CHAPTER FOUR
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The technique of modern fiction, at once greedy and fastidious, achieves as its subject matter not some singleness, some topic or thesis, but the whole of the modern consciousness. It discovers the complexity of the modern spirit, the difficulty of personal morality, and the fact of evil... it puts its hard light on our environment, it penetrates, with its sharp weapons, the depths of our bewilderment. (Mark Schorer "Technique as Discovery" in Twentieth Century Literary Criticism 399-400)

In a good work of art, form and content coalesce. Technique helps the writer to execute his thoughts and purpose. The rich ideas being canalised by various techniques furnish the work of art with opulence. Profound themes receive singular treatment with the advocacy of heterogeneous techniques. Novelty is achieved by the introduction of modern techniques. Owing to their varied applicabilities, modern
novelists bring into play multifarious techniques.

Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande whose paramount interest is "delving deeper and deeper in a character, a situation or a scene..." (Jasbir Jain "Anita Desai Interviewed" Rajasthan University Studies in English 12 (1979) 68) skilfully handle modern techniques in their novels. Both of them deal with the age-old theme of man-woman relationship but their techniques are relatively new. Focussing on the nuances of the human psyche, they are lured by techniques like flash-back, stream of consciousness and interior monologues. In accordance with the varied effects they desire to bring out of their characters, different techniques are employed. As Anita Desai in her interview with Chelva Kananganayakam has stated, "Each book requires a different one [technique]" (John Clement Ball and Chelva Kananganayakam "Interview with Anita Desai", The Toronto South Asian Review 10: 2, 35). Shashi Deshpande also in her recent interview with the researcher has accepted the inevitability of manipulating manifold techniques for her novels:

Researcher: Each of your novels has a different technique. How do you select the technique?
Do you discuss it with anybody?

Shashi: I never discuss anything with anyone. I don't talk about my novels at all. Somehow each novel selects its own technique. It doesn't come automatically. For example, I wrote fifty pages for That Long Silence. Then I realized it was not alright. So, I rewrote everything. Even the latest novel The Binding Vine has a totally different technique. (Shashi Deshpande Interviewed on 24.6.93)

Portraying the predicament of individuals through mutually incompatible couples, both Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande make fairly good use of the stream of consciousness technique and interior monologues. The Dictionary of Literary Terms defines the term 'stream of consciousness' as follows:

A manner of writing in which a character's perceptions and thoughts are presented as occurring in random form. In this technique, ideas and sensations are revealed without
Both Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande turn from external to internal reality, from the outer world to the world of fantasy. They write about the voyage and pilgrimage of the mind through consciousness. While commenting on Anita Desai's use of techniques Shyam Asnani aptly remarks:

In regard to the use of stream of consciousness technique, flashbacks and interior monologues in her novels she does it with a view to capturing the prismatic quality of life in her [Anita Desai's] fiction. Since every human being's territory is really very small, all that a writer can explore is a very tiny section of this territory, and this she finds a more interesting technique than covering a large area rather superficially. (Shyam Asnani "The Literary Aesthetics of Anita Desai's Fiction" in Critical Response to Indian English Fiction 147)
As for the flash-back technique, one cannot ignore its usefulness in unravelling the pattern of intricate human relationships. Exclusively, while analysing the inner turmoils of the heroines, one notices that their clandestine, suppressed emotions find better figuration by reclusing into the past memories and incidents.

Cry, the Peacock commences with the death of Toto and the varied moods of Maya and Gautama. Then it trails backward to Maya's interior monologues, explicating her neurosis. Gautama's obstinate attitude towards the loss of her pet dog is extended in his disinclination with Maya herself. This perpetual frustration plunges her into reminiscence.

