CHAPTER - V

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE
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As, a skilled craftsman uses some methods and devices to produce an object, in the same way, a literary artist has to make proper use of certain devices and methods in creating a literary work. A theme is conveyed through a story consists of certain events by a novelist in a novel. The story is to be narrated in the novel, being a verbal form. In the past, narration was even done orally, but now, over the years narrative craft of fiction has developed immensely. The narrator is the novelist herself/himself, entering into the minds of characters and unravelling their psyche to the readers.

'Technique' is a word which derived from the Greek *technikos techni* which means an art. It is an art in fiction including everything which goes into the creation of a novel. It serves as a medium that a novelist employ for narrating the story. Technique, is a major aspect of the novel and for the novelist, it is as important as colour for the painter. A novelist uses certain devices in creating the work of art like imagery, symbols, language, point of view to name a few. A novel’s central point is the theme which is developed and then carried forward to the climax through depiction of characters, events and situations woven up to give a final product in the form of novel. On the discovery process of getting to the devices employed by the novelist in novel, Percy Lubbock stated:
We bring to the reading of a book certain imaginative faculties which are in use all day long, faculties that enable us to complete, in our minds, the people and the scenes which the novelist and the scenes which the novelist describes— to give them dimensions, to see round them, to make them real.¹

During the ongoing process of reading a literary work one comes across various methods applied by the novelist to shape her/his novel. When a novelist keeps a wide distance from the fictional material of the novel, the reader faces some difficulty in deriving proper information about the devices she/he has employed. Otherwise the reader while reading is made aware of certain technical aspects used in the novel.

One cannot deny the fact that Indo-Anglian novels have been influenced by the developments in terms of themes and technique adopted by western writers. As Meenakshi Mukherjee asserts, now writers; "were less concerned with the larger social world than a strict fidelity to the individual vision of their central characters".² Among the Indo-Anglian novelists dealing with different perspective of life, Anita Desai was no exception.

She has been one of the leading luminaries in the genre of Indo-Anglian fictional world. Her forte lies in her inclination towards subjective experiences. Most of her contemporaries laid emphasis on propagandist writing related to social issues, Anita Desai went with

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her frame of mind which believed that literary works holds no:

further debt to society beyond that of being utterly truthful. I don't believe it can or ought to execute reforms, lay down laws or lead the people. Literature should deal with more enduring matters, less temporary and less temporal than politics. It should deal with life and death. It should be too ironical and too mystical to accept the world at face-value and regard it as the whole or the whole truth.³

Anita Desai possesses her own artistic private vision representing inner most concerns regarding literary artifacts. Anita Desai was very much aware of the transitions taking place around and the complexities of human predicament. She saw life as; 'a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.'⁴ The Fiction of Anita Desai dismantles the objectivity of life with a subjective approach. She exposes the conflicts of human existence which drives one into a state of anguish and utter despair.

The essence of her novels lies in the deep probing into the inner lives of her characters. She projects a new orientation of Indian english writing through her introspective and psychological realm of novels. Anita Desai emerges on the literary scene as an innovator of technical skill regarding her use of stream of consciousness methods in her novels in the most explicit and elaborate way. While discussing


this technique, Lukacs's thoughts is worth mentioning here:

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.5

Mind is a storehouse of all impressions and emotions of one's life. It is the connecting link between past and present. It makes one aware of the real self of one's being.

Time floats up and down like a running stream, providing different experiences simultaneously. Mind is the recipient of every little thought process. The views of J. Krishnamurti needed to mentioned here to understand the consciousness technique, which says:

If you watch your mind at work, you will see that the movement to the past and to the future in which the present is not. Either the past is a means of escape from the present which may be unpleasant or the future is the form of hope away the present. So the mind is occupied with the past or with the future and sloughs off the present.6

The unhappiness of present state pushes them to turn their back to past or take to the future ought-to-be vision. Conscious is something present in our awareness, also incorporating mental processes which means traces of past and present experiences of an individual.

The elements of unconscious forces and incidents are also important parts of our conscious actions, which include memories, intentions, beliefs, desires and thoughts. These elements are the true cause of everything that comes to be. The realm of unconscious stands for desire and a source to shed all pain and sufferings. Some people are driven by such repressed motives which takes them into a fantastic world. In this regard, B. Spinoza's observation requires to be mention, who stated:

men regard themselves as free, since they are aware of their will and their desires, and do not even in dream think of the causes which determine their desiring and willing, as they do not know them.⁷

They wish for an escape from the present state of anguish, but they are unaware of the unconscious forces which are compelling them to do so. This create havoc in their lives. Goethe has said; 'Man cannot persist long in a conscious state, he must throw himself back into the unconscious, for his root lives there.'⁸ The dwindling between past and present eventually affect their psyche and their present state, which becomes unbearable for them. For Goethe, Whyte observes:

Consciousness and unconsciousness, properly interpreted, are inseparable, mere names for complementary aspects of one phenomenon.⁹

An unconscious thought steers up the process of consciousness. It

(8) Ibid., Quoted by Lancelot Whyte, P. 128.
(9) Ibid., P. 127.
haunts one's present mental state unwillingly and gives an uneasy feeling to deal with.

The conflict between unconscious and conscious goes on and situations get more complexed one after the other. Nietzsche believed that conscious state is the surface reality, but unconscious is the main arena of real mental activities. The incoherence in human consciousness helps in analyzing human nature, which is an ongoing process and can be best presented through stream of consciousness technique.

Strongly associated with the modernist movement, stream of consciousness technique seeks to portray an individual's point of view by giving the written equivalent of the character's thought processes. The modern development in the genre of literature in the form of this technique influenced wide range of novelists across the world. The idea of a subconscious mind acting as a repository for suppressed elements developed in the initial years of twentieth century. The orderly waking state and below lying the subconscious layer full of repressions, complexes and fixations are the two areas being postulated by Freud. Different impressions co-exist in the consciousness as the time division of past, present and future is possible only in the waking state. Consciousness is the storehouse of memories and associations without any bondage of time. The novelist endeavours to provide a pattern to the confused collection of memories and impressions.

Everything is presented through an apparent unorganized succession of ideas than by logical argument and sequence. The action
takes place in the mind of the characters and stream of consciousness reflects all forces acting upon them at any one moment. This technique is the manifestation of new awareness of reality which is full of chaos and complexities.

It acts as a sequel to the disintegration of the values of twentieth century. It helps in the blurring of objective reality through a subjective approach. It focusses on the sensations of bodies and of the objects around, memories of past experiences and thoughts of distant things, feelings, desires, aversions and other emotional conditions together with determinants of the will in every variety of permutation and combination. This technique explores pre-speech level of consciousness, revealing the psychic being of characters, dealing with the whatness and howness of mental experiences.

The stream of consciousness method presents individual's personality in terms of artistic sensibility. It helps in delineation of characters on a more graphic, realistic and realistic level. It takes the readers to the hidden recesses of altering consciousness of the minds of characters. One can share the presence of their consciousness as it helps in bridging the distance between the reader and characters portrayed by the novelist. Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf were amongst the first ones to question that if life is so incomplete and chaotic, then why should it be so compact, well-knit and organised in a novel..? These novelists got themselves rid of the mechanism of a well-knit compact plot and adopted this technique, which was for them closer to reality.
Virginia Woolf opined that external happenings covers a long period of time, but leaves myriad of impressions in the mind which is of short duration. The reality of one’s being is mind, which is well aware of this short duration impressions. This method links past to the present without being formally categorized. Four remarkable novels of hers, namely, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To The Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931) and *Between the Acts* (1941) are perfect examples based on this technique. What distinguishes her novels is the aesthetic effect of her exploration of the minds of her characters. The meeting of past and present has been considered an important aspect of the novel. Nostalgia and memory is a crucial part of her craft used thematically in the novels.

As mentioned earlier, Anita Desai had been very much influenced by Virginia Woolf and it is perceptible in her framework of writing. The novels of Virginia Woolf carried certain characteristics including stream of consciousness, suppression of plot, a poetic style and interior monologue. Following her footsteps, Anita Desai made it to the Hall of Fame with her very first novel, *Cry, the Peacock*, a sensitive revelation of a woman’s predicament in a hostile universe. One finds here the novel’s pre-occupation with time. The narrative here moves up and down via 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 axis to comprehend the whole pattern... a marriage
of past and present with the flying multiplicity of the future racing
towards one.\textsuperscript{10}

The time scheme of the novel is polytemporal, yet one can discern the
barrier time-shape. For instance, an albino astrologer in the novel has
predicted death of either Maya or her husband in the fourth year of
their marriage. As time progresses, the gruesome prediction comes to
fulfil itself within the context of given time-limit.

\textit{Cry, The Peacock} proved to be a trendsetter in the realm of
psychological fiction, unravelling the psyche of main protagonist,
Maya. She is a sensitive married woman, dissatisfied with her life, as
her husband Gautama is contrary in nature to what she is. The novel
begins with the death of their pet dog, Toto, whom Maya was deeply
attached. Her husband, being a practical person, considers it a trivial
matter and do not share her pain. Here one is taken back to Maya's
past days, which serves as a connecting link between Toto's death and
her fear of death. She confesses:

\begin{quote}
\textit{it was not my pet's death alone that I mourned today, but another
sorrow, unremembered, perhaps as yet not even experienced, and
filled me with this despair.}\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quote}

The strange horror haunting her mind was the prophecy of that albino
astrologer, Who predicted the death of either Maya or Gautama in the
fourth year of marriage. The memory of this prophetic vision is
repeatedly felt by Maya. The fear of dying was always there in her

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mind, which made her life a hell. She could not wipe off the shadows of the past.

The reader is moved from outer to inner realities, from present to past experiencing sensations. A kind of objectivity in the scene is also used by the novelist to make one aware of the consciousness of the character. One of the scenes between Gautama and Maya is an instance of such technique used by Anita Desai:

"You look disappointed". He looked at me waiting. I did not move. So he shrugged, poured out his tea. Yes it was best for him to learn how to do it himself. One of us would be left alone to always pour his or her tea, in loneliness; I felt the shroud of death blur my vision, while through it I saw him sitting, miles away in the distance, squeezing out a small yellow lemon that filled the stale air with a sharp, shooting odour of astringent freshness. The limes that shaded the dogs corpse had emitted just such an odour upon a fine spring evening, long ago. Death and youth, stillness and sensation; "Who was the letter from then", he asked setting back comfortably with a cup of tea\textsuperscript{12}.

Pouring tea by Gautama led Maya to vision her/his future state of loneliness as it was predicted by the astrologer that one of them will die. Her mind takes her to future and the reader too shifts from present to the visionary future of hers. Again the smell of lemon transports her back to the past incident of Toto's death. Then, an interruption by Gautama brings her to the present state.

Here one witnesses the excellent demonstration of

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., P. 142.
psychology of association of time by Anita Desai. Reader can connect with the character's mind which is moving back and forth in time. A constant connection between the external and internal events is reflected through stream of consciousness technique.

The main skeletal events of Toto's death, albino's nightmarish prediction and the deaths of Gautama and Maya are held together by the novelist juxtaposing past to the present with sweeping towards the inevitable future. The below given Maya's statement itself is a reflex of Anita Desai's technique:

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.\(^{13}\)

To match the sudden shifts in perspective with disconnecting thoughts, sentences move in a rush. Stream of consciousness is the main technique used by the novelist to probe into the inner psyche of her characters. Anita Desai's style can be best understood from her own statement:

It is the movement of the wing one tries to capture, not the bird. That is, it is the image that matters.... That is, what a writer's existence is all about- he connects, he connects, all the time he connects. It is a process that does employ language but also transcends it.\(^{14}\)

The texture of the novel is enriching for it has controlled transitions

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\(^{13}\) Ibid., P. 179.

to the past and future and also blending of past and present. Anita Desai through her skilful use of time and memory have developed the theme of the novel and explored the real being of her characters.

One of the fine early novels of Anita Desai, *Voices in the City* has the title itself an example of technique, reflecting on the central theme of the novel. It echoes with the hearts of countless people struggling to make a life of their own. The leading characters of the novel are led by their unconscious instincts and impulses. Their conscious actions and thoughts are triggered by their unconscious mental activities making them dwindle between their past and present, shuffling between unfulfilled wishes and reality which did not offered them what they expected. Nirode, the male protagonist of the novel, has an unconscious wish of getting mother’s affection, but her affair with Major Chadha becomes a threat to the care he unconsciously craved for.

The traumatic experience of having lost motherly affection keeps haunting Nirode. In his sickness, he becomes nostalgic and talks to Monisha (his sister) about their mother. He recalls,

> When we were all very small and she would play Chinese checkers with us on the bright mats and put us to sleep with stories from the 'Mahabharata'.

In due course of uttering this incident, he becomes incoherent in his talks. All his life he hopes to get little warmth and care from his mother, but feels baffled by her cold response. At the Death of

Monisha, while waiting for their mother, Nirode's mind again got engrossed in thoughts of her mother:

The thoughts had, occasionally, visited him that now his mother would come, now he would meet her and talk to her, and the knowledge had given him relief.¹⁶

The haunting presence of her mother in his mind unconsciously dominates his life. After watching dispassionate gesture of his mother at Monisha's death, he says to Amla; 'She is our consciousness and our unconsciousness, she is all that is manifest and all that is unmanifest...'¹⁷ He felt the amalgamation of life and death in her face. The personality of his mother eventually got fixed in his mind and he did not wished to come out of that image, which kept haunting his mind and heart throughout.

Monisha's detachment from everything around her stems from her unconscious impulse for security and craving for individual freedom. She is married to Jiban, who ignored her existence and dances to the tunes of his vast family. The joint family have shatched the word 'privacy' from Monisha's life. Her own utterance expresses her repressed desire:

Only I wish I were given some tasks I would do alone in privacy away from the aunts and uncles, the cousins and nieces and nephews.¹⁸

Her urge for freedom and privacy throughout adds to her neurosis. This

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(¹⁶) Ibid., P. 250.
(¹⁷) Ibid., P. 256.
(¹⁸) Ibid., P. 115.
is her unconscious wish which never got realized in actuality.

Amla, the other leading character of the novel too possess an unconscious desire for love, companionship and freedom. She tries to strike a balance between the real and ideal, what is and what 'ought to-be'. She comes to Calcutta for her career and there she develops a relationship with Dharma, Nirode's friend. She finds him corresponding with her image of a companion in her unconscious mind. Dharma, being a married man could not welcome her intrusion in his life. Soon, she realises the futility of this relation which offered no security of hers. The tragic death of Monisha also became an eye-opener for her and decided not to sacrifice anything for anyone. Watching Monisha's dead body:

She contemplated her own drawings. Then Dharma... And all the while, at the back of a mind that could not grapple directly with the powerful thing at hand, she knew that Monisha's death had pointed the way for her and would never allow her to lose herself. 19

Between Nirode's neurotic outbursts and Monisha's tragic death, Amla stands out as an emerging self. Viewing the actuality to life, she decides to shut all the romanticism and accept life the way it is.

The third novel of Anita Desai, *Bye-Bye Blackbird* deals with social reality of Indian immigrants in England. The actions, responses and the whole perspective of leading characters are monitored by unconscious forces. Dev, an Indian is romanticised with the idea of Britain from the last fifteen years and he wants to settle down there:

so well prepared by fifteen years of reading the books that had been his meat and drink, the English books that had formed at least one half of his conscious existence.  

A perfect image of England was well set in the deep recesses of his mind. When he landed, there he felt every image concretizing before him. Dev is completely enamoured by the grandeur of England. His unconscious decision of settling here took time in becoming a conscious one after dwindling between rejecting his homeland and accepting a new one. On the surface, he was not sure whether he would be able to adjust to new surroundings, but subconsciously at the back of his mind, he affirmed his decision of settling here. Some disgusting and derogatory remarks by England towards Indians disappointed him, but at the end he took it rather lightly and compromise with the situation for the sake of his dreams, which, he feels, could be fulfilled in England.

Adit, a complete contrast to his friend Dev, is proud to live in England. Being an Asian, Adit too faces insulting remarks but he ignores them. Adit is attached to his homeland India on the unconscious level. He misses Indian food, music and people. He left India out of poor financial condition, but his roots still remained planted in India. Adit made his English wife Sarah to adopt Indian style of cooking and dressing. After a bitter experience at his in-laws place, Adit's felt the sense of non-belongingness and becomes

aware of it. Now he craves for; 'anything individual and eccentric, unruly and unplanned, anything Indian at all.'\(^{21}\) This was the call of his unconscious which was much bigger than the enchanting English surroundings and the hypnotic charm of English education. The below given instance clears his attitude towards English:

Entering a store, he felt he could not bear to see one more pale, expressionless British face. If one more to approach him, he would hit it, hit it. He put his shaking hands inside his pockets and left furtively.\(^{22}\)

The hatred for English people going on his mind is perceptible through his gestures. Anita Desai has brilliantly externalise his inner psychic conflict. Adit decides to extricate from illusory world of fantastic England and flies back to India. In Adit's case, his unconscious helps him to come out of his dillusions of a romantic world. Meenakshi Mukherjee remarks:

Removal from one's natural background invariably brings about a sharpened sense of identity and a self-consciousness about one's cultural roots.\(^{23}\)

After suffering from disorientation and rootlessness, his temptations for the luxuries of England got shattered. The unacceptance by English people makes him feel deprived of any respectable status among them. Being nostalgic about India and earnestness to see again the

\(^{(21)}\) Ibid., P. 192.

\(^{(22)}\) Ibid., P. 192.

Indian sunset compelled him to take decision of leaving England, forever. As in Adit's own words: 'It's so stifling— all the time, all the damned time— being aware of who one is and where one is.' This suffocation always hovered on his mind and he wanted to come out of it. There was no alternative than to decide to return to his native land.

Sarah, suffers from psychological as well as social pressures after getting married to an Indian, Adit, settled in England. Sarah was fascinated by the romantic image of India which offers cultural heritage, legends and festivals. But her marriage was not wholeheartedly accepted by her parents. She was fascinated by the 'alive' world of India, its culture and traditions. Her unconscious enchantment for India attracted her towards Adit. When Adit decides to leave England, she agreed without any argument.

She could not tell what effect the smallest refusal or contradiction might have on him—... he might start screaming accusations at her... anything was possible in his highly strung and dramatic condition. She dreaded such a reaction. Even a thought of such reaction from Adit scared her. To save her marriage, she opted to surrender to her husband's decision. Sarah was pregnant and Adit wants their child to be born in India. Sarah knew she would miss England and her coming baby would also miss it:

She began rapidly to draw up a mental list of the things her child

(25) Ibid., P. 200.
would not know and enjoy and tried to stop herself by attending to another list, the list of things the child would know and enjoy, but inspite of the substantial length of this list, she could not help biting her lips and casting another look at the pleasures it would have to forego.26

Sarah knew that it would not be an easy task for Adit to start all over again in India. It will cost lots of pain, suffering and adjustment. Her confused state of mind is very well expressed here by the gesture of hers by the novelist.

Anita Desai has explored the psychological realm of characters through their gestures also in the novel. One of such extracts from the novel describing Sarah's confused mental state, her inability to comprehend Indian ethos and her split-personality is as follows:

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... To her closed eyes the darkness moved in a tumult of black shapes that would not settle.27

This is the perfect example of Anita Desai's mastery in probing of psychological states of characters. Sarah's effort to adjust, her perplexed psyche and her willingness to accept is very well explicated here. The reader could feel and understand the traumas of characters

(27) Ibid., P. 50.
during the ongoing reading process of the novel. Certain actions and attitude very well describe their state of mind. Also the novelist has beautifully connected the present conscious mind of characters with the future one.

Anita Desai’s next novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* has its female protagonist, Sita, vacillating between reality and her sense of fabulation. She has been brought up in a world of colours and magic on an island. Gradually, she became aware of the realities of life including her father’s failed marriage, which made Sita sore about all this. After the death of her father, her real interaction with life began, when she got married to Raman. The reality of life, of her marriage and then children was also not agreeable to her. Feeling disgusted and fed up of everything around her, she thinks of getting back to island in the hope of some magic. But there she found it was just a mirage. She found the atmosphere reeking badly and village in a squalid condition. Again when Raman comes over then to take her back, she accepts the agonies of living as a part of existence.

