Chapter VI
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It is the vision of the novelist which underlies the stylistic pattern of the work. The theoretical aspects of time in narrative are used in the novels to reveal the submerged self in human consciousness. Sometimes the author presents dramatically the external occurrences along with internal workings of mind at the same time, to achieve simultaneity of perception. Again sometimes the narrative merely depicts the ticking of the hours, minute by minute, or encompasses the idea of the ambiguous nature of time. Time has a powerful bearing on man’s life, emotions, thoughts and experience. It makes its presence felt on both the physical and the psychic planes of human experience. Time plays a crucial role, at least, in the structuring of events.

Bergson makes a distinction between “clock” time and “psychological” time. Clock time neither flows nor acts but exists passively like a line drawn on a surface. It represents arbitrary measurements of duration in terms of standard units like seconds, hours, days etc. Thus we can feel that clock time is something objective in comparison to psychological time which is purely subjective. Bergson feels that real experience can’t be measured with the help of clock time. To explain this we can quote:

A flowing irreversible succession of states that... Melt into each other to form an indivisible process. This process is not homogeneous but heterogeneous. It is not abstract but concrete. In short, it is “pure time” or “real duration” (Edwards 288).

Time and memory are interlinked concepts. Augustine thinks that the past can be defined only in terms of memories. Bergson makes a distinction between memory and
pure memory. Memory, to him, consists of habits that are fixed in the body of the organism and is common to both men and animals. But pure memory is an opposite term and a specific human characteristic. Bergson says that it retains the whole of our past. He further adds that our brain acts as a filter which allows to emerge only that memories which are practically useful.

Nicholas Berdyaev’s concept of existential time is akin to the Bergsonian duration. Nicholas makes use of three basic categories—cosmic, historical and existential—to categories cosmic, historical and existential to describe time history in literature while cosmic time refers to the endless recurrence of things, historical time refers to the linear course of nations. Existential time describes the individual’s ability to free himself from both cosmic and historical time. So, we can say that whatever way time is labeled, as conceptual or perceptual, its paramount importance to the novelist and his art is undeniable. In fact, “the genre in conception and practice is so completely committed to time that it ceases to exist if a work is blown forever outside the loop of time” (Meyerhoff 10). In literature, time shapes can be classified according to their varying relationships to the structure of the work. Higdon talks of process time as something distinct from a simple chronological order. It leads to certain developments in a causal sequence, culminating in a particular result. What is stressed here is that events unfold in a causal order and one thing leads to another as a Hardy’s Tess of the D’Urberririlles.

Another category Retrospective time can be summed up in a famous maxim, “Life can only be lived forward and understood backward” (Meyerhoff 6). In this the character momentarily steps out of the flux of time, considers his past and often
changes his complete life style. The concept of barrier time can be understood by the fact that in this movement is not continuous. It constitutes many jerks and starts. In this particular category a time limit is prescribed within which a certain task has to be accomplished. But the most popular and important category is polytemporal time in which the author deliberately shuffles time in such a way that a reader often losses track of all time references. In Cry, the Peacock, Maya constantly delves into the past nightmarish encounter with the albino. She breathlessly waits for the evil prophecy to fulfill itself. It is the polytemporal time shape that is predominant in the works of Desai, as our study will reveal.

In the polytemporal time scheme, there is a constant shift from past to present to future. The past is defined in terms of human memories and the future in terms of human expectations. There is an underlying longing for the past, which surfaces as the shaping spirit of the novels of Anita Desai. It informs not only the content of her work, but shapes the structure as well. The use of nostalgia with its frequent references to the past, results in discontinuity. These shifts are neither artificial nor superimposed by the novelist. In fact these are a result of the novelist desire to convey the substance of life, of experience. Nostalgia is also useful in categorizing characters into those who are aware of their past and those who are not. Samuel Butler belies that memory and forgetfulness are as life and death to one another. To live is to remember and to remember is to live. Gautama in Cry, the Peacock, exists within a clock-bound world while Maya transcends the limit imposed by clock time. According to Bergson, the past is not past but continues into the present through the vehicle of memory. But at the same time it is also true that memory reconstructs the past in a unique way for each person. And it depends upon his experiences, prejudices
and opinions. Thus the way a character experiences time, helps the reader to grasp the very essence of that character. In the words of Desai, the present is being continuously invaded & interrupted by the past. It is the memory who, “runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither” (Woolf 49). So we can conclude that the use of nostalgia not only determines the author’s choice of theme but also the way he arranges the elements in the narration.

