

Chapter 1

Introduction

The seed of Indian writing in English was sown during the period of British rule in India. Now the seed has blossomed into an evergreen tree with fragrant flowers and ripe fruits. The fruits are being tasted not only by the native people, but they are also being chewed and digested by foreigners. Thus these fruits known as Indian literature are a product of a multilingual, multicultural and socio-historical combination. Today, it has reached the apex of creation with the contributions of regional and national writers. Indian English writing is also gifted with the works of woman writers that changed the face of Indian literature. There are also examples for writers whose novels and short stories evoke characters, events and moods with recourse to a rich use of visual imagery and details that can be compared to the modernist sensibilities of other English writers. Anita Desai is one among the greatest writers in India. The fictional world of Anita Desai is located in the corridor of human consciousness.

Anita Desai is an illustrious writer among the Indo Anglican novelists. Her novels aim at exploring the inner psyche of the characters and through them, gives an understanding of human psyche in general. It also explores the tensions between family members and the alienation of middle class women. The characters of her works can be classified into two distinctive groups; those who try in vain to come in terms with the harsh realities of life and those who are too weak to fight and concede to it. Reflecting the realities of the life we see around daily, her characters always remain “outsiders” because they cannot accommodate themselves to the world of realities. Desai is endowed with boundless imaginative resourcefulness and creative vitality. She reveals

amazing variety and profundity in her fictional world. She has given a new dimension to the Indian novel in English by turning from outer to inner reality.

Desai is well known for her use of new techniques. Her experiment with non-traditional materials and technique has given her a distinct position among Indian English novelists. Her fondness for quotes from various writers serves a definite purpose. Her use of language is the main element of her narrative style. And her style or narrative technique is a vital agent for the popularity of her novel.

This dissertation focuses on the two novels of Anita Desai, *In Custody* and *Cry, the Peacock*. The title of this dissertation, *Colonizing the Psyche*, makes reference to the protagonists of the novels which is mentioned above. Both these novels exhibit a strong liking towards existentialist analysis of the human dilemma. They are also living in a world that is not suited for them, a complete alienation. For a detailed study of their characters they are analyzed on the aspects of symbols which are recurring in both the novels of Desai and thus it is established that they are “colonized” as said in the title. The word colonizing is used to explain how the characters are traced for the sake of understanding them in detail.

Anita Desai is a pioneer in writing psychological novels. *Cry, The Peacock*, published in 1963, is her first novel and it won the Sahitya Akademi Award. This novel revolves around the story of the protagonist Maya. She is seen as a neurotic, self absorbed and love-famished character. She is a victim of the inadequacy of human relationships. Maya’s loneliness and frustration are effectively brought out by the writer. Maya is a brooder and a spoilt daughter of a wealthy, aristocratic father. Her father settled to fix her marriage to Gauthama, who is much older than herself. Her life is haunted by the albino astrologer’s prediction that in the fourth year of

marriage there will be a death, either her's or her husband's. To make herself free from the burden, Maya recedes to her past and fantasizes over her childhood days. She struggles hard to live her life as it is not going the way as she would like it to. She identifies herself as an alien and finds out that she cannot cope with her life. Maya always clings to fantasy and it becomes a part of the total structure of the novel. Maya's relationship with reality passes through three different stages; her childhood, marital life and the final stage when she totally surrenders to the world of insanity.

The protagonist Maya, who behaves like an alien in the novel, is the first character who is taken to study. Her alienated world and how it is connected with the symbols which are mentioned in the novel are what pave the way to implement the analysis of the psyche. The symbols included in this novel are taken together with another novel of Desai, namely *In Custody*. This novel does not share a similar plot, but there is a thematic connection.

The novel *In Custody* was published in 1984 and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in the same year. It deals with the search for meaning in life. Traditionally, Persian and Urdu poets are engaged in the mystical life and meditating on God. This story is set in contemporary India and explores the theme of identity and language, using Urdu poetry. This novel is also the story of the Hindi professor Deven Sharma who turns to Urdu poetry as an escape from his ordinary life. He lifts his spirits through poetry. In his life, he feels that he has given up any ambitions he had and has settled. He once had a strong desire to write poetry. He put that aside in order to support his wife. The couple has settled into a loveless union in which they subtly let each other know their dissatisfaction with each other. Further frustrating Deven is the fact that although his first language, the one he is hung upon, is Urdu, he makes his living by teaching Hindi literature.

Thus tumbling around in his own sense of failure, he receives an opportunity to revive the elements of his life that once inspired him. He got the chance to interview an elderly Urdu poet of great renown, Nur Shahjehanabadi. When he left no choice other than interview, Nur decided to do so as it was told by his friend. But it was not an easy task and he is turned off by the conditions and feels as if he would like to run. Thus he also acts as a man who is alienated from his present life situation. He finds difficult to adapt with his life and his desires call him to the path to which his family is against. Here, it is clearly evident that the protagonists of both the novels are suffocating in a world which is strange to them. The life which they wanted to live is denied.

A symbol is any image or thing that stands for something else. It could be as simple as a letter, which is a symbol for a given sound. The attempt of this project is to connect the symbols in both the novels to the life of the characters who share a similar psychological state. The recurring symbols are studied on the basis of symbolism and more particularly, they are viewed under a psychoanalytical lense as this dissertation tries to portray their psychological conditions. The symbols taken for study are the mediators that connect both the characters and their situations.

Symbolism is a literary device that endows objects with a certain meaning that is different from their original meaning or function. Authors use symbolism to tie certain things that may initially seem unimportant to more universal themes. The symbols then represent these grander ideas or qualities. For instance, an author may use a particular colour that on its own is nothing more than a colour, but it hints at a deeper meaning. Symbolism has been used in cultures all around the world, evident in ancient legends, fables and religious texts.

Psychoanalytical criticism adopts the methods of “reading” employed by Sigmund Freud and later theorists to interpret texts. Freud also developed many levels of human’s psychological aspects. Indeed, literature and psychoanalysis have been viewed as two very closely related intellectual disciplines. Freud willingly borrowed literary examples to prove his analytical points. Thus psychoanalysis emerged as a valid tool for literary criticism and gained wide acceptance among intellectual circles.

Psychoanalytical symbolism refers to the combination of symbolism and psychoanalytical criticism that helps in analyzing psychological aspects on the basis of symbolism presented in the text. Five recurring symbols from both the novels are taken to elaborate the idea of psychoanalytical symbolism. The protagonists as well as other characters are read under the light of this.

From both these novels we will get a clear idea that Desai is primarily interested in exploring the psychic depth of her characters and can be considered a unique writer among contemporary Indian English novelists. The protagonist, Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* is not only one woman’s quest but the quest of a human being towards some understanding and acceptance of her predicament. Anita Desai’s novels carry symbols and most of the novels are discussed on the psychological aspects of characters. But connecting symbols to reach upon the concept of psyche is a different attempt that is not common. The symbols mentioned in the novel had a greater meaning than is implied in the text. This is the main aim and is clearly evident in the title itself. How the characters are approached with the help of symbols to connect them with their psyche are discussed in the third chapter. This introductory chapter is a hint that helps to understand the essence of the project and the topic as well as the theory which is employed.

The second chapter of the project is about theory, that is, psychoanalytical symbolism. The definition of symbols in a deeper sense and the origin of symbolism will be discussed. Now, symbolism has got new looks and is used as a literary device in literature that helps to examine texts in a different light. Additionally, the chapter also deals with the psychoanalytical criticism and how it is used to study characters in literature. Then, as the next step, the theory of psychoanalytical symbolism is discussed. As mentioned earlier, this theory is a blending of psychoanalysis and symbolism. How this is used to apply in both these novels with the symbols is also mentioned in brief.

