CHAPTER IV
FICTIONAL TECHNIQUE

Anita Desai is no doubt a great artist with a remarkable and astounding technical efficacy. Her technique does not only suit the theme dwelt upon in the novel but also goes a long way in her externalizing the inner turmoil of her protagonists.

The word "technique" is derived from the Greek, *technikos techni*. It means an art, artifice. The hypothetical Indo-European root of the word is *tekth-* meaning to weave, to build, to join. The Greek word *teckton* meaning a carpenter. Similarly later in Latin texture means to weave, to build. Thus the word in its original form means an applied art whether of building a house or of weaving a piece of cloth. And from usage in such practical art the term is later applied to literature. Literature being a world of imagination has to borrow words from the "practical" world for its uses. Like an artisan or a skilled worker, a literary artist has to use some tools, devices and methods in creating a literary work.

Technique in fiction includes everything that the novelist uses for narrating his story. On finer level it means imagery, symbolism, point of view, chronological order of events, stream of consciousness, schematization of chapter-division, dialogue, language, characterization, and plot are the aspects of fictional technique. Some novelists are deliberately conscious of technique and rely on technical innovations and some are satisfied with the more basis.

Anita Desai is not considered a technical innovator but it does not mean that she has no technique. She seriously sets herself to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of millions of men and women tormented by existentialist problems.

*Cry, the Peacock* is a technically well written novel. It is the story of a sensitive, introvert, childless, Maya, the protagonist the novel. She, being childless, is much attached to the dog and his death is a shattering experience for her. It throws her into a state of fearful
neurosis. The death becomes an obsession and it turns her into a brooding introvert. She is also thrown into a labyrinth of emotional imbalances.

Anita Desai describes the opposing temperament of Maya and her husband through images. Maya thinks of herself as "a partridge plump and content" and her hand is like "a well-fed pigeon" (134). The sense of comfort and contentment she enjoyed in her father's house is evoked through these images. And Gautama is like "an antique Owl" and a "meticulous tortoise" (208). These similes reflect Maya's disdain and disapproval of Gautama as he is dull, slow and stupid at times in understanding certain matters that are vital to her. He is calm as, "the mediator beneath the Sal tree" (14) evoking the image of Buddha. Though in her lucid moments Maya feels that "he alone was my rock in the wild sea-calm immobile" (120), in moments of anger she finds his "long papier-mache face ... made of clay after all" (143). Maya associates her happy sensations and pleasant emotions with birds, plants, flowers, fruits and poetry. And the people with whom she has affinity are also depicted through bird imagery.

The animal imagery acts as a significant outlet to express her latent fears, nausea, and hatred. The people she finds obnoxious and repelling always come alive through animal imagery. Maya's overcharged sensibilities are described through animal imagery, on one hand tree is the majestic image of the peacock, and on the other the grotesque. This is how her neurotic state is described through a vision:

Wild horse, white horse, galloping up paths of stone, flying away into the distance, the wild hills. The heights, the dizzying heights of my mountains, towering, tapering, edged with cliff-edges, founded on rock. Fall all, gloriously fall the bed of racing rivers, foaming seas (150).
A terrifying picture, woven with animal images clarifies the mounting fears and insanity of Maya. She constantly thinks of:

[... ] the lizards that come up on you, stalking you silently, upon the cold toes, slipping their club like tongues in and out, in and out, with an audible hiss and a death's rattle slowly moving up grinding rubbing and grinding albinoes (127)

The imagery which is used in the above passage reveals a sick mind of Maya. It also reveals that Maya's world is raided and ruled by fears, by thoughts of prophecies and lizards and rats. The another image of rats which is used in the following lines, suggests Maya's mental stage:

[... ] and then, in the very height of stillness, its tail switched. One small, brief twitch. But I saw it, and immediately a thousand rats twitched their tails – long, gray, germ- ridden, Just once, before they were still again stiff (183).

The colour imagery, the various dance imagery, the symbolic aspects of star and moon depict the essential destiny to the thin texture of the novel. The colour to dogs and the flowers of queen of the night are also white and it symbolizes death. The dog image is the central in the novel. Anita Desai has also used the image of the albino astrologer. It creates a terrible commotion in Maya's consciousness. This event makes a traumatic effect on Maya's life which is described in vivid and lurid colours.

Maya's childhood has a dream- like quality. The girl in this world is protected like a precious 'red ruby' or a delicate 'velvet bug' (36). The recollection of her childhood is dominated by the imagery of bird, plant and flower which underlines her sensuous nature. Likewise, her father and brother are both described in affectionate terms. Her father is always associated with positive images. Maya recalls fondly that her father's hair "gleamed soft and white as a bird's wing in mist and shadow"(53). She compares her brother, Arjuna to "a wild bird, a young hawk that could not be tamed, that fought for his liberty"(34).
The image of the caged monkeys at the railway station is very suggestive one. This image completes the picture of Maya's intense suffering at her assumed captivity:

There I was, amongst them, not one of those who sat quietly in an infinity of sadness and resignation, but one of those who clung, clung to the bars till they cut into my flesh and rattled them, shook them, crying over and over again: let me out I want to live Gautama, I want to live !" (131).

The caged monkeys are thus directly suggestive of Maya's own captive spirit and those monkeys enable Maya to realize her non condition. Some animal images also indicate the changes of protagonists self undergoes. The Pigeons "nests that were filled with babies" (34) and the rats that, "suckle their young most tenderly" (126) that used to enchant her and fill her with a longing for motherhood voice only exasperation now in her as she hears the fatal call of separation in the birds cooing, “the doves in a mood for mating, cooed to each other until I was distracted. I counted them as omens of ill-fortune, of separation (34).

Like animal imagery, Anita Desai also uses the flower imagery for denoting the changed perceptions of Maya. "The purple flowers of bougainvilleas look "like warm blood bathing her" (8) and the movement of the small star-like flowers seems to her as the slow mysterious movement of "nocturnal snakes"(16). The blooming flowers instead of attracting her through their beauty seem to portend only their impending end by the evening. These images clearly indicate the diseased vision of Maya.

Maya's repressed sexual desires are also revealed through using images which aggravate her agony. Maya's repeated references to the frenzied dance of the peacock for its mate, the cooing, and the mating calls of the pigeons, the heavy silk cotton trees, the male papaya trees, the withered pink carnations and reel roses reflect her repressed sexual desires. Her longing and despair are projected in the image of moon: "Butterfly, moon-moon rising,
falling, now waning, now waxing. The eternal flux, the eternal decay of a world of rubies and butterflies" (94).

Maya's inability to capture the external world of rubies and butterflies is juxtaposed with her unattained closeness with her husband. The dance of peacocks that defines the tragic predicament of Maya which chimes in many other images of dance. All these dance images integrate into the image of the dance of death. 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:

Pia, Pia they Cry. Lover, lover, Mio, Mio I die, I die... How they love the rain-these peacocks they spread out their splendid tails and begin to dance, but, like Shiva's, their dance of joy is the dance of death, and they dance, knowing that they and their lovers are all to die, perhaps even before the monsoons came to an end (82).

Each variant of dance imagery in its own way is a subtle symbolic reference to Maya's madness. The final variant, just before Gautama's death is symbolically the most expressive. Having led Gautama to the terrace, Maya catches a glimpse of the, 'bronze Shiva'. She feels that she has got the sanction of Shiva and moments later kill Gautama and gain her own liberation of years of psychological bondage to the astrologer's prophesy. These dance images fuse the experience at fantasy level with the one at the realistic level and become very powerful, haunting symbols. The cabaret and bear dances and dust-storm are experiences at the realistic level and the dance of the peacocks, the Kathakali and Lord Shiva and Maya's own identification with a dancer are at the fantasy and dream level.

The colour symbolism forms a symbolic pattern of imagery. Darkness is equated with isolation, madness, desperation and death. Maya is more drawn to the spaces of darkness in between the stars than the enchanting presence of the stars themselves:
Death lurked in those spaces … separation and loneliness … the longer I gazed, the farther they retreated, till there was only the darkness hanging, like a moist shroud, over our heads (24).

The colour 'white' embraces gentle as well as evil qualities. The fluffy whiteness of Toto when alive is endearing but it white corpse is frightening. There are a host of images describing the sensuous pleasure of Maya through the use of 'white'. But after the revelation of the prophecy, 'white' assumes the weirdness of an evil presence. In her delirium, Maya imagines wild, 'white' horses "galloping up paths of stone" (180). White thus, becomes an inextricable element of her insane consciousness. The images of moon and stars bearing 'white' colour form an important part of colour imagery.

The use of symbols in the novel is very significant element of Anita Desai's fictional technique. Symbols have a vital role to play in displaying different states. Generally, the symbols used by Desai are a part of the circumstantial details of the narrative. They acquire significance because of the appropriate correlation between the object and its symbolical meaning. The symbols not only help Anita Desai to objectify the nuances of a character’s subjective world but also to delineate the psychological depth of the characters. As the title shows the ‘Peacock’ is an important symbol of the novel. The title of the novel symbolizes the agony of an unfulfilled desire of the protagonist, Maya.

Other important symbol used in the novel is that of Shiva which symbolises liberation. In Maya's memory the image of Shiva invokes in her a Shloka about Natraj. The 'dust symbol' is also used in the novel. It suggests the subconscious decision of Maya to murder Gautama. Here Anita Desai suggests the preceding psychic turmoil and the following peace. The decision remains only as something vaguely and dimly felt never defined.

Some of the traditional symbols have been reinterpreted by Anita Desai for the sake of rendering highly individualised psyche. The repeated references to Peacock as, "brain
fever bird," "a reminder of death" and "ill-fated lover" are contrary to the traditionally popular image of the Peacock. Its dancing image in the rainy season has been associated with love, romance and beauty and not with fighting, mating and dying. By presenting the Peacock in her arbitrary symbolical colours, Mrs. Desai depicts Maya's mental predicament.

To show the mental state of Maya, Anita Desai uses symbol of moon. In acutely disturbed state of Maya, the moon appears to her as sinister and ghastly, "a demoniac creature, the fierce, dancer... accompanied by a deafening roar of silent drums"(28). Symbolically, the position of the moon in the sky parallels the lucidity of the thoughts of Maya which progress as in the same degree and the moon becomes a symbol of Maya's psyche. It is on moon-light when Maya pushes Gautama off the roof. The immediate provocation was that Gautama came between her and the worshipped moon.

Anita Desai uses the technique of fantasy in Cry, the Peacock. Maya clings to fantasy because she is unable to cling to reality. Her relationship to reality passes through three different stages, her childhood, marital life and finally when she totally surrenders herself to the world of insanity. The conflict between the two worlds of fantasy and reality is seen when at the beginning of the novel, after the death of the dog, Maya rushes to the garden tap "to wash the vision from her eyes." To make herself free from the burden of the present Maya recedes to her past. She remembers her father's garden, the fairy stories of the, 'Arabian Nights', "tales of princes and regal queens of jackals and tigers" which have an element of fantasy in them. Maya lives in a state of fear and with hallucinations. She considers Gautama as an "unreal ghost" a body without a heart". There are several uncanny references like this throughout the novel.

Anita Desai follows the triptych structure in Cry, the Peacock. The structure of the novel in intended to underscore the mystery. The story is divided into three fold divisions namely a prologue, main narrative and epilogue. Part I and Part III of the novel are very brief
consisting of three and eight pages respectively. Part I works like a 'prologue' to the novel which describes the conditions which lead Maya to her neurosis. Part III works like a 'Epilogue' to the novel. Maya is a childless woman who thinks that the death of her pet dog Toto is a sure prelude to another great and impending tragedy. Part II which forms the core of the novel and is divided into seven chapters, highlights the ups and downs of the life of Maya and Gautama a reputed lawyer who is twice her age and friend of Maya's father. The husband wife alienation which lies at the root of tragedy is started from the very beginning. In part III Maya regrets back to an infantile state and finally leaps to death. The self-realization of Maya and death motif is built skillfully in the structure of the novel. The action of the novel takes place in two cities: Delhi and Lucknow.