Anita Desai has brilliantly unravelled Sita’s psyche with all her frustrations, agonies and disbeliefs. The novel opens up with Sita’s arrival in Manori. Her consciousness takes readers into the past through flashback technique to Bombay, and her whole life is unveiled. Sita remembers how her husband reacted when she broke the news of her fifth pregnancy.

He stared at her with a distaste that told her it did not become
her a woman now in her forties, greying, aging, to behave with such a total lack of control.28

She wept a lot then and there was none to comfort her. Then again, few months later, when Sita decided to leave for Manori, Raman stopped her from doing so. Her frustration, anger and rage which she collected inside her bursted out in her action:

Tossing clothes, Cigarettes, books into the suitcase that she had dragged down from the tops of cupboards, she was silent and blind in the face of his alarm and disbelief as he stood and not quite believing what he saw.29

Raman tried to make her understand that she will face problems in Manori as there would be no facilities and no reputed hospitals for her. Sita cried and said that she does not want to have the baby. Raman was shocked at this attitude of hers. He reminiscences how:

a woman who had once stood all day on the balcony, keeping away the crows that were attacking a wounded eagle on a neighbouring roof top and who winced dreadfully every time she heard a child cry.30

Her sensitivity flashes in his mind, and now he could not stand with her statement of not having the baby. Her husband Raman used to have business parties occasionally at home. At one such instance when guests were busy in eating and chatting, Sita goes back to her memories of island where no one was aware what one ate:

(28) Anita Desai, Where Shall We Go This Summer? (New Delhi : Orient Paperbacks) 1982, P. 32.

(29) Ibid., P. 33.

(30) Ibid., P. 34.
Sita found this at first so fantastic as to be unreal. But very soon the kitchen odours and kitchen sounds thickened and swelled till they became indubitably real, overpowering real.\(^{31}\)

This oscillation of hers between reality (her present) and past creates conflict in her mind. Once coming back from Ajanta and Ellora caves, Raman and Sita met a stranger. He asked then for the lift, but Raman said they are going other way. After sharing cigarettes, he parted from them and moved on his way. Somewhere Sita unconsciously identified with that stranger and:

She not only thought again and again of that wanderer's mirage-like appearance and disappearance but spoke too often and too much of him.\(^{32}\)

Sita praised him by calling him innocent, brave, admirable before Raman and said that she would also like to travel like him. Raman calls it as an act of infidelity on her part. But it was Sita's psyche which urged to be a wanderer, to search her real-self. The thought of that stranger reflects Sita's inner desire to find her own self. Thoughts keeps flowing in her mind all the time. She is hardly present with the existing moment:

"Are you waiting for someone?" she was occasionally asked by one of the children dashing past or by her husband, as she sat on the balcony, smoking, not reading the book on her lap, looking at and then away from the sea. Sometimes she answered with a nod for it was true, she was always waiting. Physically so resigned, she could not inwardly accept that this was all there

\(^{31}\) Ibid., P. 49.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., P. 52.
was to life, that life would continue thus, inside this small, enclosed area, with these few characters churning around and then past her, leaving her always in this grey, dull-lit empty shell.\(^{33}\)

Probably Sita has higher notions of life than any other average woman and unfulfilment of those wishes created havoc in her mind and life. She is expressing her anger and disgust by act of smoking.

When Raman, one fine day, asks her where they will go this summer, her answer was:

To Manori, she instantly replied, but in silence because with this idea there also sprang to her mind the idea that she would go alone. 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.\(^{34}\)

She perceived island as a place of refuge from the dull, routine life of the city. She hoped that the shadow of trees will protect her and children from the destructiveness of the city; *'The island had been buried beneath her consciousness deliberately, for years.'\(^{35}\)* She did not want to continue the tedium life with Raman and wished to find the peace at Manori. Now Sita comes back to her present moment where she is reaching towards island with children. She was shocked to find the changes that took place there. She remembers her father; *'watching and directing his chelas, all in white, all still pure and clear*
as glass after their prayers and devotions, made it seem one.\footnote{Ibid., P. 68.} She reminiscences many incidents one by one that happened on island many years ago. All her childhood memories of her father, brother and sister flashed in her mind one after the other. Again coming back to her present state, Sita got engaged herself with looking after Menaka and Karan. The novelist points out about the psyche of Sita:

...When the children were away, playing or asleep- and they intruded strangely little on her consciousness considering they were in that isolated house- she never felt alone. She felt surrounded by presences- the presence of the island itself, of the sea around it, and of the palm trees that spoke to each other and sometimes, even to her.\footnote{Ibid., P. 126.}

The island was always subconsciously present and acting in her mind. Now, instead of relief and solace, island increases her loneliness. She feels miserable and wretched and realize that all her fabulation of a perfect world at island caused all the miseries. When Raman came over there at the call of Menaka, Sita too opted to return home with him. At one instance, while they were walking together:

She looked away, staring at her feet, watching a frilled wave dash at her, sweep over her and then rush away. Again and again the wave repeated its rush forward, its rush backward. Watching it, she saw again that point in time when she had realized what a farce marriage was, all human relationship were.\footnote{Ibid., P. 144.}

Innumerable thoughts were flowing in her mind. When Raman
inquires her about one happy moment of her life, she recalls a scene from Hanging Gardens, where she saw a man caressing his woman tenderly. He was shocked to hear but tolerated it. Sita helped children in their packing and deliberately attempted to make her mind to go back to Bombay.

She could visualise nurses looking after her. And also feel a sense of relief that she would have, once her fifth child is born. With all these thoughts going in her mind she packed up things and got ready to leave Manori.

Anita Desai has connected different stages of her life through memory and presented her real psyche before the readers. Noticing the most trivial detail she invests it with significance. The novelist has entered completely into the characters, one by one tracing their thoughts and actions with free lyrical expression. Sita’s continually escape to the past has been aesthetically delineated and woven in the fabric of her personality by the novelist. One gets full fledge picture of the confused life of Sita through psychological probing of her personality by Anita Desai.

Anita Desai's most accomplished novel *Fire on the Mountain* placed her reputation as one of the best Indian English novelists. Time here does not flow in a forward sequential movement but there are constant references to the past. The central character, Nanda Kaul, lives in a solitary place named Kasauli, after her husband's demise.
Nanda Kaul unconsciously seeks to freeze Time into a motionless constancy, but Time keeps moving through her past which she recapitulates she reacts to her present surroundings.\(^{39}\)

Time has been not fair to the characters of *Fire on the Mountain*. Nanda Kaul lived all her life performing duties as a wife and a mother. She has led a life of deprivations and unfulfilment in the house of vice-chancellor loaded with guests all the time but devoid of love and affection. She nourished an urged to be loved and cared all through her life in her unconscious mind. The novelist’s passing back and forth can be seen in the second chapter itself. The postman who had come with a letter for Nanda Kaul see the house where she was residing in and that takes him back to memories and now; *The postman could imagine nothing but he knew a few things. He had known the house before it was Nanda Kaul’s.*\(^{40}\) He remembers all the previous occupants of the house and the reader gets acquainted with the history of Carignano. Anita Desai had made use of flashback technique to present the very experience of "life". She aims to depict the human perception of time which is fragmentary and expands or contracts according to situations and people.

The letter was by Nanda Kaul’s daughter and Nanda Kaul who was now living in solitude did not want any kind of intrusion in her life. She began to think of her daughter and also Tara, Nanda Kaul’s grand daughter who was suffering at the hands of her cruel husband. Nanda Kaul did not wished to open the letter, but then she

\(^{39}\) R.S. Sharma, *Anita Desai*, (New Delhi, 1981), P. 120.

did. It carried the news of the arrival of her great grand daughter Raka, at Carignano. This news distracted Nanda Kaul because:

All she wanted was to be alone, to have Carignano to herself, in this period of her life when stillness and calm were all that she wished to entertain.\textsuperscript{41}

Anita Desai, by probing into the psychological depth of her character has revealed and captured inner rhythm of life. Lots of thoughts were flowing in the mind of Nanda Kaul and the novelist have explicitly drawn it into the canvas of her novel. Then Nanda Kaul:

Looking down, over all those years she had survived and borne, she saw them, not bare and shining as the plains below, but like the gorge, cluttered, choked and blackened with the heads of children and grandchildren, servants and guests, all restlessly surging, clamoring about her. She thought of the veranda of their house in the small university town in Punjab, the Vice-Chancellor’s house over which she had presided with such an air as to strike awe into visitors who come to call and leave them slightly gaping. 'She had her cane chair there, too, and she had sat there, not still and emptily, but mending clothes, sewing on strings...\textsuperscript{42}

The retrospection here makes one aware of the married life of Nanda Kaul which was full of responsibilities rather than anything else. The futility of her past life made her cynical and embittered and this is the reason of her reluctance regarding the news of Raka’s arrival. She does not want any kind of duty now on her shoulders. Externally everything

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., P. 17.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., P. 17.
seemed to be smooth in her past life but internally she was burying with the fire of frustration. She feared her peace to get disturbed by Raka's unwelcomed intrusion in her life:

Now to converse again when it was silence she wished, to question and follow up and make sure of another's life and comfort and order, to involve oneself, to involve another.\(^{43}\)

Nanda Kaul was afraid even at the thought of Raka's coming to Carignano. Another intrusion in her life appears in the form of Ila Das, who had been a schoolmate of hers. Ila Das calls her up informing about her arrival at Carignano, but Nanda Kaul asked her to wait for a while as she was very rigid to Ila Das and does not wished her to see. The phone of Ila takes Nanda back to her past:

She thought of her's husband face and the way he would plait his fingers across his stomach and slip heavy lids down over his eyes whenever Ila Das came, bobbing and bouncing, in button boots, her umbrella wildly swirling, to tea. The memory of his face, his expression, made her lips twist almost into a smile.\(^{44}\)

Ila Das appears as a simple, innocent, harmless and quite silly woman emerging from the underworld of hardships and deprivation and someone to be bullied and laughed at by anyone. She is an active social worker trying to educate people as a welfare officer.

Nanda Kaul began to love her solitude at Carignano. Lying on her bed, she reminiscences about her busy life at vice-chancellor's house, where she had no space of her own:

\(^{43}\) Ibid., P. 19.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., P. 22.
She remembered how she had tried to shut out sound by shutting out light, how she had spent the sleepless hour making out the direction from which a shout came, or a burst of giggles, an ominous growling from the dogs..., the dry rattle of eucalyptus leaves in the sun, a drop, then spray and a rush of water from a top.\textsuperscript{45}

The novelist had aesthetically objectified every feeling of Nanda Kaul. One can visualize and feels her situation. Her psychic conflict has been explicitly carved out by Anita Desai within the framework of her novel. The past of Nanda Kaul kept hovering on her present:

From all sides these sounds invaded her room which was in the centre... She could hear her sons tiptoe past in their great, creaking boots, then fling their satchels down with a crash.\textsuperscript{46}

She had never experienced peace in that house. Only husband, children and guests became the whole and sole of her life. No one cared for her needs as she did for everyone. Mr. Kaul lived a life on his own terms which had nothing to do with his wife's needs. The time she used to spend in the lawn gave her sense of space and peace:

That was one time she had been alone: a moment of private triumph, cold and proud. The memory of it cast a shadow across her— it was cool. It made her stir, raise her hands to her cheeks, her hair, then slowly sit up... It was time for tea.\textsuperscript{47}

The juxtaposing of past and present with the flow of novel reveals the
character's altering consciousness. Then again while reading one of books- to which depicted loneliness of a woman as its theme, rushes her back to:

The old house, the full house... intense and busy world, Its crowing had stifled her. There had been too many servants... too many guests coming and going, ....so that there was a shortage of privacy that vexed her...

They had had so many children, ...She had suffered from the nimity, 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;

Would Raka's coming mean the opening of that old troublesome ledger again? Sighing she went off to bed, dragging one foot uncharacteristically.

Slowly and steadily, step by step her consciousness in unveiled here.

The transition from the busy world of Vice-Chancellor house to the solitude at Carignano has been beautifully drawn out by the novelist.

Raka appeared as an introvert child. She loved to be with herself, which was a shock to Nanda Kaul, as the Kids of her age are more inclined towards playing and roam around with friends. Her aloofness was the result of the traumatic experiences she had in her home where only bitterness and violence prevailed. The key to the understanding of Raka's personality is furnished by the following incident, which remains in her sub-conscious:

(49) Ibid., P. 29-30.
...was her father, home from a party stumbling and crashing through the curtains of night, his mouth opening to let out a flood of rotten stench, beating at her mother with hammers and fists of abuse—harsh, filthy abuse that made Raka cower under her bedclothes and wet the matters in fright, ... and her mother lay down on the floor and shut her eyes and wept. Under her feet, in the dark, Raka felt that flat, wet jelly of her mother's being squelching and quivering, so that she didn't know where to put her feet and wept as she tried to get free of it. Ahead of her, no longer on the ground but at some distance now, her mother was crying. Then it was Jackal crying.49

Such cruel behaviour with her mother left a negative impact on the innocent of Raka. She started hating people and found better companions in winds, rocks, thorny bushes and uninhabited wilderness. The background of her emotional traumas made her what she is— an gloomy embodiment of privations.

Nanda Kaul tries to interact with Raka and she spun some charmed fantasies to win over her. She concocted imaginary stories of her childhood and builds vast stories of Persian carpets, Moghul miniatures to impress Raka; 'That was long, long ago at a time when hardly anyone even thought of trying to go Tibet.'50 She created a story out of nothing. Here Nanda Kaul covered her unhappy past with fantasy world of illusions. She told that her father was an explorer and was away in Tibet for so many years. She fabricated a fantastic realm to impress Raka, but Nanda Kaul knew that every bit of it is a lie and her life has been devoid of any happiness and affection.

(49) Ibid., Pp. 71-72.
(50) Ibid., P. 82.
The flashback technique used by the novelist has co-ordinated story and time process effectively. The game of reminiscing and reconstructing the glories of an otherwise painful past is carried further by Ila Das, which makes Nanda Kaul feel; "the entire weight of her overloaded past seemed to four on her like liquid cement that immediately set solid, incarcerating her in its stiff gloom."\(^{51}\) But the tragic death of Ila Das makes her realize that:

All those graces and glories with which she tried to captivate Raka were only a fabrication: they helped her to sleep at night, they were tranquillizers, Pills. She had lied to Raka.\(^{52}\)

Focussing on the inner experiences of life, Anita Desai has been successful in striking a sympathetic chord in the sensitive reader. The time balance showed by the novelist in juxtaposing memories of past with that of present suspends the need for chronology of events and preferring skillfull use of stream of consciousness technique to reveal the psychic of individuals. *Fire on the Mountain* excelled in unraveling the consciousness of Nanda Kaul, which was the reality of her detached existence.

Her next novel *Clear Light of Day* is a family drama covering a long period from childhood to maturity, depicting characters constantly moving in the present and past. Anita Desai has described it as a four dimensional novel, having a family moving backward and forward within a period of time. It is about time as a destroyer and preserver and what it does to people. The novel, a nomination for the

\(^{(51)}\) Ibid., P. 117.
\(^{(52)}\) Ibid., P. 145.
Booker prize award is a sensitive and beautifully written novel. The novelist has focussed and explored the apparent meaninglessness of life in a small family consisting of four brothers and sisters, Raja, Bim, Tara and Baba. Raja and Bim (Bimla) are bold and independent. Bim is looking after house and carrying all the responsibilities on her shoulders after Raja ran away to Hyderabad to get married to a Nawab's daughter.

Baba is handicapped and mentally retarded. Tara is a sensitive girl, now married and settled in life. The whole occurrence of family is unfolded through consciousness of two main characters, Bim and Tara, primarily from Bim's point of view, who is the female protagonist of the novel. Through their reminiscences, the reader is taken to their childhood days and then their youth to middle age. One such moment, when Bim's consciousness takes back to her past and got herself busy in some stuff:

Bim stood with lowered head, tugging at the hair that hung loosely about her face as she had done when she had sat beside her brother's bed that summer that he was ill.\(^{53}\)

Her present moment reminds of her past days moments with her brother Raja. She hates him now for what he did by running away all his duties, but still remembers him. One is made aware of the kind of relationship they shared in the past through stream of consciousness technique.

The rose walk takes Tara back to childhood days of hers,

when as a child she used to follow her mother who was expecting. Tara used to scream at the sight of snail while walking with her mother in the garden. Now, after years when Tara comes home, she again shouts at the sight of a snail which is surprising for Bim; "Was Tara, grown woman, mother of grown up daughters, still child enough to play with a snail?"\textsuperscript{54} At another instance, while sitting in the veranda, Tara remembers:

This room had been hers and Bim's when they were girls. It opened onto the dense grove of guava trees that seperated the back of the house from the row of servants quarters. Bright morning sounds of activity came from them-- a water tap running, a child crying.\textsuperscript{55}

One gets a glimpse of their house as it was used to be many years back.

Few minutes later, while waiting for her husband, Tara saw Baba moving out from the house in a hurry. She wanted to stop him, but did not. She remembers:

Once, when he had ventured out, a bicycle had dashed against him as he stood hesitating at the edge of the road, wondering whether to cross... He was small. He was standing on the dunes... a man loomed up, military in a Khaki uniform... roughly pushed past him shouting 'Hato! Hato!' to make way for a white horse that plunged up out of the dunes and galloped past Baba, crouching on his knees in the sand.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{(54) Ibid., P. 2.}
\textsuperscript{(55) Ibid., P. 11.}
\textsuperscript{(56) Ibid., P. 15.}
Again Tara comes back to her present state where her husband Bakul has arrived and waiting for her to get ready. The above mentioned incident informs the reader about the accident that took place in Baba’s life which left him to live the life of a handicapped.

While Bakul was busy in speaking out things one after the other, Bim goes back to her past and several instances kept on flashing in her mind:

Raja used to swear that one day he would leap up onto the table in a lion-mask.. while Bim flashed her swing scissors in the sunlight... But Tara simply sucked her finger and retreated down the veranda to Aunt Mira’s room where she could always tuck herself up... as not to feel the need to wreck her parents’ occupation or divert their attention.\(^{57}\)

The above mentioned passage throws light on the family atmosphere they had and were grown in. Another instance to mention would be when Bim and Tara are talking about Raja:

Hyder Ali Sahib was always Raja’s ideal, wasn’t he?’ she ended up. Her words had cut a deep furrow through Tara’s forehead. She too pressed down on her elbows, feeling the balustrade cut into her flesh as she tried to remember.\(^{58}\)

Such memories helps the reader to understand the relations, as it happens here. To marry Hyder Ali’s daughter only, Raja left home. Bim anguish is clearly perceptible in these lines, even the thought of Raja gives her pain. Tara is shocked at such attitude of hers.

\(^{(57)}\) Ibid., P. 22.

\(^{(58)}\) Ibid., P. 25.
One day, while checking drawers, Bim found that letter of Raja which he wrote years ago. Then suddenly:

...a series of pictures of the Hyder Ali family flickered in the half-dark of the room. There was Hyder Ali, once their neighbour and their landlord.\(^{59}\)

Again Bim's heart got infuriated with anger and pain for her brother. She did not wish to get her youth back as that only gave her suffering. She remembers how Raja fell ill but was worried about Hyder Ali as the fire partition was growing all over. About Raja; "She could not help admiring what she saw as his heroism, his independent thinking and courage."\(^{60}\) His love for poetry also fascinated Bim. When Raja was ill, she used to read for him. Both share same kind of admiration for poetry; 'Bim remembered how, as small children, Raja had announced, so grandly, 'When I grow up, I shall be a hero.'\(^{61}\) Such remembrances of Raja make her feel agonized and sad because according to her, Raja became a coward by shutting down all the responsibilities. He did not stand up by his word.