According to Virginia Woolf, “Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope” (189). And a writer’s function is to represent life so he should adopt a technique either than the traditional one. Because a traditional novel, on the whole, concentrates upon:

Outer events and acts taking place within a phenomenological universe, full of things and Persons; it assumes the existence of a Pattern or purpose. Events are so arranged that significance can be readily deduced from the structure (Goldberg 3).

The early 20th century novelists concentrate on the internal and upon the nature of reality as perceived by various psyches. One day of clock time can be stretched to seem a hundred years while a whole day can seem to have passed in seconds. Thus real or psychological time may pass quickly or slowly, depending on the emotional states of the character such as excitement and boredom. “It can contract or expand, contracting to attention on a single present fact or state, or expanding to include simultaneous memories from one or more periods of past time” (Richter 39). Or in other words we can say that the early 20th century novelists felt a need for a different concept of time that would release man from the limits of time itself.
To Anita Desai, the business to the novelist is the exploration of the human personality so as to attain a vision of life's meaning. Her characters live, think and unfold in time and hence she preoccupies with the problems relating to it. There is a dichotomy in Anita Desai between two types of would-one, a world of linear time; the either of psychological time. In Desai's novels: "Thoughts come, incidents occur, then they are scattered and disappear. Past, present, future, truth and untruth. They shuttle back and forth, a shifting chiaroscuro of light and shade, of blood and ashes" (CP 179).

The writer's task, according to her is to connect and all the time connect. The apparently disparate blocks of narrative find meaning in the novel in the ultimate vision of life where time is at once duration and flow. It is both the life giving and the life destroying force, depicting the idea of time as the destroyer and the preserver. The concept of Bergsonian duration is prevalent in all the novels, and in some novels, Desai shifts blocks of time from chapter to chapter. While one chapter would be narrated in the acting present, the next chapter would depict the past in the present tense. This is also to suggest the flux and reflux of the consciousness, where past, present, future all lie together. The novels where the narrative shifts block of time are Baumgartner's Bombay, Clear Light of Day and Where Shall We Go This Summer? The use of flash back in these novels not only act as a narrative device to unravel the past and explore consciousness but also contribute to the narrative pattern in the novels.

Anita Desai's first novel Cry, the Peacock, if seen in a wider context is a sensitive study of Man's predicament in a hostile universe. It is remarkable for its poetic style, its internal monologues. Its vivid & colorful creation of the Indian landscape acts as an objective correlative to the state of mind of the characters. The
novels of Anita Desai reveal her pre-occupation with Time. It informs both the thematic and formal aspects of her novels. In *Cry, the Peacock*, the narrative moves up and down through layers of time, as Durrell puts it:

> The narrative momentum forward is counter sprung by references backwards in time, giving the impression of a book which is not travelling from ‘a’ to ‘b’ but standing above time and turning slowly on its own axis to comprehend the whole pattern... a marriage of past and present with the flying multiplicity of the future racing towards one (107).

