CHAPTER- III

PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

The Fear Within

“Psychological oppression in learning contempt for one’s kind and devaluing females and feminine qualities. If carried to extremes, this can mean self-hatred which may lead to timidity, lack of confidence, fear, hesitancy and insecurity” - Anne Wolpe & Anne lire Kulum

This chapter deals with the outcome of the sociological oppression and the psychological imbalance created by circumstances on protagonists like Sarita in The Dark Holds No Terrors and Jayanthi in That Long Silence on the one hand and the more precipitous stand taken by Maya Raka and Nanda Kaul in Anita Desai’s works. The helplessness and isolation is rather felt by the characters – a mental state rather than a physical predicament.

Shashi Deshpande implies that the mental state resulting from the oppression and sense of desolation – does not lead to socially agonizing and physically unpleasant situations as shown in most of Prem Chand’s work and occasional in that of Sarat Chandra’s. She recognizes the damage it does to the growth of a woman’s mind, her maturity and her wisdom. It closes the opportunity for women of gaining a firsthand experience of life and reduces that to a kind of prearranged series of stimuli and responses lacking the essential element of life. Even the cruelty, the bias and the injustice don’t come through as all is lost in a response that freezes the whole thing. The result is a statement of strangulated aspirations and shrill cries lost in icy silence.
They appear to fight the exterior forces which are also the ones that created their present state of angst and helplessness. The present status is the result of the sociological reality with all its oppressions. The tragedy of Shashi Deshpande’s characters is that they are out to fight against forces – but suddenly the realization dawns that what they fight against are also the same forces that have been imbibed into them. She cannot break away the shackles as they are in part imposed by her own self. They discover that the shackles that they intend to break free are not physical shackles but those that have reduced her mind to eternal slavery and compliance. Hence quest becomes more complex. Deshpande aims at portraying realistically Indian women’s sense of frustration and their alienation. The characters are shown often as torn apart by the conflicting forms of tradition and modernity not a satisfactory alternative. Thus her characters find themselves in a halfway house, more poised towards a third alternative. Hence their quest continues and it is not merely a search for a lost feminine identity. Her women struggle to find their own voice and are continuously in search to give them a defining moment.

In sharp contrast, in Anita Desai the inner and outer rhythms of human psyche are all important. She is a modernist who shares some common features with other prominent writers of her times. The method of ironic juxtaposition, a well – known Victorian ploy used by novelists like Tolstoy, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Bronte and Hardy is employed by Anita Desai for heightened intensity of drama and characterization. Only the characters effectively move out of their imprint of caricature which is an essential sign of modernity. Also Anita Desai’s novels are more melodramatic than those of Shashi Deshpande. At another level she appears to be the more cognizant of the two writers leaving less to speculation and opinion and depending on slightly sharply focused leit-motifs that lead to a given path of action.
The battles and struggles in Shashi Deshpande’s novels are fought in the mind and the silence and non-committal stance of the characters is taken as strength and also a protective wall that shields. From this it may be inferred that the two writers have great thematic similarities but differ greatly in the denouement and execution of their plots. Shashi Deshpande prefers the phlegmatic overly cautious style of a social psychologist like a George Eliot or a Henry James to the overtly deterministic style of a Dostoevsky or a Dickens. The prose poems can assume various forms and their versatility may extend from the ironic to the naively passionate from genuinely profound and tragic to the artfully subtle and spastic, loftily symbolic. The past life of the protagonists provides the default backdrop against which the present consciousnesses of the characters interact and lay foundation for the emerging personality of the protagonist. It is here that the European, American and Russian literatures have made a quantum jump with such masterly exponents of characterization like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, James and Stendhal. The same trend is seen in regional literatures particularly in the novels of Prem Chand (Hindi) and Sarat Chandra (Bengali) who have been recognized as world-class novelists. The characters of Nirmala (Prem Chand) and Subhadra (Sarat Chandra) stand out as highly mature and well crafted icons of Indian womanhood. In the following two generations there has been a shift in popular media from fiction to films. Hence, the movies of the post-independent era -- starting from 1948 and going upto the first three decades to 1980 and then at a slower pace during the last two decades of the 20th century – have been the nerve-center of modern Indian thought and ideology.