Through past reminiscences one comes to know about the birth of Baba and arrival of Aunt Mira in their family to look after him; 'Aunt Mira even played with Baba, teaching him games no one else had tried to play with him.'\(^{62}\) She used to take care of everything. Filling up jars with pickles, knitting sweaters are such things which

\(^{59}\) Ibid., P. 27.  
\(^{60}\) Ibid., P. 45.  
\(^{61}\) Ibid., P. 55.  
\(^{62}\) Ibid., P. 105.
is sweetly remembered by Bim of hers Children loved her; "They owned her and yes, she wanted to be owned. She owned them too, and they needed to be owned." This is the kind of relationship they shared with Aunt Mira. She was not their mother, but certainly became the very centre of their lives and household. Memories of past kept lingering in her minds. Coming back to present, with the passage of time Bim tries to purge herself of the intense hatred that she felt for Raja and she realises; "No other love had started so far back in time and had so much time in which to grow and spread." She discovers her love for the family which was more important than anything else. It shows how the memories get coloured by fresh perceptions and redefines each moment by present self. On Bim's victory over all grievances, omniscient narrator says:

That soil contained all time, past and future, in it. It was dark with time, rich with time. It was where her deepest self lived and the deepest selves of her sister and brothers and all those who shared that time with her.

Consciousness is forever changing and also one's memories get revived with the passage of time.

Das's house is steeped in memories exposing the turbulent lives of the characters in a world of ever-changing values. On the novelist's technique of telescoping past and present pursuing remote mental associations, Brijraj Singh writes:

(63) Ibid., P. 111.
(64) Ibid., P. 165.
(65) Ibid., P. 182.
Indeed even the most casual reader of 'Clear Light of Day', is likely to be impressed with her weaving of past and present into a single and unified whole. An incident occurs, or words are spoken, or a scene is described in the present; this lead effortlessly to the recreation of past incidents, words and scenes: the past is explored and them just as effortlessly we move back to the present with greater illumination only to take this light of understanding back to the recessed and shadowy events of the past.66

Anita Desai has been successful in achieving a multidimensional effect in characters through her use of memory and thus explored psychological depths of their real selves.

Her seventh novel In Custody is the story of a teacher Deven and his wounded self. He is a lecturer of Hindi in a private College in Mirpore and about to interview an Urdu poet, Nur, living in old Delhi. Deven is utterly fascinated by Nur's personality and is never able to come out of his shadow. The title of the novel grabs the attention of the reader because of its two implications. The first one to be that Deven is Nur's true discipline and his poetry would be safe in Deven's custody. Another one are the complications which Deven lands himself in one after the other in taking Nur's interview. In Custody is Deven's quest for self-fulfilment, which according to him lies in reaching somewhere in the literary field:

He often had nightmares in which he struggled towards an unspecified destination but was repeatedly waylaid and deflected, never in any stretch of sleep arriving at it any more than he did

in waking, his feet seemed to be enmeshed in the sticky net of the nightmare that would not let him escape at any level of consciousness.67

He possess an unconscious desire of carving a niche for himself, especially in the field of poetry. He inherited his fascination for Urdu poetry from his father. Deven gets an opportunity to meet Nur, his idol and he can not let it go from his hand. The feeling of exhilaration that comes from Nur’s name are expressionistically rendered here:

Nur, of course, the magic name of Nur Shahjahanabadi of course, thought Deven, walking out into the brassy light. It was a name that opened doors, changed expressions, caused dust and cobwebs to disappear, visions to appear bathed in readiance. It had led him to avenues that would take him to another land, another element. Yes, these college grounds, these fields of dust, ..., mocking young students at the gate and the bus stop, all would be left behind, and he would move on into the world of art and poetry.68

Here one gets a mixture of stream of consciousness and expressionism. Outer images are expressing his inner feelings and influence of Nur’s magic. He took great pains by shuttling between Delhi and Mirpore but his awe for Nur shatters when he finds Nur’s greed for money not art. This novel is quite different from Anita Desai’s earlier novels at thematic as well as structural level. So, its treatment too offers a little distinctive pattern. The stream of consciousness device is very rarely used in the novel.

(68) Ibid., P. 105.
This novel has a male protagonist unlike other novels of Anita Desai. But a woman character in the form of Sarla, Deven's wife too exist in the texture of the novel. She is an ordinary housewife meekly accepting her fate. Like an other girl she too dreamt of a luxurious life after marriage but all of it shattered because Deven was a low-paid lecturer. Little past of theirs has been revealed here to make readers aware of their temperamental polarizations and imposed marriage:

Of course she had not been his choice but that of his mother and aunts,... found her suitable in every way; plain, penny-pinching and congenitally pessimistic. What they had not suspected was that Sarla, as a girl and a new bride, had aspirations, too.\(^{69}\)

Sarla's friends used to gossip about the luxurious items one gets at the time of marriage. She too aspired for all the comforts of life. While preparations were going on in her home and mother collecting stainless steel cooking pots and other stuff:

She dreamt the magazine dream of marriage: herself, stepping out of a car with a plastic shopping bag full of groceries and filling them into the gleaming refrigerator, then rushing to the telephone placed on a lace doily upon a there-legged table and excitedly ringing up her friends to invite them to see a picture show with her and her husband who was beaming at her from behind a flowered curtain.\(^{70}\)

But the reality pushed her to a small town. Her frustrations, anguish and pain of not leading a comfortable life created a distance between

\(^{69}\) Ibid., P. 67.
\(^{70}\) Ibid., P. 68.
the couple. The fact was; "At least Deven had his poetry; she had nothing and so there was an added accusation and bitterness in her look." Her facial expression clearly showed her disappointment with life. Here psyche is objectified through various looks and gesture used by the novelist on the part of characters. Deven's sense of failure of not providing his family all the comforts are externalized through such acts:

Tearing up a shirt she had not washed, or turning the boy out of the room because he was crying, he was really protesting against her disappointment; he was out to wreck it, taking his revenge upon her for harbouring it. Why should it blight his existence that had once shown promise and had a future? But now the blight settled on his own existence and he submitted to it; it suited his mood, it seemed fitting. Sprawled upon the broken cane chair in the Veranda, he listened to Sarla moving about the house inside, and watching his son playing on the steps. They were busy, he idle. They were alive, he in a limbo. If he made no effort to rise from it, there he would remain.\(^{72}\)

He came out of his disturbing subconscious thoughts and called his son to show his course books.

After meeting Nur, Deven found him as an extremely degraded man having no moral values. Nur enjoyed going brothels, even got married to a dancing girl and shared cheap talks. The image that Deven carried in his mind and heart of Nur is broken and this makes him see the reality of life and he prepares himself now to face

\(^{71}\) Ibid., P. 68.
\(^{72}\) Ibid., Pp. 68-69.
all the obstacles in his way.

He reminiscences of all that happened regarding Nur's interview and his realization:

Walking on, he kept his eyes on the clay path, a chalky streak beside the dark water that ran deep in its bed of reeds. He remembered how he had walked there with Manu and how a parrot had let fall its brilliant tail feather and he had picked it up and handed it to Manu. Then they had returned to the house and found Nur's letter, the first of Nur's letters. Nur- he tired to think of him as separate from his letters, his senile demands... the joy of hearing his voice then quoting his lines back to him, binding them together in a web, an alliance, he knew this was what he have to recover, to retrieve. If he could do that, it would give him a reason, and strength, to survive whatever came.73

With a positive belief in his heart, he moved on ready to meet the troubles of life.

It somewhere indicates Deven's preparation to annihilate the problems upcoming next in his life. Last page of the novel has Deven's wondering where is the end or is there any end of this trap. He has a vision:

He had a vision of Nur's bier, white, heaped with flowers, rose and marigold, bright blazing flowers on the white sheet. He saw the women in the family weeping and wailing around it. He heard the funeral music play. He saw the shroud, the grave-open. When Nur was laid in it, would this connection break, this relation end?

No, never- the bills would come to him.74

(73) Ibid., P. 203.
(74) Ibid., Pp. 203-204.
His fabulation for the poet becomes the course of fantasy, Deven missed the art of rational living, which is the reality. Here Anita Desai has used fantasy combining realistic and romantic modes depending on the situation and incidents. The visual quality of the novel deserves appreciation and one witness a detailed explanation of Deven's consciousness through such visionary details.

Next novel of Anita Desai to enter her fictional world is *Baumgartner's Bombay*, dealing with the modern phenomenon of displaced persons. It shows a world of uncertainty consequently leading to melancholy, fear and perplexity. It is a piercing study in human solitariness. Here, one comes across the tension between an individual and hostile social forces. The story revolves around Hugo Baumgartner, an uprooted Jew who is harassed in his own native land. Due to forced circumstances he is compelled to move to British India to begin his life and earn livelihood. He lives in India till his last breathe but unfortunately could not be accepted as one of them by Indians. The novel reflects the condition of a lonely man in an alien country.

The novel initiates with Hugo, in Bombay living a life of an outsider and then getting murdered. One get a glimpse of his childhood, his mother and surroundings of Berlin through his letters. A stream of visual images flows in the mind of Hugo, which takes the readers back to his past and indicates the psychic and corporal traits of his father:

When he walked, there was no obstacle, and no hesitation. He
strode, he paraded- his head held high, his hat gleaming like the wing of an airborne beetle... His walking- stick with the ivory knob tapped the Berlin streets with authority- pleasantly, light-heartedley on a Sunday afternoon- but still with authority. Hugo tried to ally himself with that by touching the signet ring on his father's finger as he allowed his hand to be rolled into a round moist ball like a half- eaten roll and held- again lightly but with authority.  

This passage holds significance in its relation with the present plight of Hugo. A calm mood is conveyed here where father and son go out to listen some music at a cafe.

Also Hugo felt pleasure at the sight of streets with 'buckets of flowers'. Among all these pleasent memories, sense of incomplete childhood also tormented Hugo:

Hugo instead, remembered the figure of his father, left behind in a wraping of blankets: he felt uneasy sensing a rift, a break between his parents that might have existed for all these years but of which he was only now really aware. He kept his eye on his mother, suddenly so much younger, and he exposed and vulnerable. 

Like most of other characters of Anita Desai, Hugo also had some unpleasant experiences of childhood. The novelist's use of this technique of going into past helps in covering a large area of a tiny territory of human life. Now it is not all the same, as his own country witnessed a lot of changes in the bygone years:


(76) Ibid., P. 46.
the street was not the sunlit, delicate, precious scene it had seemed... The only figures to be seen on it were somehow threatening - the collars of their overcoat turned up and caps pulled down low over their eyes as if they wished to be faceless... He kept his eyes on his shop windows... but found them lacking in colour and interest... it might have been a trick of the light but they all seemed covered by a layer of dust.

The life was no longer safe in Germany. So, that made him decide to shift to India. His constant journeys from one place to another and reminders of unsavoury situation in Germany did not allow him to be ever at ease. On his landing at Bombay, he finds difficulty in interacting with the people. The language factor was the major reason. He was happy to be in India. He moves on to Calcutta, then war between Germany and Britain pushes him into internment camp for years and when he returns, Calcutta was not the same. Compelled by the circumstances he goes back to Bombay, where he lives till death but as an alien. His relationship with Lotte, which was more of emotional comfort is also revealed during the course of novel. Only the memories of his mother made him calm in the indifferent atmosphere of India. The novelist has depicted the mind of Baumgartner, his confusion and maladjustment and above all the pathos of his life which was the feeling of unacceptance, always haunting his mind. His entire life has been revealed through flashback technique on which Anita Desai holds mastery at.

Structure is a word which implies a formal ordering of matter.

(77) Ibid., Pp. 29-30.
and content in accordance with time indicating a linear form, where
first things comes first and then last, as it happens in life. Fugal
form has taken the place of linear one and has become the
characteristic of modern novelists because fugal form offers liberties
with chronology. Anita Desai has successfully applied this form in
almost all her novels, producing and leaving thematic and aesthetic
effects in her works. She herself asserted in an interview:

'I prefer the word 'pattern' to plot as it sounds more natural- and
even better... One should have a pattern and then fit the char-
acters, setting and scenes into it- each piece in keeping with the
others and so forming a balanced whole.'

Her novels do not have a sequence-wise beginning, middle and
end. The novels of Anita Desai neither begin with the childhood of
protagonists nor end with their old age or death. The structure is not
deliberately done. It formulates as the story progresses. Plot has been
given subordinate position in comparison to the characters and
themes.

'Cry, the Peacock', the very first novel of Anita Desai has
been divided into three parts, dealing with the origin, development
and zenith of Maya's neurotic condition. The first and third part is so
briefly described to be termed as 'Prologue' and 'Epilogue' respectively
to the novel and both narrated in the third person. The second one
is entirely commentary of Maya rendered in the first person. The first
section projects the contrasting nature of Maya and Gautama through

(78) Atma Ram, "An interview with Anita Desai", World Literature Written in
English (Arlington), 16, 1 April 1977, P. 101.
their response at the death of pet dog, Toto. Maya's sensitivity and Gautama's indifferent attitude at the incident very much reflects the temperamental incompatibility between the two. The opening chapter also helps the reader to perceive an impression of female protagonist, Maya.

The second part is rendered in the first person running to the length of seven chapter. Here the narrator has focused on the labyrinths of Maya's mind revealing her loneliness and state of despair. Finding herself weak and aloof at emotional level, she finds escape in childhood memories:

the finely groomed hand that places silvers of fruit upon my plate seem made of alabaster and ivory, fashioned by those magic carves of ivory that side beside the Taj Mahal, creating one humble replica of the inamorata's mausoleum after another.79

Such remembrances highlights her escapism and impractical approach. Her mental equilibrium is almost ruined and her marriage is on the verge of destruction with her extreme sense of anguish and solitariness. This part offers a wide canvas of Maya's mental space, deftly fathomed by Anita Desai encompassing Maya's childhood memories and its affect on her present state. Also the prediction of death of either Maya or her husband by an albino astrologer occupies a central position in this part of the novel. Here, one witnesses the fusion of reality and illusion. Sensuous images compressing of colours, scents co-related with the emotional concerns and intense passions.

The third and final section is taken over by the omniscient narrator. The novel has a straight narration uninterrupted by multiple views. The narrative is blended beautifully with the monologues of Maya. The plot has been unfolded step by step with a fast denouement leading to the final catastrophe.

Her next novel, *Voices in the City* is a third-person rendering of three voices namely Nirode, Monisha and Amla, tormented by hollowness of their existence. The inner cosmic world of these three is explored by the novelist fathoming their conscious and subconscious minds. In this novel, the inner climate of characters has been more compelling than their visible actions.

On structural level, the novel is partly divided into four. The first section initiates with the description of city of Calcutta forming the background against which the survival of Nirode, Monisha and Amla are projected. It uses third-person universal observer technique with author as the narrator. The first part throws light on the life of Nirode, who is caught in an existential predicament and frustrated with life. He is unconsciously in search of his idealized image. The novelist points out:

> The suitcase is never packed, the tickets never purchased, and the ship sails, leaving one ensnared in the net of sleep. He was not one of those born with a destination balanced like a boiled egg upon a silver spoon in his mouth. He was merely a traveller and the only reasonable thing to do was to accept the journeying as meaningful in itself.\(^{80}\)

\(^{80}\) *Ibid., P. 10.*
It shows his powerlessness to act and face the challenges of life. He had no goal to reach out to. He possess a negative attitude towards life. He likes to believe in his self-glorified image. Nirode used to read Camus and Sisyphus and somewhere one finds them working subconsciously in his mind. In Nirode's own words:

I want to move from failure to failure, step by step to rock bottom.
I want to explore that depth. When you climb a ladder, all you find at the top is space, all you can do is leap off- fall to the bottom. I want to get there without that meaningless climbing. I want to descend quickly.\(^{81}\)

Here it seems the novelist is much interested in presenting the philosophy of life rather than Nirode's psychic state. The character of Nirode appears unconvincing to the readers as asserted by Kunj Bala Goel, who found the structure of the novel sound and commented:

Nirode's experiences concerning different vocations and aspects of life remain at the level of statement and reportage and his psychic turbulence seems to be unreal... Nevertheless, some parts of this section (Section I) like Arun's departure for higher studies at Howrah and Nirode and David at Firpos with Sunny and his father are dramatically touching and effective owing to the skilful handling of language.\(^{82}\)

The disillusionment and frustration of Nirode, his negation of a world where he feels isolated are the causes of his undoing things. He appears as a person who enjoys his loneliness.

In second section, "Monisha", the novelist adopt the

\(^{81}\) Ibid., P. 40.

\(^{82}\) Kunj Bala Goel, Language and Theme in Anita Desai's Fiction (Jaipur: Classic, 1989), P. 170.
diary-mode of narration to unveil the miserable plight of Monisha, along with the comments of omniscient narrator analysing changing attitude of Monisha and her siblings. The diary is a record of impressions of those who has clustered the surroundings of Monisha. Monisha’s comments on her loveless marriage with Jiban expose the tribulations of her psyche:

If only love existed that is not binding. That is free of rules, obligations, complicity and all stirrings of mind or conscience, then- but there is no such. It is nor there in my relationship with Jiban, which is filled only by loneliness and a desperate urge to succeed, and once plunged me into the most calamitous pleasures and pains, fears and regrets and never again will it possess me.\(^{83}\)

Monisha is unhappy and dissatisfied with her present and wishes to escape. She did not cherish her childhood days and even her relationship with mother was a soar one. She always felt neglected as a child and now as an adult too, she remains aloof. But after marriage a sense of self-pride has taken place within herself, considering herself superior to others. She feels happy when she is alone with her books.

Living an ungratifying married life in a traditional Indian social scenario, Monisha found herself entrapped in a cage. Kunj Bala Goel held different opinion about this part and said:

Part II- "Monisha"- views the meaninglessness of life from the female point of view. It is comparatively more concrete and appealing that part one due to better harmony between theme

\(^{83}\) Anita Desai, *Voices in the City* (New Delhi : Orient Paperbacks) 1965, P. 135.
and its expression. The creation of the atmosphere of the Bow-Bazar house and the employment of a few significant symbols like the barred windows and the bleeding doves are effective. At times the expression of Monisha's helpless, pitiable condition in her husband's middle class joint family is touching. The second part, "Amla" witnesses the gradual temperamental changes in Nirode and Monisha. Amla, being a more lively character in comparison to her siblings makes, the atmosphere of this section quite different. The excitement of her youth is presented through cocktail parties and outings. Her meeting with Dharma and then interactions with him are very well expressed. In her appreciation, Kunj Bala Goel said:

'Amla', part three, seems to be the most satisfying part of the novel. Mrs. Desai employs the dramatic and symbolic mode in this section. While the changes in Amla's relations with Dharma have been depicted in terms of paintings, her realization concerning the triviality and artificiality of life in Calcutta comes alive through the dramatic presentation of the party at the Basu's. The deep revelation concerning, violence and death dawns on her effectively through the symbolic presentation of the events occurring at the racecourse.

(84) Kunj Bala Goel, Language and Theme in Anita Desai's Fiction (Jaipur: Classic, 1989), P. 171.

(85) Ibid., P. 213.
Amla reorients herself after her first meeting with Dharma. She got inclined towards him because his company gave her pleasure and also she felt admired by Dharma as he painted her real self on his painting canvas. Their relation offers a balance between reality and hallucination, where Dharma is not able to offers her a committed relationship. So, Amla finds it better to break away from him.

This part describes in detail the idiosyncrasies of Nirode, Amla, Monisha and Dharma presenting a detached picture of their lives. It also widens the canvas of this novel by including minor characters like Dharma's wife, Gita Devi, Jit Nair and Bose. The evocative language of this section makes it appreciable. Amla's suffering on his relation with Dharma is suggested through various images.

The fourth section is the briefest one. It marks the reunion of long-separated mother with Nirode and Amla. It also includes a lengthy soliloquy of Monisha moving towards her pathetic end. Her suicide is the major eventful happening of this section. Here one finds the working of the brutality of violent city Calcutta taking away the life of Monisha. The novel ends with a sense of realization on the part of Nirode who eventually loses all faith in love and relations and accepts the only actuality of life, that is death.