In *Cry, the Peacock*, we have the spring to summer frame-work. The novel opens in a haze of April heat and ends soon after the summer *loo* stormily sweeps away Maya’s last tenuous link with sanity. This novel is divided into three parts. The first part can be viewed as the prologue which more or less anticipates the epilogue, both sections being balanced by death. These two parts are entirely taken over by the omniscient narrator while the second part is given to Maya. In fact, her technique is somewhat similar to Gunter Grass’ when he says, “you can begin a story in the middle and create confusion by striking out boldly, backward and forward” (17). Anita Desai deals not with the sensational but with the ordinary experiences of life. She presents the moments in the lives of the characters. Thus it is through a skilful use of time and memory that the themes of her novels are developed. By showing the contrast between past and present, Desai stresses the theme of an individual’s isolation. In *Cry, the Peacock*, Maya’s fruitless marriage to Gautama with its lack of emotional attachment stands in sharp contrast to her affection filled childhood. She starts looking with nostalgia at her past and experiences a feeling of isolation. This lack of understanding and communication between individuals is echoed in Maya’s words,” There was not one of my friends who could act as an anchor
any more, and to whomsoever I turned for resources, betrayed me now” (CP 11). Neither
father, nor husband, nor friends can remove this terrible feeling of desolation.

In this novel, past creeps into the present in the shape of Maya’s memories of the
albino astrologer and of the bear dance chiefly. The writer does not shift blocks of time in
flashback or montage technique for long periods. The narrative technique at work is that
of stream of consciousness where past intermittently exists with the present. For example,
in the Part II of the novel, the passage narrating Maya’s conversation with Gautama about
the Kathakali troupe in Delhi leads Maya to think of her father:

When with my father, even breakfast in the garden
Becomes a party, as good as revel of elves and
Fairies   As a child, I enjoyed princess like
The glories and bravado of Indian mythology... (CP 89).

Then suddenly with the memory of peeling oranges, Maya’s mind jerks back
to the present. “No one, else... loves me as my father does” (CP 89). Time in this
novel is at once ‘polytemporal and ‘barrier time.’ Durational time or polytemporeal
time operates in Maya’s consciousness where past, present and future lie inseparably.
‘Barrier time’ is at work as Maya believes in the albino astrologer’s prophecy of death
of either her husband or herself within a span of four years. The concept of time as the
preserver and destroyer, is the principle narrative vision in the novel. The look at the
end of the novel is described thus:

Such storms had blown since the time when the earth was desert
Such storms would sweep the earth and the last traces of these huge
masses of creeping, crawling, toiling struggling cell conglomerations
that now wracked the earth when the time came for annihilation.
The passage of time also signals the final end of man. Thus death becomes another of the common theme of Anita Desai. Gautama explains to Maya: “This life you speak of, this little flash in the pan, how insignificant and trial it appears compared with the immortal cycle to which all humanity is bound” (CP 27).

From the above quotation it seems that Desai seems to refer the endless recurrence of things, night following day, season following season and the cycle of birth, growth and decay. In short she seems to show the circular character of human and natural experience. In Cry, the Peacock, the beginning and the end are conventional enough but in Part-II we face the stream of consciousness technique. The linear sequence of the narrative is frequently broken by Maya’s past memories.

The main skeletal events of Toto’s death, the visit to the Lals, the visit of Nila and her mother and the deaths of Maya and Gautama are held together by carefully selected details which juxtapose the past to the present. Desai generally avoids the objective description of the physical and mental qualities of the characters. She uses memory, in a series of internal monologues, to give access to the characters minds. She records the different reactions of Gautama and Maya to Toto death and set the identities of her two main characters. Maya lives intensely for each moment. On the other hand, Gautama being a remote and detached intellectual is bewildered by her hypersensitivity. He preaches the ideal of the Gita but feels this attitude to be the negation of life. Desai allows the reader a glimpse into the past through the characters memories. Maya’s memories of the bear episode and her reaction to it, establishes her neurotic condition. Thus from the characterisation it can be easily concluded that Desai believes that a person’s past is inseparable from his personality.
From this study it becomes clear that Desai believes in the linear, objective course of time. Their perception of time is subjective, coloured as it is, by memory. To quote Lukacs:

Only in the novel... does there occur a creative memory which transfixes the object and transforms it... The duality of inwardness and outside world can here be overcome for the subject only when he seeks the... unity of his entire life... out of the past life stream which is compressed in memory. The insight which grasps this unity... becomes the divinatory intuitive grasping of the unattained and therefore inexpressible meaning of life (122).