The novel illustrates the incompatibility of the couple at the outset and recedes into the past to infer the logic behind it. Intensity is gained by first person narration and interior monologue. Maya within herself broods over her loneliness and Gautama's indifference:

Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me, to either the soft, willing body or the
lonely, wanting mind that waited near his bed.... Yes, I cried, yes, it is his hardness—no, no, not hardness, but the distance he coldly keeps from me. His coldness, his coldness, and incessant talk of cups of tea and philosophy in order not to hear me talk and, talking, reveal myself. It is that—my loneliness in this house. (Cry, the Peacock 9)

The whole narration of Part Two is from Maya's angle of vision and her psychic disturbance and desperate mood are "beautifully delineated through sensitive prose charged with frenzied fervour" (Vyas Bhanushankar Dhavji "Viscid Voices of the Inner Kingdom" The Journal of Indian Writing in English 9: 1 6).

The shift of viewpoint from third person to first person narration and again to the third person indicates the author's intention of highlighting the multidimensional view on Maya's neurosis. Sudhakar Ratnakar Jamkhandi supports this idea saying,

Because the novelist manipulates the shift in
the viewpoints - from the dramatic (Part One) to the first-person (Part Two), and eventually to the omniscient (Part Three) - a number of effects are achieved.

Firstly, the section that is rendered in the dramatic viewpoint emphasizes the lack of the psychological depths that human beings are capable of... Because the dramatic and omniscient points of view limit our appreciation of Maya's predicament and her personality, we are allowed to witness the workings of her mind; only then do we probe beneath her actions and experience the reality of her mental anguish as she tries to avert the tragedy that is to befall her. ("The Artistic Effects of the Shifts in Point of View in Anita Desai's Cry, the Peacock" The Journal of Indian Writing in English 9: 1 (Jan. 1981) 36-37)

Maya's frustrations, longings and mental ailments receive proper attention and depth when they germinate from her point of view. This shift in point of view enables the
writer to view a character from all possible angles. A multidimensional view provides the reader with all possible minute details of a character. As E.M. Forster puts it,

A novelist can shift his viewpoint if it comes off and it came off with Dickens and Tolstoy. Indeed this power to expand and contract perception (of which the shifting viewpoint is a symptom), this right to intermittent knowledge - I find it one of the great advantages of the novel-form, and it has a parallel in our perception of life. We are stupider at sometimes than others; we can enter into people's minds occasionally but not always, because our own minds get tired; and this intermittence lends in the long run variety and colour to the experiences we receive. (E.M. Forster "Flat and Round Characters and 'Point of View'" in Twentieth Century Literary Criticism 144)

Moreover, having empathy with a character intensifies the vigour of the writer. To make it effective and visible one has to step into the shoes of a character. So it becomes
necessary for a writer to adapt to shifts in viewpoint. As Marjorie Boulton explains,

... some variation of viewpoint is not only usual, but, in a mainstream novel, almost inevitable, in that someone is at some time going to put his own side of a case or relate some experience as he experienced it. (The Anatomy of the Novel 31)

When presented from the point of view of an omniscient author, one or several characters receive proper attention and the reader is provided with all the details. The author keeps himself aloof and objectivity is attained. This point of view makes it possible for the writer to achieve the desired effect and omit what he considers unnecessary, for

The omniscient narrator, who in a large majority of novels is the actual teller of the story, may follow any number of characters for short or long sections of the book, tell what he thinks is most interesting and comment if he wishes. He often gives a large share of the attention to one character, but sometimes
Anita Desai makes use of this point of view efficiently in portraying her introverted heroines Sarah, Sita and Nanda Kaul. Moulding them as silent sufferers who brood over their destiny within themselves, she focusses on the inner workings of their mind. When there is a dispute between Sarah and Adit regarding pet animals and sacred cows, Adit’s stern and illogical argument irritates the sensitive Sarah. So she leaves the place abruptly. Her mental torment is seen through the omniscient narration of the novelist:

After clearing the table, she went straight to bed with Kipling’s *Plain Tales From the Hills* and fell half-asleep listening to the rumble of talk and laughter in the next room, followed by the profuse strumming of sitars and pounding of drums on the spinning records. The music sounded all dissonance to her ears as did the voices, and she fell asleep from the fatigue of trying to place them, string them, compose them, into a pattern, a harmony. To her closed eyes the darkness moved in a
tumult of black shapes that would not settle.
Her dreams too were in pieces, tormented, like
the night slit and torn by long blades of
rain. (*Bye-Bye, Black Bird* 50)

Nanda Kaul's brooding over the intimation of her grand
daughter Raka's arrival is reported by Anita Desai in
comparison with her unwanted past responsibilities as the
wife of a Vice-Chancellor.

