CHAPTER - VI

CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY

Time as a Healer

Critical opinion with regard to the theme of *Clear Light of Day* (1980) is more or less agreed. It has been generally observed by critics that the central theme is Time. Ramesh K. Srivastava opines that the novel "deals with time in relation with eternity - a domain of psychological novel". Harish Raizada terms the novel's theme to be "the effect of the remembrance of past on the chief protagonists". S. Indira quotes Madhusudan Prasad in saying that "it has a unique theme of time in relation to eternity". As such, the whole novel "revolves round 'Time' drawing different impressions from the characters". B. Ramachandra Rao also quotes Anita Desai in saying that the main theme is "time as preserver and destroyer and the effects of the bondage of time" on the characters. Jasbir Jain terms the novel to be "an exploration of the nature of memory". Anita Desai herself comments that Time is the main theme of this novel:

... I have tried to construct a four-dimensional world, the fourth dimension being Time. I wanted Time to have as palpable an existence as the spatial world perceived by the five senses. I wanted Time to be an
element, like light or darkness ... pervasive ... and ...
perceived by the characters as ... a part of their
everyday consciousness ... 

Anita Desai further says that she has aimed to prove that:

... although Time appears to damage, destroy and
extinguish, one finds instead that nothing is lost,
nothing comes to an end, but the spiral of life leads as
much upwards as downwards and is in perpetual
circular motion, both the past and the future existing
always in time present ...

A close reading of *Clear Light of Day* in the light of the
novelist's remarks shows her taking up in this novel the modernist concern
with Time and Memory. The novels of James Joyce – notably *A Portrait
of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922) focus on themes
related to time, memory and consciousness. Similarly, Virginia Woolf's
*To the Lighthouse* also focuses thematically on time. In fact, Asha Kauwar
has made a significant observation on Anita Desai in relation to Virginia
Woolf:

In both *Clear Light of Day* and *To the Lighthouse*,
we have the three fold effect of time – passing of
moments or hours, the voyage from youth to age, and
the historical time, or time in relation to nation-wide
events.
Another similarity that she observes in both the novels is that, “though mind time and linear time are depicted side by side, the final triumph is reserved for “mind time or dure’e”\(^1\). She also feels that the “major point of convergence of both these novels is memory”\(^12\). These comments bring out Anita Desai’s affinity with a modernist like Virginia Woolf.

In considering this Time as the main theme, this study has concurred with the previously expressed critical opinions. It can however be mentioned here that whereas nearly all her novels show Anita Desai’s fluid handling of time as an integral part of her fictional technique, in this novel, she has specifically made Time the main theme.

Again, Jasbir Jain’s terming the novel as an “exploration of the nature of memory” is inadequate. This is because in this novel there is a close association between time and memory. The passage of time and its influence on man is recollected mainly through memory. To consider the nature of memory without its association with time here, in this novel, would therefore be inadequate.

This association of time and memory has been established by the novelist herself in her use of the two epigraphs:

Memory is a strange bell –

Jubilee and knell –

Emily Dickinson.

The other epigraph is by T.S. Eliot:

See, now they vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which, as
it could, loved them,
To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

While the first epigraph suggests the traits of memory, the second is suggestive of how with the passage of time things don’t really change, only the pattern does. The appropriateness in the use of these two epigraphs has been shown later.

As in the previous novels, the main theme has been explored through the consciousness. This is mainly through that of the main protagonist, Bim and to a lesser extent through her younger sister, Tara. After a gap of three years, Tara’s visit home evokes memories of the past and a consequent feeling of unease in both Bim and herself. In Tara, this unease is caused by the revival of her guilt – on recollection of the past through memory – at having escaped from the family’s numerous problems leaving Bim to cope all alone by herself. In Bim, however, it is the revival of her sense of abandonment by her siblings that becomes the cause of her unease. This present uneasiness causes in Bim a backward journey through memory co-inciding with a simultaneous self-exploration which finally leads her to a new self-awareness.

