, ‘sings’, ‘squeals’, ‘warbles’ and ‘sings’ all pertain to a boisterous kind of harmony. Uma’s joy in the company of Ramu is conveyed through a celebrative metaphor of music and dancing. Mira masi’s bliss in the divine presence is communicated through a similar imagery in the novel. The swing figures almost like a Leitmotif in the novel, for it figures at all the most significant contexts in the narrative. Aruna’s indecisive, restless state of mind is conveyed through the metaphor of the swing. Aruna simply swings her foot, toys with her braid and rippls with an inner momentum. After failing twice in the marriage bond, there is little hope for any other kind of ‘progress’ in Uma’s life. Uma herself has become a victim of this absurd existential movement of ‘dynamic stasis’ and ‘swings’ especially when the parents are not there. Thus the swing stands for merely an illusionary indulgence in the present and does not promise any further.

The emptiness that indicates Uma’s past, the denial of school life, the meaninglessness of the present and the hopelessness with regard to her future are all conveyed through the metaphor of the swing. The swing is a symbol standing for union and harmony. It stands for the harmony
“Mamandpapa”. After having failed in the marriage bond twice, Uma collapses on the lap of her mother in the swing and gets a fleeting moment of solace and acceptance. The theme moves and unravels through two worlds. The title indicates two different states of mind. The two families, their two stories, the two different worlds and two separate parts of the book are closely knit in one. This reminds us of the use of the same technique by Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things*.

Finally, three types of characters are found in her novels: complete egoists, partial egoists and neurotics. The first group includes those characters who are complete egoists like the mother of Nirode, Dev, Nur, Sophie and Maya. Such characters hardly get their regeneration. In absence of a rational outlook towards life, their existential pursuit goes in vain. Sometimes, their egoisms becomes the cause of their down fall. The other group includes the partial egoists like Nirode, Deven, Sita and Nanda Kaul and Uma who are baffled by their self-woven nets of illusions. They fulfil their existence when they undergo a self-schooling process in their isolation. These characters represent the neglected and ignored section of society. They exemplify the deformity of human relations and social dilemma therein. The third group comprises the neurotic characters like Maya and Monisha who are obsessed not by any internal problems, but entirely by the social forces around. Such a character either commits suicide or remains a marginal person like Baba who depends entirely upon others some characters perform a long journey from egoism to atrium, and the reader come across a sense of self-realization in her. This confirms her higher vision of life. Leading the life of an altruist and social servant, Ila Das faces a crisis in her life, symbolizing the perversion of human values. Thus, in this
way we can say that Anita Desai’s men and woman are not heroes or heroines absolute in their strength or devoid of human weaknesses. They are ordinary beings with normal human limitations. Indeed Desai’s world is not an “artistic utopia.” The great illuminative power of her fiction lies in its mimetic presentation of experience. These rebel-victims are not the outcome of an eccentric vision of the author but they are indicative of the emergence of this disquieting stance which modern literature stands to project. Highly distinctive in their motivations, manners and methods, her personages constitute a significant contribution to the Indian novel in English.