The novel is divided into three parts. The use of 1st person narrative in the first two parts and of the usual third person or an omniscient narrator in the last part has certain uniqueness about it. The novels of Anita Desai normally employ the protagonist to narrate the story. The main character while telling the story presents her own view point as seen in the narration of Maya in **Cry, the Peacock**. Maya in the novel sees the people around her especially her husband Gautama from her own personal point of vision. However, the tone of the narrator is objective and analytical in part I and III. The major part of the story is narrated in Part II where Maya narrates her psychological trauma and her love of life. In short, one should remember that novel cannot always adhere to only one point of view. The point of view could vary from one part of the novel to another. The novel, **Cry, the Peacock** is not exception to this. The narrative technique is used in the novel, proves suitable to the development of the character Maya, and the subject matter of the novel.

**Cry, the Peacock** is based on psychological and presentational sequencing. The death of a pet, Toto is all that the novel reveals in the beginning at a point of least supposition, and ends on a point where the reader feels that he knows all about Maya and Gautama, and hence
he is not shocked by the end. The interior monologue, the conversation between Maya and Gautama, the hallucinations of Maya, are all detailed psychological analyses of the innermost self of Maya, and though chronologically we feel that time has moved, Desai's deft presentational sequencing patterns it all in flashbacks and dramatic modes of soliloquy, giving us the impression of a life story.

The use of flashback is a recurrent narrative technique with Anita Desai. It is used in *Cry, the Peacock*. Anita Desai believes that the experiences of childhood are the most vivid and lasting experiences which have a strong impact on the entire impact on the life of a person. Thus, the memories of the past play very vital role in the life of Maya. The past memories of Maya which form the bulk of the novel are recalled by her or they come automatically after the death of her husband Gautama. Maya speaks of her childhood as, "my happiest days". The excessive love of her father made her a wayward and high-strung child. She recollects her father's soothing words which were like "a stream of cold water that tumbled through the ferns of Darjeeling or like the cold pern mists that crept over the blue hills and poured into the valley"(48). The toy world of her childhood is a world of the "velvet bugs" and the "blood red ruby".

The memory of the albino astrologer also disturbs her. Several other things like the death, cry of the peacocks, Mrs. Lal's child that enters the room during the party create a sense a futility in her. Maya perceives a strange similarity of her own present predicament with that of the beast of her memory. A letter from her long-lost brother Arjuna also stirs her memory. She also remembers Neila, who had married a man suffering from tuberculosis. All these memories from the past and the inability to adjust herself to an indifferent family make her feel utterly lonely and desolate. She gradually loses the balance of her mind. After the death of Gautama, Maya is completely absorbed in her childhood memories and returns into a second childhood. She starts playing with dolls, laughs like a child, falls upon the picture
books and opens the drawers. Maya's fond of nostalgia for childhood culminates in an almost hysterical longing for the splendid delight of a child and the tragic awareness of the impossibility of its realization.

The stream of consciousness or interior monologue is also used extensively in 'Cry, the Peacock'. Anita Desai has adopted a controlled method of stream of consciousness manifesting Maya's feelings about and evaluations of the events in the novel. Cry, the Peacock is a story rendered through the consciousness of Maya and in her own agonised idiom. The novel doesn't have a chronological movement. It is in the novel we have a zigzag movement from the past to the present and from the present to the past. Anita Desai has exposed the inner feelings of Maya to the readers.

Anita Desai's second novel, Voices in the City is an interesting example of technique. The novel presents a touching account of the unhappy, loveless life of Monisha who is the central woman protagonist of the novel. It also depicts an individual's fight against the self and the consequent defeat of the individual. It is complex structure of symbols and stereotypes. It is technically brilliant and thematically utterly contemporaneous in its scheme and scope.

There is a symbolic fusion of the mother of the three protagonists- Nirode, Monisha and Amla-with the city of Calcutta which makes it somewhat complex, if also difficult, on the narrative level.

Voices in the City symbolizes the varied voices of sensitive souls, which are futile in the city of death and despair, Calcutta. Some critics have observed that in the novel the city is important, and is skillfully handled by her, they compared it with that of Dicken's London and Thomas Hardy's Egdon-Heath. No one can deny the importance of the city in the novel. The novel begins at Hawrah Station where Nirode has come to see of his brother Arun who is going to England for higher studies.
Nirode, Monisha and Amla are young, intense and talented. Their shared quest for the meaning of life is a sensitive and image-filled experience. Yet their responses differ because they are unlike one another. The imagery in this novel is not as intricate and as poetically exuberant and engrossing as in *Cry, the Peacock*, but more sparingly used, throwing light on the characters, events, situations and the locale.

In *Voices in the City* a similar pattern of animal and bird imagery is noticed too, where the bird imagery is used in positive and endearing terms and animal imagery for defining the negative, bestial equivalents in characters. The protagonists, Nirode, Monisha and Amla, and their brother Arjuna all are defined by bird imagery. In the very opening paragraphs of the novel, Arun's urge for freedom is conveyed by comparing him to, "a bird poised on the roof's edge for flight, each feather alert and trained for it" (7). There is an interesting division in the bird, imagery employed by the novelist in this novel. She distinguishes between the marsh birds, Dharma and David, and King Kites- Nirode, Monisha and Amla.

There are certain situations in which animal imagery is used significantly. Monisha visits the zoo where she finds:

> the dance of milk-white Peacocks on tip-toe, strumming their fanned feathers like many stringed harps. A Kangaroo lies on its back to sun the soft honey fur on its belly, but its pouch, alas, is empty (119).

This is a remarkable incident which gives us a glimpse into Monisha's silent and secretive self. While the reference to Peacock's dance proves Monisha's ability to enjoy the fascinating spectacle and also Anita Desai's fascination for the same that she has to mention it at least once in every novel, the sight of the Kangaroo's "empty pouch" refers to Monisha's awareness of her barreness, which is not merely physical but even emotional. But it does not seem to be so. It is true that Monisha leads a passionless life and seems to be psychically and sexually
frigid, but still whenever she hears Jiban's family discussing her blocked fallopian tubes, she is filled with sorrow and regards her insides critically. Her emotional and physical frigidity is due to her glorification of self, which makes her feel that Jiban is unfit to be her husband.

The imagery of 'bleeding dove' is the most suggestive one in the novel. It suggests Monisha's suffering and search:

[...] cages of doves...wounded and bleeding, but scurrying about their cages, pecking up grain, while over them fly blithe budgerigars like animated splinters of rainbow (120-121).

This passage reveals that Monisha tries to connect the bleeding but still singing and living doves to her own life and her inner bleeding. She realizes that life means a successful merging of pain and pleasure, sorrow and peace, the two facts that make it a whole.

The image of 'caged tiger' is very interesting and functional. It clarifies Monisha's idea about death. She finds in the death of the caged tiger, a dignity that is not to be seen in the deaths of Bengali women who anticipate death with resignation. She identifies herself with the tiger:

The tiger paces up and down. Now and then he groans and his eyes are like the glass eyes of a stuffed trophy on the wall, for he is dead already (120).

Monisha's eyes too are lifeless and expressionless like those of the tiger as she lives in the cage of a home, living a death like existence. But she will never wait for a meaningless death passively to end her meaningless life. She will surely make it meaningful and dignified, as after all, the choice lies in her own hands. This seems to be her unspoken decision. Thus the images of doves, kangaroo, tiger and kings kites lay bare Monisha's subconscious drives.

The animal, bird and insect images that are used to describe Monisha and Amla suggest some sense of movement of flight of escape. Monisha is a 'wild bird' whose cry is
chilling like "a nightjar" (160). Amla is like an, "agitated moth" (235) and feels like "a rabbit in a trap" (202) struggling and clamouring, while going to Dharma.

The image of 'barred windows' suggests the imprisonment of Monisha. Monisha feels trapped behind the barred windows of Jiban's narrow-minded family. She feels there is a need for immeasurable sadness as most of the Bengali women live, "like female birds in a cage... always behind bars, those terrifying black bars that shut us in, in the old houses, in the old city" (120). To her, the street singer and even the drummer look like "caged animals" as they too have the same proud but defecated look of the "caged tiger" in the zoo.

The city birds crowing a tree near the race ground foreboding death of a horse in the race prepare the emotional climate for Monisha's end. Anita Desai has conveyed to us the opposing temperaments of Nirode and David through corresponding images. Similarly the relationship between Amla and Dharma is portrayed mostly through the images of art. Amla's first visit to Dharma prepares the ground imaginistically. She shudders unconsciously at the sight of an easel: "An easel stood there like a patiently waiting gallows. She stared back at it" (186). The easel is waiting for her alone, the model who brings out a new fact of art from Dharma. But, in the process, she suffers a kind of psychic death. The image thus foreshadows Amla's intense agonized experience with Dharma.

Rain the image of relief from tortuous heat and cleansing the mind of "chilling vision" are frequently used by Anita Desai. They are also associated with freshness and delight. The images of train and journey are also used in the novel. 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 began to part as though in preparation for a battle, sending jets of while stream violently into the night's sky.... the late comers pounding along
with baggage wobbling and disintegrating on the seemingly hopeless search for the right carriage (7).

The colour imagery in this novel is significantly merged with the city of Calcutta which the most mysterious and dominant symbol in the novel. The darker and brighter aspects are delineated corresponding to the emotional reactions of protagonist. Calcutta is not merely a symbolic correlative but assumes the status of a fourth character. The creative and destructive aspects of the paradoxical city of Calcutta are symbolised by white, black, colours and their variants of light and darkness respectively. The dark aspect of the city defines, moulds, controls and dominates every character. Monisha shares Nirode's responses to the dark of Calcutta and its overpowering oppressiveness. She observes on her very first visit to the house in the 'Bow Bazaar':

[... ] The tired balconies – four tiers of them- rise all around us, shutting out light and enclosing shadows like stagnant well water..... Here the idol splits into two: a black, four-postered bed in the centre and a gigantic black wardrobe against the wall and the iron bars at the windows accompanied by a black, bitter terrifying sound that repeats and repeats it self like the motif of a nightmare (109).

The narrow well with 'stagnant' water is another important image which is revealed in the above passage. Anita Desai uses it to describe the stifling atmosphere in joint families in which women rot, shut off, from experience and fresh air. Monisha, in the novel, has darkness within and she is unable to obliterate it and permeate it with light and love. She realizes this when she meets David and understands the crux of the problem that torments their lives.
There is also nature symbolism in section III, 'Amla'. She has arrived recently in Calcutta to begin her professional career of commercial artist. She is exhausted and the decaying nature in Monisha's house garden very well externalises mental state of Amla. It is the ruin of once well maintained garden but now everything is chaotic with a depressing effect. The ill kept garden shows negative aspects of nature. Nature instead of being life giving and refreshing is as though sucking the blood of human beings.

The supreme symbol in the novel is that of Nirode's mother as Kali. After Monisha's death, the mother, that brooding and omnipresent presence that hovers over the novel, is symbolically identified with Goddess Kali in Nirode's moments of vision: "She is Kali .... She is Kali, the Goddess and the demons are one. She has at last seized and mastered death" (252). The symbolic identification of the mother with Kali gives Nirode and Amla an awareness of mortality as the one truth of their existence that gives meaning and vitality to life. The mother who gave them life is now Kali, the destroyer. The use of the mother symbol as a life-giving and destructive force gives the novel a fatalistic conclusion.

The very title of the novel, *Voices in the City* is symbolic one. It shows that in the big crowds of the city, the voice of a single person can never be heard and hence the person whose voice is not heard or recognized, has lost its identity. One loses his individuality, integrity and identity among. "all that tumult of traffic and commerce"(8) and its polluted atmosphere full of "coagulated blaze of light and sound and odour" (8). Hence, single voice is not mentioned, the voices are mentioned. While *Cry, the Peacock* suffers from an excessive use of images in sanity, *Voices in the City* is dominated by a series of negative images in keeping with the milieu and characters presented. Images of marital and social alienation, death and violence abound in the novel. A profusion of visual images evoke the squalor of the city of Calcutta as well as the diseased psyches of the characters.
Structurally, the novel is divided into four disproportionately parts or chapters. Part I entitled 'Nirode' presents the life of the hero in 106 pages. Part II entitled 'Monisha' presents the life of Monisha in unhappy and suffocating atmosphere of large traditional Bengali family where she works as a bondslave to her mother-in-law and aunts in 32 pages. Part III entitled 'Amla' presents life of Amla working for independence running for 94 pages as it throws light on Dharma and also Nirode. Part IV ‘Mother’ terminates in 23 pages as the novelist and Nirode do not know how to deal with her.