Raja, Bim, Tara and Baba are the four neglected children of a mother addicted to card-playing and a father whom the children know “only as the master of the entrance and the exit”(53). When the youngest Baba, turns out to be retarded requiring constant attention, their mother
sends for a poor widowed relation of hers — Aunt Mira. Widowed at the age of fifteen, Aunt Mira had been used as “maid of all work” (104) throughout the years in her husband’s home. Frequently ill, time sees her as ageing young. When she comes to be considered as useless by her husband’s family, she is employed by the children’s mother. With her coming, the neglected children find love and companionship to the extent that even the retarded Baba learns to pick up bread and put it in his mouth, do up his buttons himself and play marbles and bagatelle. In time, the mutual need of the children and Aunt Mira is fulfilled and their relationship strengthened.

However, when the responsibility of the children falls directly on her shoulders with the death of their mother, Aunt Mira wavers for the first time. As the children had become too big for her, she is now overcome by a sense of incompetence. Seeking help and protection, she resorts silently to alcoholism. Thus, the passage of time begins to make its mark on Aunt Mira by increasing her inherent sense of nervousness. As time goes on, Aunt Mira spends fewer hours in sobriety. However, the doctor’s gentle and compassionate handling of her when she cuts herself, brings about — for once — a happy glow of pleasure. This brings out the old lady’s need for love, making Bim realize what her aunt had suffered in time through the deaths of her parents, Raja’s illness, Tara’s leaving after her marriage as well as the constant sorrow over Baba.
With the passage of time, these suppressed feelings of suffering overcome the old lady with further insecurity making her suffer hallucinations of the grown children threatening her and filling her with a haunting obsession of the cow's drowning in the well. Her alcoholism increases to such an extent that in time, she borders on insanity. One day, she suffers a hallucination of rats tearing into her. This makes her run out naked, screeching and prancing into the driveway till Bim manages to carry her in. Thus, earlier where it was Aunt Mira who had ministered to the children's need, time now finds her reduced to a "baby"(89) being looked after by Bim. Soon after this, Aunt Mira dies.

Bim and Raja are closer in age as well as a match for each other in many other ways. The summer of 1947 sees Raja down with tuberculosis. It is under Bim's careful nursing that Raja recovers but instead of helping Bim by taking a few responsibilities of running the house, he starts to grow restless – complaining and glowering. The day he threatens to go to his "ideal" – Hyder Ali – in Hyderabad is the day that Aunt Mira has her attack of hallucinations. His packing shocks the already distraught Aunt Mira and this precipitates her attack. With her demise, Raja does leave for Hyderabad justifying his departure to Bim by citing his inability to live forever in "that hole"(100). Bim's meaningful silence strives to further fan out his already existing guilt of abandoning his younger retarded brother and his sister. These confused feelings of guilt
and yearning to leave make him shout at Bim while assuring her that he would come back to look after them.

Time passes by and with Hyder Ali's death, Raja – by now his son-in-law – becomes the new landlord. His letter to Bim assuring her that as the new landlord he would neither raise the rent nor sell the house as long as Bim and Baba needed it raises Bim's shackles. What Raja had meant to be a letter of assurance instead turns to be the reason for raising a feeling of rancour in Bim due to his clumsiness and lack of tact. The consequence of this letter is the instillation of a sense of estrangement in Bim.

Thus, the relationship of Bim and Raja which had grown in time, becomes strained and eroded in time too. Similarly, time sees Raja to be a far cry from his childhood dream of becoming a hero.

Bimla or Bim as she is normally called had always had the reputation of being very competent and capable. Bim’s “natural energy and vivacity”(123) brings her accolades in school while Tara in comparison is a failure. With the leaving home of Raja and Tara, all burdens of the family fall on Bim. This in turn, causes in her a sense of abandonment by both Tara and Raja.