She had suffered from the nimiety, the
disorder, the fluctuating and unpredictable
excess.

She had been so glad when it was over. She had
been glad to leave it all behind, in the
plains, like a great, heavy, difficult book
that she had read through and was not required
to read again.

Would Raka's coming mean the opening of that
old, troublesome ledger again?
Sighing, she went off to bed, dragging one
foot uncharacteristically.
Discharge me, she groaned. I've discharged all my duties. Discharge. *(Fire On The Mountain 30)*

This third person narration helps to delve deep into the psyche of a character and analyse the inner workings of the mind. Sita's association of thought on seeing a tiny jelly fish is brought into focus by the narrator to exhibit her concern and anxiety about her unborn child:

Tossed up and thrown onto the sandbar by the discarding waves, it now lay quite still again as it had inside the skull of mostly passive and unadventurous sea creature, for Sita's eyes to regard till a sudden pulsing movement inside her reminded her of the foetus stranded between her hips and she was startled by the similarity of what floated inside her, mindless and helpless, to this poor washed thing thrown onto the beach, opaque and wet and sad. *(Where Shall We Go This Summer? 124)*

While Anita Desai achieves much from omniscient narration, Shashi Deshpande derives the best out of first person
narration. It makes for emotional involvement with a character and the work of art gains a more sincere tone and thus spontaneity is achieved. But on the other hand, subjectivity often lulls the reader into mistaking the words of a character for those of the novelist. One easily mistakes Gulliver for Swift, and when Hamlet utters "Frailty, thy name is woman!" (William Shakespeare Hamlet Act I Sc.ii) it lends room for debate as to whether it is Shakespeare's voice or Hamlet's. However, impersonating a character intensifies seriousness. As Marjorie Boulton observes:

Impersonating one character, narrating as "I", can give great vitality and conviction; the difficulty is that the restriction to one point of view very much limits the field that can be observed. However, this, besides increasing intensity, may well heighten the sense of reality, in that we all experience life through one pair of eyes only. Anyone who has made any effort towards true love, true friendship or even good professional relationships knows how hard it is to come anywhere near putting ourselves imaginatively in the other person's place. An impersonation may
be sympathetic, or ironical or a mixture of both. (Anatomy of The Novel 33)

Shashi Deshpande, being a woman, is able to feel the fervour of her heroines and sincerity to the cause is achieved. Saru's narration of her nightmarish experiences with Manohar, Jaya's disappointments over Mohan and Indu's inner longings get crystallized in Shashi Deshpande's first person narration. Saru's inability to fix her husband's sadism either as his psychic disturbance or her own mistaken identity is well expressed when she herself delineates her experience:

And then the two came together. I knew where I was and what had happened. Panic and sensation came back simultaneously. I turned my head slightly, fearfully, and saw him beside me, snoring softly. No more a stranger, but my husband. (The Dark Holds No Terrors 12)

Anita Desai has achieved grip over the readers by presenting Maya in a typically neurotic condition. The sensitive Maya
versus rational Gautama is depicted effectively with the aid of constant shifts from the present to the past.

This modulation finds a unique place in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. It is typical of her style that the beginning is abrupt. A seeming stranger's sadistic attitude towards the narrator, pathetically crying, "It was more as if my mind had deserted my shamefully bruised body, disowning it, making it insensate"(12) gradually restricts its area of focus to identify the stranger as no one but her husband. Instantaneously the focal point shifts to the heroine Saru's parental home and the perspective becomes omniscient. Analogous to *Cry, the Peacock*, the quandary being purported at the outset, the assay instantly succeeds. The dexterity with which Shashi Deshpande wields the procedural variation, vivifies the pace of the novel.