In *Voices in the City* uniform narrative technique is not used. The artist must use uniform narrative technique to produce the effect of unity of tone and impression in a novel. Part I 'Nirode' uses third-person universal observer technique with Anita Desai as the historian narrator. Part II 'Monisha' suddenly shifts to documentary narrative technique with Monisha as a diarist biographer. The documentary technique enables Monisha to present freely the oddities of her own thoughts and temper and to confide her own secrets to the diary which she could not with a human being. Part III 'Amla' suddenly resorts to the third person omniscient universal technique enabling the narrator the novelist herself to describe in detail the idiosyncrasies of Nirode, Amla, Monisha and Dharma and to present a detached picture of the lives they are leading. Part IV 'Mother' is in the Omniscient narrative technique again. Presentation of 'Mother' both as a demon and a goddess is likely in the universal observer technique. The action of the novel leaves the impression of being uneven, hotchpotch, and unshapely so does the narrative technique. The documentary narrative technique of Part –II is jarring, perhaps, to reflect the jarring, frustrating notes of Monisha's psyche which suddenly erupt into a volcanic disgust in Part III enticing her to end her life. perhaps, that is why, Anita Desai uses the hotchpotch in the narrative technique. However the novel suffers artistically all the same, particularly in comparison with other novels of Anita Desai.
The flashback technique is used in *Voices in the City*. The joy and trauma of the childhood experience of Monisha, Amla and Nirode get reflected in the attitudes and sensibilities of all these characters. The obsession with dream and memory and the urge to escape the dreadful reality of social existence lead the characters to an introspective stance. They turn to the innocent days of the past, the pleasure and joy of childhood. This nostalgic sense of innocence leads to a schizophrenic tendency in Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* and Monisha in *Voices in the City*.

Amla remembers the long summer holidays of her childhood playing with gardener's children and going off to the orchard to build camps and fuss over dolls. She recollects her mother as the most beautiful woman she knows. Unlike Nirode, Amla's recollection of her mother is full of appreciation and admiration. Jit also remembers the lost world of his childhood. The orchestra, the busy waiters, the dancers amidst all these Jit continues to mourn over his lost world. He recollects his past sitting in the garden in the evening Monisha also recollects her past memories which she writes in her diary.

Besides depicting Monisha's relationship with her husband and her in laws, Anita Desai has rightly chosen the technique of flashback to unfold Monisha's early life when she is caught in her true colours. These true colours and the realism about Monisha's personality become more desirable and meaningful when they appear as a contrast to the conflicting situations faced by her in the first stage when she has to face and rationalize the conflict or the dilemma. It is due to contrast in this stage of dilemma that her early experiences, particularly in reference to her life Kalimpong, represent the apparently even tenor of her life.

In *Voices in the City* the characters are not only individuals but also types. Sonny is rich landlord's son with extravagant habits and shallow understanding. Arun is an obedient son till he marries an American Wife. Jit Nair is a successful businessman but a failure as a husband. Bose earns both money and wisdom from old books. Jiban is a cipher as a man, not
understanding his wife. But the redeeming feature of all that they are friendly and helpful to Nirode. Most of the characters in the novel are flat. They do not develop or change. If there is any growth it is negligible. Nirode is not a flat character, it can not be reduced to any fixed idea or formula. He is a complex character. He has determination and force of will, he is hard working.

*Bye-Bye, Blackbird* depicts the plight of Indian immigrants in London. Artistically speaking, this novel is rather weak in comparison of Desai’s other novels in the matter of technique. It is the most rooted in experience and the least literary in derivation. The novel is very thin in texture also. Even the imagery is very sparse. Many critics feel that the novel does have a tremendous potential for the exploration of the East-West theme besides the psychic tumult of Sarah. The novel revolves round the immigrants, Adit, Dev and their Indian friends. In the midst of their affirmations and rejections towards England, Sarah, the English wife of Adit, remains a disturbing figure throughout the novel.

The novel is an example of certain features and fictional techniques to Anita Desai. The exploration of Sarah’s psyche on one hand, and the peculiar lyricism of Anita Desai in evoking the beauty of London and the English countryside on the other, sustain the reader’s interest. The imagery in this novel is confined mostly to London and Hampshire, Sarah’s parental home. Unlike in the earlier novels, there is not much of animal or bird imagery in the portrayal of the characters. However, we find colour imagery when the novelist deals with the picturesque beauty of England and the ‘darkness’ or ‘greyness’ that is presented within the consciousness of the characters.

While *Cry, the Peacock* begins with death of pet and its corresponding images of sickness and fear, *Voices in the City* begins with farewell and a sense of regret. But *Bye-Bye Blackbird* begins with a pleasant description of the morning light. The very beginning sets the tone of the novel:
The morning light slid down the lane lengths of telephone wires, perched a while on the peaks of television aerials and then rolled down the drainpipes into the new leafed hedges set the birds and the bottles (milk) clinking and clanking in informal good-morning voices (7).

The words and phrases like 'slid,' 'perched', 'rolled down' set the bottles clinking and clanking' and 'informal good-morning voices' suggest bird-movements. These words also evoke the sense of sound and movements beautifully. In the beginning of the novel we have images of light which are in the words- "red roots", blackened brick walls' 'half-smothered' liquid light (7).Some images are used for showing enchanting depressing mood of Dev and some are used for enhancing his vision and his acceptance of Dev's new home.

In contrast to the cheerfulness of these images of light, we have almost immediately the images of costumes and masks which point out the theatrical, unreal existence of the protagonists. Sarah puts on defensive mask, whenever she goes out of the house. Her intense urge for self preservation forces her to conceal her true agonized self and confused despair from the unsympathetic, cruelly curious outside world:

She kept a sharp look out for those who walked their dogs at this hour, keeping to the loneliest path, walking under the trees and drawing across her face a mask of secrecy (33).

Sarah's preference for the loneliest path, her "sharp look out" to see anyone walks that side and observes her, her 'violence' in turning away from the passers by reveals her sense of insecurity and alienation from English society. The fear that she might be mocked or jeered at for her interracial marriage makes her wear a mask purposely.

Sarah is gripped by fear only when she is in transit form one role to another. She can be herself only within the house or within the school. She can be either an Indian wife or an English woman but can number both at the same time. This daily conflict of playing two
entirely different roles torments her and tears her apart. Anita Desai gives a clue to the exaggerated agony of Sarah in an animal image which brings out her sense of inadequacy and the incompleteness of her very being "a pony on uncertain legs, startled by each gnat and mayfly" (206). She feels the two selves in her, the English self and the Indian one, are only," frauds, each, had a large shadowed elements of charade about it and "her face was only a mask, her body a costume, where was Sarah? (36). This identity crisis coupled with an element of theatricality and unreality sweeps over the life of Sarah.

Sarah suffers from dual estrangement both from England and India. The problem lies within herself. She may not be able to find a resolution to her conflict, not achieve the perfect unison with Adit but her need for order, calm and stillness makes her walk on the path of sanity and acceptance. A mixed image of machine and religion helps us to understand Sarah's positivism:

Counting, tidying, taking out and putting in some mechanism had taken her over... and set her moving and working in a comfortably assured and uncomplicated way.. With the conviction of a priestess that if all the rites were performed, all the rules observed, life would be, after all, simple (35).

Considering the use of colour imagery in this novel, we find it is mostly the colour 'grey' that dominates the lives of the central characters. The grey building rustled with the rainbows shed by pigeons' wings (103). To the same Dev, London appears in all its 'greyness' when he is sick and despondent. He sees in his feverish dreams only, "grey streets, grey lanes, grey squares and a sea of black water" (123). Sarah's passivity is suggested by her "grey and silent" eyes. The week and spent at her mother's place is so unpleasant that it too is rendered in 'grey colour'.

As in several other novels in this novel too Anita Desai makes use of symbolic situations, symbolic lines and objects. The title of the novel, Bye-Bye Blackbird is itself has
symbolic meaning. The title itself is a line from a poem and the poem is quoted more than once in the novel. It is used at different places in the novel with different intentions. Its first occurrence is in chapter I’s where the poem is sung: "Softly and sentimentally" when he is strolling with Dev towards Highstreet:

Pack up all my cars and woe, Here I go, singing low, Bye-Bye Blackbird where somebody cares for me, sugar is sweet and so is she, Bye-Bye Blackbird (21).

The lines indicate the care freeness and gaiety of Dev. The poem is quoted again in Chapter V but with different lines conveying different moods i.e. the mood of maladjustment and sorrow. In the alien country, Adit feels, people do not understand him. While goes to flat, he murmurs: “Here no one can love or understand me, make my bed and light the light, I'll arrive late tonight. Blackbird Bye-Bye” (129).

These lines are highly symbolic. Here is one immigrant, a "blackbird" biding goodbye to another. These lines here suggest the gradual change coming here in Adit and his gradual disenchantment from his adopted country. The novel ends with these lines of the poem.

There are several other instances in the novel where poetry both literary and folk is used and such uses are strikingly relevant to theme and situation.

Anita Desai has used a dream symbol for the projection of Sarah's alienation, her sense of inadequacy and her inner struggle:

She had dreamt she was borne upon the back of a mighty water mammoth that suddenly rose out of its underwater lair to start burrowing and digging through banks of black mud that flow, back into her face no matter how she fought it off, protesting and very nearly choked her (151).

Sarah does not seem to suffer from 'self-pity' or self hate. There is enough aggressiveness in her to fight against such impulses. Her problem is her inadequacy.
Sarah's search for self, for her loss of identity as an individual symbolises a woman's search for self in general. While playing two diverse roles in her life, she loses herself. There is nothing she can call her own. Her two colleagues at school, Miss Pimm and Julia Baines represent the two sides of life, the two possible attitudes towards everything. Miss Pimm symbolises sadness, dullness and negative approach to life, while Julia epitomises all that is bright, carefree and lively. The maladjustment in the lives of Sarah and Adit is symbolised by Adit's indifference to her becoming an integral part of his world. 'Tea', generally being associated with normal, practical, everyday routine and gets togetherness, at times, seems to acquire symbolic overtones in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. In the novel, the symbol ‘tea’ is related to Sarah when Adit for the first time announces his decision to leave England and declares that his son will be born in India, Sarah finds herself in a psychic turmoil yet she proposes: “Let's have a cup of tea” (204). This is symbolical of her having overpowered the threatening psychic storm in her heart.

*Bye-Bye Blackbird* is based on chronological sequencing. It is a story of Dev, Adit and Sarah. Structurally, the novel is divided into three parts: Arrival, Discovery and Recognition, and 'Departure. It means Anita Desai here follows triptych structure. In the first part, Dev. arrives in England for higher studies stays with Adit and Sarah, is perturbed with he finds Indians humiliated in both public and private places. The second part entitled 'Discovery and Recognition' describes the transition of moods in both Dev and Adit. The last part titled 'Departure' narrates the execution of final decision of Adit and Sarah to leave for India. The casual chain, on which this chronological sequencing is based, somewhere leaves a sense of incompleteness.

The decisions of both Dev and Adit are too at sudden and contrary to the values professed in the earlier part of the novel and hence create an impression of superficiality, resulting in a lack of sympathy from the reader. There is little presentational manipulation in
the novel, except for the choice of scenes and events for the purpose of foregrounding the theme.