Having shouldered all responsibility, Bim had with the passage of time and years naturally felt herself to be the “centre” of their home. However, Tara’s visit home makes her aware of the effects on her of time. Now, time sees Bim not as the head and centre of the family but as
a lonely, middle-aged spinster, living in a dilapidated old house with an unkempt garden. Like these derelict surroundings, Bim too, appears to have lost her brilliance, power and talents. The recollection of the past in memory serves to instil in Bim melancholic feelings of worthlessness and bitterness in the present. These feelings are further inflamed by a letter from her late father's business firm. The fact that Raja is nowhere present for offering help or advice and Baba unable to do anything, Bim tires of her responsibilities and becomes filled with immense anger. Consequently, she vents her pent-up feelings on a shocked and confused Baba instead of on Tara or Raja.

As Bim feels a sense of abandonment with regard to Tara and Raja, she vents her anger on Baba to elicit a response from him, to "demand some kind of a response from him, some kind of justification from him for herself, her own life..."(163). Bim has remained behind with Baba and hence, her need for a response from Baba to assuage her sense of abandonment.

However, Baba's "other worldliness"(164) fills her immediately with remorse. Baba knew "neither grudge nor punishment"(166). This attitude of Baba fills her with the realization that she too has to remove her pride, ego and possessiveness in order to see everything and everyone in their proper perspective. Baba's undemanding love has survived the passage of time. When this fact is realized by Bim, her chaotic thoughts too vanish and a deep love for her siblings overcomes
her. At the same time, the house in which they had lived together and in which she lives now with Baba symbolises for her Time, its passage to eternity and its consequent impact on human life and relationships:

... how she loved him, loved Raja and Tara ... No other love had started so far back in time and had had so much time in which to grow and spread. They were really all parts of her, inseparable ...(165).

This new realization about her love having its first foundation in past time and growing along with time’s passage also provides her with a vision about the necessity of maintaining the “wholeness”(165) of that love. This would necessitate the need to repair the breaches in her love for her siblings. Only then, would her love be whole and perfect and thereby see her through future time.

Since it is Baba who with his undemanding love and ideal innocence, gives her this new awareness of herself and her love, Raja now ceases to be her ideal. Reading an account of Emperor Aurangzeb’s death in Life of Aurangzeb, his last words seem to echo her own fate:

Many were around me when I was born. But now I am going alone ... come what will, I have launched my bark upon the water ... Strange that I came with nothing into the world, and now go away with this stupendous caravan of Sin! (167).
Bim’s agitated mind at last becomes still when she realizes the influence of Time on man’s life. Man begins his journey alone. In time, new relationships, aspirations grudges, fears and so on – that is the “stupendous caravan” – are accumulated. It is in man’s hands to destroy the negatives and preserve the positives. To do this, the path of selfless love was necessary. Bim therefore tears to pieces Raja’s old letter thereby symbolising her positive step towards a selfless and meaningful life. Bim also clears her drawer of her old, dry and impersonal things thereby suggesting the removal of all her old feelings of grudges and ego. In the words of Kajali Sharma:

This cleaning of drawer is symbolic of Bim’s removal of old grudges, ego and other baser feelings from her heart and mind. She dispels all that is dross in her...\textsuperscript{13}.

Going through Raja’s verses she realises that Raja had never been a hero but only a pathetic imitator. The years have made her realise his true worth. He was a weak and incapable romantic, too weak to confront reality. It was because she had mistakenly taken him for a hero through the years that she had been unable to forgive his cowardly act of shirking all responsibilities to the family. Realising this, she now finds it easy to forgive him. When Tara too, asks forgiveness from Bim for her careless and selfish attitude, Bim sees in her “desparation a reflection of her own despairs ...”\textsuperscript{(174). Bim recognizes a oneness with Tara and
consequently accommodates both Raja and Tara into her loving fold, forgiving them and agreeing for a continuation. Having been able to do this, Bim experiences a great feeling of calm that purges all her earlier bitterness and rancour.