The place of action immediately shifts to Saru's father's house, where Saru is standing out to be welcomed by her father. From the wordless welcome given by her father, the reader is taken to and fro as Saru's psyche relates the incidents of past and present. While she appreciates the
wordless, perfect, uncomplaining partnership of her father and Madhav in doing the household work, her mind recedes and relates the critical question asked by one interviewer which kindled the animal in Manohar. Once again she reaches the present to offer her hand in household work:

You cook and he cleans. It's a partnership, wordless, uncomplaining and perfect. A tacit understanding. As all good partnerships should be.

How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but the bread as well?

The bitch. Why did she have to say that? It was that day that it began. Or did it? Damn that bloody bitch anyway....

She came out of her thoughts with a start....

'I'll wash up today,' she said. (The Dark Holds No Terrors 35-36)

This non-observance of chronological order and the fluctuation between first and third person narration are indicative of the instability of women in this patriarchal
society and the mental ailments resulting from their struggle to come out of the confirmed circle. As Adele King puts it,

The plots do not observe a simple chronological order, but are rather a juxtaposition of action in the present and memories of the past. Time seems to move rather in circles than in straight lines.... The narrative voice in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* fluctuates between first and third person; "she" and "I" are two facets of the same self.... The circular movement and the shifts in narrative voice both express the position of the woman in a patriarchal society - someone without a clear sense of purpose (as her ability to choose is normally limited by the will of others) and without a firm sense of her own identity. ("Shahei Deshpande: Portrait of An Indian Woman" in *The New Indian Novel In English* 165)

On the other hand, in *That Long Silence* Jayas narrates her
story in first person. From her married life to the marital
problems of her servant maid, everything is viewed from her
gle only. Here, as Indira Bhatt feels:

The use of the first-person point of view
provides Deshpande with the control which
gives shape and significance to the intense
agony that Jaya experiences. ("That Long
Silence: A Study" in Indian Women Novelists
161)

In their small Dadar flat Jaya is reminded of Kamak and his
advice, her cousin Kusum and her failures. When Mohan
leaves the flat, she suddenly switches over to think of
Kusum and her terrible failure as a wife. On hearing Mohan
calling out her name she feels the "burden of his wanting,
the burden of his clinging" (That Long Silence 29) and at
the same time cherishes memories of her childhood game of
keeping house.

The shift of thought from the past to the present and the
present to the past can be well seen in the following
passage:

The tramp tramp of the mill workers' feet as they went to work, as they came back from it, these sounds had been missing since we came here, Mohan and I.

In Saptagiri, our house had stood well back from a little-used road, so that even the rare sounds... had come to us muted by the distance. (That Long Silence 55-56)

From Dadar flat to Saptagiri house and then again to Mohan's silence, Jaya's mind traverses quickly. Her restless psyche gets better portrayed in this stream of consciousness technique. In delineating the inner urges like Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai makes use of three ways:

One is the indirect interior monologue...
second method is the depiction of a situation which echoes the inner mood of the character... the third method is the apt choice of situation where feelings and attitudes are revealed with a sudden dramatic impact. (J.G. Masilamani "Feminism in Anita Desai" Kakatiya Journal of English Studies 3:1 32)

As far as the second method — depiction of a situation — is concerned, Anita Desai makes better use of colours. She identifies the situation with appropriate colours. In Bye-Bye, Blackbird, while describing a noon-time with its liveliness, she brings out the lively mood of Adit and his friends through gaudy colours:

On the sunburst pond a boy in a blue blazer sailed a small red boat. A dog... streaked over the grass after a blue ball.... Beyond a clump of trees — chestnuts opulently green and hawthorns dressed in crinolines of dark pink blossom — a good game of cricket proclaimed itself by flicker of white on green, by click of bat on ball. (14-15)
By presenting contrasting colours in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, she hints at Sita's state of mind – both hopeful and in doubt. In addition, it signifies the islanders' gay mood over the arrival of Sita's father and the fertility he promises:

> From the open veranda, wind-swept and pillared, two strangers came down to greet the family – a perspiring, purple young man in a lungi of green checked cotton, who told them he was Moses and a woman, round-thighed, yellow-eyed, encased in a pink skirt and an orange blouse like some ripe fruit... (61)

If gaudy and contrasting colours symbolize gaiety, dull colours suggest the melancholic mood. While Sarah and Adit are waiting for their departure from England at Waterloo station early in the morning, they are in a state of tension and with mixed feelings, and colours like white, grey and black capture their mood:

> ... all was in film shades of grey, black and white. Even the tea in the cups was rey, its
steam white. Women in white mackintoshes, men in grey overcoats. (Bye-Bye, Black Bird 229)

For Anita Desai, there are colours and shades of light to denote the varied emotions, whereas for Shashi Deshpande there are smells and sounds to disclose the multifarious passions. In Roots and Shadows the fragrance of the champak reminds Indu of Naren. Its mild perfume connotes Indu's soft corner for Naren as well as her perfect but brief physical intimacy with him. Shashi Deshpande describes:

Intermingled with these two perfumes, there was another, more subtle and cunning - the fragrance of the champak. To me, nothing can invoke memories as strongly as smells. And this one brought back that hot afternoon in Naren's room. The smell of champak wafting in with the breeze. (Roots and Shadows 7)

Indu is taken back to her childhood memories at the familiar smell of Atya's presence. The very smell of Atya makes Indu secure and loved. Indu's delight in this smell suggests her lingering roots with the family, irrespective of her
deliberate separation from it. In Indu's words:

It was Atya and as I reached her, she put her arms round me, holding me so hard that it hurt. Her face was wet. I inhaled the familiar smell of her presence and for a moment I was a child again, secure and loved. (Roots and Shadows 23)

Like Indu, Saru in The Dark Holds No Terrors is carried away to her childhood by the scent of the Hamaam soap. She narrates:

As she soaped her face and hands... the same Hamaam still... the smell of the soap brought back her childhood more vividly than anything else so far. (17)

For Jaya in That Long Silence it is sound that makes a lot of meaning. Varied sounds bring to her multitudes of emotions. She senses each and every rustle around her flat minutely. One can note a sharp contrast between her keen
Almost worse to me than this constant noise had been the sense of being invaded, not just by sounds, but by a multitude of people and their emotions as well. Anger, fear, hatred, envy, tenderness, love—all of these came to me as I lay in bed, a fascinated listener. Sometimes at night, when there was a diminuendo in all sounds, I had heard even the tinkle of a woman’s bangle distinctly. (That Long Silence 56)

Further, music that appeals to the sense of hearing serves to elucidate promiscuous emotions. Commencing with Jaya’s substantial statement about the pseudo-puritanism in considering film music so outré to Monisha’s death, music finds a unique place in the writings of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande.

In Roots and Shadows after the death of Naren, when Indu happens to hear his music, she is moved. His voice floats
into the room and leaves Indu depressed. Her pent-up emotions over the death of Naren find an outlet in his music. Indu states:

Music filled the room. It was Naren's music... I sat crouching there like an animal in pain. If I don't get hold of myself, I thought... I'll start whimpering. I tried to get up, but it was as if I was held in a vice of stillness. I could not move. (8)

Following Naren's song, the sweet notes of the Shehnai fill the air. But the sweetness does not bring joy to Indu. She considers it as "throat-choking sweetness"(9). Shashi Deshpande utilizes music to tilt Indu's heart so that her attachment to Naren can be ripped open. For Anita Desai also it becomes a tool to enclose hidden riddles. In Fire on the Mountain, during a tea-time conversation, Ila Das heartily cherishes her past happy days when she used to play music jubilantly. She expresses her fear over this generation which seems to lose that mirth:

I'm like that when I get on to music. It played such a role in our lives, didn't it,
Nanda? I’m afraid it’s all out of fashion now – those sweet songs, those musical soirees at which the family would gather around the piano and sing. (119)

Ila Das' positive remark on music is contradicted by Nanda Kaul’s negative approach. To her music records only bitter memories. She utters:

I never cared for music myself. It makes me fidget, I greatly prefer silence. (119)

If music makes Nanda Kaul fidget, it perforates Sarah’s melancholic mood. Her melancholy becomes that of the flute, and the transferred epithet is suggestive of her attitude:

When she opened her eyes again the young man was lying on his bed and playing his flute, the melancholy flute that had ushered in the landscape of iron railings and smoking chimney-tops that was his landscape by adoption. (Bye-Bye, Blackbird 22)

Music signifying melancholy, is protracted in Voices in the
City to the climax of Monisha's death.