Third chapter is based upon the application of this theory in the novels mentioned earlier. The symbols used in the texts are taken and each symbol that comes in both the novels will be mentioned in this chapter. The soul of this dissertation lies in this chapter. First of all, this chapter dictates the symbols and then goes deeper with the instances in which they appear in the book. The instances will be followed by quoting from the novel. This chapter mainly focuses on how this theory can be applied to the characters relating with the symbols. The thematic connection of both the novels is also discussed in this chapter. The arguments raised will be supported with the studies or the secondary sources and these are drawn together to make the argument stronger. The different aspects of symbols and how it changed the life of characters too will be discussed. The argument is also reflected in this chapter and as is mentioned in the title, it will also help to know what the title implies and how it is closely related to the character and symbols.

The last chapter deals with the conclusion and it describes how the study of these characters is analyzed with the help of symbols. It also provides a recap of the things discussed earlier and how the argument is stronger and how it is closely connected with theory. Toward the end there will be the secondary sources which are used to consider this theory into these novels.

Thus this dissertation will feast your eyes on the topic psychoanalytical symbolism applied in the novels *In Custody* and *Cry, the Peacock* written by Anita Desai.

Chapter 2

Psychoanalytical Symbolism

The term symbol is the root of the word symbolism. So it is important to know the very meaning of symbol. This term refers to the idea of a mark or character used as a conventional representation of an object, function, process, etc. It also stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract. A symbol is an object that represents, stands for or suggests; an idea, visual image, belief, action or material entity. Symbols may take the form of words, sounds, gestures or visual images and these are all used to convey ideas and beliefs. Symbols do shift their meaning depending on the context they are used in. For example, a chain may stand as a symbol for union as well as imprisonment.

The word symbolism derives from the Greek word 'symbolon' meaning token or watchword. It is an amalgam of 'sym', meaning "together", and 'bole', meaning "throwing, a casting, the stoke of a missile, bolt or beam." The sense evolution in Greek is from throwing things together, to contrasting, to comparing, to token used in comparison, to determine if something is genuine.

The use of symbol is simply called as symbolism. The use would be any kind of use such as religious purpose or social awareness purpose. "Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving those symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense." ("symbolism" 869). Sometimes a word spoken by someone may have a symbolic value or else the

same symbolic value can be seen in an action or an event. For instance, “smile” is a symbol of friendship and it can also stand as a symbol of feeling of affection.

Symbolism was a late nineteenth century art movement of French, Russian and Belgian origin in poetry and other arts. It took on its classic form in about 1870 but had its roots in the sixties (Balakian 8). In 1654, practice of representing things with symbols had begun. From 1892, it emerged as a movement in France that produced literature that aimed at representing ideas and emotions by indirect suggestion rather than direct expression, rejecting realism and naturalism. Before that, religious symbols were used since the early days of the religion. There are some broad types of symbols like religion, political, arts, economic, socio-cultural, science, etc.

In broader terms, symbolism can be thought of as part of a philosophical idealism in revolt against a positivist, scientific attitude that affected not only painting but literature as well. The term was coined by French critic Jean Moréas to describe the poetry of Stephen Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine. It was soon applied to visual arts where the realistic depiction of the natural world, seen in impressionism, realism, naturalism, was rejected in favor of imaginary dream worlds populated with mysterious figures from literature, the Bible, and the Greek mythology. The work of symbolic artists and writers was also fuelled by new psychological content, particularly erotic and mystical. Common themes included are love, fear, anguish, death, sexual awakening and unrequited desire.

Symbolism is a literary device in which a writer uses one thing, usually a physical object or phenomenon, to represent something more abstract. A strong symbol usually shares a set of key characteristics with whatever it meant to symbolize, or is related to it in some other way.

Characters and events can also be symbolic. Symbolism allows writers to convey things to their readers poetically or indirectly rather than having to say them outright, which can make texts seem more nuanced and complex. It can sometimes be difficult to say whether an author intended for something to be symbolic or not. Most often, physical objects are used to symbolize an idea or concept, as a way of pointing the reader towards some of the basic themes that a work is dealing with. And sometimes symbolism is portrayed through characters; they can serve as symbols of a particular virtue or vice, of a particular virtue or vice or of a political ideology.

Writers employ a wide variety of symbols to deepen the meaning of their work. Some symbols, though, are much easier to identify than others. It's worth recognizing the ways that symbols can be obvious, while others might be less so. In some cases, particularly when a symbol is subtle, it's not always even clear whether the author's use of symbolism is intentional, or whether the reader is supplying their own meaning of the text by "reading into" something as a symbol. In fact, it's one of the beautiful things about symbolism: whether symbolism can be said to be present in a text has as much to do with the reader's interpretation as with the writer's intentions.

When we read anything we find our understanding of what we read moving simultaneously in two directions. One direction is centrifugal, moving from the words to the things they mean, or, in practice, to our memory of the conventional association. The other direction is centripetal, trying to build up out of the words a larger pattern or context, an attempt which normally expands until it reaches the whole verbal pattern.

It is hard to find a work of literature that lacks any kind of symbolism. Symbolism is an important literary device for creating complex narratives because it enables writers to convey

important information without having to state things directly. In addition, the use of symbolism is widespread because it can help readers visualize complex concepts of central themes and track their development, afford writers the opportunity to communicate big ideas efficiently and artfully. It also invites readers to read a text independently, rather than be directly told what the author means. Symbolism also adds emotional weight to a text, and conceals themes that are too controversial to state openly. It can imply change or growth in characters or themes through shifts in the way that characters interact with particular symbols, or ways in which the symbols themselves change over time.

Symbols alone can do little things but when they are connected with psychoanalysis, we get an extensive idea to analyze the characters in novels. Freud had mentioned about this in his works. But the theory proposed is not focusing on his ideas but is a blend of symbolism and psychoanalytic criticism. Through symbols it tries to arrive at psychoanalysis. It will be explained only through a detailed idea of what is meant by psychoanalysis and even the term psyche.

The psyche refers to the totality of human mind, both conscious and unconscious. In colloquial usage, the term sometimes refers to a person's emotional life. Psychology is the study and treatment of the psyche, although different psychologist and sub disciplines may have slightly different understandings of what the psyche is.

Psychoanalysis is a set of theories and therapeutic techniques related to the study of the unconscious mind, which together form a method of treatment for mental health. It also emphasizes that unconscious mind is an essential factor in human adaptation and behavior. Psychoanalysis concepts are widely used outside therapeutic arena, such as psychoanalytic literary criticism, as well as in the analysis of films, novels and other cultural phenomena.

Psychoanalytic criticism is a form of applied psychoanalysis, a science concerned with the interaction between conscious and unconscious processes and with the laws of mental functioning. Psychoanalysis is a form of therapy propounded by the Austrian Psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Freud may justly be called the most influential intellectual legislator of his age. His creation of psychoanalysis was at once a theory of the human psyche, a therapy for the relief of ills, and an optic for the interpretation of culture and society. Despite repeated criticisms, attempted refutations and qualifications of Freud's work, its spell remained powerful well after his death and in fields far removed from psychology as it is narrowly defined.