Next novel by Anita Desai, Bye-Bye Blackbird, with rural and urban England as its setting, traces the journey of two Indian immigrants. It is divided into three parts comprising of two hundred and thirty pages. The first part 'Arrival' initiates with the recording of an omniscient narrator highlighting the conflict between the love for

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one's own land and the adopted one. Adit praises England and Dev is denouncing everything that is English. He (Dev) could not identify with the people there and he found them lifeless. He says:

The trouble with you immigrants... is that you go soft. If anyone in India told you to turn off your radio, you wouldn't dream of doing on; you might even pull out of a knife and blood would spell. Over here all you do is shut up.\(^{86}\)

Dev grudges against English way of living. He is not comfortable with their environment and so he criticizes it. This part presents Dev's disgusting experiences in London.

The second section has been categorized into Discovery and Recognition by the novelist. It deals with Dev's schizophrenic state in London. The conversation between Adit and Dev define their real and imaginative response to a common place. When Adit and Dev visit the power station, Dev excitedly bursted out:

Ah, it must be the most magnificent sight in London! God, I'm sure the pyramids have nothing on it. Look at its bulk, look at the way it squats, square and weighty and unremovable on the ground.\(^{87}\)

Here one finds Dev charged with fresh acquired familiarity with his new home. This idolatrous approach towards power station shows Dev's conflicting state between acceptance and rejection. His dialogues have become the core of this section. Sometimes he adores London and at the very second minute his mood changes and he loathes it.


\(^{87}\) *Ibid., P. 54.*
Towards the closing of this part, Dev turns from an outsider to an insider in London, where as Adit is on the way of becoming an outsider.

Here, one also gets familiar with the inner struggle of Sarah, who is caught between her real self and her projected self. For her, the most important thing in her life is her marriage with Adit.

The final section entitled 'Departure' has symbolic connotations. It deals with Adit's decision to bid farewell to the alien soil forever. Sarah, too moves from her native place to her husband's homeland. Adit's sudden transformation into a patriotic looks unconvincing. A weekend's stay at his in-laws home leaves him shattered and a sense of unbelongingness entered his mind. Then, he says:

I can't stand it Sarah. I tell you, I've had enough. It's all got to end now. There must be a change. A- a big change. I've got to do it you- you understand? Now don't stop me, don't say anything, I've made up my mind.\(^\text{88}\)

Sarah, like a typical wife meekly accepts the decision of her husband. She neither rebel nor argue with him.

Adit is a blackbird bidding farewell to England and Sarah is no longer a white bird once she got married to Adit. Now, it was Dev's turn to fall in this trap of foreign land; "Somewhere, at some point that summer, England's green and gold gingers let go, off Adit and clutched at Dev instead".\(^\text{89}\) The end of the novel marked the beginning

\(^{88}\) Ibid., P. 202.

\(^{89}\) Ibid., P. 228.
of Dev's journey in England, and on the other Adit's and Sarah's new chapter of life is about to start in India.

The next novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is structured in three parts. The first section is entitled "Monsoon 67" exploring Sita's journey to Manori along with Menaka and Karan. The novel initiates with a revelation of urban atmosphere with its pettiness and hypocrisy of modern life, with a purpose to highlight the disturbed psyche of hypersensitive protagonist. This part deals with immediate past and present of Sita. The story unfolds form her point of view. Through the subjective details of internal and external world of characters, the reader is informed about their mind set. Use of retrospective narration heightens the intensity of the agony of Sita. Her sense of aggressiveness is revealed through the sight of violence of crows. Sita's alienation from her husband and children is unveiled in this section. How does she gets affected by the violence around her is described by the omniscient narrator:

Karan kicked over a tower of blocks and howled with maniac flee to see them tumble; Menaka sat calmly tearing her Sunday watercolours into long strips of meaningless colour; her husband casually handed her the newspaper on his way out to office. They all hammered at her with cruel fists- the fallen blocks, the torn watercolours, the headlines about the war in Vietnam, the photograph of a woman weeping over a small grave, another of a crowd outside Rhodesian jail.... They were hand grenades all, hurled at her.90

(90) *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, Vikas Publications, Delhi, 1975, Orient Paperbacks, Delhi, 1982, P. 55.
This section unveils Sita's perception of destructiveness and it closes with the information of her desire to escape to Manori, in the hope of finding peace.

The second part entitled "Winter 47" highlights life of Sita at Manori twenty years before her second visit to island. It depicts her past including her relationship with her father, brother and Sister. This section portrays some wonderful passages depicting the innocence of villagers. This is aesthetically explicated along with unfolding of Sita's psyche in the following passage:

The well was dug—no more a miracle perhaps, than the wells in any village, but somehow it seemed one. The very presence of the father, watching and directing his chelas, all in white... The first bucketful was drawn out and father ladled out the water to each of those who had helped with the digging "Sweet!" they cried, ecstatic..."Sweet!" Sita also came forward and her father, after hesitating for a second, smiled and filled her cupped hand from the ladle. She drank and pulled a face, understanding in an instant his hesitation, for it was not sweet.91

The blind adoration of villagers for Sita's father, whom all considered a saint-like magician is well expressed by the novelist. Sita could not understand the attitude of villagers and of the glorified image her father was associated with. Sita also could not get the reason of mysterious smile of her elder sister Rekha, at the sight of their dying father. This section shows Sita's domination by memories of her past and her hesitation in evaluating the mysteries of her past.

(91) Ibid., P. 68.
The third and final section of the novel entitled "Monsoon 67" has Sita's visit to Manori and her failure in rediscovering the lost passion of life. Her attempt and wish to find her real self ends in disaster and she compromises with life and returns back to Bombay with Raman. The rustic atmosphere gives a picturesque quality to the novel. The language is colored with the theme in its description and narration.

The structure is co-related with the content the story holds. As Vimla Rao asserted:

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 borne in this world. It is said that she has to give up her individuality to some extent in order to accept; but only in this gesture is sanity.\(^{92}\)

It also refers a transition from the world of reality to the world of fantasy and again to the real world. Sita was so much in awe of her childhood days that she could not come out from the magic spell of inland. Those memories kept on hovering upon her all the time. The novelist has skilfully woven her past, present and near future within the structural pattern of the novel.

The fifth novel *Fire on the Mountain* of Anita Desai is divided into there titled parts. The first part, "Nanda Kaul at

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Carignano", describes Nanda Kaul's loneliness and her detachment from the dull routine of family life. She is living in the solitude of Carignano, dwindling between her past and present, whereas future is obstructed in the form of a letter announcing the arrival of her great grand-daughter. Nanda Kaul hated any kind of intrusion in her life now, but the incidents and memories of past impinges upon her consciousness all the time. Her identification with the loneliness and barrenness of Carignano is explicitly drawn here:

When a woman lives alone, her house should be extremely dilapidated, the mud wall should be falling to pieces, and if there is a pond, it should be overgrown with water plants. It is not essential that the garden be covered with sage-brush, but weeds should be growing through the sand in patches, for this gives the place a poignantly desolate look.93

The solitude of Nanda Kaul has been very well explicated in the above mentioned passage, which is from one of her favourite books. This is the ideal situation for Nanda Kaul as far as her perception is concerned. Kasuali hills creates an indolent atmosphere suggesting no work and endless rest compared to her hectic life in being a vice-chancellor's wife.

The second section depicts Raka's intrusion in her lonely existence and Nanda's fear of her unwanted arrival. As; "To Nanda Kaul she was still an intruder, an outsider, a mosquito flown up from the plains to tease and worry".94 The two are basically hostile to each


(94) Ibid., P. 40.
other in their withdrawn ways. Gradually a transformation from shear hostility to acceptance is to be seen, but more on the part of Nanda Kaul.

The third and final section describes the visit of Ila Das to Carignano, her present state of poverty, and her struggle against the vagaries of time and submission to the cruelty of male-domination which has been vividly depicted by the narrator. The novel concludes with the brutal rape and murder of Ila Das. This shock results in the sudden death of Nanda Kaul. Ila Das acted as a link for Nanda Kaul connecting to her past and Ila's death becomes the cause of Nanda's psychological death ultimately following her physical one. This part adds much too the psychic turmoil of Nanda Kaul and structural unity of the novel. The novel ends with the forest on fire. Raka enters the house saying:

Look, Nani, I have set the forest on fire. Look, Nani—look— the forest is on fire.' Tapping, then drumming, she raised her voice, then raised her head to look in and saw Nanda Kaul on the stool with her head hanging, the black telephone hanging, the long wire dangling.95

The theme of loneliness, image of forest fire forming the backdrop for the novel, the letter announcing news of Raka's arrival and a call informing of Ila's murder lead to the concluding and culminating scene of the novel. These elements are related to the psychic conditions of protagonists. Fire On the Mountain is a simple and readable book with the authorial voice rendering all details and descriptions. Larger part

(95) Ibid., P. 145.
of the story has been told by the omniscient narrator with silence being the dominate note of the novel. Gestures and musing have been given more importance which eventually proves to be a visual treat for the reader.

*Clear Light of Day* is a well-constructed novel with a good story, divided into four untitled parts. The first section opens with Koels rendering a lyrical background to Tara's contemplations and memories of past. Two states of mind of one character is presented by juxtaposing present against past. The temperamental differences between Tara and Bim, is brought out by the omniscient narrator, who says:

> It seemed to Tara that there had been far more roses in it when she was a child—luscious shaggy pink ones, small crisp white ones tinged with green, ...Tara had grown to know them on their mornings who she had trailed up and down after her mother who was expecting her youngest child... Tara had danced and skipped after her, chattering, till she spied something flashing from under a pile of fallen rose petals—... a small, balanced snail. Her face wrinkling with disgust, her mother turned and paced on without a word, leaving Tara on her knees to contemplate the quality of disillusion.

But here was Bim, gray and heavy now and not so unlike their mother in appearance only awake watchful, gazing at her with her fullest attention and appraisal.

Tara Laughed back, "Bim, the old rose walk is still here." "Of Course," said Bim; "only the roses grow smaller and sicker every year."96

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Tara is disgusted at the unchanged atmosphere of the house on her visit to Bim. The first part specifically highlights the consciousness of both sisters.

The second section of the novel takes back to the life in Delhi during partition riots of 1947. The opening lines of part two states:

The city was in flames that summer, every night fires lit up the horizon beyond the city walls so that the sky was luridly tinted with festive flames of orange and pink.  

Also it focusses on Raja's moving to Hyderabad, Bim's taking on responsibility of the family, and her refusal of Dr. Biswas's marriage proposal owing to her duties towards Baba and ailing aunt. This part chiefly deals with the mental predicament of Bim.

The third part focusses on some important episodes of early lives of Bim, Tara and Raja. Here, Tara's mother is pregnant for the fourth time. She is a diabetic patient also. It also describes the pitiable past of Aunt Mira, who came to their family to look after them:

Aunt Mira was younger than their mother although she looked so much older. She had been twelve-years-old when she married and was a virgin.

Slowly, she became the centre of their lives. Also the temperamental clash between Tara and Bim is discussed in the section.

(97) Ibid., P. 44.
(98) Ibid., P. 108.
Tara was sure she would never forgive Bim her cruelty. Bim big-
sisterliness would always be linked with that ruthless and cynical
chopping of her long hair, Tara felt.  

The gap between Raja and Bim seems to widen more with the time.

The harsh realities of life made Bim lost her interest in books
too, which at one point of time were her best friends. She starts feeling
detached from everything around her.

The fourth and last section of the novel reflects time as fourth
dimension, and its role in destroying, distorting and altering the old
and familiar in the family. Tara is astonished at Bim's changed attitude
for Raja with whom once she was very close. On reading one of the
letters of Raja which mentioned about Hyder Ali's death, Tara advises
Bim to forget the past and forgive Raja for what he did. She also tore
the letter Raja wrote to her and she never answered back. Then; "She
felt she had begun the clearing of her own decks, the lightening of
her own bork." During the course of the story, one witnesses how the
relationships develops and what makes them soar. At the end, Bim
decides to revive the old affection for Baba and forgive Raja. Human
affections transcend everything.

Each part of the novel is divided into miniature pieces
cought by the waves of feelings. Anita Desai unravels the dark
corridors of consciousness of her characters, their feelings, memories
and speculations through the omniscient narrator. On the structure of

(99) Ibid., P. 119.
(100) Ibid., P. 169.
the novel, Seema Jena comments:

The plot succeed in featuring the vision of an author which explains that love, understanding and forgiveness are qualities which triumph over despair and destruction.  

Female characters shifting from present to past, stream of consciousness method, the old house, provide appropriate ingredients to make the novel a unified work.

As far as the structure of In Custody is concerned, there are eleven chapters. The novel opens up with a description of college where Deven is teaching. A dramatic change occurs in the monotonous and unimpressive life of Deven when he is asked by his school friend Murad to interview Nur, a reputed Urdu poet. Further, all the incidents move round this duel or blind opportunity proceeding through help of images, metaphors and symbols. A little glance at his personal life is also mentioned in between which helps eventually to understand the psyche of Deven and his wife. Deven is not happy with the job he does, but is helpless. His sense of defeat on the professional front and lack of togetherness in relationships is recorded by the novelist:

"Deven had been more a poet than a professor when he married Sarla... and for the wife of a poet she seemed too prosaic".  

Sarla aspired for a luxurious life encompassing all the comforts. But Deven could not provide her the facilities she dreamt of. But:

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He understood because, like her, he had been defeated too, like her he was a victim. Although each understood the secret truth about the other, it did not bring about any closeness of spirit, any comradeship.\textsuperscript{103}

The above passage constructs Deven's state of loneliness and anguish. To seek an escape from all this and to pursue sense of gratification he accepts Murad's proposal to interview Nur.

Chapters three to ten records Deven's oscillation between Mirpore and Delhi. One finds here how doggedly Deven pursue his venture meeting resistance from Nur's wife, arranging funds for recordings and hell lot of obstructions. The first fifty pages of the novel makes him aware of the disorganization of the artist's world which he perceived as sublime. Sarla's character appear little on the narrative, only to reveal man's familial lies and responsibilities.

This novel show a shift from the women centred narrative to a male one. The ending of the novel is a realization on Deven's part in accepting the present with all its complexities. From a poetic world of escapism he transforms into a realist. The essence of the novel, in the words of Mrinalini Solanki:

He now differentiates between the real and the concrete, the illusory and the deceptive. He now intends to replace nightmare by reality, illusion by facts of life.\textsuperscript{104}

\textit{In Custody} objectifies the inner psyche of characters, Deven's life and

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Ibid.}, P. 68.

\textsuperscript{104} Mrinalini Solanki, \textit{Anita Desai Fiction : Patterns of Survival Strategies} (Delhi : Kanishka, 1992), P. 168.
his predicament. The technique of characterization holds important place structurally, in the novel. It is a journey of Deven’s illusions about world of art to harsh realities of life. The novelist has artistically woven the fragments into the texture of the novel perfectly fitting into it.

The novel *Baumgartner’s Bombay* is divided into seven unequal chapters. A major part of the novel discusses Hugo’s childhood, his troubles at refugee camp and then the problems he faces in surviving in post- independence India. Past and present at both personal and national level, identifying with the force of consciousness and questioning the hollowness of modern phenomena are well jetted within the structure of the novel.

Anita Desai’s inclined interest in describing natural phenomenon and its relation with the consciousness of her protagonists is perceptible in her brilliant use of images within the texture of her fictional world. An image, according to C. Day Lewis, is:

> a phrase or passage on the face of its purely descriptive but carrying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality.¹⁰⁵

It is a kind of embellishment for the thoughts which are to be conveyed. It reflects the mental condition of a character. His/her psyche is coloured in the form of image revealed before readers. In the words of Ezra Pound; *'It is a psychological definition hinting at an*

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intellectual and emotional complex felt in an instant of time." An image is used as an object co-related to the thought process of the mind. Some experiences or feelings which are difficult to express, are conveyed through images. Abstractness is concretized in the form of an image in a literary work.

S. Heilman has aptly said, 'Image groups are not merely theme supporters but theme carriers.' Imagery has a significant role to play in capturing the intensity of feelings of the characters. In order to convey her theme forcibly to the readers, Anita Desai has judiciously selected images from different groups comprised of [nature, birds, insects], earth to sky, animate to inanimate, nature to man-made objects, according to the situations.

Nature, playing a vital role in the novels of Anita Desai acting as a metaphor of hope, fear, life and death, in the grim atmosphere of hollow metropolis in the lifeless lives of characters. More often it appears in the form of an image associating characters with their miserable plights and unexpressed feelings and sometimes it comes in the form of sounds and sights. Nature symbolizes in its delicate and hard form implying the beautiful and uglier aspects of life. Also known as symbols, this device is elaborately used by Anita Desai to reveal the psyche of her specific female protagonists.

In the novel *Cry, the Peacock*, one witnessess this aspect


right in the title itself. Maya is an agonized hypersensitive woman, whose heart is crying and longing for love. Peacock serves as an important symbol of the novel. It suggests ecstasy of love with the culmination of death. Love lorn cry of Peacock the main theme of the novel, which starts with Maya's waiting for love and ends with her death. Working on religious and cultural aspect of symbol, P.K. Pandey finds Peacock as:

'the central symbol to feminine psyche having religio-cultural roots that enrich the meaning by providing undertones to the symbol'\(^\text{108}\)

He also mentioned about the hundred eyes on the feathers of Peacock. For Maya, those eyes were eyes of wisdom of knowledge.

The unforgettable dance image of the peacock is the most pungent one clearly perceptible in the below given passage:

"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. Is is not agony for them? How they stamp their feet, and beat their beaks against the rocks? They will even grasp the snakes that live on the sands there, and break their bodies to bits against the stones, to ease their own pain... Before they mate, they fight. ...Dying they are in love with life.\(^\text{109}\)


The echo of peacocks reminds the prophecy of disaster in Maya's married life. Also their grasping of snakes indicate Maya's urge to finish every obstacle that comes in her way of happiness. Despite being aware of herself or Gautama's death, she wants to live life. Gautama, a cold husband, fails to satisfy her inner-most cravings for love and sexual gratification. In a way, Maya's condition is a reflection of peacock's agonized cry and she could very well identify with them:

I heard their cry and echoed it. I felt their thirst as they gazed at the rain-clouds, their passion as they hunted for their mates. With them I trembled and panted and paced the burning rocks. Agony, agony, the mortal agony of their cry for lover and for death.\(^{110}\)

Very clearly, these lines indicate Maya's desire for love. As thirsty peacocks look at rain-clouds, in the same way Maya looked upto her husband to understand and satisfy her needs. The frustration of peacocks are similar to that of Maya; '...twisted on my bed, crying the Peacock's cry'.\(^{111}\) Anita Desai has excelled in carving out a perfect image to show the pathetic situation of her female protagonist, Maya.

Another image to catch attention is of Shiva, which serves as a symbol of Maya's love of life. In her own words:

...I caught sight of the bronze Shiva, dancing just a shade outside the ring of lamp-light,... fixed.. The powerful,... firm rooting of the graceful foot upon the squirming body of evil, and the raised leg with its arched foot, raised into a symbol of liberation,... The wise,

\(^{110}\) Ibid., P. 96.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., P. 97.
remote face had retreated into the shadows, but its expression spoke clearly as light to me,... let that Lord of the Dance protect us.\(^{112}\)

Maya's vision conceptualizes Shiva as an image of permanence, stillness and yet alive in the constant changing world. This image of God gives her sense of security that will protect her.

Another dance image, repeating and conveying the increasing sense of fatality in Maya's life is that of a 'Kathakali' dancer:

It was the mad demon of Kathakali ballets, masked, with heavy skirts swirling, feet stamping, eyes shooting beams of fire... I saw again that shadow... Its name was not that of a demon in a Kathakali dance drama, nor was it one of the limpid appellations of the moon. It was, I remembered it now, Fate.\(^{113}\)

The image of Cabaret dance holds high importance in the novel as such cruel dance symbolises the exploitation and harshness of society. Another frightening one to haunt the mind of Maya constantly is the unforgotten image of albino astrologer indicating darkness and fear of death in her life.