When all the others seem to be enchanted by the music of the street musicians, Monisha considers herself deprived of the normal human passions. She rushes to get the feeling of "fire" only to be burnt off wholly.

Besides human sensuousness acquiring prominence, zoological and botanical images make an impact on the works of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande. What is important for them

... is the movement of the wing one tries to capture, not the bird. That is, it is the image that matters, the symbol, the myth, the feat of associating them, of relating them, of constructing with them. (Anita Desai "Indian Writers' Problems" in Explorations in Modern Indo-English Fiction 226)

In *Cry, the Peacock*, at the outset animal image is deployed. It describes the death of Maya's pet dog Toto. According to Madhusudan Prasad, it emphasizes the death motif and the psychic disorder of Maya. To quote his words:

Skilfully emphasizing the death motif, Desai
repeats the image of the dead Toto in different forms with a view toward objectifying Maya's psychic disorder and her ineluctable preoccupation with death, the intensity of which rises in her mind until she ultimately kills her husband. ("Imagery in the Novels of Anita Desai: A Critical Study" World Literature Today 58:3 363)

For Ramesh K.Srivastava Toto stands for a child-substitute. It becomes her desirable companion. He affirms:

Maya's pet dog Toto could be a symbol of her desirable companion — warm, passionate, faithful, uncomplaining, unphilosophizing, intimate and closely attached to her. Toto represents everything that Gautama is not. It is also a child-substitute. (Perspectives on Anita Desai xxxiv)

If Toto symbolizes a child, the image of rats nursing their young exemplifies "her agonizing fixation upon her own
childlessness" (Madhusudan Prasad "Imagery in the Novels of Anita Desai: A Critical Study" World Literature Today 58:3 368). Longingly she portrays the scene:

Rats will suckle their young most tenderly. I know this, as now I lived quite near one, with seven young ones nestling between her legs.... And the rats with their young, suckling them, then lashing their tails, spreading plague.

(Cry, the Peacock 126-27)

While Maya's barren state finds an outlet in animal imagery, Sita's fear of delivering her child in this cruel world is crystallized in the cruel drama between a wounded eagle and the hovering crows. Her effort to save the eagle, pathetically ending in her failure, seems to foretell her wish to retain the child in her womb and the dolorous verity.

Sita's pain and agony in witnessing the spectacle of "survival of the strongest" is well defined in Anita Desai's
impressive prose style:

... it was an exceptionally cruel drama that had aroused the crow world outside and made them churn the air... the tortured creature cowering unshaded in that sun was an eagle, wounded or else too young to fly.

... they laughed and rasped as they whipped it with their blue-bottle wings and tore into it with their scimitar beaks. It 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. (Where Shall We Go This Summer? 38-39)

According to Ramesh K. Srivastava, Anita Desai makes use of objective correlative in presenting the image of the predator and the prey. He finds a similarity to Sita's condition in the plight of the eagle.

He observes:

Sita in Where Shall We Go This Summer? is
sensitive, peace-loving and introvert. The tension in the novel is between a sensitive individual and an insensitive world conveyed through the most frequently recurring image of the predator and the prey. Using the method of objective correlative, Anita Desai portrays Sita's condition by describing the plight of an eagle as it is surrounded and harassed by the crows. (Perspectives on Anita Desai xxiv-xxv)

Not only the tragedy of existence but also the liveliness of life is symbolized through the crawling shrimps. At Manori where Sita's children are unable to find any life, they feel the mirth of vivacity on seeing the live shrimps:

Sita drew back, hissing with astonishment, for the basket crawled with shrimps - pink and infantile, their transparent whiskers aquiver, emanating a stench that called, that shouted we live, we are shrimps! (Where Shall We Go This Summer? 105)

While the vivacity of animation is found in the shrimps, the agony of living gets a form in the "bleeding heart doves" in
Voices in the City. Monisha's tortuous existence is revealed here:

Doves like balls of rain cloud, but in each soft breast a great open wound, bleeding, scarlet seeping over tiny feathers in a blot of fresh blood... These stay on the ground, restless, in flux, and bleeding. (121)

Considering botanical images, Shashi Deshpande's The Dark Holds No Terrors demands one's primary concern, as the opening chapter unfolds Saru's state of mind through them.