*Bye-Bye Blackbird* has two prominent narrative voices i.e. of Dev and Adit. The third voice is that of Sarah who seems to be the catalyst exerting a strong influence on both Dev and Adit. The narrator adopts the tone of an amused observer, witnessing this drama of black birds. The matter of fact tone continues throughout the novel. The author neither condemns nor acclaims the decision of the two friends. The novel ends on a note of compromise. Dev content with his new home in England, and the Sen's already on their way to India. In the novel the implied author chooses to remain distant from the characters by juxtaposing two individuals faced with the same choice. Both Dev and Adit could either stay in England or come back to their motherland.

Anita Desai's common fictional technique of contrasting characters is used in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* too. There is the contrast between the Englishmen and Indians, between Dev and Adit and between Adit and Sarah. Adit is the lover of English Society and England but Dev is a hater of England. In the end of the novel, one learns that their roles change. Adit becomes the hater of England. Dev decides to stay forever in this foreign land although he is rejected. Secondly, Sarah, an English wife of Adit is also an example of contrast with in herself. Sarah tries to adjust herself totally with Adit and his Indian background but inspite of her least efforts; she is torn between herself, between her outer reality. She fails to make proper adjustment with the Indian background of her husband. Another use of this technique is to be found in Sarah's character and that of other Indian women who have totally adjusted to England. Another Anglicized character is Mr. Krishna Swami Krishnamurthy who hates going back to India but does want to start fishing business in South India. Both Krishna Swami and Dev are contrasts to Adit.
Where Shall We Go This Summer? depicts the inner-outer world of its protagonists, Sita. It is the story of the middle-aged Sita who is fed up with mundane routine of a meaningless existence. She feels suffocated in her well ordered, posh flat in Bombay and struggles hard to break away from it all. She decides to go back to the island Manori where she had spent many golden days of childhood with her family to seek peace, pleasure and a great pause in meaning. The concrete form, the befitting style, and the economy of detail make the work a curious 'tour de force'. The novel is another in the ingenious craftsmanship of Anita Desai.

Imagery plays a significant role in this novel. Her images are both simple and figurative and frequently they rise to symbolical heights and have a haunting emotional quality about them. Her prose is packed with images as if it constituted verse. The images in Where Shall We Go This Summer? help us to trace the theme of escape and reconciliation through the 'spiritual voyage' of Sita. The instinctive reluctance of the visitors in the opening part of the novel to come out of the car intuits their gloomy prospect at the island and their later disillusionment. Race of men on the island is looked at as that of ants:

She sat... staring at the people who had come to stare at them and now were turning to go about their errands, like ants who have paused wondered, then gone on (17-18).

This is only one of the denigrating, belittling images used for the human race on this plant.

Descriptive images presenting the 'mud' and 'slush' and 'bamboo stakes' 'drains' 'thatched roof' 'mud huts', children amid pigs in Manori village are recreating the natural countryside. The descriptive images are employed to describe the once magic house of Sita's father on the island acquire a figurative significance:
Then she went in at last and saw what had become of the house in twenty years of absence—a 'waste of ashes' she saw, the cold remains of the bonfire her father had it here to a blaze. Ashes, white, and waste (28)

This house is now full of 'spider webs' 'skeletal palm leaves' with 'odour of bats and mildew like under sea cave and abandoned shell. This very house was the seat of miracles, human service, cure of diseases, and source of all relief to the miserable. If the land is paradise, the house is the temple of God then. Now the house, with the father's divine light and love gone, is only ashes.

The city, Bombay and the island Manori symbolize the two different realms of Sita's existence and provide a necessary contract the symbolic action of the novel. Sita's life in the city is depicted mainly through the images of violence and her island life is teemed with images of sea, sunshine, colour and flowers. It reveals the sense of gaiety, freedom and regeneration experienced by Sita and at the same time reveals the writer's fine poetic sensibility and her acute awareness of the delicate, the beautiful and the sensuous in nature.

Sita's life with her husband Raman in the city of Bombay is one of misery, isolation and loneliness. But Sita's first journey to the island evokes a sense of excitement and joyful expectation:

They had been blown towards the island, that first time, on the waves of a silk smooth sea, rippling with enthusiasm, bounding with anticipation, sparkling with hope (58).

In keeping with this holiday atmosphere, there is a succession of images of colour, light, sea, animals and birds, celebrating the sense of joy and relief felt by Sita. She describes every minute thing and event in the island in the most flowery terms. She is happy to see the garlands of rose and marigold flung by the chelas into the sea bobbing "on the waves like coloured ducks" (59). The bullock cart is" freshly painted with crackling white and pink
streamers" (59). The new house, gifted to her father, stood on top of the knell as, "white as a washed shell" and its name if freshly painted on a signboard beside, "a hibiscus bush in full bloom" (60). The coconut palms, the "crisp sun" the "pink" fluttering sheets of Bombay “duck hung out to dry”, the 'purple' young man in a lungi of 'green' checked cotton and a woman, encased in a 'pink' shirt and an 'orange' blouse like some ripe fruit complete the picture of this earthly paradise. As if these are not enough, there is a sparkling sea too. Sita describes her father too in loving terms. He is like "one of those white water birds that marked the sands with their starred footprints" (67). As in the other novels, this bird image denotes Sita's affinity with her father.

A destructive and derogatory image from animal world is used to describe the merchant class:

They are like pariahs you see in the streets, hanging about drains and dustbins waiting to pounce and kill and eat (47).

Another derogatory and belittling image is used for merchant ladies:

Like elephants, she thought eating grass shifting foot to foot, swaying their trunks, small eyed, eating (49)

In the world of Anita Desai's fiction there is always a close correspondence between the mood or the psychic state of the character and nature. Nature participates in the human drama and highlights the mental state of the characters. This auditory image proves once again that Anita Desai takes special care to chisel her images. Sita's fury and feeling of horror, when she witnesses her father crushing the mother's jewellery and mixing it in the medicines, are well brought out in the following image:

She went back the pallet and lay looking out of the open door at the indigo darkness that the sharp shapes of bat's wings now and then cut and sliced and
at the palm trees turned to monuments of blackened silver by the moonlight (82-83).

The passage reveals that Sita now understands 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 baaf a creature of the dark.

The house, the sea, the islanders, the children the disturbances of external nature, the monsoon, the birds, the jelly fish, attachments and detachments indicate the world full of violence and destruction. 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:

With glee the crows whistled ... wheel; in ecstasy they moved their wings; crra-crra, they laughed and rasped as they whipped if with their blue-bottle wings and tore into it with their scimitar beaks. 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 (38-39).

The above incident crystallizes the tragic vision of Anita Desai. 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 crows. This science of murder and mutilation is reflective of all pervasive violence and victimization. It is formed the 'shadow civilization' in the city of Bombay. Besides it, the unconscious acts of violence committed by the members of her family frighten and appeal Sita. She is horrified to see that destruction comes so naturally to all her children and that they all indulge in acts of violence unthinkingly. Menaka crumbles the new buds of the small potted plant and rips her paintings into shreds very calmly. The older boys enjoy a mock fight and Karan, the youngest son, seems to derive more lustful joy in crashing a tower of blocks than in building them. The fights of servants
affront her nerves and bring out neurotic responses from her. Sita feels she is living in the 'wilds' and not in a civilized society.

The central image and symbol of the book is the island of ‘Manori’. The island of Manori is solid natural landscape with a village in it. It is a place of escape, a sort of dreamland, a place of freedom and relief to the psyche of Sita baffled by complications of modern life. It can be regarded as a paradise symbol. The island is the controlling metaphor.

The other most significant symbol in the novel is that of the sea. The entire action of the novel takes place against the background of the sea as it is present both in the island and in the mainland. The sea which is symbolic of the "mystic unknown" between the polarity of the city and the island baffles her. The 'sea' in the city near her flat does not seem to be a "symbol of liberation".

[...] the sea was to have come surging up and washed the city away from her. Strangely enough, the sea carried little away but brought much to those rocks on which it ceaselessly spilled, littering them with the rotten carcasses of fish, with stinking seaweed... Throwing them up at her, the sea ran out, hissing, fold upon drawn back, drawn back till she shuddered to think what else it might reveal (50).

The sea in the island revives and rejuvenates Sita. But the same sea in the city seems to attacking her, throwing up the rot at her, with venomous violence. The sea symbolizes only the violence and aggression that frightens Sita. Another sea image depicts the marital discord between Sita and her husband, "In the snarled moment of silence, time was a scummy sea, telling nothing" (35). This is an apt metaphor signifying the gulf of incomprehension and incompatibility that separates them. In the end of the novel, the sea image is used: "there is just the sea it drowns us or strands us on the sandbar and there is the island. That is all" (149). Thus, the sea is the symbol of life full of hardships and the island only an escape from it.
Sita is not only disturbed by violence around her but also the emptiness of her life. Anita Desai employs many images to bring out the emptiness, futility and meaninglessness of her life and marriage. Driving back from the Ajanta and Ellora caves where the family spent a holiday, Sita passes through:

an immensely long and curiously empty road through a landscape of heaped rocks and gray-pillared banyan trees that looked like the petrified remains of some ancient vegetables civilization (50).

The empty road' and the bleak setting reflect Sita's empty life. The negative metaphors in the passage denote the living death of her existence. A cluster of images tumble one after another, signifying the futility of Sita's pilgrimage. The island is not picturesque as she remembered it, but is just a shabby place:

The island offered them, to begin with, a lone soda water shop under a clump of toddy plams and a very shabby, broken bullock card in front of it... that ever hanging sky was flowering into sunset radiance the piled clouds, with the sun setting some where within their hearts, lighted from within like lamps in the shape of artificial roses, casting a light of fluid gold across the western sky (20).

Sita's hopes are shattered. The island with its magic has been decayed. It seems to symbolise only isolation, desolation, artificiality, drabness and shabbiness. Everywhere Sita finds only a picture of despair:

The fields were only pits of mud and slush... The Manori village was on evil mass of over flowing drains, gaping thatched roof and huts all battered and away (22).

The above scenes of dirt and decay are quite a contrast to the sparkling scenes of life and beauty that welcomed Sita on her first arrival. Everywhere, the striking feature is the
novelist's power of portraying graphically every minute detail. By using evocative images effectively, Anita Desai brings out the state of decay and dereliction of the house. The house represents not only death and destruction. It has become so empty that it can hardly provide any protection to Sita and her children. The house, revealing the darkness inside, symbolises Sita's inner void. It is situated on the top of the knoll in an island separated totally from the mainland by the sea, represents her ego and total isolation. It becomes a symbolic equivalent of Sita's alienated self.

The religious images too are also used with reference the father bringing out the holy' image, he still retained in the heart of the islanders. The 'cow' that becomes a sacrificial victim to 'holly well' dug by father is a complex image, inviting many inferences. If the 'well' represents family, the 'cow' symbolise Sita's mother, the victim of the father.

Sita's liberation from her vague fears and doubles, shadows and darkness of her inner self, is traced effectively through subsequent positive images:

They (Sita and the children) went out through the broken gate, down a flight of stone steps that the rain had washed clean of sand and stepping out of the fringed shadows of the casuarinas and across the tangle of bind weed on the dunes, were out on the beach (121).

'The broken gate' the fringed shadows and 'the tangle of bindweed' symbolise her past.

The spell of a magical evening on the sea-shore which even her children were enjoying is shattered abruptly when Sita spots a baby jelly fish lying defeated and dead on a sand bar. She feels that the gigantic sea creature represents her own 'self' and the opaque 'mind' that had burst troth from the 'white' skull of that creature after much torment represents the 'foetus' inside her. The plight of the baby jelly-fish saddens her. She is frightened at the prospect of the same sad, hopeless future for her unborn child. This image of jelly-fish foreshadows the future of Sita's fifth child.
The images of light and darkness, the wind, of the island and the city are the most significant in the novel highlighting the dominant themes of alienation, violence and escape. They also reveal the different conflicting states of mind of Sita, her sensitivity to the surroundings in terms of sounds and colours. Religious imagery is used only to highlight the image of the father. Animal and bird imagery does not make any significant contribution to the richness of the novel.