The works of the literature of this period have been relegated to a subordinate position – hence it may be inferred that literature does not lead the age – but it only exists as a secondary influence along with other arts like painting. In the pre-
independent India before the advent of the silent movies and talkies – literature had a lead role – not merely in one or two languages – but in a majority of Indian languages across all cultures – including the three main ones like the Aryan, Dravidian and the Persia – Arabic cultures. Any study of the arts of the sub – continents of India should per se note this very important feature in the historical transformation of this multicultural entity. Only a fair and open minded approach to all the major axles of this wheel of India will yield a satisfactory outcome.

Anita Desai has adopted a controlled method of stream of consciousness and internalized narration where actions are interlaced with ideas and impressions – not as disconnected as in European writers Joyce or Beckett but more as a mellowed version where the absurdity of human relations is questioned as opposed to the larger and more fundamental concern of the absurdity of human existence. There are a few examples of a similar style in Upendranath Asque’s Chetan, the first steam of conscious novel in Hindi. None of the post- colonial literature with a few exceptions like Narayan can be compared with British and American literature as the milieu they deal with is different, and the themes are too individualistic and not universal. There are no writers who have specialized in the technique and style like a Conrad or a Kosinsky or a Turgenev who have influenced the genre at the international level. The contribution of Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai has to be considered against this backdrop. In other words one has to concentrate on the thematic variations they could achieve despite the sociological and psychological oppression under gone by the women characters in their works. Chapter 2 has given a detailed account of how all the protagonists in all the novels start with certain ambitions or aspirations encountering certain situations that lead to an intense sociological oppression. The quest for identity ends up as discovery of the presence of circumstances created by or
confounded by a perception that has not yet been sharpened by experience but blunted by an injured self-esteem. The quest has to overcome the angst of the self-imposed, self-inflicted estrangement, has to push out of the maze and find the quintessential reality.

The pressures of the existing social circumstances mentioned in the previous chapter create not only the sociological oppression but also, more importantly, the psychological oppression in the minds of the protagonists. The latter cripples their confidence and sense of security forcing them into a preconceived trap of status for women designed by the patriarchal society. Very few women can emerge out of this vortex of psychological oppression. A majority of them fall into the emotional trap, the status given to women in patriarchal society.

It is believed that Psychoanalytical theory propagates that the fundamental reason for oppression in women maybe due to the Oedipus complex they develop in their infancy and early adolescence. This perspective originates from Sigmund Freud's Three Contributions to the Theory of Sexuality, Infantile Sexuality and The Transformation of Puberty. The psychoanalysts examine displacements, dreams and transference to explain motivations and 'hidden truths'. Also it acts as a protective case against the hidden feelings raging from envy to hatred that emanate from the mother.

This chapter explores and analyses the impact of psychological oppression on the three protagonists Sarita. in The Dark Holds no Terrors, Indira in Roots and Shadows and Jayanthi in That Long Silence of Shashi Deshpande’s novels in comparison to Anita Desai’s protagonists Maya, from Cry the Peacock, Bim from Clear Light of Day and Raka and Nanda Kaul from Fire on the Mountain.
These Psychological influences stunt the natural growth and development of emotions in the protagonists of Shashi Deshpande’s novels. Whether it is Saru, or Indu or Jaya, all three had a good beginning with the support of their respective fathers, even if it was only for a short period. This itself should have given them the strength and confidence to work through or around any kind of setbacks that life hurls at them. But unfortunately in the absence of the father and his support all these three women are caught-up in the quagmire of the sociological conditions and oppressions. One sees these women questioning the age-old imposed gender roles assigned to them, considered as natural and culturally accepted from the beginning of patriarchal trends that have crept into the Indian society that had to face a series of aggressions from foreign rulers. This could be clearly noticed from the life of Amrapali, a princess turned into a courtesan, who had to compromise her superior intellectual and philosophical prowess for the general welfare of her own kin. Finally Amrapali triumphs in a fascinating tussle of the genders by sacrificing her love for the prince and turning into a Buddhist nun. Right from that age, Indian women are seen to fight with the forces outside that they assume are the ones that have caused their present state of utter helplessness and silence. In reality it is the turbulence in their mind and emotions that is to be set in order.