In order to treat patients of hysteria and neurosis during the late nineteenth century, this treatment was based on the observation that the root of neurosis and other mental symptoms could be effectively determined by encouraging the patients to talk and recall memories and ideas, however seemingly unimportant. Perhaps the most impactful idea put forth by Freud was his model of the human mind. His model divides the mind into three layers, or regions. They are Conscious, unconscious and subconscious. Conscious is where our current thoughts, feelings, and focus live. Preconscious or subconscious is the home of everything we can recall or retrieve from our memory. And unconscious is the deepest level of our minds where resides a repository of the processes that drive our behavior including primitive and instinctual desires. Later, Freud posited a more structured model of the mind, one that can coexist with his original ideas about consciousness and unconsciousness.

The uniqueness of Freud's explorations lies in his attributing to the unconscious a deceive role in the lives of human beings. The unconscious is the repository of traumatic experiences, emotions, unadmitted desires and fears, libidinal drives, unresolved conflicts, etc. This unconscious comes into being at an early age, through the expunging of these unhappy

psychic events from the conscious to the unconscious, a process which Freud terms repression. Repression is crucial to the operations of the unconscious. There has been a consistent interest in contemporary literary studies in the unconscious and the notion and effects of repression linked often with debates on sexuality.

Later in his career, Freud suggested a tripartite model of the psyche, dividing it into id, ego and superego. The id, being entirely in the unconscious, is the most inaccessible and obscure part of our personality. Ego is governed by the reality principle and it is the intermediary between the world within (id) and the world outside (superego). The superego which is another regulatory agent protects the society from id. It is governed by morality principle.

Freud described dreams as the royal road to the unconscious, as they provide a better understanding of the repressed desires in the unconscious. They are considered as the symbolic fulfillment of the wishes of the unconscious. According to him, dreams are symbols, texts which need to be deciphered, since the watchful ego is at work, even when we are dreaming. The ego scrambles and censors the messages as the unconscious itself adds to this obscurity by its peculiar modes of functioning. Thus the latent dream content is not vividly displayed within the manifest one, but is concealed within complex structures and codes, which is called dreamwork in Freudian neologism.

Freud recognized two fundamental motivating forces. The first one is the constructive one called the Eros or life urges and the other is the destructive one called the Thanatos or the death urges. Eros finds its output through drives known as self-preservation drive or ego drive and sex drive. Sex drive plays a significant role in Freudian psychoanalysis. The motivating principle in life is pleasure principle, which according to psychoanalysis, is the

tendency to avoid pain and to seek pleasure. This dominates in sex drive. As one attains maturity, this is supplemented by the reality principle, which is the voice of reason that aims at rational acts to avoid future pains. The nirvana principle is expressed in death drive, which is aimed at the final returns of living matters to the inorganic state. Freud's theory of the various levels of consciousness like preconsciousness, subconscious and unconsciousness has got a striking similarity with the Upanishadic concept of the levels of minds 'jagrat', 'swapna' and 'susupti'.

This dissertation offers innovative general theory of psychoanalytic symbolism. It mentions and also follows Freud's psychoanalysis with the help of symbols taken from the novels. A symbol has a spectrum of meanings ranging from the broad to the narrow. The theory which is employed in this project is psychoanalytic symbolism. It is a mixture of both psychoanalysis and symbolism. The symbols which refer to the psychic state of the characters are analyzed through this theory. These symbols give out more abstract meaning than just a physical meaning.

Chapter 3

Hopes and Flops

“Symbolism is the language of the mysteries. By symbols men have ever sought to communicate to each other those thoughts which transcend the limitations of language.” (Hall 22)

Anita Desai’s novels are rich in symbols. In this dissertation we are going to analyze these symbols. Six recurring symbols are taken from both the novels *In Custody* and *Cry, the Peacock*. The symbols used to perform the detailed study are father, pigeon, pet, house, death and identity. These symbols are the very hint to find out the psychoanalytic condition of the characters in the novels.

In Custody is a novel set in Delhi and it narrates the story of the main character Deven Sharma. He earns a living by teaching Hindi literature to college students. As his true interest was in Urdu poetry, he took the opportunity to meet the great Urdu poet, Nur Shajahanabadi. The meeting with the poet was arranged by Deven’s friend Murad and it is Murad’s wish that Deven should meet the poet and it is not for his friend’s love to Urdu language but to get an interview of this famous poet so that he can publish it in his periodical. Murad is an editor of a periodical devoted to Urdu literature. However things do not go as he expects them to go.

Deven is fond of Urdu poetry so he decided to risk his career to get an interview with Nur. He reached the poet’s house with great expectations but things turn upside down when he realized the condition of Nur’s house. He realized the fact that the poet he once admired is no more a hero and this simple thing is easily understood from the condition of his house. Thus all the expectations turn into vain. When he meets Nur, he refuses to give an interview by saying that Urdu is now at its last stage and soon this beautiful language will not exist. Deven gets

annoyed by the condition of Nur's house and drops the idea of interviewing Nur. Murad again convinces him to interview Nur with the help of tape recorder. Thus Deven goes to buy a tape recorder and the shop owner provides him a second hand one and convinces him to buy it. The shop owner also sends his own nephew to assist him. Unwillingly Deven agrees to purchase and Nur's first wife promises to Deven to make all the arrangements for the interview. Deven also gives her some money. But the interview was not successful. He was often interrupted by Nur's drunken friends and his second wife was also a trouble in Deven's way. Also he was not an expert in recording and interview and the assistant was also troublesome for him. On the other hand he was hated by his wife for risking his only job which is the livelihood of the family and the pressures from which Deven arranged money to meet the expenses. Despite all the problems he has a hope that he could complete the interview.

In the end the recording was a failure and he has to bear the expenses for arranging this interview. He got a letter which mentions Nur's desire to die and also an order to be the custodian of Nur's poems. This is the plot of the novel and in this novel there are certain instances in which the symbols arrive and explain the psychoanalytical condition of the characters.

The first symbol which is going to be discussed in this chapter is 'father'. In this novel Deven's father plays an important role in his life which results in the evolution of Deven's character. The very evolution of Deven's character begins from the thoughts which his father shared to him. His father is like a role model and he always wishes to stick on to the place which his father introduced to him. It is his father who taught him the lessons of Urdu language and through his father he became familiar with this great language. Thus it is evident that his father sowed the seeds of Urdu poetry in Deven's mind. Even after his father's death he did not leave his passion but that he still clung to the world of Urdu language even though he is a professor who

teaches Hindi language. Maybe this is the main reason why he decided to interview Nur despite the fact that it will risk his job and it will not do a single good thing for his livelihood. When he got this opportunity his only aim was to meet the great poet who composes poems in his favorite language. So he ended up utilizing this opportunity without thinking twice. His father turns out to be the mentor of his life and it is from his father's recitation that Deven developed interest in Urdu poetry.

Deven, to his astonishment, heard himself repeat the poet's familiar words as he heard his father recite them to him when he had sat beside him on the mat in the corner of the verandah of the old house [...]He repeated it twice, and then, as if unwinding a kite's thread from the spool that his memory still held, he went on reciting that great poem of Nur's that his father had loved to recite and that he still read, ceremoniously, whenever he felt sad or nostalgic and thought of his father and his early childhood and all that he had lost. (Desai, *In Custody* 41)

From this instance it is clear that the character Deven is stuck in the world of Urdu. He knows that he is making an utter mistake by following his passion and his duty is to support his family but deep in his mind he is dragged to do what he likes. Considering father as a symbol it is clearly evident that Deven is filled with the lessons of Urdu which his father taught him. His love to his father is the reason which he could not leave the language. Urdu language captured Deven and made him its slave. As the story progresses we can see the burden which Deven accepts in order to serve Urdu language. He is also not ready to accept the truth but likes to live in the fantasy. And this attitude of Deven is the reason why he decided to interview Nur for the sake of Urdu language which is no more famous. So this symbol plays a dominant role in Deven's psyche.