Anita Desai follows a triptych structure also in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*. It is divided into three parts namely, "Monsoon" (67) "Winter"(47) and "Monsoon "(67). The section division refers to the present and past of the novel and there by the childhood and the youth of the heroine Sita. Part I "Monsoon 67" assimilates us on the island Manori and manifests the present time of Sita's life. Part II "Winter 47" depicts the reminiscences of her childhood in Manori. Part III 'Monsoon 67" comes back to the present. It is concerned with Sita's recovery from her plunge into existential nullity. Sita discovers her natural roots and connections by reviving her contact with the soil. The conclusion of the novel is similar "healing" return to the normalcy of life the regularity that had so much appalled Sita. It is observed that the structure of the novel is co-related with the content of the story:

The triptych structure of the novel neatly forms the pattern of the thesis, anti thesis, and synthesis. Sita's consciousness develops through the process of consideration, rejection and then acceptance of the terms of life within this structure. She makes a new life for herself and is eager to let the new life in her to be borne in this world. (Rao Vimla, 176-177).

In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* fantasy is used to reinterpert reality. The magic island of Manori, Sita's father who is a protective figure in the island like Prospero, her desire to keep the child unborn and several other references have an element of fantasy in them.
The novel also has patches of past memory woven into the narrative. For it Anita Desai has used flashback technique. Part II of the novel depicts reminiscences of Sita's childhood in Manori. Sita undergoes acute mental agonies and escape into the island of Manori to capture the purity and innocence of her childhood. She does it both for herself and for the child. Sita sees the island as a "piece of magic, magic mirror." In that paradise of her father,"Moses and Miriam are the original inhabitants" (61). Sita has an unusual childhood, which is full of large meaningful happenings but also as very trivial. She has never lived the life of "ruby and pearl". She does not remember ever wanting or waiting for her mother. As a child Sita has sensed an illicit relationship between her father and Phoolmaya and also an incestuous relationship between her step sister Rekha and her father. For the second time when Sita visits the island, it is an escape and a release from the city life. After twenty years the island has changed. Sita misses the milieu of innocence and purity of her childhood. Thus, the novel is based on nostalgia element. Sita moves like a pendulum between her past and present memories.

The memory flashes take the form of stream of consciousness probing of past, present and future. No doubt the novel deals with psychological probing of the mind of the heroine. Sita who is pregnant but does not want to deliver the baby and instead goes to the Island of Manori where she has spent her childhood, thinking that the magical island would somehow stop the biological process of delivery. Thus psychic ups and downs of Sita are presented through the stream of consciousness technique.

It is in this novel 'third person narrative' technique is used. In it author has adopted an omniscient stance. Anita Desai by using this technique presents the life of Sita, her states of mind psychological analysis description of Manori. Here she is able to evoke a strong feeling of closeness with Sita and others. The novel is marked by the conflicting voices of Sita and her father. The implied author stays in the background. It is in the beginning and the end that
the implied author comments indirectly on the person of Sita through the minor characters in the novel. The implicit dialogue and monologues of Sita form the core of the novel.

*Fire on the Mountain* is stylistically the most successful among other novels of Desai. In this novel, she makes use of the themes of the underworld and delineates emotional deprivations to substantiate the theme in a language suggestive of submerged symbolical associations.

The novel describes marital discord, loneliness, withdrawal and alienation, substantiating the novelists’ conviction that all human relationship are inadequate and that loneliness is an inescapable human predicament. This malady affects the child, the young and the old. The two ladies in the novel, Nanda Kaul and Ila Das and the child, Raka suffer from isolation and alienation in varying degrees for different reasons. The novel is set in Kasauli which is focused on Nanda Kaul, Ila Das and Raka and their experiences. It centres on the conflicts between an older Indian woman and her mentally ill great granddaughter.

Nanda Kaul, the widow of a vice-chancellor of Punjab University lives in retirement in Kasouli a hill station in Northern India. Despite her struggle to ward off all intrusion from her past life, her friend Ila Das and her great grandchild, Raka follow her even to this secluded spot and destroy her tiny world of stoicism and calm. The brutal act of Ila Das’ rape and murder shatters Nanda's illusory world. She feels torn within at the shameful reality of her self deception. And Raka becomes the actual agent of setting fire to the forest, symbolically setting ablaze Nanda's fabricated world of presences. Raka thus becomes the instrument in bringing about the physical death of Nanda though her psychic death is already caused by the news of Ila's murder. It is just a rotten world which is full of violence and in which visionary and sensitive suffer nothing but suffocation and oppression. The lives of these three women are unlived and unloved. The negative emotions resulting from such dreary lives determine the nature of the images as imagery always correspondence to the
theme and content of the novel in Anita Desai's fictional world. The story element is very thin and there is practically no action except for the tragic end.

The use of imagery makes the novel rich in texture. As the novel opens and progresses, it is made richer and richer by the use of imagery. As Madhusudan Prasad observes, "this novel, deprived of its imagery world be an ugly skeleton, chilling the reader" (69).

In the novel, the theme of violence, loneliness, alienation and withdrawal moves ahead with the help of evocative and thematically significant images and symbols. These images and symbols reflect the psyches of the protagonists and suggest the novelist's comments on their attitudes. They also create the appropriate atmosphere, evoke the required mood and lend textual density and beauty to the novel. With single mindedness of aim every image and symbol seems to be foregrounding the theme and thereby lending structural unity to the novel. There is no monotony or boredom.

Violence looms large over this novel, and corresponding to this theme images are used. The novel is especially significant, as auditory imagery is used with such a power and force that the theme of violence gains all its intensity through it. The thematic image of 'fire' with its connotations of violence and urgency occurs at regular intervals, warning us to us to the impending tragedy. The significant house imagery, the images of plants, colour, atmosphere, moon, birds, insects and animals all contribute to textural density and symbolic centrality to the novel. There is a great sense of place in the novel. Just as Calcutta is the extension of the psyche of the three protagonists in Voices in the City, Carignano symbolizes the psychic states of the three characters in this novel, though with less intensity. While vivifying their psychic states, the images help us to trace their changed perceptions.

Anita Desai's predilection for prey-predator imagery abounds in this novels also. Images of ugliness, loneliness, destruction and annihilation are consistently used in order to
reflect the existential tone of the novel. From the very beginning of her career as novelist

*Fire on the Mountain* is the only novel in which Anita Desai repeats imagery with remarkable skills and design. It is in the opening chapter, the image of the pine tree that stands burnt and alone is used skillfully. The pine tree is often an object of attraction for Nanda Kaul. A parallel has been shown between Nanda Kaul and a pine tree:

She stepped backwards into the garden and the wind suddenly billowed up and threw the pine branches about as though to curtain her. She was grey, tall and thin and her silk sari made a sweeping, shivering sound and she fancied she could merge with the pine tress and be mistaken for one. To be a tree, no more and no less, was all she was prepared to undertake. (3-4)

Indira notes, "Nanda's sense of identification with the pine trees suggests her desire for absolute stillness and withdrawal from life (Indira, 97). Nanda's desire for absolute stillness is only a negation of life.

The first important image of bird figures in the opening chapter of the novel. It is used for verifying Nand Kaul's inner uneasiness:

Nanda Kaul did not regard them (birds) very highly even if she stooped now to pick up a bright apricot from the short, dry grass. It had its nest in the eaves outside her bedroom window, she knew, but did not stay to watch the nestlings fed. It was a sight that did not fill her with delight.

Their screams were shrill and could madden. (4).

Anita Desai is known for creating a specific setting which evokes the tone of the novel or reflects the psychic state of her characters. In *Fire on the Mountain* she has selected Carignano with its bleakness and barrenness as the proper setting for Nanda Kaul's later part of life. The setting in the novel is very powerful. It operates strongly on the psyche of the
characters in different ways. The image of the barrenness of Carignano has a symbolical meaning.

The location of the house is a symbol of Nanda Kaul's isolated, lonely self. Its sweeping views of regal Himalayas and arid plains are juxta posed to bring out her stately physique and withered inner self. The landscape seems to be in tune with the condition of Nanda Kaul in her loneliness. As Shyam Asnani points out, "Anita Desai is perhaps the only Indo-English novelist who lays stress on the landscape and correlates it with the psychic state of her protagonists" (86).

Carignano is situated on the long narrow hilltop, mountain range in Kasauli, Nanda Kaul is completely satisfied with its cool, quiete serence picture and also with its starkness and seclusion. The image of Carignano is explained here:

She turned around and gazed at her house instead, simple and white and shining on the bleached ridge. It seemed as exactly right as a house for her, it satisfied her heart completely (4).

After reading her daughter Asha's letter which informs the news of Raka's arival, Nanda Kaul becomes quite upset about it. She knows that the arrival of Raka will obviously result in the loss of her freedom. Her despair and weariness at being burdened with duties once again when all she wants is stillness and calm of Carignano are revealed in a flower image. She thinks that, “the yellow rose creeper had blossomed so youthfully last month but was now reduced to an exhausted mass of grey creaks and groans again” (17). Here, Nanda sees herself as the yellow rose creeper which is creaking and groaning. It reveals that Anita Desai's heroines are all obsessed with their own psychic state and this obsession affects all their responses and reflections.

In the domestic responsibilities, her inner self has been smothered and suppressed. She has become a machine. She has lost her human capability to relate to others. She feels no
love for any one. Nanda's intense dislike of her family which does not leave her alone, is revealed in the sound imagery in the following passage:

Now, to how again, to let that noose slip once more round her neck that she had thought was freed fully finally. Now to have those wails and bawls shatter and rip her still house to pieces... it seemed unfair (19).

Thus, the violence of the sound imagery, 'wails, bawls shatter and rip' reflects Nanda Kaul's intense dislike of her family.

Animal imagery and bird imagery play a significant role in *Fire on the Mountain*. The entire novel is scattered with numerous zoological images. Using a 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. It is revealed through the following bird image:

An eagle swept over it, far below her, a thousand feet below, its wings outspread... she had wished... to imitate that eagle ... gliding with eyes closed.

Then a cuckoo called, quite close, here in her garden, very softly, very musically but definitely calling. She recognized its domestic done (19).

The images which are used in the passage clarify and make precise the emotional complexities of Nanda Kaul.

An atmosphere of solitary introspection is created with the help of several images, prey and predator. One of the images of prey and predator figures in the following passage:

Nanda Kaul turned her head this way and that in an effort to escape. She watched the white hen drag out a worm inch by resisting inch from the ground till it snapped in two. She felt like the worm herself, she winced at its mutilation (21).

Nanda Kaul's longing for seclusion and stillness is expressed in the following images:
She would be a charred tree trunk in the forest, a broken pillar of marble in the
desert, a lizard on a stone wall. A tree trunk could not harbour irritation, nor a
pillar annoyance. She would imitate death like a lizard. No one would dare
rouse her (23).

Thus, the prey predator image of hen pecking at a worm is suggestive of Nanda Kaul's
present inner agitation. Her past suffering at the hands of her adulterous husband and her
present awareness about the harsh realities of life are both successfully established by this
image. Her senses of identification with the pine trees suggest Nanda's desire for absolute
stillness and withdrawal from life. The words, charred and broken with anti-life connotations
seem to reveal her inner bruised self due to the emotional hurts she suffered. Her death-wish
recurs in her desire to imitate the posture of the lizard. Her intense desire to imitate death like
a lizard is once again mocked by the parrots which dared to rouse her from her reverie. Thus
the image of parrot is also suggestive.

The novel is especially important as auditory imagery is used with power and force.
After bowing her head to the call of domestic duties, Nanda finds the sunlight" too bright, too
dry" (20). Even the raining of the pone sounds "ominous" (20). It is her old friend, Ila Das on
the other side of the phone who is introduced to us in a succession of auditory images:

A burst of crackling and hissing, as of suddenly awakened geese, a brief
silence, then a voice issued from it that made her gasp and shrivel, balling up
her fingers tightly (20).

The hideous voice of her friend stiffens Nanda's already taut nerves. Ila's rasping voice is
effectively expressed in the following words:

[...] the piping, shrillling, screech that was poor Ila's speech, like a long nail
frantically scratching at a glass pane, or a small child gone berserk and prattling
on and on in a voice no one could hear without cringing (21).
Thus the auditory images hint at the nature of Ila Das. She seems to be an odd and jittery woman. Another auditory image is used for suggesting Raka's growing interest in the place Carignano.