*Fire on the Mountain* ranks fifth in the works of a still developing author and Desai is in a mellow ruminative mood. In *Fire on the Mountain*, the narrative completes itself in a few summer days in the small Himalayan town Kasauli. But in this short period, the author unfolds the entire lives of the characters with the help of memory. Time in this novel does not flow in a regular sequence but there are constant references to the past: “Nanda Kaul unconsciously seeks to freeze. Time into a motionless constancy, but time keeps moving through her past which she recapitulates as she reacts to her present surroundings” (Sharma 120).

So, we can say that inner time doesn’t depend upon clock time, but at the same time it is not rooted entirely in the self in the self for its existence. It depends upon the stimuli from the external world of objects and images. *Fire on the Mountain* is divided into three sections and each deals with a specific event. Part I shows the condition of Nanda Kaul who hovers between past and present. At the same time her present is disturbed in the form of a letter which announces that her great
granddaughter is coming to her place. Part II is the longest and is composed of twenty one chapters and this part is devoted to Raka’s arrival. In this part Desai depicts the change in Nanda Kaul’s attitude to Raka. We see Nanda Kaul changing from sheer hostility to acceptance, to admiration and finally to affection for her little visitor. Part III may be considered a masterly piece of construction which describes the detail of Ila Das’s visit, a childhood friend of Nanda Kaul. The lives of Ila and Nanda Kaul run parallel since the very beginning, coverage at certain points, are finally tied in the knot of death.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, Time has been unkind to all the characters. Nanda Kaul spent all her life doing what duty demanded from her. But the futility of her imposed role left her cynical and embittered. At a fairly advanced age, she releases herself from the bondage of boring life and opts for a life of complete stagnation. However, in the final pages we realize that even now she has no choice. “She did not live here alone by choice she lived here alone because that was what she was forced to do, reduced to doing” (FM 145). Ila Das, born in an aristocratic family, is reduced by time and circumstances to such a state of poverty that she cannot buy even half a kilo of cornmeal. In *Fire on the Mountain*, the perceptions of age are depicted in Nanda Kaul’s awareness of the barrenness and stillness of the life around here. But to its opposite Raka is alive to the infinity of movement and the variety of life around her. This is clear from the following lines of the novel:

She patted a child of wood here, smoothed a ridge of plaster there. She met a spider that groomed its hair in a corner, saw lizards eyes blinking out of a dark groove (FM 30).
In this novel, Desai wants to show that with the passage of time, events and memories lose their intensity. It becomes obvious from the fact that Nanda Kaul has more or less overcome the humiliation of her mechanical existence. Her sting of remembrance is now become soft in the peaceful Kasauli atmosphere. There is a sense of continuity in the passage of time. We know after Monday comes Tuesday, and Wednesday follows. Just as the days follow each other in a cyclic motion, so human life continues. In *Fire on the Mountain*, the continuity of life is suggested by Carignano, which brings to mind a lighthouse—solid, stable and lasting. And like the waves merge into one another, all the aspects of life are absorbed in the long, continuous stream of history. In *Fire on the Mountain*, Nanda Kaul, wants to drift along the flow of time but fragmented moments of the past impinge upon her consciousness. Ram Lal realises the power of time when he muttered quickly. “She is old, I am old. We are old” (FM 33).

