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Use of Symbolism in the Fiction of Anita Desai: A Psychoanalytic Study

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Abstract:

Anita Desai, as a novelist adds a new dimension to Indian English fiction by concentrating on the exploration of the troubled sensibility which is a typical modern Indian phenomenon. In her hands, Indian English Fiction has acquired a depth which it seldom had before. This paper is an attempt to focus on Anita Desai's use of symbols and its psychoanalytic implications as projected in her works. In her novels, she introduces a shift of ideational focus from the outer to the inner part of human existence. I have tried to examine this interplay of thoughts and emotions which is also reflected in her use of language, imagery and symbols. Dealing with the thoughts, emotions and sensation at various levels of consciousness, Anita Desai found the technique used by D.H Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner and Henry James which is quite suitable for her purpose of character delineation. Hence, we have use of flashbacks and the stream-of-consciousness technique in some of her novels, mainly in her first novel, *Cry, the Peacock* which is considered as "the first step" in the direction of psychological fiction in Indian writing in English. The novels of Anita Desai raise many issues of universal relevance and they deserve a comprehensive review, the aim and intent of present paper is to reflect on her use of symbolism in portraying the inner realities of her characters. It will also contribute to the psychological study of her characters in the contemporary world.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Symbolism, Stream-of-Consciousness, Narrative

The psychological portrayal of characters through the use of symbolism and dream are some of the important fictional techniques that have been used by Anita Desai in her novels. As we know Psychoanalysis is an interpretive art. It seeks to find meaning in the behaviour of people and in the arts they create. One way we can apply psychoanalytic theory is by understanding how the human psyche works and how to interpret the hidden significance of what people and characters in the fiction do. Psychoanalytic criticism argues that literary texts like dreams, express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties. Here, symbols play an important role in analyzing the hidden motives of the characters portrayed by the author. It gives us a deep insight into their inner psyche. Symbols can be an object, an institution, an idea or a thought. In a psychological text, characters are often portrayed symbolically. In fact symbols are messages from our subconscious. Freud himself has written:

The dream-thought that we come across as we proceed with our analysis often strike us by the unusual form in which they are expressed; they are not clothed in the prosaic thoughts,

but are on the contrary represented symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech.

Like psychoanalysis itself, the psychoanalytic critical endeavour seeks evidence of unresolved emotions, psychological conflict, guilt, ambivalence and so forth within what may well be a disunified literary work. The authors own childhood traumas, family life, sexual conflict, fixations, and such will be traceable within the behaviour of characters in the literary work. The psychological material however will be expressed indirectly, disguised, or encoded (as in dreams) through principles such as 'symbolism' (the repressed object represented in disguise), 'condensation' (several thoughts or persons represented in a single image), and 'displacement' (anxieties located onto another image by means of association). It must be noted here that despite the importance of author, the psychoanalytic criticism is similar to new criticism and it does not concern itself with what the author intended. But what author never intended (that is repressed) is sought. The unconscious material has been distorted by the censoring conscious mind through the use of symbolism in particular. Hinsie and Campbell define symbolism as: *The act or process of representing an order or idea by a substitute object, sign, or signal.* The psychologists like Freud and Jung have also attempted to define the term "symbol". While Freud's view, symbols are "unconscious ideation" Jung holds that they are not the result of rational thinking, but of a psychic process of development. Thus we can say in psychoanalytic interpretation of any literary text, symbolism is of particular importance since it can serve as a defence mechanism of the 'ego', as where unconscious or forbidden, aggressive or sexual impulses come to expression through symbolic representation and thus are able to avoid censorship. According to this theory, then we mask our unconscious sexual and aggressive desires through symbolization, which enables us to escape guilt from the 'superego'.

Anita Desai is considered as one of the pioneers of the psychological fiction in Indian English writing. Her novels are replete with the use of symbolism. Hence, it becomes pertinent to analyse the use of symbolism in her art of fiction writing from a psychoanalytic viewpoint. As a novelist, Anita Desai eschews traditional practices and gives free rein to her individual vision. Her protagonists are socio-psychic rebels alienated selves who find it difficult to compromise with this milieu. Her characters reflect the mythic reality of our life through the complex interaction of the self and the society. The Indo-Anglican novels till 1970s treated themes of political and social import. They have handled their stories based on the princes and paupers, saints and sinners, farmers and labours, untouchable and coolies, cities and villages. The more impressive and sophisticated themes like country's independence movement, East-West encounter, tradition and modernity, dealt by great writers like Raja Rao, Kamla Markandaya and Kushwant Singh. The very notion of the exploration of the human mind was alien to them. The English novelists before Anita Desai have studied man and his world in relation to the objective social reality. They used their art as a powerful instrument to present social problems. Desai approach is different. She writes neither for providing entertainment nor for the propagation of social issues. Her main pre-occupation is to study human existence and human predicament, her exploration being a quest for self. She is the novelist of psycho-emotional situation and her theme is the individual against this