The present status is the result of the sociological reality with all its conditions and oppressions that tarnishes and controls the emotions and thoughts of these women, faced with hostile social and communal forces without any outside supervision or support.

Despite all the rebellion against being smothered into the mould of traditional women, they themselves have internalized all the do’s and don’ts so much so that they are unable to break free of those shackles which have been created by their minds. In
other words, a lot of sociological factors hinder the natural development of the growth of their minds, by imposing minimum pressure that turns their lives into an eternal struggle wherein her mind undergoes a psychological frozenness. She is no more allowed to live her life, but is forced to enact it. This in essence, is what Shashi Deshpande projects in her novels.

She aims at portraying credibly how Indian Women’s concealed frustration results in their alienation. These characters are often projected as engulfed by the conflicting forces of tradition and modernity. Her women are stressed to find their own voice and are on the lookout for their true selves. The very apt statement in Deshpande’s novel That Long Silence reflects the same: ‘But they become fluid, with no shape, no form of their own’ (65). Jaya, undertakes a futile search for her ‘self’. She gives an emphatic expression to her thoughts in the following lines, “but the real picture, the real ‘you’ is never seen. Looking for it is as bewildering as trying to know how you really look. Ten different mirrors show you ten different faces” (87).

The protagonists of Roots and Shadows, Indu’s experiences, too are no different. In an elated mood she thinks that she has found in Jayanth h, her husband, what she claims that the other part of her whole self but later she is crestfallen and realises that it was ‘an illusion’ (RS 68).

Saru in The Dark Holds no Terrors, like Indu, finds her marital condition unbearable and feels ‘the desperation of a trapped animal.’ Her grandmother, deserted by her husband, “had never... complained” and had lived with her plight as her ‘luck’, believing that "it is written on my forehead’ (TDHNT 121)

Saru’s mother did not have an identity or even place for herself. She always adjusted in any available corner, ‘a room of her own and silence had become a habit” between her and her husband’ (112).
All the elderly women have accepted their condition unlike the three protagonists. It is apt to recall the words of Dr. S. Prasannasree when discussing the distinctive feature of Deshpande’s novels is the description of women's inner world. The main concern of the protagonists is the urge to find self thereby create space for self and develop and blossom into a complete personality on their own. ‘The predicament of women, especially those who are educated and belong to the middle class, has been most prominently dealt with’ (40). One can easily observe that basically there is a fear to face oneself in all the three women. There is a way to elude this fear and that is to gain one’s own self at once, and fear does not exist at all.

The fact that the three women Saru, Indu and Jaya hate their very female self shows that they have become the victims of their own psychological insecurities. There is a marked silence in matters regarding sex in their life. All of them are scared or ashamed of their sexuality. The ‘pseudo-Puritanism' and ‘shame’, mentioned in Roots and Shadows must be set aside. Indu resents her womanhood and as a woman feels, "hedged in by her sex".

In a patriarchal society, dominated by men, a woman is expected to be ‘passive’ and ‘unresponsive’, for it shocks people like Jayanth ‘to find passion in woman’. In this repressive atmosphere Indu finds herself just an anachronism. Indu realises that she is: ‘a woman who loves her husband too much and too passionately yet is ashamed of it’ (RS 84). Deshpande’s women seem to be rather fettered by the natural functions of the body. Growing into a woman Saru of The Dark Holds no Terrors, feels something "shameful" and a "torture" (55). Similarly Jaya of That Long Silence is painfully conscious of the fact that her life revolves around her husband’s “needs and desires'. She ruminates: “We seemed to be left with nothing but
our bodies, and after we had dealt with them we faced blankness. The nothingness of what had seemed a busy and full life was frightening” (TLS 25).