Bim's self-awareness becomes complete when she attends the concert in the house of the Misras, Listening to the songs of Mulk and his aged guru provides Bim with an enlightened vision of Time in its dual aspect of destroyer as well as preserver:

... whereas Mulk's voice had been ... so sweet and clear ... full and ripe ... the old man's was sharp ... like a man who had come, at the end ... within sighting distance of death ... one day perhaps Mulk would also sing like this ... Bim was suddenly overcome with the memory of reading ... the line ‘Time the destroyer is time the preserver’ (182).

Time contains both the aged guru and the young Mulk. Time nurtures as well as decays. Thus, one ancient school of music contained through time both Mulk, an “immature” disciple and his aged, exhausted guru. This realisation gives her a vision of Time in relation to her own family:

... she saw how her own house with its particular history linked and contained her as well as her whole family with all their separate histories ... giving them the soil ... to ... grow and spread ... That soil
contained all time, past and future ... where her
deepest self lived and the deepest selves of her sister
and brothers ...(182).

In other words, Bim realises through her recollection of the past in
memory that time in its flow towards eternity has all life contained within
it. It is in time that all are born, live to grow and then die. Similarly, all
relationships are born in time and evolve in time too. At times, these
relationships may erode in time and yet, at other times, they are
strengthened and preserved by time. That is why, when Tara – after trying
to convey her sense of guilt has Bim brushing it off roughly – tells her
that “Nothing’s over, ever”(174), Bim agrees.

How deftly Anita Desai has used the two epigraphs is
revealed here. Memory as a bell heralds both “Jubilee” and “Knell” – that
is, both joyous and bitter recollections, yet, time’s passage can “renew”
and “transfigure” these recollections into “another pattern”. In other
words, time can help change a person’s perspective of these recollections.
Bim too realizes that her ties with her siblings had been formed in past
time. Her new self-awareness would nurture these ties in the present time
and they would continue to be strengthened by future time.

Kajali Sarma says, “this comprehension of the meaning of
time in relation to eternity fulfils Bim’s sense of belonging”14. Thus, Bim
achieves growth as an individual through the discovery of her new self-
awareness.
Tara as a child was the opposite of what she is in the present—the "active, organised"(21) wife of the diplomat, Bakul. However, time has brought about change only externally for ironically, it has still preserved the internal nature of Tara—her fears and feelings of insecurity still persist. Unlike Bim, Tara could never acquire "decision, firmness, resolve"(18).

The unsatisfactory atmosphere of their home caused by their parents' continual absence, the "secret, hopeless suffering"(130) of their diabetic mother and their apparent disinterest in the children makes Tara want to escape from home. During the period of Mira-Masi's alcoholism and Raja's illness, Tara meets Bakul and her marriage to him provides her with the means to escape.

With the passage of time however, Tara's abandonment of her share of responsibility to be shouldered alone by Bim starts to torment and haunt her. Her visit home triggers off recollections of the past and fills her with uneasiness and guilt. Thus, while a part of her is pleased to return to the familiar, the other part is resentful at finding everything unchanged and this fills her with despair. In reality her desperateness for external change is a reflection of her own guilty feelings for having left Bim alone as she also notices the changes that have taken place in Bim due to the shouldering of family burdens alone. Tara's guilt is further symbolised by the incident of the bees attacking Bim when Tara, instead of helping her, had run away. This incident continues to haunt her and makes her long for
Bim's forgiveness and understanding. Bim however, forgets the entire incident and in her forgetfulness, Tara witnesses the soothing effects brought in by Time's flow. Tara does finally ask for forgiveness from Bim and Bim with the knowledge of her new self-awareness re-admits Tara into her love. Thus, the bonds between the sisters is healed by time.