She listened to the wind in the pines and the cicadas all shrilling incessantly in the sun with her unfortunately large and protruding ears and thought she had never heard the voice of silence before (40).

The passage reveals that Raka does not seek stillness and calm like Nanda Kaul. She finds the non-human sounds quite sonorous contributing to the strange beauty of the place.

Nanda feels that her privacy and solitude is spoiled by Raka's presence at Carignana. Her dislike for Raka is made clear when she likens the child to an insect, grain of sand in the eye:

She was no more than a particularly dark and irksome spot on the lazy landscape a mosquito, a cricket or a grain of sand in the eye (35).

Another insect imagery is used for Nanda's prejudiced feelings for Raka:

Nanda Kaul thought she looked like one of those dark crickets that leap up in fright but do not sing or a mosquito, minute and fine, on thin, precarious legs (39).

Like Nanda, Raka is also obsessed with the desire for freedom and withdrawal. It becomes clear in a string of images. The child feels uncomfortable when the old lady hugs her and her eyes follow "the flight of the hoopoe that suddenly darted out of the tree" (40). This bird – image externalizes Raka's desire to get away from Nanda. Even on her first day of arrival, Raka feels restless to stay in the room as she long to go out and explore the exotic surroundings. Her restlessness is brought out effectively in an animal image:

She walked about as the newly caged; the newly tamed wild ones do, sliding from wall to wall on silent, investigating pads (40-41).
The image of caged animals haunts the reader right from *Cry, the Peacock* to *In Custody*. All the heroes and heroines of Anita Desai suffer compulsively from an oppressive sense of captivity which stifles them. This image makes it clear that even Raka is no exception.

The dust storm which played a lay-role in *Cry, the Peacock* churning out the frenzy in Maya, serves as a stimulus to Raka's suppressed fury in *Fire on the Mountain*. The fury of the dust storm is portrayed very strikingly. It is used not only to describe a physical event but also to evoke a psychological state of Raka. The dust storm symbolically suggests Raka's inner struggle which too ends up in a "conflagration".

The images of moon symbolize the perverse nature of Raka. She is not enchanted by the beauty of moon, rather she prefers a forest fire. Moon is a metaphor for Raka. We get also insight in Raka's abnormal psyche through some images. Even in her moments of joy, she does not want to share them with anyone else as she like the glorious feelings of being alone in the world: “I’m shipwrecked, Raka exulted, and I’m shipwrecked and alone. She clungs to a rock – my boat, alone in my boat on the sea, she sang” (61-62). The picture of herself, alone in a boat seems to be an obsession with Raka. The same image occurs later in the novel when she contemplates forest fires.

Another important element of narrative technique used in the novel is symbols. There are several symbols that deepen the philosophic implications of the novel. Nanda Kaul's dwelling place, Carignano is symbolic of the loneliness and barrenness of human life in is symbolic of the lonely life of Nanda Kaul and Raka. The barrenness and starkness associated with it does symbolize an essential human condition alienation which is the key note of all existential philosophy.
Like the house symbol, the eagle symbol is repeatedly used in the course of the novel to highlight to quest. The sight of the eagle flying high, makes Nanda long to be able to soar like the bird:

An eagle swept over it, far below her, a thousand feet below, its wings outspread, gliding on currents of air without once moving its muscular wings which remained in repose, in control, she had wished it occurred to her, to imitate the eagle gliding with eyes closed. (19).

This longing for soaring above the reach of deterministic confines is the hallmark of Raka's characters. To emphasize this aspect; Anita Desai uses the eagle symbol while describing Raka's walk to the Monkey point.

She was higher than the eagles, higher than Kasauli and Sanawar and all the other hills: they were as low and soft as banks of golden moss far below. (61).

Nanda Kaul's wish and Raka's attempt merge in the eagle symbol which denotes their existential feeling of guilt and quest for values.

The forest fire scene has symbolic over tones. Like The Fire Sermon in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, “the fire in Fire on the Mountain ... is a destroyer. It is also a purifier" (Calvin 557). By making use of the universal fire symbol, Anita Desai endows Raka's character with allegorical implications. Raka, the invalid restless little girl who is the product of a broken home, becomes the symbol of the existentialists’ perception of the individual who finds herself in this hostile and futile world.

The title of the novel itself is a symbol, suggestive of the anger of Raka against the wicked world. It is also symbolic of a fire burning in the heart of Raka. 'Fire' in the title is symbolic of fires in the hearts of Nanda Kaul, Ila Das and Raka. Raka is disgusted with worldly things, such as the club and the lifeless people dancing, unaware of the higher truths of life which Raka has seen at an early state of life. Nanda Kaul is tired of enmity and wants
to be identified with the tree. Ila Das has been struggling and fighting with social evils such as child marriages, all alone at the risk of her life. The mountain symbolizes Nanda Kaul and fire is also symbolic of Raka's wild nature. Raka's whisper "Look Nani – look- the forest is on fire" (145), has a symbolic significance in the novel. The fire lying suppressed in Nanda Kaul's heart is suddenly set a flame by the shocking end of Ila Das.

The 'badminton court' has become a sinister symbol. It evokes tension, anger, disapproval and distaste in Nanda' Kaul. As the court is the place where Nanda's husband plays the game with his mistress, it becomes the symbol of his treachery. The negative connotations of this image reveal Nanda's sense of injury and insult. The moonlight becomes 'ghostly', the net looks 'grey and spidery', the drive is 'realy silent' and the branches of the trees also turn to be 'ghost- grey' to her distorted and distressed vision. Her plight is symbolized in the "broken and discarded shuttle cock'. It is her life which is, “lacking in harmony and composition” as it has to absorb too many disparate elements.

The three female protagonists have symbolic meaning. The predominant traits of existentialism – alienation, quest and conflict – are epitomized in the lives of three female protagonists. Nanda Kaul is a study in alienation and existential angst. Raka symbolizes the individual's quest for meaning in an otherwise futile life. Ila Das stands for the eternal conflict enacted in the human drama between the individual and the forces of determinism. Thus, by a subtle use of imagery and symbols, Anita Desai has succeeded in giving expression to her existentialist worldview through these female characters and their state of minds.

Structurally, the novel is divided into three sections each neatly dealing with a specific event especially with one of the three women characters in the novel. The three parts are further divided into several chapters. The novel is also divided into three subtitles 1) Nanda Kaul at Carignano 2) Raka comes to Carignano 3) Ila Das leaves Carignano. The first
section runs into ten chapters deal with Nanda Kaul, the main protagonist's lonely life in Kasauli. It has Nanda Kaul hovering between past and present when the future obtrudes in the shape of a letter announcing the impending arrival of an unwanted great grandchild. The second section, the longest, is composed of twenty one chapters and is devoted to Raka's arrival and sojourn at Carignano. Here, Anita Desai, very subtly, depicts the change in Nanda Kaul's attitude to Raka. We see Nanda Kaul changing from sheer hostility to indifference to acceptance, to admiration and finally to affection for her little visitor. The final, third section, which describes in some detail the visit of Ila Das, a childhood friend of Nanda Kaul, also consists of the denouement and may be rightly considered a masterly piece of construction. The strands of the two lives of Ila and Nanda Kaul which had run parallel since the very beginning, covering at certain points, are finally tied in the knot of death. It is significant to note that section III ends in thirteen chapters, the numeral having superstitious connotations of doom and disaster.

In Fire on the Mountain the technique of flashback and recalling the past has been employed to show the hollowness and futility of the protagonist's life. Her past keeps bubbling in her memory and these memories create uncontrollable feelings in her consciousness. The memories of the family and children make Nanda Kaul shudder at the very thought of her past. Nanda Kaul has witnessed only betrayals and demands in life before her retirement to Kasauli. She has lived a monotonous life. Her husband has carried on a life-long affair with his mathematics mistress Miss David. In Carignano whenever she looks at the tall pine trees that stand out from among the under word, she is reminded of her own alienation. The news of the arrival of Raka leads Nanda from present to the past memories which are very troublesome to her.

Anita Desai makes use of fantasy in the novel. Nanda Kaul and Raka have all their own worlds of fantasy woven into their perception of reality. Nanda Kaul creates a fantastic
world by telling imaginary stories to Raka about her childhood, and about her father. It is interesting to note that it is a grown up person and not the child who goes into the world of fantasy. Nanda Kaul's projected childhood is an attempt to create the bond of love between herself and Raka. She also derives a sort of childhood pleasure of which she herself was deprived in her childhood. Nand Kaul thinks," fantasy and fairytale had their place in life" (89). In the storm abated evening when Nanda and Raka are sitting in the drawing room, Raka touches the little bronze Buddha which leads Nanda to weave a fantastic story. She suddenly begins in a "high, musical voice that did not sound as if it belonged to her" (82). Nanda tells Raka, "It comes all the way from Tibet, you know. My father bought it" (82).

Raka's world of fantasy is shaped by her memory of the past. She thinks of the factory as a "square dragon". Ram Lal tells her about the fancy dress ball where ladies are dressed like queens and men like princes. But inside the club Raka finds "madmen and rioters" (69) who appear like monsters chasing each other. But behind this world of fear lies another world in her subconscious world of her childhood. Fantasy, juxtaposed with reality, brings out a change of perspective in the realization of reality in Desai's novels. It becomes a part of the narrative and makes clear the difference between the illusory world of the protagonists and the reality outside.

The use of poetry is a fictional device that Anita Desai uses in *Fire on the Mountain* to communicate her meaning more effectively. In the novel, Anita Desai quotes a poem by G.M. Hopkins. Although here the use of poem is not so significant yet it has some connection with the character of Nanda Kaul who quotes it and the poem signifies her desire to be away from humdrum of life, to a heaven of nature for from the madding crowd.

In the novel, we can hear the omniscient narrator throughout. While silence, rather than speech is the dominant note, we are exposed to snatches of conversation between Nanda Kaul and Raka where the latter responds mostly in gesture rather than speech. In the novel,
the author's voice is in direct juxtaposition of that of Nanda Kaul, Anita Desai as a author narrates and interprets at the same time. Authorial voice changes from scene to scene. Raka and Ila Das are described in impersonal tones with complete objectivity, while Nanda Kaul engages the mind of the author. Towards the end, the voices of Nanda Kaul and the author merge in the confession of Nanda Kaul.

The technique of contrasting characters is also seen in *Fire on the Mountain*. Nanda Kaul and Raka represent contrasted values in the novel. Nanda Kaul is a recluse by pretence. Raka is a recluse by choice. Raka is a lover of nature and a humanitarian par excellence. As against Raka's love nature, Nanda Kaul's love of nature is more of an environmentalist than of a lover of nature. Carignano is presented in this novel as a contrast to the life the city. Nanda's Kaul's dislike for the city life results in her escape to Carignano. She has no interest in the big family that she has to manage or to be the Vice-Chancellor's wife simply to entertain guests. Asha, in her letter to Nanda, mentions about the heat of Delhi and the dustsorm in summer. Asha thinks it would be very nice for Raka's health to stay at Carignano for the speedy recovery of her health and the "heat and humidity o Bombay will do her no good"(15).

*Clear Light of Day* is the most successful novel in several ways, chief of them being the narrative technique and character – portrayal, effective use of poetry, use of flashback technique, the use of the interior monologue and the stream of consciousness and fictional sequencing. The novel has elicited criticism but little on the technique aspect. Anita Desai has successfully used these aspects of fictional technique for the development of the self of Bim, the central female character in the novel.

The whole novel revolves round “Time” drawing different impressions from the characters. Like Calcutta acting as the fourth character in the novel *Voices in the City*, time becomes the fourth dimension in *Clear Light of Day*, depicting the emotional turmoil’s in
Bim. As Bim moves forwards and backwards in memory, unraveling the dark spots of her past and the unresolved agonies of the present, we follow the trail through the recurring images. The house imagery is very arresting as it is central in the development of Bim’s self. The house reflects both the physical and mental development of Bim. It vivifies her moods and evokes an atmosphere of neglect, decay and death.