Now moving to the next symbol in the novel and that is 'house'. House is just a physical symbol that can also affect the mind and personality of a character. For instance, one could easily understand the character of an individual from the way their house is kept. In this novel Murad appears to overdramatize the change in Urdu's social position, but ironically, the greatest Urdu poet does himself live in a back lane of Delhi's Chandini Chowk bazaar. Deven imagines that Nur himself resembles his poetry which lifts Deven to such heights; Nur's house in the bazaar finally upsets his vision of the conditions such a man would inhabit. "He had pictured him living either surrounded by elderly, sage and dignified litterateurs or else entirely alone, in divine isolation". (Desai, *In Custody* 49)

Deven sits uncomfortably in Nur's room, wondering how, out of this entire hubbub, the poet drew the threads that wove his poetry or philosophy. Deven had a visual about the prosperity of the poet as in his eyes, Nur is one of the greatest Urdu poets and the one he admires. But the reality is something which he is unable to accept. The house of Nur gives a bad impression to Deven but the real fact is that the poet wrote all his poems and his philosophical ideas from that house but the living condition is dark and inappropriate.

As in the other novels of Desai, the places and houses assume symbolic significance. Nur's house offers Deven, not the glories of poetry or the divine of the poet but darkness, emptiness, secretiveness and death. The darkness of Nur's house signifies that his creative vision is gone into eclipse and that his entire life is darkened now with depravity and mediocrity. The predominant impression coned by the descriptions of Nur's house is that of gloom and darkness, even as dust symbolizes Airport. (Semwal 948)

The image of the house in the novel can be also stated as the downtrodden condition of the poet. Nur was an accepted and popular poet at the time when the Urdu language had its importance. Now this language is considered a dead language and it is no more considered as a language and likewise the poets and the admirers of this same language also lost their glorious life conditions and their popularity which they achieved through this language. Thus Nur is also going through a similar situation which is clearly evident from the lines mentioned in the novel when Deven had his first encounter with Nur which is cited in the previous page. So the house resembles loss of faith or hope. Till reaching the house of Nur there was a hope in the mind of Deven but everything went in vain. The house and condition which Deven visualized in his mind was entirely different. This makes Deven nervous because the life conditions of Nur made him to realize the present situation or the fact. Admiring this language may not be a good step to take and it can affect his future and such a realization may occur in Deven's mind and it also provided a narrow option so that he can escape from this trouble. Even the description of room is also something worth to discuss and it is closely connected with the symbol of house. The four walls in which Nur spends most of his time.

The room in which poet lay resting, like a great bolster laid on a flat low wooden divan, was in semi darkness. Not only were the bamboo screens hanging in every doorway let down to keep out the sun that beat upon the top floor of the building most fiercely, but the walls were lined with dark green tiles that added to the shadowy gloom[...]solid cushion[...] like objects carved out of the murkiness, heavy and palpable with gloom. (Desai, *In Custody* 37)

The house of Nur destroys all his imagination and it also strikes hard at Deven's only hope and his passion to serve the language which he loved the most. It is also clearly evident from the

instance from which Deven imagines Nur as surrounded by elderly, sage peoples. This very thought is the imagination that Deven had about one who serves Urdu language and this thought may also have come from the colonized mind of Deven who wants to get free from his mechanical way of life. Thus the symbol of house plays a vital role in turning Deven into who he is. Even after getting the chance to keep himself safe he rejected the very offer and follows what his mind says. He behaves like a slave of his mind.

Another aspect the novelist has used is colour symbolism. Deven regards his life as “gray clay” and a “field, bare of grain.” Grey is the only prominent colour in the novel in keeping with the drab world of the protagonist. This is colourless and meaningless. When he takes his son for a walk, we see one of the rarely experienced happy moments.

“One brilliant feather of spring green fluttered down through the air”. (Desai, *In Custody* 73) This is symbolic of the moment of laughter. The colour ‘green’ which normally represents prosperity seems to Deven to signify death and destruction.

Deven and the boy walked down the road between the small yellow stucco houses that belonged to the same grade of low-paid employees[...] In the meantime they peeled and mouldered under the bean and pumpkin vines and red dusty bougainvilleas. Broken furniture spilled out of their small verandas. Strings of washing hung on lines outside. (Desai, *In Custody* 73)

Thus there are many instances in the novel which portrays the usage of colour symbolism which helps to reveal the inner feelings of the characters in the novel.

Pigeons, a recurring factor portrayed in the novel, are the pets of Nur and these birds symbolize the inner feelings of the characters. In this novel we could see the presence of pigeon

which Nur protects in his parapet. The only thing which Nur enjoys is feeding pigeons and their companionship provides him a great relief other than his drunken friends who come to hear him reciting poems. So, the next symbol which is going to be discussed in this chapter is 'pigeon'. Pigeon stands as a symbol of freedom or peace. In this context the symbol of freedom is more suitable when it is connected with the life of Deven and Nur. Both Deven and Nur are like caged birds wanting to fly away for freedom. Deven who is disgusted with his boring life wants an escape. He is doing the job which he does not like to do. The only reason for doing it is to support his family, he needed money and being a Hindi professor is the only job which could help him to earn an income. For Deven the pigeons are an inspiration which compels him to break the chain which suppresses him in his ordinary life and the interest of others.

But things are different in the life of Nur. He is a poet and he was accepted by everyone once and now even though he is not widely popular as in the old days he somehow manages to live. He does what he likes to do through his job as a poet in the language he is fond of. But deep in his mind Nur wishes for a freedom from this life. It is part of his daily routine to spend some time with the pigeons and when Deven sees this he thinks they are hurting him by sitting on his head. But Nur loves pigeons. He really enjoys this moment besides the chat with his friends. The only true friends are his pigeons.

Deven needed freedom from his present life and he likes to serve Urdu language whereas Nur is serving Urdu language and needed an escape through this. Both of the characters are connecting pigeons as a way to escape from their present life. The novel portrays some instances that justify the fact that Nur wants an escape badly from his current situation.

When he got up from his knees, he saw the servant boy had led Nur out, the mat in the doorway was rolled up and the afternoon light stood there as solid as a pane of glittering glass. He hurried out after them to find the poet could proceed no further- a flock of pigeons had swooped down out of the coppery sky and blocked his way with their hurtling wings and violently struggling bodies. He stood there in the centre of their frenzy-slate, chocolate and snow [...] teetered on his bald head and hands. (Desai, *In Custody* 45)

In this above mentioned instance there is a situation in which Deven comes forward to rescue but the poet does not want to be rescued. The pigeons are not doing any harm to him whereas he is enjoying the way they are playing with him. At that time with those pigeons he seeks a narrow relief which he could enjoy apart from his present life. Spending some time with pigeons is routine job of Nur and he finds time to follow it every day. But Deven was afraid of seeing how pigeons were disturbing and he also asked Nur whether the pigeons hurt him. Deven may have viewed them as a nuisance but Nur wanted their company. According to Deven, Nur is doing well because he is a poet in Urdu language and he is free to write poems. That is, Nur is leading a way that his passion urges him to do. He does not want a helping hand even though his situation is not glorious as it is in the past but there is a freedom in his life. So Deven thinks pigeons can be a disturbance to him

Deven's mind stands with his passion but the intellectual being in him wants him to do the duty that is to support his family and it always makes him to realize that he is risking his job of professor and it is no more safe for him to continue to waste his time following Nur. He is trying hard to control himself from not getting into any trouble which can ruin his life. But his mind still

urges him to follow his passion. When he saw pigeons he thinks of them as nuisance because it can also result to bring out the caged passion in Deven's mind.