milieu. It is only with the arrival of Anita Desai that such long neglected themes were given an emotionally poetic treatment. She presents a kaleidoscopic image of the minds of her characters. She makes known to us the unconscious motives of human psyche, the problem of human relationship, the protagonist's quest for identity in almost in all her novels. She has written:

I am interested in characters who are not average but retreated, or have driven into some extremity of despair and turn against or make a stand against the general current. It is easy to flow with the current, it makes no demands, it costs no effort, but those who cannot follow it...know what it demands are, what it costs to meet them.

As a novelist she denies the importance of theories in the shaping of artistic imagination. According to her a work of art should grow from within from the writer's inner beckoning and compulsions. She further comments:

I think theories of the novel are held by those of an academic or critical turn of mind, not the creative. A writer does not create a novel by observing a given set of theories...he follows flashes of individual vision, and relies on a kind of instinct that tells him what to follow and what to avoid...It is these flashes of vision, and a kind of trained instinct that leads him...not any theories.

Undoubtedly, Anita Desai is solely concerned with the inner weather of the characters. It has been said earlier that Anita Desai writes in the symbolic mode which subordinates plot to characters. Very few Indo-Anglican novelists have paid so much attention to form and technique. Arun Joshi, who resorts to the symbolic mode in *The River and the City*, is symbolic mostly at structural level. Anita Desai novels have a structure (if at all) which defies itself, for her characters exist in a tensional relationship to the situation, plot and the establishment which is the backbone of the whole network of relationships. Prof Srinivasa Iyenger rightly observes: *Since her pre-occupation is with the inner world of sensibility rather than the outer world of action, she has tried to forge a style supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fretfulness of the stream-of-consciousness of her principal characters.* This inner world of sensibility rendered through splendid poetic prose gives a "peculiar poetic quality" of Anita Desai novels.

Desai's debut novel, *Cry, the Peacock* fully exhibits her symbolist imagination. It explores the inner world of human beings, and demonstrates the causes of their strange behaviour and fear. Since she is concerned with the depths of inner self, the psyche of her characters, she employs symbolism to express their real feelings and thoughts. Obviously, the novel abounds in symbolic situations, episodes, scenes, characters, etc. But these symbols are not limited to any particular sphere of life; they are drawn from human life and nature, particularly from trees, animals, birds, seasons, atmosphere, etc. In this novel, the writer intermingles the past and the present of the central character Maya by having recourse to the stream-of-consciousness technique. The writer uses both the past and the present symbolically to show the depths and causes of the protagonist's anguish, despair, dread and ultimate tragedy. She is

developed as a hysterical character whose impending tragedy is suggestively foreshadowed time and again. R.S. Sharma further goes on describing the novel as:

Cry, the Peacock, Anita Desai's first novel is also perhaps the first 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 a closer study, we admire the writer's skill in capturing the psychic states of a woman haunted by an awareness of death.

The novel opens with the death of Maya's pet dog, Toto. The end of the dog symbolises the constant presence of the death in human life. The nearness of death also terrifies Maya, and she is obsessed with it. She is childless, and her dog stands for her as a child, fulfilling her need for the love of a baby. Her husband Gautama sends away the body of dog in the Municipal van. His cold indifference to the death of a pet is symbolic of his unawareness of the feelings of his wife. It can also be inferred as lack of communication and genuine understanding between the husband and the wife. The different reactions of Maya and her husband to the death of a pet dog symbolise two different approaches to life. While Gautama takes death to be a normal event, Maya is greatly disturbed by it. It suggests that he is fully aware of the realities of life and does not fear the presence of death, but she loves life so much that she is always has hysterics at the sight of death. The death of the dog is also symbolic of her imminent tragic end.