Ila Das struggles against the various aspects of time. But she has to submit herself to the tyranny of time because it overcomes her in the figure of Preet Singh. At the end of the novel when Nanda Kaul hears of Ila Das’s rape and murder, her world of fantasy tears apart. She finally confronts with the passage of time. If we read carefully then we can easily observe that in *Clear Light of Day*, Bim repeats lines from Eliot and *The Ship of Death* to reinforce the important feature of time and a voyage beyond physical decay and death. Bim is fully aware of the ‘shadow’ and the lurking fear of death. But she wants to conquer physical time and go beyond. Her inner journey leads her to the realisation that time is a preserver of permanent human qualities which cannot be destroyed. She bitterly realised that she too is alone. Bim feels that her happy moments desert her when Tara and Raja walk out of her life. But
she has a sense of fulfillment when she listens to the music of the old Master. Music buoyed her spirit and makes her see the deep bondage of love between her & Raja, Tara, Mira-Masi and Baba. It is relevant, at this stage, to quote Anita Desai on the function of Time:

My novel is set in old Delhi and records the tremendous changes that a Hindu family goes through since 1947. Basically my pre-occupation was with recording the passage of time: I was trying to write a four-dimensional piece on how a family’s life moves backwards and forwards in a period of time. My novel is about time as a destroyer, as a preserver and about what the bondage of time does to the people. I have tried to tunnel under the mundane surface of domesticity (IT 142).

Anita Desai is concerned with recording the passage of time, and showing the bondage of time in the lives of Bim, Tara and Raja. The passage of time affects the family of Hyder Ali. He is forced to move out of his house and the family is uprooted. Raja who has taken a great liking to the family of Hyer Ali marries Benzir a pretty plump girl and settles in Hyderabad. His hopes of becoming a hero is sacrificed when he leads a middles class life. The romantic nature of Raja is changed.

The bondage of time takes a heavy toll on Mira-Masi. She steps into the household where the children are in need of affection. She loves the children and they surround her with affection. She is the tree that grows in the centre of their lives. She is the support on which they lean as they grow up. But she ends up as a hysterical, mad woman. Bim experiences the oppressive power of the passage of time: Raja and Tara go away from her. Both Raja and Tara think that they are free from the decaying atmosphere of the house. But they are not. What they strive to achieve is only an
illusion of freedom. It is the passage of time which brings about the destruction of Tara and Bim’s dreams of childhood happiness. Raja and Tara want to escape from the bondage of time. Tara takes a flight and whenever she comes back home she has the spider-fear that she will get stuck to the past. Raja resists the temptation of staying in the house. Nobody except Bim tries to understand the passage of their individual time and space. Raja and Tara observe time by the clock of the mundane world. But they fail to comprehend their inner life which is guided by psychological time. There is a difference between the ‘passage of time’ which is historical time – the record of facts and events – a time sequence which determines a particular linear movements and the passage of time as a record of what is happening in the human consciousness. Bim’s effort is to correlate these two concepts of time. Time is a continuous flux and reflux of concrete impressions and illuminated moments in the consciousness of Bim.

Time is capable of discovering fresh meanings in the drab life around:

...the mind receives myriad impressions - trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with sharpeners of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged: life is a luminous halo, a semitransparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end (Woolf 189).

The individual consciousness of Bim is the norm & measure of not only understanding her but also understanding Raja & Tara, of what they are seeking- the inner freedom from the mental blocks and constraints which they have imposed upon themselves. However, much Bim tries to withdraw into her shell, memory rakes up her past. Recollections bring to the surface the dreams of her youth, of her role as a heroine. She never wants to go back to her childhood days but they surface
again and again. She has a distinct memory where the passage of time brings on divisions and cracks in her personal relationship with Raja and Tara. She compares it with her life:

Isn’t it strange how life won’t flow, Like a river, but moves in jumps, as if it were held back by locks that are opened now & then to let it jump forward in a kind of flood? There are those long still stretches — nothing happens each day is exactly like the other plodding, uneventful and then suddenly there is a crash mighty deeds take place momentous events — even if one doesn’t know it at the time and then life subsides again into the backwaters till the next push, the next blood? That summer was certainly one of them — the summer of 47 (CLD 42-43).