Nur is much attached to his pigeons. They always fly around him and he keeps feeding them and it is a part of daily routine. Both the pigeons and Nur are much connected in their life. His happiness resides in spending his time with his pets. That is why Deven couldn't do anything when Nur was with his pigeons and he waited for him to finish what he is doing. Deven came there to discuss a serious matter but he could not stop Nur when he interrupted Deven's concern by feeding his pigeons. Nur's affection to them was something which no one could imagine and it is at the same time he thought about death when he realized the fact that his pigeons are dying and he felt he is alone. Nur send a letter to Deven and in that letter he mentions that his pigeons are dying.

My pigeons are dying. A new disease has broken out, unknown to the doctors of the bird hospital. It was claimed five already, each a champion. On the others, too, I see the grey mould that grows till it caps the bird's head [...] so that it slowly suffocates to death. There is no medicine to cure them. I watch them fall and find them lying on their sides, cold. (Desai, *In Custody* 229)

Nur could not accept the fact that they are leaving him and he is alone in the world. His mind strongly urges him to follow their path and he is also afraid to do so and this situation also leads to the symbol of 'death'. Both the characters in this novel were depressed about their ordinary life. They want to do something more and in their mechanical way of life there are certain things which help them to survive. For Deven it is his ambition to do something for Urdu language and Nur who already serves the language is tired of his life. And the smallest happiness

which he gets in his life was his pets. The painful view for Nur was to watch his pigeons dying and it is at this time he decides to leave the world. “When the last of my pigeons is gone, I will cease to write poetry forever. I will go with them”. (Desai, *In Custody* 229)

He wanted complete freedom from this world and when his pigeons died he wished to leave this world. And he got the feel that he should go with them. The real death is happening to Nur and the character Deven was in the death-mode as everything in his life was not anything that mattered or gave pleasure. He just acted like a robot that has planned all his routines and there is no time for him to achieve anything which he wants from his youth. A lover of Muslim Urdu poetry, Deven has to teach Hindi literature written by Hindus and he does this poorly and without spirit. He longs from his childhood, to become a poet but could not do so because of his worldly responsibilities. Deven’s love for Urdu language is an illusion whereas his job as Hindi lecturer is the reality. This itself is the state of his death but when it comes to the life reality Nur becomes the victim of death. The fear of death was always something that disturbed him. This is the reason when he got the letter of Nur he hesitated to go through it. The reality is hard to accept and it is same for Deven as well as Nur.

Now we can move to the symbol of ‘identity’. In this novel the protagonist Deven can be portrayed as a man who is facing identity crisis. When we look back to the job and situation of Deven we understand that he is not a man who can be placed in the present situation which he is going through. He is acting as an alien in the present world and it appears to be different to him because his thoughts and desires are funny to the people around him. Deven’s passion for the Urdu language makes him different. According to the present condition there is no popularity for Urdu language but he decides to serve it by taking the opportunity of interviewing the Urdu poet Nur.

Deven wishes to recite Urdu poems and spend his time serving Urdu language but he does not do so because people may think he is crazy. Even though his love is for Urdu he is a professor of Hindi language in a college. He is afraid to take the offer which is given by his friend Murad because he knows that it will lead to him being unemployed. He finds himself as not suited to live. Even Nur says to him that he is wasting his time.

‘Urdu poetry?’ he finally sighed, turning a little to one side, towards Deven although not actually addressing himself to a person, merely to a direction, it seemed. ‘How can there be Urdu language left? It is dead, finished. The defeat of the Moghuls by the British threw a noose over its head, and the defeat of the British by the Hindiwallahs tightened it. So now you see its corpse lying here, waiting to be buried’. He tapped his chest with one finger. (Desai, *In Custody* 39)

So, this was the reply of Nur when Deven revealed his aim. Both Deven and Nur are the admirers of Urdu language but they are surviving in a state in which Urdu is considered as a dead language. They don’t have any roles because they are not at all a part of the interest of the other individuals. People may mock them because they are protecting something which is not at all worthy of protection. Deven is completely an outcast; he does not have any right to take his own decisions and he is living for someone else. He is a man who failed to accomplish what his mind says, that is, his passion for the Urdu language.

Identity crisis is a problem which always haunts him. He is a Hindi speaking man but his love and care is for Urdu language. He hesitates to love his mother tongue but he is a Hindi professor. There lies the contrast he is devoted to the language which is not his mother tongue but when it comes to his livelihood he is serving his mother tongue.

Deven is worried about his family and his family is the only factor which makes him do the job that he does not like to do. He is afraid of the fact that he might lose his job and let his family suffer. So Deven stands in between the two problems. As time moves on he finds it difficult to match him with the reality, he goes on repeating that his wife may get angry to the way which Deven follows Nur to get his interview. “‘I can’t do this night after night,’ Deven complained in an aggrieved tone. ‘I have my job to think of, and my wife and son. I can’t let this family’s dramas and performances take over my life’”. (Desai, *In Custody* 96)

After complaining all this, Deven still goes for interviewing Nur. He likes to mention himself as an Urdu slave and may be this is the reason why he still takes the job which his friend offered to him. For his friend Murad, getting an interview of Nur is just to get publicity for his journal. Deven’s friend is an editor of the Urdu journal but he is not as successful as other editors. Murad does this for the profit which he could gain through publishing Nur’s poems but for Deven it is beyond that, it is his identity. He also hopes to bring back the language and for that he is willing to do everything that he can do.

In the cycle rickshaw going home – his legs felt strangely weak, He knew he could not walk – he opened the letter. It was not written in English this time but in Urdu and he read it while wobbling down the streets, so that the letters danced crazily before him, turning him giddy. (Desai, *In Custody* 228)

His life was not fruitful but was an utter failure. It becomes worse when Urdu language declines in popularity and from there onwards his life was the time for him to decide his death. The letter which Nur left for Deven was something which affected him badly and after reading it he was not able to sleep. His wife Sarla was worried for him and as Deven was not able to sleep

and he decided to go for a walk. The thought of death is something one could get in their miserable conditions. Such a miserable condition arrived in the life of Nur and he decided to go for it.

The faintly glimmering path by the black canal was like a thread he had to follow to the end. Where was the end? Was there one? 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. (Desai, *In Custody* 233)

Deven became alone in his life when Nur died. Both of them were gifted with the talent of writing Urdu poems and Nur utilized it and also became famous in the past but Deven could not commit what his mind said because his responsibilities acted as an obstacle in his path. Death is an uninvited guest and it is sure that it can happen at any time in anybody's life. When Nur left his life, he made Deven the custodian of his poems.

He thought of Nur's poetry being read, the sound of it softly murmuring in his ears. He had accepted the gift of Nur's poetry and that meant he was a custodian of Nur's very soul and spirit. It was a great distinction. He could not deny or abandon that under any pressure. (Desai, *In Custody* 233)

Desai relies more on symbols because her aim is not to depict surface reality but perpetually search for truth. "To her reality is merely one tenth visible of an ice berg that one sees above the surface of the ocean, and truth the remaining nine tenth of it lie below the surface".