The garden seems to symbolize Bim’s own self and its plight. On her first morning in Delhi, Tara, woken up by the Koels, runs to meet her sister, to the ‘rose walk.’ her favourite spot in the garden. But she finds only a neglected garden with some miserable – looking little flowers here and there:

The rose walk was a strip of grass, still streaked green and grey, between two long beds of roses—everything else, even the papaya and lemon trees, the bushes of hibiscus and oleander, the beds of canna lilies, seemed abandoned to dust and neglect, to struggle as they could against the heat and sun of summer (1.)

Thus the garden stands for Bim’s 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.

A dreary picture of the house in which there are images of old, faded and worn out things helps to evolve Bim’s self from happiness to a sense of despair and desolation. The image of the empty house and darkness foreshadows Bim’s depressing–future. While living life in the house, Bim realises that her fate is leading a dull and uneventful life. So she regards her house, “a tomb” and old Delhi itself,’ a great cemetery’ (5). The house is like “gray suffocating cell” (89).

After the death of Mrs. Das and Mr. Das, Raja leaves for Hyderabad by disregarding his domestic responsibilities. Tara, her sister, has got married to a young man in the Indian
Foreign Service and has left Ceylon. So that Bim is left alone in the old house in old Delhi to look after her mentally retarded younger brother Baba.In this circumstance,Bim feels that the development of her mind is blocked.This situation is evoked by using the images of the scummy well which reflects her self’s stagnancy and stativity. The stagnant domestic life becomes the hurdle in evolving feminine self of Bim. The images of the well and the house are closely linked to each other for showing the state of Bim’s mind and self. The well in the backyard of the house constantly hovers in the consciousness of Mira Masi and Bim.

The colours that dominate the landscape of this novel are white and grey. There is an occasional green or red. When Bim suggests ‘red’ colour for the furniture of the school run by Jaya and Sarla much to their discomfiture, while Jaya insists that it should be ‘ pink or blue’ (161), the colours denote their very natures. Bim’s rebellion and spite are revealed in her preference for ‘red’ with its connotations of violence and anarchy. Jaya’s passivity and soft nature is revealed in her preference for sober colours like ‘pink’ standing for elegance or ‘blue’ representing melancholy.

The images of birds, animals, and insects are parts of the landscape of the house. They evoke the atmosphere; participate in the emotional turmoil’s of Bim and Tara. The novel begins with the call of the Koels evoking the spirit of the day – break; “The Koels began to call before day light. Their voices rang out from the dark trees like an arrangements of bells” (7). This metaphor of awakening is an important romantic metaphor for the emergence of the self into a new life. Apart from the images of cow, koels, horse, pigeons, a pet cat and a pet dog form a part of the background and reflect the development of the self of Bim and Tara. The snail imagery illuminates the real character of Bim. Madhusudan Prasad connects the ‘snail’ to Bim as it is she who shoulders all the responsibility alone sacrificing the pleasures of life(75). The snail imagery reflects the vulnerability of Bim’s self.
There are a few insect images serving the same functions as the animal images. The image of ‘bees’ in connection with an episode in Lodhi gardens reveals Bim’s character and foreshadows her future predicament. Bim does not scream even when she is covered and stung by the bees which reveal the inner core of her character. She can face problems and suffer bravely without flinching with terror, without screaming for help. And Bim’s future as a queen, a prisoner, a sacrificial victim is suggested in this image. She reigns over their old house like a queen, is trapped in that like a prisoner with no freedom to go out into the wider world to lead her life in her own way and is also a victim to the selfishness of her brother Raja. The image of ‘a cricket’ responds to Bim’s sorrow over the blighted, tragically wasted youth.An invisible cricket by her feet at that moment began to weep inconsolably “(72). The inconsolable weeping of the cricket conveys the deep grief suppressed in Bim’s consciousness.

The plant, flower and fruit images are very scant but they do hint the psychic states of the characters and their temperaments. The hedges round the garden of the house seem to symbolize Bim’s mental state. The blackened ripe mulberries scattered like ‘worms’ represent the emotional complexities of Bim.

**Clear Light of Day** is divided into four united parts. Part I opens with the Koels providing a lyrical background to Tara’s musings. Bim’s reminiscences of her childhood take up most of Part II, while Part III is given over to Tara’s point of view. The final section is shared by the two sisters and is rounded off with Bim. Although, the Chronology of the Das family has been traced, the sequencing is more in keeping with the psychological and presentational order. The commentary is direct and impersonal but the writer selects and highlights events and episodes to create a necessary background for the moment of ‘recognition’ in the life of Bim, to justify the ethical stance of the novel. The beginning gives
a general impression of the family but withholds details for dramatic presentation in the middle of the novel. The forgiveness, self-realization, self-awakening and surge of emotions towards the end seem natural and acceptable as Bim is forced into introspection and self-analysis by Tara’s visit.

The novel has the balanced force of two narrative voices, the implied author and Bim. It is Bim’s consciousness that the novel projects. But, the implied author is in that control of the narrative in the novel. From the beginning, it is a third person narration with strong personal markers. The implied author discloses the layers of Bim’s consciousness formed over the years, through the characters of Tara and Raja. Tara’s voice although subdued is a constant reminder to Bim to strike a happy balance in life, while Raja’s unseen presence is responsible for the turmoil in Bim’s soul and the succeeding calm when Bim is reconciled with him. The novel in the beginning has an atmosphere of decadence but ends on a note of rejuvenation.

The narrative technique or strategy employed by Anita Desai in this novel is highly complex, and also most interesting. The first point to note in this connection is that Anita Desai is more interested in the inner landscape of the mind than in the outer landscape of the world. Psychological analysis becomes an essential part of Anita Desai’s narrative technique. Almost half the total space in the novel is devoted to psychological analysis and the rest to the narration of outward events. This sort of thing occurs almost alternately. The outward events and happenings which reflect Bim’s evolving self include the games which the children played. Bom’s and Raja’s excursions to the melon-fields being the river Jumna, Bim’s and Raja’s excursions to the melon-fields being the river Jumna, Bim’s activities and achievements at school, the picnic in the Lodhi Gardens.
Anita Desai, intending to depict the inner states of mind of Bim, has made use of the interior monologue and the stream of consciousness technique. At various points in the course of the novel we come across brief passages in which the thoughts passing through the mind of Tara, aunt Mira and Bim have been described. The inner life of Bim has been dealt with by Anita Desai at a much greater length. We have a couple of passages in the very opening section in which the inner thoughts of Bom have been described. But the finest example of the use of this technique in the case of Bim is to be met with in the final section of the novel when, at first, Bim’s sullenness, irritability, and anger are depicted, and then, the change which comes over her is described. Bim has been feeling most annoyed with Raja because of the humiliating letter which he has written to her years before she also feels annoyed with Tara and Bakul. She even speaks harshly to Baba. This process of introspection or interior monologue continues, and it is in the course of this process that Bim realizes the flaws of her behaviour. As a result, she tears off Raja’s letter and then, after reading the dying words of emperor Aurangzeb, she is moved to tears. Her self is evolved and then she forgives Raja, she also makes up her mind to make amends to Baba. She entrusts Tara with a loving message for Raja. This is good sign of Bim’s maturity.

Anita Desai has also used the device of the flashback i.e. the mingling of the present and the past events. In *Clear Light of Day* she has not followed the sequence of events in their chronological order. The journey of the novel is from present to past and then again to present. Sections II and III are an example of the device of the, ‘flashback’. But in these two sections also chronology has not been adhered to. The death of aunt Mira is described in section II, and yet in section III we are taken back to the time when aunt Mira has first come to the Das house and started living there as a kind of governess for Baba.
The character-portrayal and using contrasting characters is another noteworthy feature of Anita Desai’s fictional technique in *Clear Light of Day*. We come across a fairly large number of characters in this novel. In the Das household we meet the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Das, the four children, Raja, Bim, Tara and Bim and later, Aunt Mira of these, Bim is the central character. The minor characters include Bakul, Dr. Biswas, the Misra sisters and brothers. All the characters have been endowed with life by Anita Desai, so that we get the feeling that we have actually met and talked with all these figures in the novel. Each of the characters in this novel has realistically and vividly portrayed. Among them Bion’s spirit of service, and her devotion to her unfortunate is notable of her character.

The contrast between Bim and Tara has most vividly and convincingly been presented. While Tara is a timid, different type of person, Bim is a self-confident, self-assertive, daring type of person who takes hold initiatives and who is very independent-minded. Indeed, the presentation of the contrast between the two sisters is one of Anita Desai’s highest achievements in this novel. It helps to focus upon the evolving self of Bim.

*The Village by the Sea* is another example in which Anita Desai has employed the vivid imagery, the technique of memory flashbacks, the stream of consciousness technique. We have plenty of examples of vivid imagery and graphic description. Here she is capable of evoking the most beautiful and vital pictures of nature on which background character of Lila is developed. In Chapter one there is an excellent picture of flowers: “Scarlet hibiscus blooms, sweet smelling spider lilies and bright butter-yellow alameda flowers “(7). It is followed by a finer view of butterflies. The words and the language which is used in the picture of birds is an excellent one. Anita Desai has also presented beautiful evocative pictures of the sky in monsoon and past-monsoon period and the clouds and the sea mixing into awful mystery and drenching the earth. Anita Desai makes use of the figures of speech in the course
of her narration or character portrayal. In the certain passages of the novel. We find such words as, ‘flute-voiced drogues’ is a metaphor and the phrase, ‘cut through the air like dazzling knives’ is a simile. The word, “blue-black” is alliteration. The expression, “Coop-Coop Coop” is the example of onomatopoeia. In the chapter II Anita Desai describes the setting sun in the background of the sea which is nothing but sheer poetry with a picturesque image of the setting sun, “outover the sea itself, majestic and purple now with the sun dipping into it as royally as a kind going to his repose.” (41).

The traditional historic or epic mode of narration is adopted along with the writer as omniscient observer in the novel. As there are no complexities of emotions or consciousness to be conveyed, the narrative is direct and charming. It leaves the impression of an old primitive ballad narrating the adventures of Hari and his sister Lila trying to pull their family out of the mire of poverty, sickness and drunkenness. The plot is divided into thirteen chapters. In these chapters attention is focused on Bombay viewpoint and Thul viewpoint. Besides this, Lila’s viewpoint adds another harmonious effect. Anita Desai has also used the technique of stream of consciousness and memory flashbacks here and there for the development of Lila’s and Hari’s characters in the course of narration.

Characterization and plot are usually independent and complementary in the novels of Anita Desai. Her characters evolve themselves through action and dialogue and there is very little characterization on the part of the author. In this novel most of the characters are two dimensional but very much alive and unforgettable. Here, Anita Desai tells the story of real people with whom she has come in contact. She catches her characters in the novel in the midstream of change and depicts their sufferings and sorrows realistically. The characters of Hari and Lila are major one. Even minor characters are memorable. Those are Jagu, Mr. Panwallah, the de Silvas, Biju, Hira Lal, Mr. Adarkar and others.
*The Village by the Sea* conforms to the traditional methods of omniscient author approach. It is fully controlled by the authorial voice. A sympathetic tone towards the suffering humanity of Indian villages prevails. The implied author depicts rural as well as urban life successfully. The author captures the spirit of the two different ways of life and presents a combination in the characters of Lila and Hari.

*In Custody*, from the point of view of technique is not a very significant novel, but still it very well portrays the mind of Deven and his wife Sarla. The novel does not have much use for imagery. However, we find certain images scattered here and there. There are a few arresting images dealing mostly with a sense of confinement and victimization in society and nature. There are also some colour, bird and animal images, relating to the evolving self of Sarla, significant female character in the novel and to the theme of despair, death and suffering.