Gautama's indifferent and insensitive nature is symbolically depicted through "an opal ring" given by him to her to wear. Though he gives the ring to her, he does not notice *the translucent skin beneath, the blue flashing veins that ran under and out of the bridge of gold*. Gautama's unawareness of the changing colours and beauty of the opal ring is suggestive of his unawareness of the changing moods and sentiments of his wife. The opal ring is the symbol of her iridescence i.e. her different moods, her emotions of love, fear, despair and longing, and her beauty and loneliness. The hollowness of their married life can be noticed the moment Gautama leaves her alone and goes out without saying a single word. The novel reveals psychological anguish of the protagonist, Maya and her mental sufferings. She also suffers from father-fixation. It is suggested by her forgetting all about Gautama's indifference to her the moment he comes back after some time and touches her hair and cheek tenderly and lovingly. She considers her more as a guardian than a husband. Maya's need for father makes her cling to Gautama's arm like a child, even though he detests it and she fully knows it. This is suggestive of the hollowness of their conjugal life. She confesses:

...I was flooded with the tenderness and gratitude, thought of him as my guardian, my protector, the one who had seen to the burial of my pet and now came to wipe the strands of hair out of my wet eyes and speak to me softly.

Furthermore the inseparability of life and death is symbolically shown by the novelist through Maya's thoughts. Anita Desai successfully employs the technique of interior monologue to reflect on Maya's inner psyche and her mental dwindling. Sitting in the garden, she suddenly remembers the Queen of the Night attracts snakes. Queen of the Night is a beautiful plant, but snakes are fascinated by it. This is suggestive of the inevitable

relationship between life and death. Life is beautiful, but death is inalienable from it. The presence of the fear of death in Maya's subconscious or unconscious makes her feel the shadows of trees as the shadow of death and the touch of grass as snakes encircling her toes and feet. Naturally, she is immensely upset. Her obsession with death is brought out symbolically when she feels:

...a sensation of snakes coiling and uncoiling their moist lengths about me, of evil descending from an overhanging branch, of an insane death, unprepared for, heralded by deafening drum-beats...

The drum-beats symbolise the echoes of the presence of death, and so in her unconscious the nearer she feels the death the louder she hears these drum-beats. It also evokes the image of lord Shiva performing his 'tandava' the destructive dance which is a famous Indian myth. In fact one can notice, Maya's mind is constantly seized by the fear of death, though she is not conscious of it. This is the reason she appears to be happy with the darkness of ignorance and with night:

Night, night, deep, dark night. This, I knew, was what one lived for: the nights were always beautiful-the gentle herbal balm rubbed into the hot temples and fevered bruises inflicted by the long frustrating day.

The night is symbolic of her longing for death. Apparently for Maya death is the end of all her mental agony and suffering that life has given her. Day stands for life which has become frustrating for her and death becomes the only healer of her pangs and pain. The sky, studded with stars, does not attract her anymore; rather, she feels that in between the stars the empty dark places are the abode of death that does not spare anyone:

Death lurked in those spaces, the darkness spoke of the distance, separation, loneliness- loneliness of such proportion that it broke the bounds of that single word and all its associations, and went spilling and spreading out and about, lapping that stars, each one isolated from other by so much.

In fact she unconsciously feels alienated from her father and it is this separation which disturbs her very much the darkness between the stars is symbolic of death, and the distance between them symbolises the distance between her father and her. Further we notice the rising of the moon in the dark sky reminds Maya of someone, i.e. the albino astrologer who lived in a dark room where "light burned in a single lamp" she visited this astrologer in her childhood. She compares him with albino, a sluggish white worm that lives "indoor always" and does not like to be touched by the light of sun. This is suggestive of the death that is closely associated with darkness and does not like to be touched by life which is bright like day. Thus to Maya the astrologer becomes the symbol of death. Maya's moving between the past and the present is also symbolic. Her recollection of her happy childhood reveals the fact that when a person is a child, he is closer to life than to death, and so she is very happy and unaware of the presence of death in life. On the other hand, her present unhappy life suggest that in advanced age a person is closer to death than to life, and thus it makes past very attractive. Thus in this novel Anita Desai's use of symbols portrays the entire inner life of the

protagonist Maya. Thus as a novelist Desai effectively uses her craft to focus upon woman's sensibility in the contemporary world. We get a glimpse of the inner world of Maya through her own psyche. Through this novel Anita Desai contributes to the development of the psychological fiction in Indian writing in English and which was never practiced so efficiently before in India. In fact the novel occupies a distinct place in the history of Indo-Anglican fiction writing.