(Sharma 15) Thus it is clearly evident that the novel *In Custody* is a masterpiece of Desai in

which protagonist Deven emerges from his mechanical life to become a custodian of Nur's poems which helps him to achieve the life he dreamt of.

Chapter 4

Incompatibility of Temperament

Cry, the Peacock is another masterwork of Desai which also won a Sahitya Akademi Award. The novel revolves around the life of a young girl Maya, obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster. According to the albino astrologer's prophecy, she or her husband would die on the fourth year of her marriage. Her father dismisses the prophecy and arranged her marriage to his own lawyer friend Gautama, who was a middle aged man.

The marriage was never fruitful. She found it difficult to accept the reality which is different from that of her expectations about married life and as a result, she lost all her interests and lived a gloomy life with her husband. Thus her mind compels her to think about the childhood which she loved very much. The reminiscence of those long days serves to her as the defense mechanism to set her free from her inner frustration and conflicts and therefore Maya turns into a psychopath whose emotional needs collided with that of the extremely practical outlook of her husband. She eases her tension and frustration by pondering unconsciously by viewing the peacock's images which come through her mind.

Towards the end of the novel, a sense of violence arises in Maya's mind and she takes the crucial decision to push her husband from the terrace which makes his end. Then she commits suicide to leave the world of unhappiness. Thus, the story ends with the death of Gautama and Maya. This gives a clear image of the protagonist's haunted mind. Maya's unhappiness in the novel is not related to the reality of her circumstances; it is a product of her own consciousness. She has led a protected life and has been brought up by fantasies and now when she confronted with the reality of life, she loses hope to live.

Thus Desai is primarily interested in exploring the psychic depth of her female characters and can be called a unique writer among the contemporary Indian English novelists. The quest of Desai's protagonist is not only one woman's quest, but the quest of a human being towards some understanding and acceptance of her predicament. In this novel the distracted mind of Maya and the situations which makes her a psychopath is portrayed by the novelist. Her mindset can be explained through psychoanalytic criticism. In this novel the protagonist Maya cannot be easily judged and likewise her mindset is complex with fears and desires. She experiences such a journey which seems to be strange to others. The fear which often strikes in her life was the prophesy by an albino astrologer who said that she or her husband would die when they enter into the fourth year of their marriage.

Unlike most women, she is not a conventional housewife. Her intense desires are locked inside her mind which she fails to accomplish. Those desires disturb her married life. Her inability to construct a viable space for her as a wife and as a woman in the public sphere has led to the intensification of desire inside her for her childhood spent with her father and she often looks back to her beautiful childhood. Character formation is developed in one's childhood. Here the childhood of Maya only holds beautiful memories of her father and his affection towards her. She also experienced many restrictions in her life. Maya's childhood can be said as a preserved one.

"Behavior is driven by fear and desires locked in the unconscious". (Freud 10) Freud believed that when we explain our behavior to ourselves or others we rarely give a true account of our motivation. This is not the fact that we are lying but hesitate to reveal one's mind to others in the conscious state even though the person seems to be close to us. Freud used the analogy of an ice berg to describe the mind of human beings in which the unconscious, that is the most

significant region, lies beneath the water. So that a part of the mind which is in the conscious stage is only visible to others.

In *Cry, the Peacock*, Desai aims at tracing the theme of physical isolation and psychological alienation, a sort of estrangement from someone or something with which she or he is attached or identified – family, friends, society and even one's own self. In this novel it is the mental estrangement rather than physical sufferings of the characters that come to the front. Desai depicts the inner struggle of Maya, the heroine of the novel whose neurotic condition is brought about by a variety of factors such as marital discord, barrenness and psychic disorder. In Desai's words she is an ideal example of her characters who are not normal human beings, but have been driven into some extremity of despair and are found wanting when coping with the normal living standards of society.

It is not the mere thought of loneliness which upsets Maya; actually she unconsciously feels alienated from her father and it is this separation which disturbs her very much. She has visualized a life in her mind and she prefers to live in that world in which her father raised her. It is not some other physical state but here the world means the care and the love which her father gave her. She was like a princess in her father's hands and even after her father's death and her marriage, she likes to live in such a world which she enjoys the utmost.

The doctor has to be called, finally, to give me a little morphine so that I might sleep in peace, and, by my father's orders, no more performing animals are allowed in at our gate. Yes, now that I go over it in my mind, my childhood was one in which much was excluded, which grew steadily more restricted, unnatural even, and in which I lived as a toy princess in a toy world. But it was a pretty one. 'Exhibitionism', said Gautama. 'Nothing but a penchant for exhibitionism. As

common a disease as egoism, or megalomania, not to be suppressed.’ (Desai, *Cry, the Peacock* 78)

Maya’s father introduced a world to her and she likes to stay in that world itself even after her father’s death. Maya knows the fact that she is a married woman and she could not adapt the new life which is totally strange to her. So in between her life with Gautama she is visualizing the pretty life which her father gave to her, that is her beautiful childhood. The reality is something which is hard for her to accept so she just visualizes her childhood with her father. She is not interested to come back from that life.

As in a toy world she gets every care from her father and she tries to compare her life with Gautama and also analyze the love which her father gives her and not given by Gautama. “Maya is neither a Cinderella in rags, nor a Snow White in a dread of a stepmother. She is a toy princess prototype of a dance princess whose only contact with reality is an autistic” (Uniyal 157). Maya is sensitive and believes in imaginary or dream world, whereas on the other hand her husband is insensitive and realistic.

Maya’s husband always curses her for this attitude of her but deep in her mind she is living like the little princess of her father. She always clings to the world her father created for her. Maya’s subconscious mind is the factor which lives in reality and she is in the cage of this mind, her desires are carried out through this way. She is fed up with the ordinary life with her husband so she is finding happiness through dreaming and trying to make everything as she experienced in her childhood but things do not go as easily as she expects. It is hard to live a life with her husband as he always urges her to come back to the reality. Maya began her life by holding her father’s hands and she is a motherless girl. The love and care which her father gave

to her is the reality for her everything outside it is not reality. It can be also said that she suffers father-fixation. So her behaviors seem to be weird for those who live in the reality.

He followed me, grasped me and shook me roughly. ‘Neurotic’, he said, ‘Neurotic, that’s what you are. A spoilt baby, so spoilt she can’t bear one adverse word. Everyone must bring a present for Maya – that is what her father taught her.’ It was he who spoke bitterly now. ‘Don’t you speak of my father -’ ‘I will certainly speak of him. He is the one responsible for this – [...] Life is a fairy tale to you still.’ (Desai, *Cry, the Peacock* 98)

Gauthama is not happy with the way she responds to the life with him. And he always scolds her for being in the imaginary world he wants her to be in reality and as a result he criticizes her father for the main reason for such a spoilt child. Maya is a girl who lives in a dream world. Her soul and her identity is stuck in that cage and she finds it hard to come out from that. Her rational thoughts order her to do so but her mind is not willing to do.

‘I will certainly speak of him. He is the one responsible for this – for making you believe that all that is important in the world is to possess, possess riches, comforts, posies, dollies, loyal retainers – all the luxuries of the fairy tales you were brought up on. Life is a fairy tale to you still. What have you learnt of the realities? The realities of common human existence, but living and dying and working, all that constitutes life for the ordinary man. You won’t find it in your picture books. And that was all you were ever shown – picture- books. What wickedness to raise a child like that!’ (Desai, *Cry, the Peacock* 98)

This changes her personality and also leads to the psychic developments. The thoughts and desires which her father provided her is the companion to her even after in her married life.