Images of prison in different form suggesting Sarla’s and Deven’s overpowering desire to escape from the stifling monotony, are strewn all over the novel. Deven regards Mirpore as a prison where he is doomed forever to live a dull and empty life. Sarla regards Deven’s house as a prison where she is kept like a prisoner. In her own house Sarla is only “a trapped animal” (131). The neem tree that grew outside the wall has covered the entire courtyard with its branches like, “a dusty canopy” (130), shutting out the sun and the air. It gives the courtyard the appearance of a cell which is stifling and suffocating. The images of the neem tree also hints at the predominant emotion of the novel-disappointment and bitterness. Sarla seems to doomed to live either in the “walled courtyard “ in Mirpore or drift about in the” walled city” (131).
In a series of negative images, the state of neglect, stagnation and sterility of Mirpore is presented realistically. The dust imagery is prominent one in the novel symbolizing the novelist’s dismal view of reality and the dull arid life of Sarla and Deven:

The citizens of Mirpore… could not be blamed for failing to understand those patriotic songs and slogans about the soil the earth. To then it was so palpably dust (91).

The “withered and desolate” fields, the “unproductivity” of the town’s bustle (23), the decayed state of its temples and mosques depress Sarla and Deven also. The town becomes for them “the impassable desert” (24), that lay between them and the capital. It is a “strip of no-man’s land that lies around a prison, threatening in its desolation (24). Thus Mirpore becomes an objective correlative projecting the dullness, boredom and apathy of Sarla and Deven’s lives. As in Anita Desai’s other novels, here too, the landscape and the house reflect the psychic state of Sarla and Deven.

The animal, bird and colour images show the “grayness” in Sarla and Deven’s life bringing to surface their doubts and anxieties. These images also indicate Deven’s attitudes and responses towards other people. Here is a significant animal image which reveals the novelist’s tragic vision of life. The death of the stray dog on his way to Delhi unnerves Deven as he sees in it an ill omen:

He turned and peered out of the window to see if the dog lay on the road, broken bleeding or dead. He saw a flock of crows alight on the yellow grass that grew besides the ditch, their wings flickering across the view like agitated eyelashes (26).

Here, the negative qualities of the birds that have been exploited. The pet pigeons of the poet turn from being “a symbol of flight and song” (98) into a menacing threat. The only prominent colour in this novel is ‘grey’ befitting the drab world of Sarla and Deven. The
wearisome monotony of life settles upon them like, “a grey, crumbling mildew” (66). The colour ‘yellow’ is also used quite frequently signifying dryness, lifelessness and saplessness. The images of ‘yellow dust’ “yellow roadside” “yellow sweets”, “pale yellow of the western sky” are scattered throughout the novel intensifying the meaningless drab monotony created by the images of dust.

From the point of view of technique the title of the novel is quite significant. It is very significant image. There are two implications of the title. The first as warranted by the text that Deven is the true disciple of Nur and he would keep his poetry in safe custody. The other implication of the title is that Sarla finds herself in custody in the form of Deven’s house. Anita Desai herself says in an interview:

The title is somewhat misleading. It is about an emotional prison, a spiritual prison, not a physical one. It is a word with a double meaning – custody means guardianship; safe keeping as well as imprisonment. (Ketaki Seth; Interview with Desai, 55).

The title thus becomes the central metaphor around which other metaphors are woven skillfully.

Like the preceding novels In Custody also has references to poetry. These poems are recited by Nur. But these poems are not of Nur’s himself. These poems are by the famous romantic poets like Byron, Shelley and Keats and the lines quoted are from Ode to the Westwind, Ode to a Nightingale and La Belle Dame sans Merci.

The plot of the novel is divided into eleven chapters. It is intricately connected with the characters of Deven, Sarla and Nur. In the beginning it is Deven through whose action the plot moves but as soon as Murad asks him to interview the poet the actions are more controlled by the poet rather than by Deven or Murad. The action of the whole novel is a long series of
episodes related to the interview. The novel follows chronological sequencing and is interspersed with internal and external perspectives. The casual chain is unbroken till the end. However, the technique of ‘Free Indirect Discourse’ makes the writing full of subjective element. It means, the stance taken in this novel is that of third person subjective perspective and hence it combines a multiplicity of values. The implied author and Deven come very close to each other and sometimes merge into each other. The other Voices are that of Sarla, Murad, Nur, and Trivedi.

_Baumgartner’s Bombay_ is a novel that deals with the modern phenomenon of displaced person like Baumgartner and Lotte, a cabaret dancer. The novel covers a long period of time of almost fifty years beginning with the rise of Nazism in Germany to the late 1960s and 1970s. The locale of the novel are Germany and India.

The novel is a powerful and poignant study in human loneliness. The imagery in this novel is never explicit or exuberant but subtly suggestive. The highly metaphorical style, the abundance of imagery, the hysteria of restlessness that have crowded the previous novels are absent in this novel. The images—“bitten on a stone” (37), “Sweetness always ended in a quaver” (38) and “Killed by overfeeding” (38) — suggest that something ominous hovers in the air and happiness is going to end in a disaster.

Nazi Germany is determined to wipe out the Jewish race. The novelist suggests the changed attitude of the country towards the Jews through a scene which is not changed physically as much as in tone. Lotte and Hugo experience this bitter attitude of the country. It is through Hugo’s eyes that we get the picture of the changed scene. The street which used to delight him before with, “its baskets of croissants and rolls” “decorated tea cakes” and” buckets of figures” (23) – has lost its colour and appeal. The disaster becomes vivid through a free play of a plethora of visual, light and auditory images.
Baumgartner and Lotte’s first impressions of India abound with images of blood, violence and a sense of futility. The red point of the hotel lobby looks like ‘blood’ to him and the landlady’s screaming makes her look like; a jungle cat (103). The land of India seems to be “the driest earth” (107), “cattle...roaming aimlessly in search of non-existent grass” (89) is another suggestive image which suggests futility of human enterprise. Lotte’s desperation and nightmarish fears are symbolized in the ant image. The ants carrying moist, white eggs into the dark cave in a crack between the floor and the wall seem to her as an, ”endless labour of human forms—bent, driven into black caves from which they did not re-emerge” (143). The image of ants thus symbolizes the fate of all the Jews in Germany whose life vacillates between “Nacht and Nebl”, Night and Fog, into which, once cast, there was no return. No return. No return” (143).

Lotte is presented not just as an old memsahib despised and taunted by her neighbours but as a condemned prisoner, a caged animal. She locks herself inside the room with many chains and bolts as if she preferred the security of the cage to the murderous outside world. She has disgust for the country. She encounters nothing but mockery, frustration and betrayal. To her India is a “bloody graveyard” (88), where the climate rots everything. The emotional affinity between Lotte and Baumgartner is evident in the way they sleep on the same bed making a comfortable pair looking like “two halves of a large misshapen bag of flesh” (100). Both are fragments of dispossessed humanity and in need of each other for emotional sustenance.

Imagery clarifies Lotte’s mental agitation. The endearments on the cards sent by Baumgartner’s mother which were fallen on her tongue like “Crystals of sugar” (09). When she first reads them she becomes repulsive the next moment and her teeth shrank from impact with them. The repeated assertions of “Do not worry” anger her and she spits out “those
pieces of silver as if they were glass and cut her “ (10). This is the novelist’s technique of using positive images for negative purposes to bring out the emotions of the protagonists effectively. The words- the coffee spilt, the cards scattered, the bottle emptied (10), symbolise the chaos, the devastation of Lotte’s life and spirit. The German words ‘Mama’, ‘mutti’ and ‘Mu’ on the cards bringing back the sweetness of childhood assault on Lotte. Besides the uses of imagery, Anita Desai makes use of minor events very suggestively. So that at the end all the pieces fall into their proper places leading structural unity to the novel. Irony, satire, the grotesque and the element of theatre enrich the texture of the novel, effectively bringing out the unreality and the meaninglessness of the lives of the “eternal aliens” like Lotte and Baumgartner.

As in Clear Light of Day this novel too has an epigraph which is once again from T.S. Eliot’s, “East Coker” from Four Quarters. In the context of the novel what signifies is the first line i.e. “In my beginning is my end” in the sense that Baumgartner’s life except for his short happy childhood is full of frustrations and misery. The novel is full of German songs even though Baumgartner has forgotten his own mother tongue having been away from Germany for such a long time.

The plot of the novel is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter of the novel uses flashback technique from the present to past and what a difference between the two the past prosperous and cosy and the present almost a tramp somehow making the two ends meet. His childhood is recalled through many of German songs and poems which are scattered throughout the novel. Unfortunately, since no English paraphrase to German is given, we cannot make out the meaning. Psychological sequencing in this novel is best traced in dealing with the alienated selves of Lotte and Baumgartner. In this novel the implied author chooses to remain distant from the characters - Lotte and Baumgartner- faced with the same problem.
The title of the novel is too straightforward to require any elucidation from the point of view of characterization. Anita Desai has done justice to portray the minds of Lotte and Baumgartner, their confusion and maladjustment both in their own country and their adopted country and above all the pathos of their lives, how they wanted to be accepted but are never accepted whether in Germany or in India.

Anita Desai’s *Fasting, Feasting* marks a departure from all her earlier works. Most of the elements like the deep psychological insight into her characters, the neuro-psychic analysis and the serious reactions of her woman characters against the unacceptable situations are completely missing. Anita Desai, here, uses light touch, simple language, uncomplicated structure, but at the same time addresses some very big issues and makes a point.

The first striking feature of the novel is that the plot is laid bare in the most simple and lucid manner without any trace of complexity. It appears a simple long story in a straightforward narrative structure. Anita Desai presents the story of a small family in which Mama, Papa are the central figures around with their three children revolve, unraveling the story of a family where provincial customs and attitudes dictate the futures of all children: girls are to be married off and boys are to become as educated as possible.

The novel is divided into two parts. The first part which is of 13 chapters, deals with a family in India: Mama and Papa and their children. Eldest daughter, Uma has stayed at home to look after her parents, after two failed dowries and one failed marriage; middle child Aruna has a successful marriage and has almost forgotten her roots; and the third child, a son named Arun (for whom Uma is made to sacrifice her education) has gone to the U.S. for further studies.

The second part containing 14 chapters, dealing with the Patton family in the U.S. most of this section is written in the present tense. Arun is exposed to this American family
and is bewildered by the contrasts in culture. The story of the novel contrasts the life of the main character, Uma, daughter with Arun, boy and the baby of the family.

The structure of the novel is interesting and I think, takes off from the title. Fasting seems to refer to the first part and feasting to the second - fasting synonymous with Indian society and feasting with the American. In part I, all of the chapters except for one are divided into two sections, one written in the present tense and one in the past. The entire narrative structure is built in concrete words which are mostly monosyllabic with simple diction and precise description. The narrative becomes all the more clear and excitingly moving when Anita Desai comes to revel the excitement of the father at the birth of their much desired and much expected son. This is Papa’s reaction:

A boy! he screamed, ‘ a bo-oy ! Arun, Arun at last’ It turned out that when a second daughter had been born, the name Arun had already been chosen in anticipation of a son. It had to be changed, in disappointment, to Aruna (17).

In this novel too Anita Desai uses the flashback technique. The first part of the novel tells us in a flashback as how Uma becomes a reluctant victim of entrapment at home. We gradually see how Uma is arrived at this imprisoned state. Much like her use of language, Desai’s art of characterization is made through the same vivid and lucid structure of her language. What strikes most in her presentation of characters is the fact that each one of the characters in this novel appears alive and intimate; they appear full-blooded and living like the figures on the cine screen and this is achieved chiefly through the use of language. The characters like Uma, Mama and Papa are really life-portraits.

The use of similitude also discloses the utter simplicity of diction. It shows Anita Desai’s sense of preciseness, exact approach and accuracy. The account of Aruna’s marriage
proposals along with her dress, choice of shade and in her department display the excellent use of the similes mainly drawn from nature:

The pale pink sari, the slender chain of seed Pearls, the fresh flowers, the demure downcast turn of the eyes, the little foot in the red slipper thrusting out suddenly like a tongue, and the laughter low and sly (85).

Thus, it may be said that in this particular novel, Anita Desai intends to transcend all her earlier limitations to present a simple human situation in the most simple way to establish her credibility as a contemporary Indian English fiction writer.
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