Also Anita Desai has aesthetically used dense imagery describing in a poetic manner. Maya's sexual dissatisfaction and frustration of not deriving and getting physical pleasure is expressed as an act of delicate violence shown on Jasmine buds:

In a damp, white handkerchief,... gathered into a nest, lay a heap of white jasmine buds that the gardner has plucked... for me to

\(^{(112)}\)Ibid., Pp. 203-204.  
\(^{(113)}\)Ibid., P. 28.
thread into garlands for my hair... for some reason, I had forgotten. There they lay, almost palpitating with living breath, open white, virginal. I plunged my face into them and kissed them with a wild longing to pierce through that unimpeachable immaculate chastity of whiteness, to the very soul of their maddening fragrance. What dreams they conjured in swirls of scent, what passions and scenes of love and farewell. I tore myself away from them, having bruised them with my kisses, and trembling, flung them against the mirror, at that fleeting image to which they belonged, and backed out of the room which was now terrorised by the vast, purple shadows of a dreadful night.\textsuperscript{114}

Jasmine buds symbolises love and passion which was missing in Maya's conjugal life. The sexual urge of hers is very well explicated here by the novelist. The mentioned flower image and Maya's treatment of those flowers clearly indicate her psychic condition and frustration of carrying the burden of a loveless life.

Maya's sexual desires assumes a new significance in the image of Papaya trees:

I contemplated that, smiling with the pleasure at the thought of those long streamers of bridal flowers that flow out of the core of the female papaya tree and twin about her slim trunk, and the firm, wax-petalled blossoms that leap directly out of the solid trunk of the male...\textsuperscript{115}

Gautama fails to give intimacy in his sexual experience with Maya, which she desired. So she remains dissatisfied and keep longing for fullest physical satisfaction. Such kind of images mirrors her unfulfilled

\textsuperscript{114}\textit{Ibid.}, Pp. 106-107.

\textsuperscript{115}\textit{Ibid.}, P. 92.
urges.

The garden image also is well-interpreted by the novelist. The garden at Maya's father's place was strictly looked after. The reminiscence of that garden connects Maya to her present garden of her husband's place. Which is completely disordered and not taken care of. The past garden symbolises her childhood days which were over-pampered and taken care of. The present one indicates the chaos of her own life. Maya confesses; '... I have failed to care for my own garden for so long, now and the garden has neglected it.' Here the garden is a symbol of her chaotic life and her ownself. The gardener is Gautama, who is indifferent to her feelings. Maya feels neglection on the part of her husband. The treatment of such rich symbols externalizing Maya's thoughts leaves an indelible impact on the reader's mind.

Another image is that of a moon, assuming different meanings for Maya at various situations. Here it symbolises the loneliness of hers in the crowd:

But there was a moon. A great moon of hot, beaten copper, of molten brass, livid and throbbing like a bloody human organ, a great, full-blossomed woman who had mounted the sky in passion, driven the silly stars away from her, while she pulsed and throbbed, pulsed and glowed across the breatheless sky.117

Breatheless sky symbolises the detached vast family of her in-laws, who have no value and time for emotions and attachments. Maya is

(117)Ibid., P. 51.
a love-longing creature, but there was no one to understand her feelings. So she remains aloof from everyone around her.

The image of moon is repeatedly used by the novelist, but with a different interpretation and new significance for the character. Out of her loneliness, at one instance, Maya keeps glaring at sky and finds moon staring at her and all like a ghost; '...it was not the gentle moon of love ballads and fairy revels... but a demoniac creature'.\(^{118}\) Admist countless stars, moon is the loneliest. Maya felt the mask of demon on the surface of moon which reflected her aloofness. Later on, Maya's response to the moon is different, when, in a fit of frenzy she pushes Gautama who was obstructing her view of the moon by standing there; 'In talking, gesturing, he moved in front of me, thus coming between me and the worshipped moon.'\(^{119}\) The time Gautama stood in front of her at the terrace, she was lost in the sight of moon, which was for her:

Virginal, chaste and absolute white, casting a light that was holy in its purity,... casting its reflection upon the night with a vast, tenderly mother love.\(^{120}\)

Maya had been a motherless child, so when Gautama came as an obstacle in her sight of moon, which was giving her all the calmness, she could not tolerate and pushes him away. The same moon which previously assumed loneliness for Maya, now became symbol of tenderness and care. The changed mood of Maya is perceived here in

\(^{(118)}\)Ibid., P. 28.  
\(^{(119)}\)Ibid., P. 208.  
\(^{(120)}\)Ibid., P. 208.  

(249)
a different manner. Anita Desai has remarkably jelled the images with the changing psychic states of Maya.

One finds stellar images been predominantly used in the novel, focussing the torments of Maya:

Death lurked in those spaces, the darkness spoke of distance, separation, loneliness—... lapping the stars, each one isolated from the other by so much. And the longer I gazed... there was only the darkness hanging.\(^{(121)}\)

It denotes the solitariness of Maya and the imposed solitude she was living with. Also the temperamental ever-widening distance between Maya and Gautama is stressed here through the image of stars.

Another symbol to mention would be of a plain desert indicating the loneliness of Maya; *The desert too. Nothing but sand, they tell, you, arid sand for mile upon fulvous mile.*\(^{(122)}\) Desert also symbolises barrenness, which here in reference to the novel, connotes Maya's infertility, which is also one of the major reason of her aloofness.

Animal imagery has also been used to externalize the psyche of Maya. The image of rat is indicative of her frustration with her ownself being a childless woman; *Rats will suckle their young most tenderly*.\(^{(123)}\) Such image reveals fast deteriorating psyche of Maya and her suffocating obsessions, of which her infertility is foremost.

The image of snake is also used by the novelist to unveil the

\(^{(121)}\)Ibid., P. 22.  
\(^{(122)}\)Ibid., P. 127.  
\(^{(123)}\)Ibid., P. 127.
repressed emotions of Maya:

All white flowers, chaste sweet white flowers, luring the snakes to their hearts of scent. And they come, the snake, They come slithering towards these virgins in the night, with only their small cold eyes glinting in the dark, and they cling to the bending stalk and with forked tongues lash and lash again at the heart of innocence.\(^\text{124}\)

On the surface level, one finds here an evil creature attacking an innocent one. But the underlying meaning invoked by the novelist is of Maya's fear of death and also her strong desire for passion in her conjugal life. The sexual overtone is lying in the snakes clinging to stalk image.

Again, a reptile image is used by Anita Desai, symbolizing Maya's sexual gratification.

Of Lizards, the lizards that come upon you, stalking you silently, upon clawed toes, slipping their clublike tongues in and out, in and out with an audible hiss... they will mount and lash with their slime-dripping tongues, lash and lash again, as they grip you with curled claws, rubbing their cold bellies upon yours, rubbing and grinding rubbing and grinding.\(^\text{125}\)

This act of lizards provides an image of sexual urges being fulfilled, but which remains unfulfilled for Maya in her marital life. Her psychic condition is very well reflected through such images.

The images of crawling creatures, rats, snakes and lizards often floats in Maya's mind. Anita Desai's projection of psychic disorder

\(^{\text{124}}\)Ibid., P. 126.

\(^{\text{125}}\)Ibid., P. 127.
of Maya reaches it climax through the image of an iguana. When Maya watches a cat slowly moving in her room, the image of cat suddenly gets replaced by that of an iguana in Maya's mind, giving her the creeps and she screamed out: "Iguanas! My blood ran cold, and I heard the slither of its dragging tail even now, in white daylight. Get off— I fell you, get off! Go!" Such image makes the emotion obvious, ultimately shaping up the theme of the novel, which basically deals with the psychic turmoil's of Maya. On Anita Desai's use of animal and reptile imagery, Dr. Kunj Bala Goel has rightly remarked:

Animal and insect imagery used with reference to human beings prepares the background for characters withdrawal and puts forth its causes by suggesting the meaninglessness of human life, its monotony insensitivity and lack of individuality. The novel is full of such arresting images symbolising Maya's psychic conditions at different situations.

The other image in the form of storm symbolizes her efforts to escape from fears, anxieties, and apprehensions. It was a sign of release for her:

Ah! storm storm, wonderful, infidel storm, blow, blow! I cried,...

Frightened? No! I ran from the thought, laughing oh no, what need of fright? It is relief,... It is only relief at having survived, at having regained the will and the decision to survive.

(126) Ibid., P. 128.
(128) Ibid., P. 190.
The storm carried away all her fears and gave a fresh lease and hope of life. Anita Desai's use of such luxuriant images in the novel compelled Darshan Singh Maini calls her first novel, *Cry, the Peacock* an "extended ode in prose."\(^{129}\) Anita Desai has adopted a suitable technique to portray the isolation and traumas of an individual. The apt image describes the inner world of characters. It has added to the structural unity and narrative skill of the novel. B. Ramchandra has called the language of Maya to be of flowers and fruits and dance of the Peacock. Her incessant reference to jasmines and roses, their smells and scents reflect her love for a comfortable life and also her sensuous nature. The effect of language is heightened with use of such adjectival phrases.

Meenakshi Mukherjee commends Anita Desai for her use of intense individual imagery which is marked by; "sensuous richness, a high-strung sensitiveness and a love for the sound of words."\(^{130}\) There is not much conversation in *Cry, the Peacock* and very little of outer action. Anita Desai deserves applause for conveying the fever and fret of her characters through suggestive images. On the function of symbols, K.K. Sharma says:

*Cry, the Peacock* is a typically feminine novel, a novel of sensibility rather than of action. It has the quality of an orchid and

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a flute about it. It concerns almost wholly with the terrors of existence, and it achieves its effects through a series of exploding and multiplying metaphors.\(^\text{131}\)

The novel is a perfect example of Anita Desai's figurative poetic descriptions loaded with dense imagery. Such skillfully created images from the pen of Anita Desai deserves appreciation.

The novelist has aptly used symbolist technique in her next novel, *Voices in the City*. The city itself is symbolic excersing powerful influence on all three major characters, Nirode, Monisha and Amla. The city has been described as a monster by the novelist in the third section 'Amla':

...this monster city that lived no normal healthy, red-blooded life but one that was subterranean, underlit, stealthy and odorous of mortality, had captured and enchanted- or disenchanted both her sister and brother.\(^\text{132}\)

The city is symbolic of oppressiveness, materialism, selfishness and death. It reflects the lives of people caught in the web of changing social values. The image of city as a; "pus-filled boil"\(^\text{133}\) is suggestive of the miseries of its residents. Another dominant image is of Kalimpong, a mountain resort with nature's bliss. For their mother, it is an "ivory tower"\(^\text{134}\). Where she always wanted to live, away from everybody.

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\(^{132}\) *Voices in the City*, Peter Owen, London, 1965; Orient Paperbacks, Delhi, 1965, P. 150.

\(^{133}\) *Ibid.*, P. 118.

\(^{134}\) *Ibid.*, P. 201.
Nirode uses the word "marsh bird"\textsuperscript{136} for himself, Dharma and David; "yet they were only like marsh birds who could not fly long, but hopped along the ground, above the water, in the rushes."\textsuperscript{136} It indicates their helplessness and frustration in the dreary city, with their struggle for freedom.

Monisha’s childlessness is indicated through the image of Kangaroo; "A Kangaroo lies on its back to sun the soft honey for on its belly, but its pouch, alas, is empty."\textsuperscript{137} The taunt and jibes which she gets to suffer for being infertile worsens her living state. Dharma’s inclination towards painting serves as a symbol of eternity and freshness, in an otherwise dull atmosphere. The indifferent and detached family of Jiban with whom Monisha have a suffocated life, is expressed in terms of inanimate objects; "This room, too, was full of appurtenances of a past, spent inside this barred enclosure."\textsuperscript{138} Monisha was living in a cage, trapped within enclosed boundaries. At another instance, a woman’s face appeared to her as an embodiment of eternity; "...the face was that of the Eternal Mother, the Earth Mother, a face ravaged by the most unbearable emotions of woman".\textsuperscript{139} That face reminds her of the affection that she missed out in her mother.

The supreme symbol in the novel is that of Kali, which

\textsuperscript{135}ibid., P. 72.  
\textsuperscript{136}ibid., P. 72.  
\textsuperscript{137}ibid., P. 119.  
\textsuperscript{138}ibid., P. 241.  
\textsuperscript{139}ibid., P. 237.
according to Nirode stands for his mother.

"Mother, mother- Kali is the mother of Bengal, she is the mother of us all. Don’t you see, Amla, how once she has given birth to us, she must also deal us our deaths?" \(^{140}\)

Nirode here has delved deeper in search of higher meanings in life. He bows before the mystery of life and death embodied in the mother as Goddess Kali. Life is indeed inscrutable and the novel ending on this thought proves that Anita Desai has given a solution to the problem of universal nature that is not able to understand the chaos of life.

Some other detailed treatment of symbols are to be found in the novel, when Amla arrives in Calcutta for her professional career. She feels exhausted and the decaying nature of Monisha’s garden externalises the mental state of Amla. While sitting on the stairs, she saw:

On two pasts that flanked the steps stood blind, dispirited marble goddesses- the Greek idol copied and recopied till the last drop of immaculate blood has been sucked out of it- holding what looked like ugly metal cages for Birds of Paradise long flown from them... unbreathing garden where the unmown grass housed singing swarms of mosquitoes, and spiderwebs alone multiplied and reproduced admit the leaves of plantains and mango trees that had years ago surrendered the desire to propagate and fructify. \(^{141}\)

The description of such ill-kept garden symbolises negative aspect of

\(^{(140)}\textit{Ibid.}, P. 256.\)
\(^{(141)}\textit{Ibid.}, P. 148.\)
life which is chaotic and confused. Lifelessness is projected through imitated Greek statues of whose it seems even last drop of blood have been sucked out. The nature imagery indicates psyche of Amla, whose vitality have been sucked out. Only despair and exhaustion is left there. Anita Desai has used symbolistic devices very effectively within the texture of novel.

The novel, *Bye-Bye Blackbird* do not have any forceful image to convey. The title of the novel in itself is a supreme symbol indicating the theme of the novel. Blackbird refers to Indians settled in England. Here in the novel Adit is bidding good bye to his friend Dev and also to his own past, which he spend in England.

Anita Desai’s prose is packed with both simple and figurative images to explore psychic conflict of characters. The title of the novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* symbolises the doubts, frustrations and indecisiveness of contemporary world. The interrogative title itself speaks for and is symbol of Sita’s uncertainty. In the novel, it is a question for Raman he asks Sita of where she would like to go for holidays and for Sita it symbolises a refuge to a peaceful place from the dreariness of city life. The central image is the island of Manori, which for Sita, is a place of freedom and relief to her psyche which is buffeted by modern complexities Materialistic people for Sita are:

nothing but appetite and sex... they are like pariahs you, see in the streets, hanging about drains and dustbins, waiting to pounce and kill and eat.\(^\text{142}\)

\(^{142}\)Anita Desai, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, (New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks), 1982, P. 47.
Such destructive image by the novelist clearly indicates the frustrating psyche of Sita. Another derogatory image is used for merchant ladies; "Like elephants, she thought- eating grass, shifting from foot to foot, swaying their trunks, small-eyed, eating." Sita perceives materialistic and money-minded people worst than animals. The image of a wounded eagle represents the trauma and pain of Sita. Crows symbolises those people who crushes down weaker ones. It represents machine world which destroys nature, and also they are sign of crimes in the world. Many crows surrounded that eagle and kept torturing him till he broke down. Here crows symbolises modern era, which is selfish and practical.

With glee the crows whistled- whee; in ecstasy they waved their wings; crra-crra, they laughed and rasped as they whipped it with their blue-bottle wings and tore into it with their scimitar beaks. This sight of violence left her with disgust for everyone around her. The psyche of Sita has been well explicated through the medium of images which are perfectly fitted in the texture of the novel deserves appreciation. R.K. Srivastava remarks:

The incident in which a number of crows assault and kill an eagle becomes symbolic of Sita's own plight avid violence so much prevalent in society.

(143) Ibid., Pp. 48-49.
(144) Ibid., P. 39.
The novel achieves poetic dimension also due to its suggestive imagery. The symbolism is more pronounced here. The urban residence of Bombay represent a prose and humdrum of life, while Manori as spiritual place. On reaching home at the island, Sita finds darkness inside, which symbolises her inner vacuum. Madhusudan Prasad considers house imagery to be rich in symbolic evocation and artistically contriving and linking up the theme with the psychological character of Sita.

At another such instance, when Menaka unknowingly and intentionally:

idly reached out her fingers and crumbled a sheaf of new buds on a small plotted plant she had been labouring to grow on the balcony. "Menaka!" she warned, on the edge of her chair, unable to bear the sight of such unthinking destruction any more.\(^{146}\)

Menaka was taken aback at such attitude shown by Sita. The breaking of buds signify the destructiveness and horror of Sita's life. This sight made her flared at Menaka for she felt her real self being suppressed by her own people. At another instance, the image of palm trees is used by the novelist to reflect Sita's confusion:

The palm trees all shook their heads along with her, their leaves rustled one against the other, one saying "you must", the other "I Can't", always producing that sound of battle, that sound of distress.\(^{147}\)

The reluctance of Sita to move back to Bombay with Raman and his

\(^{(146)}\)Ibid., P. 45.  
\(^{(147)}\)Ibid., P. 141.
insistance that she should come back create utter chaos in her heart. Here is a perfect blend of symbolism, impressionism and expressionism in the style of the novelist. Such miniature touches add to the artistic stature of Anita Desai. Sita identifies herself with a jellyfish, without any shape and direction:

Perhaps I am only like the jellyfish washed up by the waves, stranded there on the sand-bar. I was just stranded here by the sea, that's all.\(^{148}\)

The image of sea bird is also used by the novelist to express Sita's sense of belongingness which she feels is now going back with Raman:

Like the freed sea-bird at evening, she wheeled around and began to circle about and then dropped lower and lower towards her home.\(^{149}\)

She gains release not form the bondage of marriage and responsibilities but from the island, an illusion of her life.

Using symbols appropriately, it becomes easy for the novelist to depict the psyche of characters in an effective manner. Another significant symbol is of sea; "There's just the sea–it drowns us or strands us on the sandbar–and there's the island. That's all."\(^{150}\) Sea here symbolises hardships of life in abundance. It is upto human being whether to get themselves drowned in difficulties or try and face the challenges and come over it. Reality should be embraced and illusions

\(^{148}\)Ibid., P. 149.

\(^{149}\)Ibid., P. 150.

\(^{150}\)Ibid., P. 149.
are to be given up, that is life. The city-island dichotomy is highly symbolic to receive critical attention. As observed by T.S. Anand:

Her desire to bear the child and return with Raman to the land signifies her return to life, community and society inspite of the debased dullness of life, the calamity, the lies and moral buggery, the odium, the detritus of wrong and sorrow dropped on every heart, for existence is not possible in an insulated stage of being, rather existence implies being with others.\(^{151}\)

Bombay- manori dichotomy symbolises world of reality and fantasy. Anita Desai deserves all applause for externalising human emotions through inanimate and animate objects. The hopes, fears, frustration and agony of Sita is very well expressed in the form of images.

In *Fire On the Mountain*, Anita Desai has used images for the purpose of characterization on Raka's arrival Nanda Kaul finds her appearance; "like one of those dark crickets that leap up in fright but do not sing,"\(^{152}\). She looked like a seclusion-lover to her. On the disappearance of Raka every now and then, the narrator says:

She was like a rabbit conjured up by a magician-drawn unwillingly out of the magic hat, flashing past Nanda Kaul then vanishing in the dark of a bagful of tricks.\(^{153}\)

Raka used to wander a lot in the hillsides. She loved to be in the lap of nature far away from materialistic world of dry emotions; "she

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(153)*Ibid.*, P. 47.
appeared to have no needs. Like an insect burrowing through the sandy loam and pine-needless of the hillsides"¹⁵⁴ Being deprived of parental love, she has no inclination towards family or society. She found more solace and peace in nature. One of the striking images used by the novelist is that of an Eagle connoting freedom. Raka thinks,

if she spread out her arms and rose on her toes, she would fly, fly off the hill-top and down, down on currents of air, like the eagles that circled slowly, regally below her.¹⁵⁵

And Raka just wished to fly away from the humdrum of life to the vast horizon of nature.