So, this personality of her may be victimized by others like mad and in this case also Gautama reacts to her behavior as mad.

‘House’ is a major symbol which leads to portrayal of many things about the character and its psyche. Maya got a wonderful childhood with her father and it is also mentioned that she is like a ‘princess’ or a ‘toy princess’ to her. She was raised by her father by giving everything she wanted in her life. When it comes with the life with her husband Gautama all the expectations were destroyed. The life she imagined was not the same when it comes to reality. Maya enjoyed a good atmosphere in her childhood and her expectation did not match with the reality and this reality is also a hint to the future of Maya. That is the total destruction in her life.

It is another spring – a far more idyllic one, for it is at home, in Lucknow. I have been strolling amidst the vegetables with father – he takes an interest in tomatoes of a foreign variety, and I nibble at a radish, then a spring of dill ... I watch a small butterfly flicker amongst the flowers: it has white wings, each with an orange fleck. Bright and fluttering, it is as much of a gay paper-cut as the flowers. The world is like a toy specially made for me, painted in my favorite colours, set moving to my favourite tunes. (Desai, *Cry, the Peacock* 35)

Her house was something which gives her pleasure but now her life with Gautama is not something which she wanted it to be. She could not connect it with her house and the warm conditions which she enjoyed. She finds it hard to connect her reality with her expectations. She needed love and care which is not present in her new house, even the family members are different and she was taken from her glorious life and planted on this life with Gautama which appears to be boring to her. She feels like an alien in that house. Her mind again and again says that she does not belong there and no one cares for her. She is totally an outcast in that house.

In this loneliness she tries to find out some pleasure by going back to her memories and try to live again that life and it's like a dream. Such attitude of Maya can be only viewed as madness. She behaves like an abnormal person and her wants are limitless. She is forced to live a boring life with Gautama. She does not have any interest in her married life. She is just living this life for someone's sake. It is said in the novel that her marriage was arranged by her father and Gautama was a middle aged man so there are so many differences in the perspectives of both these characters. The father who always loved his daughter made a mistake in choosing his son-in-law. And for father's sake she is living this life, actually it cannot be said like that because she does not even feel it as a life. She has even thought about dying rather than living such a gloomy life.

Another symbol in this novel is the pigeon. When Maya recalls about her childhood and beautiful memories with her father and being a princess in her house she comes across the pigeon nests in her house's verandah. The very sight of those birds is a relief to her. Even that picture can be connected with the idea that her house is such a beautiful place which is a perfect place. She does not care them much but the sight of that pigeons and its nest is something which always stuck in her mind.

On our Verandah, the pigeon's nests were suddenly filled with babies that twittered and muttered and whispered and whimpered all day. The floor was littered with their droppings and discarded twigs. Other springs, I had had ladders propped up, and climbed them to peep at these minute, peeping infants. (Desai, *Cry, the Peacock* 34)

Providing her house for the pigeons to nest but her mind is in some struggle and she remembers this to escape from all the problems. Her present life is gloomy so she could sustain it

only by clinging on to any other memories like these so she is deliberately dreaming of these events. There is no proper place which her mind stays. It is always jumping from one event to another. Lack of stability is a major issue which she faces always. Her mind is wandering she does not know where she should stay. She also fails to concentrate on one thing; being with Gautama, she always visualizes her childhood. So she cannot enjoy her life and always complains about the boredom life with her husband.

In order to present submerged psychic truth she uses the technique of symbolism thoroughly and carefully chosen symbols. Moving to the next symbol, identity. About identity it is clearly evident that Maya is facing identity crisis. The way she behaves is a proof for this. Maya's behavior appears to be neurotic for her husband and he criticizes her father for turning her like this. But the real fact is she is not sure whether she belongs to the life which she is living or the lost beautiful childhood which she lived with her father. This confusion often disturbs her psyche and she ran out into problems that results in destruction in her married life.

Maya always wanted the life which she dreamt of and she realizes there are certain obstacles which stop her from achieving that life. The problem that she faced was the confusion which is haunted always about her existence. She is like an alien to the world uprooted from the place which she belongs to and planted to a totally unknown life. Maya always compares her life with her husband to her childhood with father. She failed to place her in the appropriate place.

'No one, no one else', I sobbed into my pillow as Gautama went into the bathroom, 'loves me as my father does.' The curtain fell to behind him, in tragic-folds. He did not hear me – the tap was running. The vacuum into which I spoke made me more frantic, and yet he was not really meant to hear. In Gautama's family one did not speak of love, far less of affection. One spoke – they spoke –

of discussions in parliament, of cases of bribery and corruption revealed in government, of newspaper editors accused of libel, and the trials followed, [...]They had innumerable subjects to speak on, and they spoke incessantly (Desai, *Cry, the Peacock* 43- 44).

Being in that family she feels like she does not belong there. They are not discussing anything which gives pleasure or entertainment. The systematic way of life is too much for her to bear. Love and affection is missing in Gautama's family. The above citation is the opinion about her husband's family. She goes on complaining about these but her husband is not lending his ears to hear it. In his opinion her father ruined her by giving more care to her. All these circumstances make her sick to live in reality and she slips to the one she loves to live. In reality she is a girl who is married to a middle aged man but she is a girl who is always dreaming about going back to the childhood where she could live like a princess. Her desires are like a fairy story and she is not bothered about the reality and her only aim to get into that life which she loves a lot.

She loses her control and her mind seeks pleasure which is denied in her married life. She feels suffocation in her husband's house and the members around the family are not so affectionate. So she stays in the reality wondering her identity. Nobody cares about her and she is not anything to anybody. She is denied the love and care which she thinks can hold her in the married life. When a person goes through many things like denials in his or her life there will be the change of character originates. The inner voice of one's physical body orders to do as it wants. There will be a conflict happens and it will be hard to identify the character. Desires and pleasures can take one into whatever extent it can. Thus this attitude or behavior may appear to be like madness.

Maya is portrayed as an emotional character who is over sensitive in mental proclivities but affectionate in nature. Her expectations of a caring soul who could sympathize commensurably with her sensibilities were not fulfilled by her husband Gautama. He never cared to understand her sentiments and becomes the reason for all the tragedies. Her inability to recognize the space and situation results in her mental destruction. Maya reverts back to childhood memories to escape the present. As a grown up woman now, she cannot relate herself to the realities of married life. Her husband Gautama is not a suitable substitute of her father. Maya the domestic outcast and alien house wife wants from her husband love and passion, but what she gets is logic and philosophy. This attitude of her husband made the change in Maya's character.

Maya's name is symbolic and she is aware of it as "only a dream – an illusion". "Maya", my very name means nothing, is nothing, but an illusion." (Desai, *Cry, the Peacock* 144) Her name also means worldly pleasures and temptations which will kill a person who comes in contact with them. Maya stands for the imagination and the dream world. She is a symbol of heart, loveliness and sensuousness; she symbolizes the positive side of life with all its joys and beauties. Gautama on the other hand implies the negative side of life in the name of reality. Gautama stands for mind, logic and detachment. His name evokes the image of Gautama Buddha whose name suggests "detachment" and rejection of pleasure, that is, Maya.

The next symbol is colours. In *Cry, the Peacock* there are two dominant colours – black and white. Red is probably symbolic of Maya's craving for a colorful life. It also suggests the underlying streak of violence. As Maya herself admits "a thousand drops of blood, a thousand can be also state as the ruby red hammer show red across" her vision. The white colour is indicative of drabness and indifference on one hand and weirdness and fragility on the other (Pathak 101).