In Baba, time seems to have come at a standstill. Although outwardly, Baba does grow up to be a man, mentally he still seems to be a perpetual child. Happy without making any demands. Baba is contented just to listen to the old records on the old gramophone. This suggests that time has stopped for Baba. His refusal to accept new records as well as a hi-fi set also suggest that Baba is against the changes brought about by time. This lack of desire for change is because of his "otherworldliness"(174). Thus, he appears as a "saint"(166) to Bim and an "angel"(12) to Tara. In fact, Baba's "otherworldliness" and undemanding love symbolise to Bim the fact that these qualities can withstand the ravages of time and bring in mental peace. Inspite of Bim venting her pent-up fury on an innocent Baba, he still remains the same smiling Baba bereft of any rancour or ill-feeling. His attitude thus helps Bim to re-discover herself. Since, Bim now wants to identify herself with Baba, it is significant that only both of them remain back in the house after Tara's departure.
That time has finally obliterated all misgivings, helped to heal old wounds and re-establish old bonds is brought out symbolically by the clear light of the sun pouring in on Bim and Baba:

Everything had been said at last, cleared out of the way finally. There was nothing left in the way of a barrier or a shadow, only the clear light pouring down from the sun ... illuminating them wholly ... (177).

Anita Desai has employed the use of the omniscient narrator in the novel. However, as the narration fluctuates between the past and the present, the perspectives of the characters are also presented. Thus, Part I is in the narrator's voice. But there are instances of projecting the character's perspective. When Tara goes to the rose walk and surveys the scene there, the narrator projects her thought-processes in his/her voice. The next sentence is again Tara's perspective: “But the rose walk had been maintained almost as it was. Or was it?” (1). Then the past is recollected in Tara’s memory by the narrator’s voice. Similarly, Bakul’s perspective on Bim and Tara:

He wondered ... if Bim were not ... the superior of the sisters ... If only Bim had not that rather coarse laugh and way of sitting with her legs up ... now Tara would never ... (19).

Here, while the first sentence is in the narrator’s voice, the second projects Bakul’s perspective.
In Part II also, the omniscient narrator is present. However, the recollection of the past is mainly centred round Bim’s thought-processes and as such it reveals her relationship with Raja, Mira-masi, Tara, Baba and the doctor – Dr. Biswas.

Likewise, in Part III, the omniscient narrator projects the past through the thought-processes of Tara. What is revealed is the coming and settling of Aunt Mira, the relationship of the siblings with their parents and Tara’s guilt of having abandoned Bim to the bees.

Part IV is mainly narrated through the omniscient narrator. However, the narrator, also projects the thought-processes of Bim prior to and during her self-discovery thus rendering Bim’s mental agitation and then its subsequent abatement more vivid to the reader.

In terms of technique also, there has been great fluidity in handling time. Clock-time and psychological time move side by side when the past with its associated emotions is evoked through memory. Part I shows the narrative shifting between past thoughts and present action. For instance, the sight of the rose walk takes Tara back to her childhood. Similarly, the sight of a snail evokes memories of the past. While walking with her mother in the past, Tara had “spied something flashing from under a pile of fallen rose petals – a pearl, or a silver ring?... and uncovered – a small, blanched snail”. A grown-up Tara – walking with Bim – watches the rose petals scatter and once again she sees:
... uncovered the gleam of a – a pearl? A silver ring?
Something that gleamed, something that flashed, then
flowed – and she saw it was her childhood snail...(2).

Watching a grown-up Tara perform “the rites of childhood over the handy creature”(2) Bim’s mind moves back to the summer of 1947. It is this summer of ’47 that connects the second part – Part II – to the first. The action of Part II is in the past dealing with their emotional youth. It describes the main events of the family against the background of the Partition of ’47. Part III goes even further back into the past – to their childhood and infancy. Many episodes that had been recounted in Part I are repeated in Part III. However, while in Part I, there was mere recollection, in Part III, these are enacted. For instance, Tara’s discovery of the snail, Bim’s action of chopping off Tara’s hair, Hyder Ali’s driving of his horse and so on. Part IV is in the present – a continuation from Part I. It is in Part IV – in the present – that Bim’s self-discovery takes place along with her vision of the dual aspects of time.