The first change she notices at her house is the unmaintained tulsi plant, which has successfully accomplished its purpose, and the second the fresh hollyhocks. The very sight of tulsi brings forth an unwelcome thought of her mother, and the hollyhocks, a big question mark. The dry tulsi plant symbolizes the lost presence of Saru's mother, and the fresh hollyhocks, the existing presence of Madhav. There lingers a subtle irony in Saru's tone considering the very purpose of growing tulsi.

The tulsi had been the only spot of green. But
that had gone as well. Of course, it had served its purpose. She had died before her husband. Wasn't that what all women prayed to the tulsi for?... Then she noticed the flowers in one corner against the wall. Hollyhocks, tall, colourful, and ridiculously incongruous in that place. Who could have planted them?

(The Dark Holds No Terrors 15)

The green hollyhocks welcome Saru with a question in her mind whereas the old champak tree lets Indu know a secret on its forthcoming end. It stands for her childhood memories and the underlying tender feeling for her old house. Though she appears indifferent, Indu has a real concern for the family and this is exemplified through the champak tree. When she comes to know the sore fact of the champak tree's end, desolation overtakes her.

'And the tree?' I asked him.

'What tree?' he stared at me, uncomprehending.

'Our champak tree.'

'Oh, that one! It's right in the middle of the house, isn't it? In the back courtyard? Well, well, it will have to go, of course.'
At that, such a sense of desolation and bereavement came over me, that I could have wept then and there,... The evergreen leaves, the golden flower, whose pervasive fragrance had, it now seemed to me, permeated all my life. *(Roots and Shadows 201)*

Besides zoological and botanical images, places stand as symbols in the writings of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande. As Sita and her children enter the Manori island, they find only a lone soda water shop. The soda water that consists of nothing but water combined with carbon dioxide, with its struggle to burst out, symbolizes Sita's pent-up, boiling emotions which seek an outlet.

The plan to escape boiled up in her with such suddenness, she was herself taken by surprise, not realizing that it had been simmering inside her so long although she was herself the pot, the water and the fire. *(Where Shall We Go This Summer? 57)*

Similarly, the plain soda water that remains without carbon dioxide connotes Sita's still mind after her
sojourn in Manori island. Besides, the island itself stands as a tempting mystery suggesting at once the charms of the city and the island.

Ramesh K. Srivastava confirms this idea:

The sea between the city and the island and surrounding the latter can symbolize the sea of mystery, tempting, unfathomable but no less dreadful, which adds to the charms of both the city and the island, paving the way for two-way mobility. (Perspectives on Anita Desai XXXVI)

Allied to this, England in Bye-Bye, Blackbird "symbolises a world golden and glittering on surface but hard and cold underneath"(XXXV). According to R.S. Sharma England "appears as a siren and a temptress" (Anita Desai 92). In the beginning it seems to warn Dev and tempt Adit and towards the end it is vice versa.

In the novels of Shashi Deshpande, the heroines' parental home symbolizes emotional binding with the family and the blighted hope of their married life.
Both Saru and Indu enjoy their stay in their parental home like Sita in the Manori island. To them it is a place of bliss, a place away from their mechanical life. In addition, it renders them with an answer to their exigency and endows them with a vigour to comport themselves.

Along with symbols, images, stream of consciousness and flash-back techniques, the word "silence" executes divergent tenors in the writings of both the writers. The language of silence is one of the powerful tools in the hands of a postmodernist writer.

As Ihab Hassan observes,

... silence develops as the metaphor of a new attitude that literature has chosen to adopt toward itself. This attitude puts to question the peculiar power, the ancient excellence of literary discourse - and challenges the assumptions of our civilization (The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett 11)

Both Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande make use of this
postmodernist technique sparingly but effectively. Abstract ideas and feelings are made tangible by means of "silence."