The repeated suggestion of black and white portrays the changes in the behavior of Maya. The white colour can be also closely connected with the innocent dreamy girl who is in urgent need of the love and care which she was waiting for. Whereas the black colour is the dark side of her mind which is willing to go to any extent to achieve her desires.

[...] Queen of the Night attracts snakes too, and tuberoses. All white flowers, chaste sweet white flowers, luring the snakes to their hearts of scent. And they come, the snakes, they come slithering towards these virgins of 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. One never know, by as but one may bend to look into the yellow pollen upon a fragile stamen and be struck between the eyes, deeply and fatally, by a viper's fang. (Desai, *Cry, the Peacock* 107)

The last symbol is 'death'. After the death of her dog, Maya's mind is constantly haunted by the fear of death and this may be the reason why she is happy with the darkness of ignorance and night. Death plays a dominant role in the novel as well as her psyche. Maya who is unhappy in her life was always thinking about death and how it will give her pleasure. For her life is no more interesting and she is not happy with her married life in which she got a husband who is not loving and caring and for her life is equal to being dead.

Being completely alienated from her environment, Maya looks upon her relationship with Gautama and her relationship with death. Her consciousness moves rapidly towards complete breakdown. She starts behaving in an abnormal way. Her hysterical repetitions of the words and phrases, appearance of hallucinations and her weird actions are indicative of her psychotic behavior. The irrational, that was earlier looming large on the border of the memory, was now

her absolute master. Under the stress of the hidden fear she loses her senses and in a fit of madness she kills her husband. Having killed him, she becomes incurably insane and ultimately commits suicide.

In her weak moments, the childhood prophesy of the albino astrologer tightens its grip over her mind. She unconsciously begins to realize that this world is not a suitable place for her. A strong feeling of being entrapped in a hostile world prepares her for getting released from the bondage of physical existence. Death is now the word that rules over her psyche.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Every story needs a storyteller who is called as the narrator and the narrator is decided by the author. The author's perspective shapes the narrator, i.e., the author's vision, judgments, feelings, and emotions create the narrator. A narrator narrates the story from inside the mind of the character. Sometimes the narrator can be the author itself and the author uses the narrative style, where the various narrative techniques could be interspersed. The point of view is significant part of any narrative technique. The point of view could be different from one part of the novel to another. The point of view can be classified into the first person narrator or the omniscient narrator. The person narrator could be the author, the main character or the minor character. The first person narrator gives a close-up view of events. He narrates only what he hears or sees. The omniscient or third person narrator is one who surveys all the action and gives us a close view or far view of the action. The omniscient narrator is objective analytical, unlike the first person narrator. (Dodiya 33-35)

Anita Desai is one of the few feminist voices in the Indian literary firmament who has carved a niche for herself. She has made a landmark contribution by the flair of her creativity and imagination to remain an inspiration to the subsequent generations of women writers. Desai's primary concern as a novelist is with the sequestered individual living in an abandoned limbo of personal privation. She projects the psycho emotional and socio psychic states of protagonists living in an alien and cloistered world of existential problems and passions. Desai herself has disclosed in an interview that her concern revolves around the 'solitary and individual beings'. Her fictional world portrays alienated characters who find it difficult to come to terms with reality. Writer Desai is not far from her fictional world as her novels are purely subjective. Her

protagonists are women who find themselves caught in the web of social, economic, cultural and political crises. Anita Desai has been categorically hailed as a 'feminist writer' by several critics, although she never missed an opportunity to deny it. But analyses of her novels in the light of feminist ideology prove that her critics are right.

Anita Desai is able to narrate the story to portray the characters, to convey the mood, to evoke the atmosphere, to probe the psyche of her characters successfully and for this she uses flashback technique, stream of consciousness technique, use of contrasting characters, use of symbolism and effective use of language either to evoke an atmosphere or to transcribe the pronunciations or the use of rhetorical skill of language. To create realistic effect she also uses Hindi words but in moderation. The distinctive feature of novelist's fiction is to focus on the interior aspect of life. Anita Desai's novel is called 'forte of poetic sensibility' because she employs 'the language of the interior' to delineate the inner tension in the lives of her characters. She expresses a uniquely Indian sensibility. "Writing has become such a deeply ingrained habit, it is like chain smoking; I chain-smoke with words, with books." (Dalmiya) As Wimsatt and Brook suggest "every colour, sound, odor, emotion and every visual image has its correspondence in traits of human self" (Wimsatt & Brook 135).

In this project, a brief description of symbolism used by Anita Desai has been discussed with the help of two novels which are *In Custody* and *Cry, the Peacock*. Symbols have a vital role to play in displaying different states; generally, symbols used by Anita Desai are a part of circumstantial details of the narrative. In order to present submerged psychic truth she uses the technique of symbolism carefully choosing a cluster of images and myths. Symbols are most prominently amongst the devices deployed by her. These symbols are capable of objectifying the inner psychic layers of the characters. Six symbols are taken from both the novels to bring out

the idea of colonizing the psyche. The six symbols are father, colours, pigeon, identity, house and death. Each of these symbols is analyzed from the instances in the novel to prove how they are related to the argument which is raised that is approaching the psyche with the symbols and narrowing their inner thoughts and behavior which also affects their life. Both the characters in both the novels shares similar experience in one or the other way. So by taking these symbols which are recurring in these novels are helpful to draw a deep sketch of the character analysis and to study the haunting experience faced by their psyche.

Though *Cry, the Peacock* is Anita Desai's first novel, she employed it with the symbolist imagination. Likewise in the novel *In Custody* we discussed symbols. From both these novels we could get a clear image that the characters discussed here, that is Deven and Maya, were individuals with great expectation and dream but they are living an alienated life. Their behavior and their interests made their life miserable. They turned to be a laughing stock to others. Deven's dream to serve Urdu language was not appreciated by everyone. Even his wife was against this idea. Thus he was forced to lead a life to serve his family. In the case of Maya she viewed her life in a more interesting way and she was raised by her father who loved her lot but her married life was just opposite to something which she dreamt of. Deven and Maya were living a life which they are not interested in. Deven was forced to become the teacher of Hindi in order to support his family. In reality he is fond of Urdu language but fate made him to opt for this job. For him this was a job which made his life a mess and he continued it for the sake of his family. Life of Deven as a Hindi teacher was like a prison to him, he wanted to flee from there but circumstances did not allow him to do so. In the case of Maya she was not interested in the married life with Gautama but she married him for the sake of her father. She also lived in suffocation with Gautama and it was like a prison as it is in the case of Deven. Both the

characters are not given the life which they dreamt of but when the story moves forward they try everything to get the life that they aimed at.

Living like prisoners, both the characters' life turned to be a miserable one. Their behaviors turned to be abnormal to others and everyone around them rejected their ideas. Their expectations were something hard to achieve. In both the stories, the characters' fathers are responsible for dream and expectations. For Deven, his father was the first person to introduce him to the world of Urdu language and in the case of Maya her father plays a major role in turning her daughter into a toy princess. Even after the death of the fathers, both the characters were stuck in the imaginary world.

Deven was not paid much and he finds it hard to meet both the ends and he does not have the will power to take the opportunity handed to him by Murad. But when time goes he decided to take the opportunity even though it risks his job. Maya was not happy with her life. There was nothing happening in her life which can be considered as pleasing to her but to succeed in her life she decided to remove all the obstacles in her life and she decided to take very strange decision that took her husband's life. When problems piled up in their life they solved them differently which portrays psychic changes.