As in the previous novels, characters are projected through their own thought-processes and through different points-of-view. For instance, the effect of time on Bim and the earlier Bim is revealed from Tara’s point-of-view. Again, while Aunt Mira is mainly projected by the omniscient narrator, at times she is projected through Bim’s and Tara’s point-of-view as well. For instance, to Tara, “she was solid as a bed, she smelt of coking and was made of knitting”(109) while her widowed state
that caused her to move around whenever the need for domestic help arose has been delineated by the narrator as:

She stayed with them for so long that she became boring ... a parasite ... she was turned out. Another household could find some use for her: cracked pot, torn rag, picked bone (108).

Like *Voices in the City*, *Bye-Bye Blackbird* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* this novel too has a psychological structure in order to depict the psychological growth of Bim — her psychic journey to self-awareness. Part I reflects Bim’s sense of embitterment and Tara’s sense of guilt. This is aroused by Tara’s visit home. Part II reflects the events that lead to Bim’s feeling of loneliness and abandonment which in turn bring in her embitterment. Part III reflects the contrast between the two sisters. The competence of the earlier Bim as highlighted in Part III accentuates the deteriorating effect of time with its accompanying burdens on Bim’s shoulders on the later Bim. Part III also brings out the episodes that cause guilt later on to the grown-up Tara. Part IV brings out the state of self-awareness achieved by Bim as well as her understanding of the two aspects of time. This understanding leads her to a reconciliation with her siblings. Her understanding also leads her to forgive Tara and Raja and this helps Tara in wiping away her sense of guilt.

In creating this psychological structure, Anita Desai has picked out a few episodes and images from the “four separate yet linked
lives" of the siblings and repeated them. This device has been mentioned by Anita Desai herself in an interview:

My technique has been to pick out just a few episodes and images from their four separate but linked lives and repeat them over and over, seen from different angles at different times of their lives so that each twist of the prism casts a new light ...

This repetition – as has been stated by the novelist – causes these different episodes to be seen from different angles by different characters at different times of their lives. Thus, Raja’s writing of his verses in his youth is viewed by a matured Bim in later life in a different perspective. Initially, Bim adored his verses. When she is estranged from him, she finds them “nauseating”(25). After her self-discovery, Bim finds Raja’s verses to be just ordinary imitations, “modest and unassertive”(168). Raja’s letter to Bim is viewed differently by both Bim and Tara. In fact, the initial ill-feeling that it had generated in the earlier Bim is obliterated in the later stage after her acquisition of a new self-awareness. Again, Tara’s marriage is viewed by her in the later stage as being “an instrument of escape”(157) unlike the earlier stage when Bakul’s attentions had nearly swept her off her feet. The summer of 1947 is the most oft-repeated episode and its turbulence is felt in memory by both Bim and Tara. This different viewing at different times is also reflective of time’s influence on the character’s psyche.
As far as Desai's frequent use of symbols is concerned only a few important symbols have been made use of here. This is because, it has more outward reality than novels like *Cry, the Peacock, Where Shall We Go This Summer?* and *Fire on the Mountain*. The house to Tara is evocative of an atmosphere of neglect, decay and death. It can be said to symbolise the destructive aspect of time. Tara, on her return home, feels overcome by the "spirit of the house". It contains the "empty hopeless atmosphere of childhood"(21). Finding everything still the same externally, Tara feels resentful. As has already been mentioned, this resentment of Tara is the outward expression of her inner guilt of having left Bim alone.

The other image that symbolises Tara's guilt is the attack of the bees on Bim. This has already been mentioned. However, Bim's not uttering even a scream under the attack of the swarming bees is suggestive of her stoicness.