"Silence" stands for emptiness, inability, strength, barrier, hurt, fear, accusation and understanding in accordance with the situation, character and temper.

In That Long Silence Jaya's emptiness in her relationship with her husband is explicated through this single word silence. She recalls how she had shaped all her desires and plans to be in harmony with Mohan's. Yet there is nothing but emptiness and silence to be retained. She laments pathetically:

I had shaped myself so resolutely to his desires all these years, yet what was I left with now? Nothing. Just emptiness and silence. (144)

When Jaya finds emptiness in the silence between herself and Mohan, she beholds inability in the silence of the
neighbourhood girl. That girl's inability to answer the queries of her husband results in her silence.

Again the blows, and still the woman clinging desperately to her silence, abandoning it only to cry softly, 'mother, mother, mother.' (That Long Silence 57)

If Jaya discerns emptiness and inability in 'silence', Mohan perceives strength in the silence of a woman like his mother who silently bore her husband's ill-treatment.

Jaya narrates the incident:

when the boy finally drifted off to sleep, she was still sitting there in front of the fire,
silent, motionless.... He saw strength in the woman sitting silently in front of the fire, but I saw despair. I saw a despair so great that it would not voice itself. I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender. (That Long Silence 36)

Unlike Mohan Jaya distinguishes despair and surrender in her mother-in-law's "Silence". Veena Sheshadri, while commenting on the novel, remarks:

The novel is not only about Jaya's efforts to obliterate the silence that is suffocating her. It is also about the despair and resignation of women like Mohan's mother, Jaya's servant; Jaya's mentally disturbed cousin Kusum. It also deals with Mohan's silence which is the silence of a man who speaks but can find no one to listen to him. ("That Long Silence" Literature Alive 2: 1 (1988) 95)
Shashi Deshpande's feministic principle gets crystallized in scanning the silence of women as not strength but despair. She presents "silence" as a barrier in Saru's ties with Manohar.

I never revealed that to anyone. Not even to Manu for he asked me nothing. And they began then... the silences that grew between us. Just grew and grew like Jack's beanstalk. (The Dark Holds No Terrors 94)

Each time she undergoes the torture speechless, the barrier between them grows steadily. Saru is very well aware of the fact saying "And each time it happens and I don't speak, I put another brick on the wall of silence between us"(96).

Not only the negative aspects but also positive effects are attained through "silence". Saru, her father and Madhav form a perfect partnership in doing household duties. Their wordless, commotionless life portrays understanding. Anita Desai in Where Shall We Go This Summer? attributes this meaning to a very rare moment of Sita's understanding with her husband. On returning from their picnic Sita observes a
silent link between herself and Raman. Raman's gentleness towards a foreigner has moved her:

Sita sitting intently from the back seat, thanked him for his gentleness, thanked him ardently in silence, and leaned forward to take a cigarette herself. Raman lit both their cigarettes and they smoked nervously, Sita acutely conscious of this silent link between them of a shared physical act of inner nervousness.(51)

In Fire on the Mountain the sudden silence between Nanda Kaul and Ila Das, on recalling the name of Miss David who had an illicit relationship with the Vice-Chancellor, indicates their hurt. The very mention of the name brings back Nanda Kaul's bitter old days:

But the line was cut suddenly as a thread is cut-snip-completely. She was silent.... The badminton court - mixed doubles - Miss David - and here were Ila Das and Nanda Kaul, both beaten, silent.(122)
Multifaceted meanings are envisioned through "silence" by both the writers competently. A single word contributes voluminous elucidation by its potent usage. Animals, plants and birds dance to the writers' tunes and make their work invaluable. Colours offer profound layers of explication in portraying the psyche of their characters. Flash-backs and the stream of consciousness technique offer the readers a multidimensional view of situation and character.

The uniqueness of their art lies in their use of manifold techniques without identifying themselves with a type. Both the writers demonstrate the reality about the suppression of women in their own individual way. Anita Desai's helpless women characters tolerate the injustice meted out to them silently and alone. On the other hand, Shashi Deshpande's women characters are more emphatic, more aggressive, their arguments resulting in difference of opinion between man and wife.