Bim is acutely conscious of the natural time sequence. Time is given a continuity and regularity that the ticking of a clock in the hall may convey in other homes. Bim feels grateful for it. & But she is at times gets irritated by it’s beyond endurance. Clear Light of Day, falls into a regular pattern of evoking many creative moods to sustain life. It is a conventional novel in the sense that the structure has a beginning, a middle and an end. But the inner flow of life is not conventional. All major events are stored up in memory and each important event has a direct connection with the onward movement.

James H. Bergson speak on the concept of ‘La duree’ and memory. La duree is the psychological time against chronological time. He says that psychological time and mental states are the true modes of apprehending aesthetic experience. Bergson makes a distinction between memory which is voluntary and memory which is involuntary and emphasizes the importance of involuntary memory. Bergson explains the concept of time as:

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Our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which grows into the future and which swells as it advance (44).

In Where Shall We Go This Summer? The visit to the Island itself is like revisiting the past. Sita’s remembrances of her childhood days creep into the text now & then in the first chapter. The narrator observes that, “Sita’s feet seemed to remember instinctively, the path that led through them from Moses’ small kingdom…” (WSGS 16). However, the present experience of the island sharply contrasts the past experience. In Sita’s memory, the house had white walls, which gleamed chalkily above the waves. But Sita reaches there to find it pitch dark. Even the light of lanterns cannot redeem the darkness. The narrative in this chapter chiefly unfolds the reason for Sita’s journey to the island. The incidents are narrated in a way to suggest that they are arranged in an order in Sita’s mind to clarify to her ownself her decision.

The concluding chapter records Sita’s stay in the Island and proceeds to contrast it with her fantastical remembrances of it in the style in which the first chapter had hinted on. The novel move more or less chronologically here depicts temporal time as Sita battles with her conscience to face reality. The clock time operates in this part of the novel with the passing of strenuous moments and strained conversations between Sita and her family. The recollections of her life in Bombay creep into the narrative to clarify the present situation. To sum up in Ritcher’s words, “Not only is the past always with us but consciousness is forever changing, and so our memories redefined each moment by the present self and coloured by fresh perceptions are in a state of continuous alteration” (44).
In Baumgartner’s Bombay, the novel opens with Lotte just returned from the
scene of Hugo Baumgartner’s murder. The novel closes with Lotte again trying to solve
the mystery of Baumgartner’s life and find meaning in human existence. It is within the
frame work of the living present that the story of Baumgartner is told in flashback. As
Baumgartner goes to the market to fetch something tasty for his cats, his mind cuts back
and forth from present to past scenes on the streets. But at the same time the novelist
creates the idea of time in its perpetual flow with the scene of the straw haired child and
the street family busy in the daily chores. Fear as a motive occurs again and again in this
novel to connect Baumgartner’s past with his future. The narrative records his
introduction to the German drug addict when he reaches Café de Paris. He recognizes the
youth to be a Nagi and the discovery recalls to his mind his horrifying past. His fear
flowing back from his past is clear from the following lines: “The Camp fire and the beer.
The beer and the yolleling. The yolleling and the marching. The Marching and shooting.
The shooting and killing. The killing and the killing and killing” (BB 121).

The narrative technique is cinematographic is its use of flashback from the
first chapter to the second. Chapter II, hence, records in the stream of consciousness
technique his childhood and his early youth. However, the closing lines of Chapter II
“….the boat had arrived… packing his valise he ran out into the moist dark” (BB 64).
finds connection with the present in Chapter III. “But the light was different here”
(BB 68). Baumgartner wipes his eyes with his handkerchief as if awakening from a
dream. The narrator once again records Baumgartner trotting down the road to Lotte’s
house. Through their conversation past once again creeps into the present. Lotte
reshapes her past, while Baumgartner listens on contributing to it from time to time.
The past in this novel exists not just as a memory of certain events back in time. The
recollection of past here is the revitalizing force for the characters to continue with their living in their present. In spite of the difference that may exist between the two, circumstances draw Lotte and Baumgartner together to relive their past with a sense of joy and togetherness. Chapter V, once again reverts back to present to find Baumgartner awakening from his sleep in a panic, Chapter six records Baumgartner’s life after the war and his employment with Chimanlal.