Another novel of Anita Desai which I would like to discuss in this particular context is *Voices in the City*. The very title of the novel is symbolic and it suggests the aspirations of different people living in one city i.e. Calcutta. The voices symbolise the different attitudes and behaviours of human beings towards inner and outer realities of life. *Voice in the City* is Anita Desai's second novel. It deals with the psychological problems of the youths of today. As it is mainly about the growth and working of psyche, it is rich in symbolism. The novelist makes an extensive use of symbols to delineate the true nature of man's thought-process and the way he mentally perceives and comprehends things. The novel is centered upon the search of three main characters- Nirode, Monisha and Amla- for a meaningful and happy life. The city of Calcutta which is presented symbolically as a living character traps all the major characters by its evil forces. They suffer immensely while passing through different stages of failure and struggle, and their mental sufferings are depicted through variegated symbols. The novel opens with the departure of Arun, the younger brother of Nirode from Calcutta. His departure reminds Nirode of his own failure in life. Arun goes abroad for higher education, and the prospects of his bright future fill him with jealousy and uneasiness portrayed suggestively by the novelists in these words:

This light was crass, it stung his eyes, and what he wanted was shadows, silence, and stillness-and well, he told himself, that was exactly what he would always be left with.

Though Nirode envies his brother, his longing for darkness suggests his desire for failure in life. He wants to see life through failures. The source of Nirode's desire to meet failure in life and have the spirit to move again towards the next failure lies in his deep rooted mother-fixation. Nirode's past is portrayed symbolically through a dream. His father's endeavour to protect him from the shock of the reality of his mother's ingenuousness is suggestively shown: "A nicotine-tinged hand rose to shield the dreamer from the wild, white wind that swept across from Tibet". The barrier between his love for his mother and his intimacy with his father is symbolised by "a barbed wire fence, all glittering and vicious." His shock at his mother's unfaithfulness to his father is communicated to the reader when in dream Nirode sees his father's dead body lying by his side and his mother smiling sensually to her lover Major Chadha approaching her from the other side of the barbed wire fence. Nirode is unable to bear the sight of his mother, "smiling a slow, sensual smile. Hideous to see in his mother, hideous to see in the heroine who had led his crusade. He turned over, away from her." This is indicative of Nirode's mother-fixation and of his decision to go away from his mother. He leaves home and goes to Calcutta in search of some meaning in life. The inner turmoil of Nirode's heart is projected by the stormy monsoon weather outside:

...now the tumult of monsoon clouds rose to bury the flagrant sun, black silhouettes were ripped apart and toppled, roses and ashes rioted, mocking the black squalor of the grimed city beneath-unlit, exhausted, waiting for the kinder night.

In the course of his journey Nirode realises the importance of having a successful and independent life. He is no more interested to see the life through failures. The desire of Nirode to become successful is conveyed to the reader through the symbolic image of king kite:

one must be a king kite wheeling so far away in the blazing empty sky as too be merely a dot, almost invisible to the urchins who stood below, stones in their fists, ready to be aimed and flung.

However, Nirode's success as a journalist doesn't give him happiness. Anita Desai has depicted the wavering mind of young generation through the character of Nirode. He keeps on searching for true happiness and meaning of life. He is bored with the magazine and decides to write a book. The play which he writes is also quite autobiographical. This is reflective of Nirode's own inner trauma and sufferings. His quest for identity and the true meaning of life through failures is symbolically reflected in the play:

..A blithe young box-wallah who has had too much drink at the night club, reeling down a dark street. He stumbles and falls into an open manhole. Emerging from it, greatly altered in looks and spirit, he is confronted by a passer-by, an Englishman, dressed impeccably in a ruffles silk skirt...They continue their walk home together all the while discoursing on the city of two hundred years age and the city today. They then enter the same house, and who is to tell who is the present occupant, and who is the ghost of whom?

This theme symbolises Nirode's consciousness of his loss of faith in life and of his search for it. His wavering mind and shattered faith in his mother is suggested by the fall of the young man in the manhole in the play. After this, Nirode is a totally changed person and is unable to trust people anymore. Though he hates his mother in his conscious mind, his subconscious is not free for her love. The high fever, from which he suffers, in fact, symbolises the heat of the realisation of his true inner self. Though he is devoid of any soft feelings and emotions at the outer level, but his fever symbolises the burning desire of love for his mother inside.