The detached feeling of Nanda Kaul has been suggestively painted through an eagle:

An eagle swept over it, far below her, a thousand feet below, its wings out spread, gliding on currents of air without once moving its great muscular wings which remained in repose, in control.¹⁵⁶

The symbol of eagle stands for complete detachment of Nanda Kaul from the affairs of the world. She is a free soul not bound by any kind of obligations or responsible to fulfil. She has also been identified with pine tree:

She fancied she could merge with the pine trees and be mistaken for one. To be a tree, no more and no less, was all she was prepared to undertake.¹⁵⁷

(155)Ibid., P. 61.
(156)Ibid., P. 19.
(157)Ibid., P. 4.
The lines indicate the inner fury of Nanda Kaul to become a tree, because she wanted no attachments in her life. Anita Desai seems to have been influenced by Laurentian traits in employing metaphors and symbolic suggestions in the novel; "On the Knoll and at the gate the wind ruffled the pine-needles so that they glistened silver in the sunlight."\(^{158}\) Here it indicates groaning over imminent doom of human conduct. This image correlates with the troubled soul of Nanda Kaul. Another instance reflecting the alienated condition of Nanda Kaul:

Waiting for the first cool stir of breeze in the late afternoon to revive her. Till it came, she be a charred tree trunk in the forest, a broken pillar of marble in the desert, a lizard on a stone wall.\(^{159}\)

This involvement with nature connotes waiting for death at the subconscious level. Her intimacy with nature is a way to get out of the monotonous and dreary existence.

Her life is depicted through a symbol of creeper hanging on the wooden railing:

...the yellow rose creeper had blossomed so youthfully last month but was now reduced to an exhausted mass of gray creaks and groans again.\(^{160}\)

The creeper symbolizes Nanda's life, full of responsibilities and children to look after, but now she is old, grey and lonely. It indicates the temporal nature of young age in one's life.

Again Raka's condition has been objectified through an

\(^{(158)}ibid., P. 36.\)
\(^{(159)}ibid., P. 23.\)
\(^{(160)}ibid., P. 17.\)
image of a bird; "a bird fallen out of its, a nest fallen out of a tree."¹⁶¹ She is a victim of a storm destroying her life. She is a victim of a broken home and disastrous relationships. The traumatic atmosphere of her home took away all the happiness from her.

The image of howling Jackals reminds her of her mother being abused by her drunkard father; "Jackals come at night to chew the bones beating up her wife everyday."¹⁶² Images does represent symbolical association with the inner psyche of character, unravelling their heart before the readers. Certain striking images convey those unsaid thoughts which are difficult to explain in plain words.

The symbol of fire suggests the thematic stream and its unseen presence is felt throughout the novel in the form of frustration, agony and death. Raka's first encounter with forest fire has been associated to the significance of consciousness of hers:

Holding her ear to the cold pane closely, she thought she heard the cries of animals and birds burning in that fire. But when she removed her ear from the pane, she heard only the crepitation of silence... The disturbed sky, livid with firelight, kept her awake: it was too light... it had the quality of a dream- specters that follow one, trap one.¹⁶³

Fire as a symbol of destruction haunting her mind throughout. At the close of the novel, she imagines herself to be a source of fire then she screams; "Look, Nani, I have set the forest on fire."¹⁶⁴ The explosive

(161)Ibid., P. 50.
(162)Ibid., P. 44.
(163)Ibid., Pp. 75-76.
(164)Ibid., P. 145.
Raka has done the job. On one hand the fire destroyed the forest, on the other, Nanda Kaul met her death after hearing the shocking news of Ila's rape and murder. These three incidents denote the act of destruction and tragic end of the painful lives of Nanda Kaul and Ila Das. Anita Desai has made nature to speak for her characters. Several happenings in nature indicates the tension and chaos occurring in the minds and lives of her protagonists.

Raka's setting of fire symbolises her rebellious attitude and rejection of suffering. She assumes the role of an agent to revive the lost zest warmth of life's fire. Her daring attitude and explosiveness is expressed in these words; "Raka sprang from the house as if shot by a gun."\(^{(165)}\) Such perceptions offers a new insight to the very process of artistic creation of the novelist and then; "Raka no more needed, or wanted, a house than a jackal did, or a cicada. She was a wild creature- wild, wild, wild."\(^{(166)}\) Associating Raka's personality with animal imagery, one get to the real psyche of her disintegrated being. Such instances offers intellectual experience gained on the part of reader.

Violence of human world corresponds to the one happening in nature through use of images. through prey and predator's image the novelist has depicted the violence in nature:

Closer to closer, the hoopoe promenaded under the apricot trees,

\(^{(165)}\)Ibid., P. 89.
\(^{(166)}\)Ibid., P. 103.
smartly and unfurling the striped fan on top of its head. Its young had flown and it appeared to be celebrating, even flouting its independence, its new youth and freedom. It pounced upon grasshopper and stabbed it to death with its victorious beak.\(^{167}\)

Nanda Kaul's solitude is again disturbed and attacked by the news of Ila's coming down at Carignano. Here the violence of animal world is gradually transferred to the human one and it reaches its culmination in the rape and murder of Ila Das by Preet Singh. The news of her death shatters Nanda Kaul's world into pieces.

The interaction between human and non-human world is very much in the novel in the form of imagery is used by the novelist. The image of rain has also been employed in the novel. Rain stands for spirit of regeneration, emotional relief and protection from devouring fires. But here when they come, only bring temporary respite. Rain fails to come in the end, when the whole landscape has been set ablaze.

The sound image has also been used by the novelist reflecting the psyche of her characters. For a lonely woman, like Nanda Kaul:

\[\text{there were only cicades to be heard, a sound so even and so insubstantial than it seemed to emerge from the earth itself or from the season- a scent of pine-needles made audible.}\(^{168}\)

The solitude of hers, without any intrusion but nature has been beautifully expressed here. The music of withered rose-creeper

\(^{167}\)Ibid., Pp. 103-104.

\(^{168}\)Ibid., P. 13.
appeared to Nanda Kaul as; "an exhausted mass of grey creaks and groans."[169] The sadness and pain of her life is very well conveyed through this sound image. Raka, too seems to move about; "in a kind of dream, set to the sound of cicadas and the wind in the pines."[170]

It refers to the anguish and pain of Raka's life. Nature plays such a vital role on the level of symbolism and imagery here that it is inevitable to appreciate the novelist to making effective use of this technique to characterize different characters in the novel.

Imagery acts as a metaphor of hopes and fears, happiness and frustrations, life and death in the novels of Anita Desai. Image of birds and insects play significant role in *Clear Light of Day*. The image of Koel announcing day break in the opening lines:

> The Koels began to call before daylight. Their voices rang out from the dark trees like an arrangement of bells, calling and echoing each other's calls, mocking and enticing each other into ever higher and shriller calls.[171]

The snail image is also repeated in the novel representing the dull movement of life. Another image of roses indicates the effect of time. In the past, roses for Tara were- 'luscious shaggy pink ones, small crisp white ones tinged with green, silky yellow ones that smelt of tea', now they are; "small negligible crimson heads that loll'd weakly on their thin stems."[172] Past and present lives of characters are connoted

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through the image of rose. The past of theirs was much more lively, when all the members of the family were together. Roses symbolise youth in the past and now when they are looking dull in appearance, that is the monotonous life the characters are leading. The garden is a symbol of order, when it was looked after properly, but it deteriorated with the time:

the gardens as overgrown and neglected and teeming with wild, uncontrolled life. The experience of Tara and Bim at Lodi garden with Mishra family in the spring time, Bees sorrounded Bim, 'as if she were the chosen queen, made prisoner'.

Bim did not screamed and stands there only, while Tara ran away. It reflects the sacrificial nature of Bim, her tolerance is very well conveyed by this image; "Bim their appointed victim, the sacrificial victim on whom they had draped the ceremonial shawl." Bim was not an escapist like Tara. This experience is symbolic of the courage and suffering of Bim. Then, the house imagery evokes the declining atmosphere of Old Delhi. The house of Hyder Ali which used to echo with song and charm once, now is ruined. Baba and Bim, while walking onto that deserted house feels:

It was as if they had walked into a Cobweb- they could feel it on their faces, a clinging, slightly moist net which they brushed at with ineffectual fingers.

The 'Cobweb' presents the frustration and helplessness of Bim. The

(173) Ibid., P. 135.
(174) Ibid., P. 135.
(175) Ibid., P. 72.
house was now still and cold, so was the life of Bim. She was entangled into responsibilities from which she sees no escape.

The house of Bim has been characterized by various sound images also:

Silence roared around the house and thundered through it, making her press her hands against her ears. She would have relished the sound of the gramophone if it could have drowned out the sound of silence. ¹⁷⁶

Baba's existence is portrayed by sounds. Aunt Mira helping Baba in his stuffs, are filled by those harsh sounds affecting inmates of house in different ways at different times. The silence used to terrify Bim at times. She could not bear the imposed aloofness around her.

The pleasant image of moon losts its soothing sight in the psychic trouble of Tara, as she sits watching the moonlight:

She wanted the question, the problem of Bim solved and resolved tonight. The light of the full moon was so clear, surely it could illuminate everything tonight. Like snow, or whitewash, it fell upon the house and the veranda and the garden, covering everything with its white drifts except where the shadows lay or the trees reared, black as carbon- Like snow, its touch was cold, marmoreal, and made Tara shiver. ¹⁷⁷

The impact of the light of full moon evokes sense of coldness and fear in Tara. A complete silence was there in the dreary atmosphere of the house.

Sunlight also has been used as an image reflecting the sense

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¹⁷⁶Ibid., P. 164.
¹⁷⁷Ibid., P. 158.
of awareness in Bim:

Everything had been said at last, cleared out of the finally. There was nothing left in the way of a barrier or a shadow, only the clear light pouring down from the sun.¹⁷⁸

The sun is life-giving, source of energy and to Bim, it brings a realization that human emotions and relationships are the most valuable things in life. The clear light of day is suggestive in the sense that it includes the real meaning of life and her real self is lit up by its rays.

In the novel In Custody, the novelist has used some bird, animal and colour images in relation to the character's despair and suffering. A figure of dog is used to describe Deven's dejection and futility of life. On his way to Delhi, he thinks of the dog which had come under the bus. He identifies his fate with it. That image culminates into the fly which he notices in the cup of tea he drank; "In it lay the struck dog, the triumphant crows, the dead fly– death itself. nothing else."¹⁷⁹ Such imagery is used to describe his anguish, helplessness and pain of failure. Pigeons who are symbol of flight, are depicted as creatures hungry for Nur's flesh and blood:

and the birds not only seethed around him but perched and teetered on his bald head and hands, furiously scrabbling with their hooked claws, raw and pink, and their gluttonous beaks as if they would hear the flesh from his bones devour if he had nothing else to give them.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸Ibid., P. 177.
¹⁸⁰Ibid., P. 407.
It describes Nur's nervousness, impatience, and his imprisoned self. Nur's pig-like life, is even hinted by his wife, screaming on Deven:

Do you call that a poet, or even a man? All of you--you followers of his--you have reduced him to that, making him eat and drink like some animal, like a pig. ¹⁸¹

The loss of dignity of an artist because of his greediness is very well expressed through this image. Another to illustrate would be a cricket image; "a cricket shrilled incessantly in the kitchen, shrilled and shrilled." ¹⁸² It is said that when crickets chirps louder than usual, it symbolises death. It indicates Deven's fear of being trapped in the dominance of Nur which kept on hovering onto his existence.

Nature imagery has also been employed by the novelist projecting Deven's impending disappointment; "Bushes and grasses all appeared to have died; the land was shorn, or shrouded." ¹⁸³ It symbolises Deven's plight. Also an image of neem tree is used to depict the inner fury of Deven; '...the tree in the courtyard appeared lifeless." ¹⁸⁴ It indicates the stillness in his life. Even nature is not helping Deven to achieve freedom from his disturbing state of mind.

Some minor images of sky, stars, summer and sea are also employed by the novelist to throw light on Deven's state of mind and his inner tumult:

He looked up at the dusty pelt of the sky for some chink that

¹⁸¹Ibid., Pp. 59-60.
¹⁸²Ibid., P. 183.
¹⁸³Ibid., P. 187.
¹⁸⁴Ibid., P. 183.
promised escape but even the stars were smothered in musk. No message came whispering on a nocturnal breeze; every leaf on a neem tree hung stiff, lifeless. Out in the lane, a bullock cart creaked by, the wooden wheels lacking oil and shrieking dismally. Across the canal a stray dog barked in a long monotonous howl of protest.\textsuperscript{185}

His loveless life, lack of pleasure and peace to live with is expressed through the image of shrieking bullock cart. The 'dusty' sky and 'smothered' sky signifies his unexpected predicament. It also prefigures the captive situation he would be going to get caught in. Colour imagery has also aptly been used by the novelist:

...the poet's figure was in startling contrast, being entirely dressed in white. His white beard was splayed across his chest and his long white fingers clasped across it.\textsuperscript{186}

His white dress and beard symbolize his imaginative world and illusory status.

The house imagery also serves as an interpretative symbol in the novel. When Deven's arrives Nur's house, he was shocked to see an artist's residence where:

Doors opened on to the unlit verandas all around the silent well of the courtyard where one bare electric bulb burned ...others were solidly, impassively dark. Some rustled with furtive life, concealed by darkness. Others seemed dead, or asleep, or empty.\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{185}Ibid., P. 131.
\textsuperscript{186}Ibid., P. 40.
\textsuperscript{187}Ibid., P. 58.
It was like a dark trap he was stepping into. Here the house symbolize stagnant and decaying life of Nur and his poetry. Also it reflects the gloomy phase of Nur's life, an artist who lost its charm with the passing time.

An another insect image, related to a minor character, not so significant yet important because of its thematic connection with the novel cannot be undermined. Deven's describing about a tailor with whom he shares a room; "droning on in his corner like a trapped mosquito." The tailor was telling Deven about his new customer, a foreigner, fair woman. And Deven felt he is caught by her captivating beauty by seeing her looks and gesture. This image is related to the theme of the novel, where Deven too is trapped in the poetic world of Nur. The novelist has explicitly coordinated the image to that of the main theme of the novel.

The use of metaphors in Baumgartner's Bombay, are suggestive enough to convey the physical as well as mental traits of characters. The description of Hugo's father includes such metaphorical connotations:

His waistcoat gleamed too,... like a bottle of dried ink, and the spats on his shoes were like ears of a soft animal laid close against the leather."

Such visual images characterize his personality and gives a clear picture to the reader. Next to mention is; "...flakes of chocolate flecking

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(188)Ibid., P. 166.
the cream that floated like an inland on its dark surface." Certain references are a visual treat for the readers and it lends visionary richness to the texture of the novel. Anita Desai has used to an extent visual, light and auditory images to convey the meaning of the situation and also to define certain characters.

On his way to India, Hugo takes a hault at Venice and is charmed by its beauty. For him it was like the meeting point of East and West. He was spellbound by its surroundings and felt himself as a natural citizen of it His mental condition is brought out in an image of birds:

Cage upon cage blocking up a tall windows above, filled with canaries that trilled and sang because a little light was shining on them from out of all the grey.191

Another animal imagery is the annoying sense of fear, which is like; "an animal in its grey pelt, keeping pace, clinging, refusing to past; an animal like a jackal in the day, a hyena in the night."192 This image is vital here as Hugo considers himself the prey being hunted down by the predator, fear. The life period of his mother has been indicated through a plant image; "cherry tree".193 The desperation and fears of Hugo are symbolised in the ant image:

He could watch the column of ants, each carrying a moist, soft, white egg into the dark cave in a crack between the floor and

(190)Ibid., P. 24.
(191)Ibid., P. 59.
(192)Ibid., P. 89.
(193)Ibid., P. 45.
the wall. The trouble... their tedium, the endless repetition of forms and actions that blurred and turned into an endless labour of human forms—bent, driven into black caves from which they did not re-emerge.\(^{194}\)

Another image indicating his condition at the camp; "*He was able to live, ostrich-like, under the sands of this illusion.*"\(^{195}\) From the camp, he wrote letters to his acquaintances, but there was no reply. Still he was being assured that response will come, ironically, he knew that the letters written by jews there are not posted.

The copulation act between Hugo and Lotte is described effectively without being vulgar yet suggesting everything that is needed.

Like a cat she pressed upon him, nuzzling, nibbling, without speech. With small groans they made themselves comfortable against each other, finding concavities into which to press their convexities, and convexities into which to fit concavities, till at last they made one comfortable whole, two halves of a large misshapen bag of flash, and then they were still and slept the heavy noontime sleep of the tropics, sighing and snoring less and less till they became totally immobile silent.\(^{196}\)

It serves as a perfect instance of Anita Desai's effective prose in describing an erotic scene. Employing images, metaphors to suggest the psyche of her characters, the novelist is successful enough to catch the real spirit of their selves.

\(^{194}\)Ibid., P. 119.

\(^{195}\)Ibid., P. 118.

\(^{196}\)Ibid., P. 82.
The novelist has also used poetry to convey the sensibilities of her characters in a more effective manner. As, poetry has been considered the best medium to express one's emotion and thoughts. Anita Desai has done justice to her portrayal of characters revealing their interests the inner truths of their lives. Maya's anguish and sense of loneliness in *Cry, the Peacock* has been very well expressed by the novelist through various devices and poetry is one of them. Maya's pain and aloofness is perceptible in the given lines, which she feels are coming from somewhere around:

Lord, thou hast dealt me so many sorrows; "To bear them, couldst thou not also have lent me another heart?"[197] Maya feels her unbearable pain of meaningless existence to burden her heart and mind. She feels sharing her agony with almighty God and asking him to show her the way to come out of the shell. Maya had been quite nostalgic about her childhood days. She wishes to get more love and affection and revive all those glorious moments of her childhood. She feels; "I might, after all, have achieved the way to grace, Had you but granted me a few years more, O Lord."[198] She is torn between two worlds. The bygone golden days at her father's place and the detached environment of her husband's place, which is driving her to madness.

Maya and Gautama were living a fruitless marriage. Their mental incompatibility and temperamental polarities is evident from

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an incident of Gautama's quoting an Urdu Couplet and Maya's sensitive approach to it. Gautama uttered this couplet very lightly: "Even if each star in the sky were an heart, what of it? Give to me one heart that is capable of sorrow."¹⁹⁹ He was reading an anthology of persian couplets and just read these lines and went away. But Maya found them compassionate and tender. The lines kept haunting her mind and wanted to discuss it with her husband. But Gautama, did not even remembered its content.

Certain poetic instances convey the mood and mind of characters. Their fears, hopes and feelings are expressed through this medium, which is adequately fitted by the novelist to enrich her work.

Anita Desai's use of poetry in *Voices in the City*, no doubt, conveys the meaning more effectively. Also apart from that, it seems more convincing because some of her characters are inclined towards art and so the poetry mentioned in it looks more realistic and an important part of character's life. In *Voices in the City* the characters being intellectuals use poetry in relation with the situation or it expresses their psyche. The first instance comes from Professor Bose, who is telling a fable to Nirode, use these four lines in relation to the story:

'Scholarship is less than sense;
Therefore seek intelligence;
Senseless scholars in their pride
Mand a lion: Then they died.'²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹Ibid., P. 23.
The poem is a witty one who made Nirode smile a bit. All he wanted to say was that it is more important to use one's intellect at the right time and on the right thing than just being an intellect doing nothing. At another instance, Nirode sang these lines:

'Agh, what avails the scepters race!
Ah, what the face divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer, all were thine.'

For Nirode, this situation is more scary, when one despite having everything, loses the battle. This might be the reason of his hesitation in trying out a venture and then probably fail in it. These lines reflect the hesitant part of Nirode's personality.

Lighter aspect of Nirode is perceptible while singing a song for her sister Amla, to make her smile:

'Ghosh Mosh Chunder Bose my name,
In Radha Bazar I keep shop.
O I'm a veree good Bangalee babu,
In Radha Bazar I keep my shop.'

Nirode was trying to make Amla understand his ambition that he wants to earn as much it is needed immediately. During his conversation, he suddenly started singing the song to make the atmosphere a bit lighter. The novelist deserves all appreciation for her perfect blending of poetry with the emotive aspects of the novel.

As in other novels, Anita Desai in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* too

(201) Ibid., P. 43.
(202) Ibid., P. 157.
uses poetry to convey the meaning more effectively. The poem which is quoted more than once in the novel has its thematic significance:

'Pack up all my cares 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.'