The river Jumna symbolises the flow of time into eternity encompassing the past, present and future. Bim realises this and sees the future of the river connected with the past:

It's where my ashes will be thrown after I am dead and burnt ... It is where Mira-masi's ashes were thrown. Then they go down into the sea(24). As Tara does not realise this aspect of time, the river is just a "muddy little trickle"(24) for her.
Mention has already been made of the symbolic significance of the singing of Mulk and his aged guru.

The recollection of the past occurs through involuntary memory that is reactivated by a chance image, smell, sight or other such intangible experience. For instance, the rose walk brings back the past into the present for Tara. Seeing Tara with the snail Bim too, has a recollection. Seeing the dense grove of guava trees, Tara recalls with longing its taste, “Her mouth tingled with longing to bite into that hard astringent flesh under the green rind”(11). Similarly, the unchanged image of the house brings back the haunting recollection of her diabetic mother being given insulin by her father.

Unlike in the other novels, imagery has not been used here to delineate character. In fact, as compared to the earlier novels, imagery has been used much more sparingly. This is probably because as compared to Cry, the Peacock, Where Shall We go This Summer? and Fire on the Mountain, the novel is not that interiorized. Although B. Ramachandra Rao comments that there is “very little action” in the novel, he also says that there has been more “effort to describe the larger social world”16 in which the characters move. There is therefore more external reality here than in the above-mentioned novels. Since external reality can be expressed in words, only a few important images have been used. The “green scum” – that never showed “a ripple in its blackened crust”(99) – which appears on the well on its disuse after the cow’s drowning in it has
been used to show the stagnancy in the lives of the sibling during Mira-
masi's and Raja's illnesses. However, it is also used to suggest the 
"horror" of death as it now "contained death as it once had contained 
merely water, frogs and harmless floating things"(107). Mira-masi 
becomes "obsessed by the idea of the well"(99) as she too, by becoming 
nearly insane has suffered a mental death while her acute state of 
alcoholism is slowly leading to physical death.

The other recurrent image – apart from Cry, the Peacock and 
Fire on the Mountain – is the dust-storm. Like the functions it served in 
these two novels, here too, the dust storm is the externalization of the 
inner turbulence and restlessness of the characters. For instance, the dust-
storm is linked to Raja's illness and suggests his restlessness:

Raja had fallen ill. His father and his aunt were 
convinced it was something to do with the 
atmosphere ... the threatening, advancing violence in 
the air at one with the dust-storms that gathered and 
broke ...(57).

Again, in another instance in the present, the dust-storm raging outside 
reflects Bim's inner turmoil – her bitterness over Raja's offending letter, 
Tara's presence for the disturbing memories it evokes and her support for 
Raja, Bakul's complacency and Baba's helpless condition. Her inner 
frustration is reflected in the raging dust-storm outside:
Bim was correcting papers ... the dust-storm raging outside ... the sand and gravel scraping past the walls and window ... It seeped in through every crack and opening ...(142).

However, when Bim vents out her pent-up feelings about Raja, the external dust-storm too, subsides:

They sat in silence together listening to the storm blow itself out ... seemed to recede, leaving them in a kind of grey cave that still echoed with the tides(144).

Finally, the other important image is the one contained in the novel’s title – the clear light of day. In fact, S. Indira views this image as the “thematic image” which “aptly suggests the inner tranquility of Bim”¹⁷. This is because just as the clear light of the sun removes the darkness from every nook and corner, Bim’s self-awareness and her newfound comprehension of Time are juxtaposed with this clear daylight. Her self-awareness helps to remove all darkness from her mind “without allowing a single shadow”(177) to enter.

Notes


5. ibid., p124.


9. ibid., p225.


12. ibid., p 46.

14. ibid., p 120.


   Perspectives on Anita Desai p 225.


17. S. Indira, op. cit., p 149.

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