Monisha's death gives Nirode insight into the true meaning of life. Her suicide doesn't depress him; on the contrary he is very excited. He realises that the true meaning of life lies in death. It is the comprehension of this reality that makes him celebrate the death of his sister as if it were: "the death of a saint." The death of his sister suddenly opens a gate of knowledge to him. This is symbolically presented and gives us the dwindling psyche of Nirode between consciousness and unconsciousness:

He felt himself elevated to an unimaginably high vantage point from where he could see the whole fantastic design of life and death, of incarnation followed by reincarnation, of unconsciousness turning into consciousness...

The description of Monisha's room in the novel is also symbolical and suggestive of her own mental agony. It contains "a black, four-postered bed in the centre, and a gigantic black wardrobe against the wall." The black colour is the symbol of lonely and melancholic life. It is the reflection of Monisha's mental status as she feels familiar with this dark aspect of life. Her mental depression is very well depicted through the expedition of zoo. It has a symbolic significance as well. In the Zoo, she feels little happy to see the cheerful open space where "the jaruls are in bloom...and all the milk white peacocks dance..." But this pleasure is momentarily. Soon she is reminded of her own barrenness by a Kangaroo lying on its back with its empty pouch. This is also suggestive of her own life at her in-laws' house. The different animals symbolically reveal the working of her subconscious mind. Seeing the wild ducks, she wonders "why don't they fly out of the city, into the open..?" This is symbolic of her subconscious mind provoking her conscious self to run away from her in-laws.

In everything Monisha tries to find out the answer to her despair life. She goes to music conference. In a state of depression she feels betrayed by the performers at the conference. However, she identifies herself with the *sitar* player who produces music: "with tender undertone of deep melancholy and solitary sorrow". Further the *sitar* and the *tabla* player's start questioning and answering among each other respectively. The *sitar* player is always answered by the table player confidently. They are the symbolic of pain and despair, and of logical reasoning and outer reality of life. The argument between them reflects her inner conflict between her sorrow and desperate search of identity and her logical bent of mind. Monisha's snatching away Nirode's play from her husband Jiban's hand in fury is a symbolic of her strong desire for privacy, for secretiveness at every cost. Though she wants to be a rebel, she does not find herself strong enough. She feels her life is a waste, "so imperfect, so handicapped."

Amla is another important character of the novel. Her psyche can also be explored symbolically. She goes to Calcutta to start her career as a commercial artist. She is bristle with high spirit, hope and enthusiasm. She is excited about her new life in the big city. Amla decorates her hair with the flowers to appear more lively and cheerful. Her action is symbolic of her efforts to keep herself alive and full of spirits. Anita Desai symbolically depicts Amla's ignorance about the reality of these flowers. It suggests that Amla is ignorant of the reality of life:

...at every street corner these flowers were hawked in garlands, that every woman wore them in her hair in the evening, each one aware that by next morning...the whole garland hang limp and repulsive as a dead serpent.

Soon it becomes evident that Amla is depressed by her friendless life. Her loneliness makes her believe that she is involved in a shady business. She tries to escape from this state, but fails to do so. She thinks-"the summer was never going to end." The summer becomes the symbol of her agonized and agitated mind. Amla's way to fight with the sordid realities of life is totally different from that of Nirode and Monisha. Unlike them, she runs away from the involvement in real, hard life to an involvement in dream-world, in fantasy. She is immersed in the world of fantasy, and since Dharma, another important character in the novel, is the

symbol of that world for her, she becomes deeply attached to him. Amla feels calm and confident in Dharma's presence, but is desperate and miserable in his absence. This reflects her need for the world of fantasy. She gets more and more confident about her moving farther from the real world. But when Dharma shows her the sketches he has drawn, she is shocked. He has drawn different portions of her body on different sheets:

...she saw her small sections helplessly scattered through many pages, scarred with harsh charcoal or dissected into even finer sections with pen and ink or pencil, she shuddered and dropped them...

This dissection of her body is symbolic of her loss of wholeness, of total identity, and that is why she is shocked. But slowly the friendship between them develops into a relationship and Dharma paints the different part of her body with different dreams, and it makes her uneasy to see her dreams exposed.

The other characters of the novel like Dharma and David are also portrayed symbolically and the symbols are representative of their present state of mind. Dharma is inspired by Amla transparency. He finds in Amla a new life. It makes her interested in the inner world of man. While painting her inner self, he realises that it is this which actually shapes the outer personality of man. His style of painting changes totally and this is symbolic of his transformation. Consequently his paintings are:

....vividly linked with the silent, intangible train of dreams that impress and influence the human body far more than the slashing and scarring of reality itself.