Here, in the first instance carefreeness and gaiety of Adit is felt. But second time, when it was used, one finds mood of maladjustment and sorrow:

Here no one can love or understand me, oh what hard luck stories they all hand me. Make my bed and light the light, I'll arrive late tonight, Blackbird, bye-bye.

His discomfiture is obvious here and the pain he goes through is perceptible in this instance. The poem is suggestive of a gradual change in Adit's enchantment form his adopted country. The poem quoted once again at the end of the novel,

'Make my bed and light the light,
I'll arrive late tonight
Blackbird, bye-bye.'

This poem has been organically woven in the tapestry of the novel.

It is significant from the structural point of view. It describes different


(204)Ibid., P. 131.

(205)Ibid., P. 230.
phases in Adit's character with his perception changing in due course of time.

Also a vedic hymn to fire is quoted in Chapter III when Dev and Adit are travelling in a bus to Chelsea Bridge. Dev began to utter these lines in sanskrit while passing through Battersea powerstation:

'Produce thy streams of flames like a broad onslaught,
Go forth impetuous like a King with his elephant.
Thou art an archer.
Shoot thy sorcerers with thy hottest arrows,
O Agni, send forth thy heat, thy winged flames...'

It reflects Dev's anti- London stand and establishing superioprity of India over it. Also the novelist has used folk poetry or nursery rhymes in the novel. One of such instance is:

'Half a pound of tupenny rice,
Half a pound of treacle,
Mix it up and make it nice...'

The mentioned rhyme by Dev reflects his easy going attitude. While Sarah was arranging pennies in a row for Dev to study, he uttered these lines.

One comes across another poem giving message of living life in the second chapter. When Adit found Dev in a confused state of mind and worried, he starts singing to lighten Dev's mood; "For every evil under the sun there is remedy or there is none. If there is one,

(206) Ibid., P. 54.
(207) Ibid., P. 12.
seel till you find it. If there is none, never you mind it."²⁰⁸

Another instance strikingly relevant to the theme and situation is a folk song by Adit, expressing her released mental state:

When I was a bachelor I lived by myself,
And all the bread and cheese I got, I laid upon the shelf.
The rats and the mice, they made such a strife,
I had to go to London to buy me a wife."²⁰⁹

Several instances of poetry in the novel fitted by the novelist in its texture adds richness to the work. Also it reflects the psyche of characters.

Anita Desai, in the novel, Where Shall We Go This Summer? had used poetry in a significant manner to convey Sita's vision of life in accordance with different situations. Sita memorises poem by favourite Greek Poet Cavafy, when she feels afraid of being crushed:

He who refuses does not repent. Should he be asked again, he
would say No again. And yet that No- the right No- crushes him
for the rest of his life.²¹⁰

She refused to live with her family and tried to escape from the responsibilities. She knew that she did not had the courage to face the realities, yet she has no regret of saying no to her routine life.

For her husband who believes that life should move on with all its business and routine, she says:

(²⁰⁸)Ibid., P. 49.
(²⁰⁹)Ibid., P. 67.
(²¹⁰)Anita Desai, Where Shall We Go This Summer? (New Delhi : Orient Paperbacks) 1982, P. 139.
To certain people there comes a day, When they must say the great Yes or the great No. He who has the Yes ready within him reveals himself at once, and saying it crosser over to the path of honour and his own conviction.\textsuperscript{211}

Raman performed all his duties and this is the reason why their children loved and respected him more than Sita. Another example of the use of poetry is a poem by D.H. Lawrence, occurring in the last section of the novel. These lines come to Sita as a revelation:

\begin{quote}
The wild young heifer, glancing distraught, 
with a strange, new knocking of life at her side 
Runs seeking a loneliness. 
The little grain draws the earth, to hide, 
Nay, even the slumbrous egg as it labours under the shell 
Patiently to divide and sub-divide, 
Asks to be hidden, and wishes noting to tell.\textsuperscript{212}
\end{quote}

Commenting upon the significance of these lines, Anita Desai herself suggested:

\begin{quote}
Of course, if one is alive in this world one cannot survive without compromise, drawing the line means certain death and in the end, Sita opts for life with compromise- consoling herself with Lawrence’s verse with the thought that she is compelled to make this tragic choice because she is a part of the earth, of life, and can no more reject it than the slumbrous egg can or the heifer or the grain.\textsuperscript{213}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{(211)}\textit{Ibid., P. 139.} 
\textsuperscript{(212)}\textit{Ibid., P. 139.} 
\textsuperscript{(213)}\textit{Atma Ram, ”An Interview with Anita Desai”, World Literature Written in English, XVI(l), November, 1977, pp. 95-104.}
This poem offers Sita a solution, which is to go on with life discharging all her duties. It provides a vision to accept life with all its complexities. Anita Desai, quite aware of the power of poetry, has used it in her novels as a fictional technique with all her skills and craftsmanship. Sita's turbulence, anguish, indecisiveness and acceptance is very well expressed through poetic medium.

Like other novels, Anita Desai has used poetry in her award winning novel *Fire on the Mountain*. It is a poem by G.M. Hopkins, used in reference to Nanda Kaul who quotes it and which signifies her desire to be away from the humdrum of life.

'I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.
'And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.'

of course it was not written about a place, any place, but about a vocation- a men's vocation, as it happens- but, all the same, it seemed to apply.\(^{214}\)

This poem clearly indicates Nanda Kaul's urge to be in solitude. It could also be seen as an intial attitude of hers to Carignano. Other than this, there is not much significant use of poetry in the novel.

Poetry, like most of her novels forms an integral part in the

story of *Clear Light of Day*. The most striking part is the epigraphs used by the novelist. The first one has the following lines by Emily Dickinson:

'Memory is strange bell- Jubilee and Knell.'

Memories of past has an important role to play in one's life. To Tara, memories are *jubilee*, a reason to celebrate, to feel joy at, but to Bim, they strike the knell of sorrow and she wishes to escape from it. The second epigraph in by T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* illustrating the change of pattern with the passage of time.

See, now they vanish

The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,

to become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

Both sisters had different temperaments and psychic attitudes. Each prefiguring the past in its own pattern. Things do not change, only the pattern and structure changes with the flux of time. Raja is a lover of poetry, so the novelist has used some lines of Urdu poet Iqbal, one of his favourite poets to show Raja's inclination towards poetry:

Thou didn't create night but I made the lamp. Thou didn't create day but I made the cup thou didn't create the desert, mountains, and forests, I produce the orchards, gardens, groves. It is I who made the glass out of stone and it is I who turned a poison into an antidote.215

Here the lines emphasize the importance of man almost claiming equality with God, the creator of the universe. But in the novel it has

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been used to show Raja's interest in poetry. For a young boy like him it is not possible to fully realize the significance of these lines. But it does incorporate the individualistic philosophy of the novelist.

Another few words mentioned provides a vision to Bim's life and also throws light on the significance of title:

"Your world is the world of fish and fowl. My world is the cry at dawn"

* * * * * * *

"In your world I am subjected and constrained, but over my world you have domination."\(^{216}\)

Life is full of complexities, frustrations, hopes, fears, treachery, unfaithfulness and to go beyond these pettiness of life, one needs to have a glimpse of divine thing i.e. *Clear Light of Day*. The novel ends on this spiritual note giving a message of enlightenment, forgiveness and love.

The effective use of poetry in this novel within its context is the most significant from technical point of view. The poetic description of time towards the end; "*Time the destroyer is time the preserver,*"\(^{217}\) points out the novelist skill in the use of appropriate language to suggest the role of time in a man's life. Time stands against the momentary existence of man being a symbol of eternity.

The novel, *In Custody* is about a poet Nur, his world of poetry and Deven's fascination for poetry, so it is bound to have poetic

\(^{216}\)Ibid., PP. 182-183.

\(^{217}\)Ibid., P. 182.
instances. Deven, recites few of his favourite lines written by Nur; "Many sins, and much suffering; such is the pattern, Fate has traced on my tablet, with blood." These lines have its importance acting as connecting link between Deven and his dead father, who, also had been a great lover of poetry and used to recite this poem to Deven.

Another instance would be from Nur's verse which was reminded by Deven as casually as a discarded bus ticket:

Night ends, dawn breaks, and sorrow reappears,
Addressing us in the morning light with a Cock's shrill.

These lines are quite pessimistic in approach. The gloomy atmosphere of Nur's place still lingered in his mind.

Nur did not quoted his lines throughout the novel, rather he intoned lines from Keats and Shelley, which was of least interest for Deven. He felt utterly disgusted by the great poet, Nur. Despite having a poet in the story, very few instances are to be found in the novel. This is what the plot demanded, and Anita Desai has done justice to it.

*Baumgartner's Bombay,* is full of German songs, referring to Hugo's childhood, then describing Nazi Germany. Here is an instance of poetry, an English rendering of Nazi song having significance for Baumgartner because his race has been persecuted by Nazis but he is forced to participate along with other Germans:

'then comes a call like thunder's peal,

(219) Ibid., p. 65.
Like billow's roar and clash of steel
The Rhine, the German Rhine so free,
Yes, we will all thy guardians be,
Dear Fatherland, sweet peace be thine,
Dear Fatherland, sweet peace be thine.
Firm stands the Watch and free,
The watch on the Rhine....'220

It is a song celebrating fatherland along with description of Rhine. The unfortunate part of poetry in this novel is that as most of the poems are in German without English paraphrase so it is not possible to make out the meaning. One such instance of poetry associated with Hugo's childhood is:

'Schlaf, Kindlein, schlaf!
Da draussen gehn zwei Schlaf!
Ein schwarzes und ein weisses,
und wenn das Kind nicht schlafen will,
dann Kommt das Schwarz and beist as
Schlaf, Kindlein, Schlaf!'221

This is the one thing that irk the readers of the novel, when it is not possible to know the meaning of poem, until they know German language.

*Fasting, Feasting* is a quintessential Indian family story focussing on the pathetic life of Uma, in particular. An unco-ordinated woman who finds it difficult to succeed in every aspect of life and


(221) Ibid., P. 37.
finds solace in the company of Books. The below mentioned lines used by Anita Desai within the texture of novel clearly reflects the mental state and unfulfilled dreams of Uma:

You are wasting your life in that dull, dark room
(As he fondled her silken folds);
O'er the casement lean but a little, my queen,
And see what the great world holds.
Here the wonderful blue of your matchless hue
Cheapen both sky and sea-
You are far too bright to be hidden from sight
Come fly with me, darling—fly.222

The inner suppressed urges of Uma are beautifully expressed by the novelist conveying the psyche of hers to the reader.

Locale also plays a vital role in the novels of Anita Desai, affecting the psyche of her women characters. Gardens, hills, islands and cities are associated with the mental state of her specific female protagonists. In *Cry, the Peacock* Maya remembers her father's garden where she used to have breakfast. This garden plays an important role in her childhood memories which kept haunting her mind every now and then. The disciplined habits and life-style of her father appear to Maya as formal as a Moghul garden:

He shakes his head and folds his napkin meticulously. As one neat crisp white square settles upon the other, as one long crease straightens and flows into the next, so do his thoughts, his life, his life, his attitude, his learning and his career assume a similar


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pattern—formal as a Moghul garden, gracious and exact, where
breeding, culture, leisure and comfort have been brought to a nice
art.\footnote{223}

The novelist displays her remarkable ability to perceive realities in
such minute perception of sights providing an insight into the inner
domain of her characters. The city of Delhi in this novel holds
compulsive presence having parties, dances, drinks disturbing the
inner quietness of Maya. She becomes a constant victim of vainglory
of city life. City plays a crucial role in widening the gap between Maya
and her husband who is a busy lawyer and do not welcome any
interruption. Maya feels the lack of warmth around her and city
becomes a symbol of coldness and indifference.

As mentioned earlier, locales (Cities) play an important role
in the mental set-up of her women characters. \textit{Voices in the city}
symbolizes voices of sensitive characters, combined with their sorrow,
anguish, pain and hope of lives. On Desai's skilful handling of the city,
A.V. Krishna Rao was compelled to think that city of Calcutta is the
hero of the novel, no one else:

Thus although one may be tempted to consider Nirode as the hero
of the Novel, the city of Calcutta is indeed the invisible protagonist
of the novel. Calcutta, conceived as a force of creation, preservation
and destruction is ultimately identified as a symbol for the
goddess Kali.\footnote{224}

\footnote{224}A. V. Krishna Rao, \textit{Voices in the City, A Study: Perspectives on Anita
Desai}, Ed. Ramesh K. Srivastava, Ghaziabad, Vimal Prakashan, 1984,
P. 175.
The city of Calcutta, with its people, its dreariness, suffocation and extinction are expressed by the novelist through the lives of her characters. The environment in which one lives in, bound to influence one's psyche in some way or the other. The same happens with the characters of the novel. The beginning of the novel at Howrah Station, gives a natural description of the city with all its squalor:

...the drain was chocked with the sadden remnants of partings and farewells. Beating his way out of the swarming apathy of Hawrah, Nirode strode down the bridge, dodging the traffic that made the bridge roar and rattle beneath his feet like a tunnel of bones and stell. Trams crashed murderously past him hand-carts rolled recklessly, maniacally by.  

The city which stifles the voices of agonized sufferers, of their unfruitful efforts, and their panting hearts with its demonic aspect has been aesthetically coloured by the genius of the novelist. The corruption confound public life of the city had adverse effects on the psyche of characters. For them, darkness is the new colour of the city. Anita Desai has successfully drawn a brooding and ghastly picture of life.

The city of London holds thematic significance in the novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, it symbolizes world's glittering face on the surface level, but deep down it is hard, indifferent and cold:

To begin with this is Dev's London– the small side lane banked with its brick-walled houses...a creeper of crimson roses or a bush of azaleas as delicate, as fine and airy as a host of pink and white


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butterflies hovering over a golden gate. In the small pebbly gardens and on narrow pavements, an occasional abandoned toy wagon or garden rake, but rarely an owner of these objects, rarely any human attachment. Lives lived in Laurel Lane are indoor lives. ...Laurel Lane remains, to him, a place of shut doors and curtained windows... He does not hear his neighbours- their radios, their quarrels, their children are all kept behind closed doors.\textsuperscript{226}

This kind of atmosphere makes him uneasy. People are more to themselves own lives devoid of any interaction with each other. He finds it a cold wasteland of bricks and tiles. Anita Desai has captured the loneliness and emptiness of England and presented it through Dev’s eye. The affect of such surrounding also disturbed the psyche of Sarah. The novelist has skifully delienated the mental state of characters affected by the locales.

Locales in the novels of Anita Desai holds an important place in the lives of her characters, specifically, women. Bombay, in \textit{Where Shall We Go This Summer?} plays a vital role in the life of Sita, who is fed up with the monotonous life of Bombay, where everyone is engrossed in their busy lives. Sita feels suffocated in the emotional devoid environment. She is fed up with the mechanical life that people lead in Bombay. Bombay symbolises contemporariness of the age with all its complexities.

Whereas, Manori has been interpreted as a natural landscape. It is a place of refuge for Sita, where she is expecting some miracle to happen, as it was used to be in her father's time. An

atmosphere of magic used to prevail there, but as time passed by everything faded. Sita's belief in the fantasy world of island made her move from the city to Manori. These two locales have immense contribution in the development of Sita's psyche and her attitude towards life. Island life has been delienated with image of sea, sunshine and flowers, whereas Bombay with violent images that horrifies Sita all the time.

As far as the locales are concerned, the geographical space covered by the novelist in *Fire on the Mountain* has become symbol of Nanda Kaul's protest and assertion. Anita Desai's projection of mountains reflects an ambiguity of Nanda's fireness and hesitation on her withdrawal from life. It represents stark truth of life and also the lure fantasies. Its huge space has been shown related to the feminine consciousness. Mountains encompassing sounds, vision, rain, flowers, wind and fire fascinates the readers. It reflects the disharmony and violence happening in the human world. The mountains here stands for isolation:

In very direction there was a sweeping view- to the north of the moutions, to the south of the plains. Its windows were open- the ones facing north opened onto the blue waves of the Himalayas flowing out and up to the line of ice and snow sketched upon the sky, while those that faced south looked down the plunging cliff to the plain stretching out, flat and sere, to the blurred horizon.²²⁷

It indicates an infinite expansion at one end and a decline to a dull

state on the other. If one view of the hillside that comforted her, the
other view of plains becomes symbol of the ambiguousness of her
mental state. Nanda Kaul keeps on oscillating between her wishful
structuring of the past and her painful withdrawl from life.

Raka’s reaction to the wider landscape is quite different. She
does not pine or hope for human company. She wanted freedom from
every relation around her and:

Carignano had much to offer- yes, she admitted that readily,
nodding her head like a berry- it was the best of places she’d
lived in ever. It was as dry and clean as a nut but she burst
from its shell like an impatient Kernel, small and explosive.

It was the ravaged, destroyed and barren spaces in Kasauli
that drew her: the ravine where yellow snakes slept under
grey rocks and agaves growing out of the dust and rubble, the
skeletal pines that rattled in the wind, the wind- levelled hill-
tops and the seared remains of the safe, cozy, civilized world
in which she owed no attachment.²²⁸

The barreness of landscape suits her mood. She wishes to merge with
the seclusion of Kasauli. The lonely pine trees, rocks and hills of
Carignano become the projection of Nanda Kaul’s life. Raka is inclined
towards the unpleasant aspects of nature. This attraction is an
externalization of her inner furies. The devastating pictures of valley
fascinated her, and it is a reflection of her sub-normal nature.

The garden of vice-chancellor’s house also has symbolic
significance:

(228) Ibid., P. 91.
There had been too many trees in the garden—dark, dusty guava and mango trees, full of too many marauding parrots and squirrels and children that raided them for fruit and either over-ate or fell from the tops.\(^{229}\)

It is an extended metaphor of busy and hectic life of Nanda Kaul among children, relatives and guests. In contrast was the garden of Carignano, barren and empty.

the garden seemed to have arrived, simply by a process of age, of withering away and an elimination, at a state of elegant perfection.\(^{230}\)

Nanda Kaul did not wanted any addition in her life. The emptiness of the garden of Carignano is an emblem of her loneliness and her passing age. The phantasy of Tibet to attract Raka by Nanda Kaul also serves as an important symbol connoting a dream-like atmosphere, where life is easy and beauty rests everywhere.

The web of dreamy illusion presented a momentary joy to Nanda Kaul as well as Raka but then evaporated like a bubble with the touch of reality which was not sweat. Such instances leaves poetic impact on the novel. Thus, gardens, landscapes play significant role in the psychic turbulence of Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila Das at the crucial juncture of their lives. Anita Desai has used them according to the situation and need of the events.

Talking about locales, the City of Delhi, in *Clear Light of Day*

has important role to play in influencing the lives of Das’s family. The second part, specifically deals with the patriotic fire of 1947, and the effect it had on Delhi.

The city was in flames that summer. Every night fires lit up the horizon beyond the city walls so that the sky was luridly tinted with festive flames of orange and pink,... she could hear the sound of shots and screams.\(^{231}\)

Das family lived near by the city where the gardens and bungalows were sheltered behind their hedges. Raja was ill during that time and he was very impatient to know about Hyder Ali, who lived in the heart of city. Raja wanted to get out of house to help Hyder Ali, but could not. After sometime, he flew away to Hyderabad with Hyder Ali and settled down there. The city of Delhi offers no sweet memories to Bim. Being behind the scene, the city displays its ugliness through the ingratitude, lack of feelings and cruelty of people, making Bim its victim. Old Delhi becomes a symbol of decay and monotony. In the words of Bim:

Old Delhi does not change. It only decays. My students tell me it is a great cemetery, every house a tomb. Nothing but sleeping graves.... Here we are left rocking on the backwaters, getting duller and greyer, I suppose.\(^{232}\)

Bim is not happy there, but she has to live for the sake of Baba and to look after the house. Tara was so much attached to her house in old Delhi, that she finds it difficult to adjust with the changing pattern.