The concluding chapter closes the story of Baumgartner with his murder. The narrative reverts back to the actual present with Lotte musing over the cards on the table. The novel ends with the suggestion of time moving on and the continuation of life in Lotte. While the alternating chapters in montage technique reveal durational time, the idea of Time as the preserver and the destroyer take over. Durational time exists in the mind of man and the clock time moves on with life in its flow. A narrative pattern is discerned in the novel depending on duration & temporal time. While the beginning meets the end, in between, the chapters in flashback alternate with present and past to suggest flashback within flashback.

In Voices in the City and Bye-Bye Blackbird, time is not preponderant as in the other novels. Memories flow from Nirode’s mind about his mother’s seductive ways in Kalimpong and find symbolic representation in his dreams. His mind revolves round this bitter memory & brings a sense of nullity in his life. With Monisha’s death, he strains to solve the riddle of life and sort out his feelings about his mother. In the other novel, Bye-Bye Blackbird, time follows a chronological pattern. Psychological time manifests itself in the feelings of nostalgia over India or England. As Desai herself admits, this is a very straight cut novel. She remarks that, “Bye-Bye Blackbird
is the only book I’ve written that is truly about objective world, objectively observed characters hence, the lightness of it” (Shrivastava 221).

*In Custody* is the only novel, where Desai does not use the flashback or memories to depict psychological time. However, there is an interesting phenomenon at work in the novel with regards to time. Desai attempts to use here spatial time in some of the scenes in the novel. The idea is to represent in words as in an impressionistic painting the simultaneity of perception. An illustration from the novel will help to qualify this observation:

...Yes, yes, yes Murad bhai is he coming? I sent him an invitation too He didn’t tell me; Deven cried...
Yes, Yes, Yes I told him to bring you along...
Imtiaz Begum, called a voice from the audience, You are like a star fallen into the well of the Courtyard from which we have come to fetch Water... Will you give us star poems tonight? Deven looked anxiously at the poet who was shifting uneasily about in the cane chair making it creak (IC 80-81).

The passage moves on to narrate Deven’s state of mind which is broken by Wah! Wah! to continue again. It is interesting to note that Desai is not merely presenting a scene comprising a lot of people assembled in a situation. While “everything sound simultaneously here” (Flaubert 107). The reader also has access to Deven’s state of mind. Desai’s style in this novel is her use of spatial time. She herself mentions on the art of writing, “A writer does not create a novel by observing a set of theories he follows flashes of individual vision” (WLWE 100).
A close analysis of the novels of Anita Desai always reveals pancy of external action. In most of the books internal action, that is, thought, movements and feelings of individuals predominate. In the present novel also there is little physical action. What constitutes the plot in the novel is state of a family of papa Mama during a given period of time. The plot presents the story of Uma’s failure to get suitably, Arun’s brilliant career and marriage and Arun’s going to America for higher education. The time covered by the plot is Mama’s pregnancy, birth and growth of Arun in India and his departure for U.S.A. for education. It appears a simple long story in a straight forward narrative structure.

It is the vision of the novelist which underlines the stylistic pattern of her work. The theoretical aspects of time in narrative are used in the novel to reveal the submerged self in human consciousness.

Sometimes the author presents dramatically the external occurrences alongwith internal workings of mind at the same time, to achieve simultaneity of perception. Since all art presupposes a degree of selection and presentation. The perspectives of the writer become the formative principles of his art. In Desai’s work, we find an obsessive involvement with the characters’ past as a key to their consciousness, their life. A preoccupation with Nostalgia and Memory thus becomes an integral part of her craft. But these are not used as things in themselves. They are used artistically both for thematic as well as formal purposes. The hallmark of Desai’s fiction is her focus on the inner experience of life. But this does not lead her to sacrifice the truth of life in favour of fantasy.
Works Cited