David, unlike Nirode, sees life from a positive point of view. He is portrayed as a foil to Nirode. His quest for the truth of life makes him an ardent traveller. As he looks out of the train at the Bengal countryside, he gets ecstatic, and wishes that the fantastic sight, enormously rich in symbols and images of various kinds, may never come to an end:

...seeing these somehow familiar figures, these symbols of a wanderer's world, David was filled with a passionate wish that the whip may remain forever poised above the angular haunches of the oxen, never upon their hides, that the bright bird may remain always in the air, taut and ripping with static speed and desire in the moment before its downward flight, that the small boy remain always in mid-air, in the ecstasy of jump, never to land on his feet, in the mud.

David's wish shows his craving for permanent happiness in life. He is aware of the ephemeral in life, but he trusts his instincts and sets out wherever his instincts lead. This is where Nirode lacks completely; he does not trust anything, not even his own heart and soul.

The other minor characters in this novel are also important as they contribute to the psychological study of character portrayal and provide us different insight of human psyche. Sony, a minor character in the novel, reflects another side of the search for identity. He is afraid of individuality, and so sticks to the past of his family. Symbolically, he is fond of his old riding boots, old jackets, trousers, scarf, etc. He represents that side of life which Nirode has left in order to get his own identity. His escape from reality is suggested by his obsession

with his past. However, after the sale of his estate, he grasps that the fantastic world of his ancestors was not a reality. His joining Jit Nair's office to earn a living suggests that he has accepted the truth of life. Similarly the despair of Jit Nair springs from his failure and lack of courage to take up art and become a man of letters. He runs after Nirode and others like him because he is conscious of the fact that for the sake of worldly comforts, he has abandoned his values. He lives a luxurious life of box-wallah. Nevertheless he does not feel happy inside and is ashamed of his stands for what Jit has wished to be. Since he does not have courage to leave things and do something higher than personal side of him needs Nirode for its fulfilment, and his requesting Nirode not to abandon the magazine is symbolic of his own wish to be like Nirode:

I need you-and your Voice-before me...I need to think of you in order to humiliate myself...

This need for self-humiliation suggests his awareness of the hollowness of his life and material world of earthly pleasure. Subconsciously he knows that he has chosen a meaningless path of life, and that is why he wants to humiliate himself. Nirode is his ideal, and so he cannot bear the thought of his failure. This suggests he tries to fulfil his subconscious desires through Nirode. He acts as a coward. In fact he is the symbol of a life of compromises. He is incapable of facing his own reality, and therefore takes a path of compromise, self-humiliation and self-punishment. The novel is highly symbolical. All the major characters are portrayed symbolically to reflect their deep insight and hidden desires. Hence it is important to make a psychoanalytic study of symbols for the better understandings of these characters and incidents in the novel.

Conclusion:

Anita Desai thus uses fictional techniques such as; flashback, stream-of consciousness-technique, dream, fantasy, symbolism and so on. to reflect the inner loneliness, pain and conflict of her major characters both men and women. It does not only give the poetic quality to her novels but also help to portray and explore the hidden psyche of her characters. In fact she can be considered as technical innovator in the field of Indian English Fiction Writings. It enables her to narrate the story, to portray the characters, to convey the mood, to evoke the atmosphere and to probe the inner most psyche of her characters. Desai's other novels such as *Clear Light of the Day*, *Where Shall I Go This Summer?*, and *Fire on the Mountain* also evoke similar critical study of Desai's fictional technique used for the psychoanalytical portrayal of characters. It can be averred that Anita Desai, like the modern psychological novelists, is primarily concerned with the exploration and delineation of psyche, with the examination and presentation of the inner being of people, and not with the external life of systematic thinking.

She believes that the world is an iceberg-the one-tenth visible above the surface of the water called reality, while the nine-tenth of it is submerged under water and is the truth. She states

...life is reality you see on the surface-the visible world-while literature plunges the depths below that lie hidden and need to be explored and described....

Every writer is in constant search and communication of this truth. Such truth cannot be conveyed through the medium through the medium of language in its literal and direct form. It has to be in figurative language. This is one of the reasons there is abundant use of symbolism in her novels. She remarks about the unconscious use of symbols in her novels:

I use them unconsciously. I mean I employ metaphors and images which acquire significance and suggest deeper meaning that they state i.e. turn into symbols.

Thus by shifting to the realms of the human psyche, she brought the Indo-Anglican novel into the main stream of European and American fiction. The gradual growth of fiction in India is made by the gradual shifting from external world to the inner world of the individual.

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