\(^{232}\)Ibid., P. 5.
of time and place:

Now New Delhi, they say is different, that is where things happen. The way they describe it, it sounds like a nest of fleas. So much happens there, it must be a jumping place. I never go, Baba never goes. And here, here nothing happens at all.\(^{233}\)

New Delhi is a symbol of exuberance, vitality, energy and movement. Old Delhi symbolises the dullness, and dreariness of Bim's life. Where as New Delhi indicates life at its fullest. The city is closely connected with the psychic state of Bim and Tara and its effect had been skillfully drawn out by the novelist.

As far as locale in the novel \textit{In Custody} goes, Mirpore is symbolically used by the novelist. it represents the basic nature of the entire class of society to which Deven belongs. The town, as Anita Desai illustrates:

Although it lacked history, the town had probably existed for centuries in its most basic, most elemental form. Those shacks of tin and rags, however precarious and impermanent they looked, must have existed always, repetitively and in succeeding generations, but never fundamentally changing and in that sense enduring. The roads that ran between their crooked rows had been periodically laid with tar but the dust beneath was always present, always perceptible.\(^{234}\)

Here one finds a symbolic existence of Deven, who neither had significant past nor has any progressing aim for future. People of the town live a monotonous life, without any background and history.

\(^{233}\)\textit{Ibid.}, P. 5.

Deven perceives Mirpore as a prison where he is sentenced forever to live an empty life and Delhi is known as a; "walled city." Here Deven comes in search of name, fame and freedom.

A reputed critic, Kunj Bala Goel, rightly asserted; "While Mirpore represents reality, Delhi becomes symbolical of fantasy." Deven found the city of Delhi as polluted and gloomy, and Chandni Chowk:

...was so like a maze from which he found no exit, in which he wandered between the peeling, stained walls of office buildings, the overflowing counters of shops and stalls.

The noise, violence, filthiness, insecurity, unpleasant sounds pervading the entire metropolis led Deven to introspect; "What madness had drawn him out to undertake this journey what could only be disaster." In its multiple diversions of agony and ecstasy, the city embodies an ambivalent vision of hope and despair for Deven. The Hope of meeting his idol successfully and despair of getting nothing out of this great city.

The novel Baumgartner's Bombay presents an interaction between the locale and emotional states of characters. The story is about a jew from Germany who shifts to India with a hope of settling down. India was an unknown land to him till he entered and

(235)Ibid., P. 187.
(238)Ibid, P. 27.
experienced what it was all about. His initial reaction was:

India flashed the mirror in your face, with a brightness and
laughter as raucous as a street band. You could be blinded by it.
But if you refused to look into it, if you insisted on walking around
to the back, them India stood aside, admitting you where you had
not thought you could go. India was two world, or ten.239

Baumgartner was confused to see the rude behaviour of Indian People
to him. He thought India would be a land of peace, love and humility,
but he was shocked. He kept on bewildering at the indifferent attitude
of people towards him.

Though he lives for thirty years in the Bombay, but it has
failed to understand him and vice-versa:

The life of Bombay which had been Baumgartner’s life for thirty
years now- or rather, the setting for his life; he had never
actually entered it, never quite captured it; damply, odorously,
cacophonously palpable as it was, it had been elusive still.240

His peace of mind has been destroyed by the surroundings of the city.
Inspite of its indifference, crowd and noise, the city becomes
an inescapable part of the artist’s perception. The enduring human
condition of the urban metropolis has been aesthetically portrayed by
the novelist. Lotte also becomes a co-sufferer of no less intensity than
Hugo does. She is an expatriate. She sought refuge in india during Nazi
regime in Germany. To get Indian nationality she got married to Kanti
Seth, a Marwari Businessman and settled down in Bombay. But she


(240) Ibid., P. 214.
was no more than a keep to him. She is a victim of cultural alienation and is an exile in the city of Bombay who never accepted her and always treated her as a 'foreigner'. In her own words; "Mostly I am alone. All, all alone." The city of Bombay and its inhabitants have always insulted her. The another city that further accentuated Hugo's sense of loneliness was Calcutta, manifesting its ugliness through its various facets – the mosquitoes, the noise, the crowded, the prostitutes and the heat of sun:

The congestion of the streets and the odours in the heat were overpowering; debris was piled everywhere – banana peels, coconut husks, ashes and cinders from the fires the householders lit in their small brick-stoves with cakes of cowdung soaked in Kerosene, a lethal substance that let out billows of choking yellow smoke… that made one gasp for breath and cough… Processions wound endlessly through the city, chanting slogans like dirges, slipping into sudden outbreaks of activity, to overturn buses and set trams on fire. Or there would be a strike – of taxis, of trams… There were barricades in the streets, police with helmets and batons and rifles, mobs sullen or infuriated – one could never tell.

Baumgartner feels suffocated in such atmosphere. Here the city acquires a symbolic dimension, like most of Anita Desai's novels reflecting existential anguish of its male protagonist Hugo, Who is stifled by the constant pressure of urban milieu intensifying his sense of despair and alienation. Locale here appears as an ironic presence

(241) Ibid., P. 203.
(242) Ibid., Pp. 171-172.
pervading life in terms of materialistic as well as psychic level of the characters.

Anita Desai believed childhood experiences to be the most vivid and leaving lasting impressions on one's personality. This fact has been unanimously accepted by various schools of psychology. The emotional turmoil in a child's life has great effect upon his/her future's character development. The attitude of parents and the type of home-life and surrounding are the main constituents in influencing and shaping up the psyche of child. It is a commonly accepted fact that lack of parental affection leads to emotional instability on the child's part, which consequently leads to his/her failure in adjusting with social norms and therefore, becomes a deviant personality.

In the novels of Anita Desai one witnesses a growing incompatability between the world in which characters are brought up and the world which is imposed upon then driven by circumstances as they grow. The joy and trauma of childhood experiences of female protagonists in the novels of Anita Desai are reflected in their sensibilities and attitudes.

Maya, in *Cry, the Peacock* considers her childhood as the happiest phase of her life. The over-pamperedness of her father made Maya a wayward and high-strung child. She was treated like a princess in her toy-world, a make-believe lovely world created by her father:

As a child, I enjoyed, princess-like, a sumptuous fare of the fantasies of the Arabian Nights, the glories and bravado of Indian
mythology, long and astounding tales of princes and regal queens, jackals and tigers, and, being my father's daughter, of the lovely English and Irish fairy tales as well, that were read out to me by him.²⁴³

Her childhood was more or less a world of fantasy and she always longed to perpetuate this fairy-tale atmosphere. She was a motherless child and her father offered her a life of protection and affection. Maya grows up physically, but his over-protectiveness does not give her chance to get out of this childhood stage. It hampers her psychic intellectual growth. Healthy and mature development of her personality is blocked.

Maya remains a light-headed child all her life. She wants to grapple with realities of life, to charm her husband by feminine charm, but the child in her takes over everything and once again she treads on familiar grounds. Also a warning of an astrologer when she was a small child, that four years after her marriage either she or her husband would die, does not allow her to live a normal life. This childhood memory haunts and disturbs her throughout. After death of Gautama, she gets absorbed in her childhood memories. She returns to her infantile state, into a second childhood. At her father's place, she starts playing with dolls, giggling like a child, fall upon picture books and opening drawers. Her mother-in-laws hears:

the patter of a child's laughter cascading up and down the scales of some new delight- a brilliant peacock's feather perhaps? Then

(243) Anita Desai, Cry, the Peacock (New Delhi : Orient Paperbacks), 1980, P. 43.
it stopped, suddenly, and they heard a different voice calling, 
shrilly and desperately, from some unimaginable realm of horror, 
calling out in great dread.\(^{244}\)

Maya's nostalgia for childhood thus culminates in an almost hysterical 
longing for the splendid delight of a child and the dreadful and tragic 
awareness of the imposibility of its realization.

In her next novel, \textit{Voices in the City}, Anita Desai has 
displayed the isolation and hostility of character's apparently happy 
home work towards emotional imbalance of the three siblings, Nirode, 
Monisha and Amla. Despite being well equipped with money, intellect 
and taste, their home suffers with an inner voidness creating a strange 
mass of dark darkness within. The marital clash between their parents 
make all three of them mute sufferers of their tension. Up-bringingness 
of child is a difficult procedure. It; "\textit{involves working with an unusual medium, one that has a mind and a will of its own, a child who is constantly his own designer.}"\(^{245}\) The parents must enter a partnership 
with their child in order to help her/him in the process of self-creation. 
Sadly, parents of Nirode lacked this involvement. Contempt and 
resentment in mother's eyes and neglect and malice in father's 
attitude seep into their young lives and Nirode, became its worst 
sufferer. His father was partial towards him and bestowed his love on 
Arun. Nirode broods over his unfortunate boyhood after bidding 
farewell to Arun, who went to England for higher studies. He feels:


\(^{245}\)\textit{Caroll Davis, Room to Grow} (London : University of London Press, 1967), 
P. 3.
It might have been he, he knew that, had he not, as a child, an emotional and disorderly school boy, fallen from his horse... If Arun had not ridden like a prince, captained the cricket team and won top honours... If his father,... had not weighed these distinctions before laying aside a sum of money for the education of one of his two sons. If Arun had not been the favourite and Nirode a congenital failure.²⁴⁶

To cope with the uncertainties and confusions of childhood, he shuts others from his life and becomes detached and stoic in his attitude towards life and family. The inferiority complex which he suffered from in his childhood enables him to start a journey and moving ahead in life. He enjoys sinking comfortably into the effortless inevitability of the betrayed man.

Parental indifference and familial disorder characterizes Monisha's childhood. She gets puzzled by the remoteness of her home and consequently becomes a cold and lonely person. Her parents thought her aloofness as an inclination towards morbidity and later on forces her into a marriage with a man unsuited to her taste and elegance. They thought that:

it would be a good thing for her to be settled into such a stolid, unimaginative family, as that, just sufficiently educated to accept her with tolerance.²⁴⁷

They never interacted with Monisha and does not gave importance to her feelings and choice. Her conscience is withered and dead and

her marriage makes her seal up all her aspirations. The emotional
vaccum reated in her childhood never gets filled up and leads her into
state of self-destruction.

The sensitive protagonist of novel *Where Shall We Go This
Summer?*. Sita has an unusual childhood. She is a motherless child
and she is told that her mother ran away to Banaras, which Sita does
not believe. She also sensed an illicit relationship between her father
and phoolmaya. She kept pondering over the real cause of her mother
deserting her children Sita lived on an island, Manori, in her own
small world. Her father had no time for her, as he was much indulged
in solving villager's problems. The innocent villagers admired him like
anything. They called him the messiah of island, but Sita does not.
Her life was devoid of love and affection, yet she believed in the
serenity and magic of that place called Manori. After her marriage, she
becomes a melancholic, depressed woman. She could not mould
herself according to the necessities of city life which had no time for
emotions. She always wanted to escape back to Manori in search of
peace.

Her imaginative world of perfection in the form of Manori
clashes with the harsh realities and humdrum of city life. After a long
period of twenty years, when she visits Manori, she is disappointed as
now it was substantially changed. She terribly misses the milieu of
innocence and purity of her childhood. The pre-conceived notion of
simplicity and peace which she carried in her heart right from her
childhood was broken amidst the complexities of modern city life.
This, as a result does not allow her to live a normal life with her husband and children. Sita looked at the world through her mirror of innocence, but life was not as bright as she thought it to be.

*Fire on the Mountain*, the most accomplished novel of Anita Desai, presents a perfect example of traumatic filial ties and its effect on child's psychological state. Normally, a child of Raka's age is attracted towards beautiful aspects of nature and world of fairy-tales. But, for Raka, these things were of no interest. She is inclined towards the uncanny places and have fascination for ugly, lonely, rugged and barreness of nature. She enjoys the sights of burnt house, fire and ravines. The reason for her unusual alluration is because she is a victim of a broken home. Her sick, frustrated and unhappy mother and drunkard father who came home at night and:

> his mouth opening to let out a flood of rotten stench, beating at her mother with hammers and fists of abuse—harsh, filthy abuse that made Raka cower under her bed clothes and wet the mattress in fright, feeling the stream of urine warm and weakening between her legs like a stream of blood, and her mother lay down on the floor and shut her eyes and wept.248

This incident holds key to the understanding of bitter personality of Raka. This horrifying incident would be one of the several such frequently occurring ones in her innocent child life. The sweetness of human relationships comes through love and the deprivation of this emotion broke Raka's innocent trust and feelings in relations. She found better companion in the rocks and thorny bushes. Her terrible

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childhood experiences breaks every possibility of creating a positive healthier emotional interaction with everyone around her. In case of Nanda Kaul, she recreates an imaginary childhood to win Raka's attention.

She pouted, childishly. One might have said she had arrived at her second childhood if one believed in such things. She looked so exactly like a baby thwarted, wanting attention she did not get.\textsuperscript{249}

The fantasy world based on the memory of an adventurous father by Nanda Kaul, in a way, projects her own longings as a child.

Anita Desai's four-dimensional novel, \textit{Clear Light of Day}, follows the concept of time and its effect on human beings. It talks about the emotionally deprived childhood of Tara and Bim and its haunting effect on their present lives. When Tara visits her parent's house, after her marriage, she transposes back to her childhood, having a walk with her mother who always kept a distance from her. Now Tara shouts like a child in the same garden at the sight of a snail. Sitting in an empty room, she feels:

the boredom of her childhood,... everything that she had so hated as a child and that was still preserved here as if this were the store room of some dull, uninviting provincial museum.\textsuperscript{250}

Also the memory of her father giving injection to her mother makes her suspicious that he has killed her mother. Even attempts of Aunt

\textsuperscript{(249)}\textit{Ibid.}, P. 101.

Mira, Bim, and Raja to explain why she was injected were in vain and she could not free herself from that haunting memory.

For Bim, the very thought of childhood breeds cynicism in her. She hates thinking about her childhood because that reminds her of the ingratitude of her family members. Both sisters were dissatisfied with their childhood. The negligence of their parents created an unfulfilled vacuum in their hearts. Parents used to play bridge in the greek lit aquarium at the cardroom:

unaware of their daughter's presence outside, and to whom it had never occured that the child was now a young girl and might like to be taken out with them.\(^{251}\)

Bim used to spend time with books in order to avoid the insipid atmosphere at home. Tara was obsessed with her childhood denying the growth of time. Later on, she somehow freed herself from its clutches and adjusted with her present.

*In Custody*, has also some patches of memory, woven in the fabric of narrative. Deven gets upset by a visit of Murad, his childhood friend who had been a spoilt rich boy in his days. His presence makes Deven feeling inferior to him. As in his childhood Murad again lures Deven into making money by writing for his magazine. This childhood friend brings chaos in Deven's life.

*Fasting, Feasting*, the Booker-prize nominated novel of Anita Desai, is a story of Uma, whose life had been tied down to her parents. She is constantly being insulted, made fun of and criticized

\(^{(251)}\)Ibid., P. 138.
of whatever she did. She never had the experience of a affectionate childhood. She was even deprived of proper education. All this made her a love-lorn girl, eventually into a dependent, unhappy and an presumed ill-fated woman.

In the novel, Baumgartner's Bombay, Hugo, the main protagonist has mixed feelings of pleasure and pain while recalling his childhood. The innocent experiences of his childhood days always ended in a quaver that made him lonely and withdrawn. The sense of outlandishness is deeply rooted in him from his childhood days but he did not knew the reason. On Christmas day gifts were being distributed among the students and when Hugo's name was called, instead of going to receive the gift, he looked down at his toes. He experienced shame, that he did not belong to the picture book world, the fairy world every child belongs to:

What was the shame? The sense that he didn't belong to the picture book world of the fir trees, the gifts and the celebration? But no one had said that. Was it just that he sensed he did not belong to the radiant, the triumphant of the world? A strange sensation surely for a child.252

Sense of an incomplete childhood also torments him. When he remembers how on Sunday with his father Hugo used to go Cafe. Such memories often provide solace to him in am indifferent atmosphere of India, where he came to settle down. The sense of unbelongingness which was sown in his childhood longed for whole life and he felt

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unacceptable wherever he went.

Anita Desai has brilliantly covered the large area of a tiny territory, which is childhood in her novels. She has emphasized the importance of childhood in development of one's personality. Her novels explored this important aspect of her character's life and shown its indelible impact on their adulthood. The obsession of fairy-childhood leads to a schizophrenic tendency in Maya and Sita. For Tara, Bim and Monisha the memories of painful childhood brought frustration and despair in their lives. Raka's dreadful homely atmosphere makes her a recluse. By projecting certain characters, Anita Desai has proven her point that childhood experiences does have lasting impact on one's heart and mind.

The above survey of narrative technique of Anita Desai's fictional world encompassing her different novels shows that she uses distinct fictional techniques according to the requirement of the story. She has been called a technical innovator in the sense of enriching poetic device in her novels. Anita Desai, no doubt, has been successful in narrating the story, conveying the mood, unveiling the psyche and evoking the atmosphere in relation with the characters. Her use of flashback technique, imagery, effective language and influence of locales in probing the inner psyche of protagonists is commendable. She may not be an innovator technically, but the way she has effectively used it in the texture of her novels places Anita Desai above her contemporary novelists.
R. S. Sharma has rightly remarked:

_Cry, the Peacock_, Anita Desai's first novel is also perhaps the first step in the direction of psychological fiction in Indian Writing in English. Initially the novel shocks us with its neurotic and near morbid obsession with death, but on closer study, we see the writer's skill in capturing the psychic states of a woman haunted by an awareness of death.\(^{253}\)

Technically, _Cry, the Peacock_ has been considered a well-written novel. Artistic devices like images, poetry, sights, stream of consciousness are woven together in externalizing the inner psyche of hypersensitive Maya. The fever and fretfulness of her characters in _Voices in the City_ has been skilfully delineated by Anita Desai. Praises for the novelist came from A.V. Krishna Rao, a reputed critic, stating: "The novel is a remarkable tour-de-force both in its narrative technique and artistic vision."\(^{254}\) Anita Desai's exploration of themes through adequate use of different devices within the texture of novel is discussed in detail in this chapter.

The language of her novel _Where Shall We Go This Summer?_ is marked by simplicity and vividness, which are enough to produce the desired effect. Descriptions are purely a visual treat for the readers. Anita Desai has rendered life in the existentialist framework of the novel. The novel is successful in weaving a well-structured

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narrative till the book closes. The novelist has endeavoured to provide her own vision of life with its complexities and solutions proving quite convincing and appealing to the readers.

Her award-winning novel *Fire on the Mountain* unfolds the tragic view of life where innocents suffer. The title here stands for revolt in the character of Raka symbolising new feminine sensibility. By employing perfect nature images, landscapes, sounds etc., the novelist excelled in expressing feminine psyche in adequate form.

Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* which is said to be the most autobiographical in nature, conveys its thematic concern by juxtaposing past and present elaborately. The reader is made aware of the cyclic nature of things. The remembrances and nostalgia on the part of Bim and Tara, in particular expressing their psychic turmoils are well fitted in the structure of the novel. It is an another artistic triumph for the novelist.

Adopting various devices for characterizing characters and adequate use of metaphor and symbol makes the novel, *In Custody* a compact one. The altering consciousness of Deven is explicitly drawn through expressionistic mode. Images are perfectly jetted regarding the psyche of its male protagonist.

*Baumgartner's Bombay*, thus appears as a novel in which perverted socio-political and communal biases make the life of an individual not less than a hell. An uprooted Jew, Hugo, persecuted in his own country because of Nazi regime, too dark to be accepted there.

(311)
His coming to India in search of a better future and prospects fades and he is considered too-fair skinned to be accepted by Indian society. He always remains the victim of society, in Germany and then in India. The reality was; "Accepting - but not accepted; that was the story of his life, the one thread that ran through it all." From technical point of view, the most noticeable thing emerging here is realistic description of places. The novel uses flashback technique to inform the reader of his childhood. Inclusion of certain German songs justifies the fact that he is a German. Employing differences devices, the novelist has effectively narrated the story with revelation of psyche of the main characters.

Anita Desai has prominently used stream of consciousness in most of her novels creating desired effect befitting the situation. She has been successful in reaching a woman's heart with all her fears, fury and desires by employing variety of techniques.