It is this loss of meaning in life, this emptiness, this lack of an enlivening and enlightening interest that gives way to the morbid psychological state of estrangement. Unlike Saru of The Dark Holds no Terrors, Indu in Roots and Shadows expresses her aversion to ‘the suckling baby’. She feels that she would “end up like Sunanda-atya, pure, female animal” (RS 6).

These women are averse to most of the natural biological functions of a woman, especially associated with mother or the mother-figure. In fact, they develop apathy towards their body from their childhood. They are faced with the problem of what the mother figure represents. The only way out for them is to seek a new environment where the mother cannot exercise her will.

Their parental home, a symbol of tradition and old values would have no room for them. They breathe the air of rituals that obstruct the growth of a woman as a being. To them, mother is the possible model, after which she must mould her life, looks a bad model and hence rejected. The protagonists in Shashi Deshpande's novels seek marriage as a choice to the oppression created by the attitudes of parents and other family members. Marriage to the person of their choice is freedom. Their dissatisfaction with their role as daughter ends with marriage and now they look optimistically to the new role of a wife with the expectation of winning the long-denied freedom. Freedom is breaking from the shackles of one’s thinking by not realizing that the thought of bondage exists only in the mind. These women enter one relationship lo get freed of another. However, they do not give themselves to the relationship of marriage also. It is a popular belief that in India everyone has to live within the bounds of a relationship which lacks fairness to women and is loaded with
further ideas that pose a threat to her being. This seems to be the order of the day and there is no other way. Yet Indu, Saru and Jaya see marriage as another shackle. In fact, even Shashi Deshpande agrees that it is needed. It is apt to recall what she stated in her interview on that: “It’s necessary for women to live within relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this and no further, then one becomes unhappy”. (Deshpande)

Such unhappiness is due to the rigid traditions that intimidate the mind from being bold and confident. The fear of appearing to be less 'feminine' is what silences these women. The world of Shashi Deshpande's women is a nightmare. There is a constant yet silent battle. The modern, educated, working woman realizes that she can establish her equal status by such acts as marriage, career etc. But her behaviour is limited and defined by that external force of domineering larger than life institutions of society, family etc. This leads to the turmoil of the emotions in the mind which in turn leads to self-doubt that ultimately overpowers them in the face of larger reality restrains the emergence of the true self. This in turn leads to further trauma in accepting the situation.

The dream world of marriage collapses when reality crops up. The so-called ‘love’ is quickly perceived by Saru, Indu and Jaya for what it is in reality. They see it only as physical instinct. Very soon they realize the horrendous error made by them in rushing into marriage under the illusion of freedom. Marriage appears to be another inescapable trap that leaves women like the caged animal. They perceive marriage as only the dark room where terror awaits in the form of husband who does not hesitate to appease his physical desires with little concern for her consent. This unimaginable situation which Saru was never exposed to shocks her. When Saru compares the two major situations in her life, that is, her life with her mother, before marriage, where
she was ignored and abused for being a girl and to the one after her marriage to Manohar and the subsequent suffering due to the domestic violence in the form of marital rape, makes her wonder which of them is worse. In Saru’s words, “she had exchanged one pair of pinching, torturing shoes for another” (THNT 87). Deshpande implies that marriage ceases to be a revered institution or a hope or a dream – and becomes a tool as common as the shoe.

Like the paternal home, marriage seems to be “the hallowed lines drawn by others” where Indu, Saru and Jaya have to be carefully walking on them one step this side or that might ruin their lives. What seemed to be an access to freedom has ended up as a trap in a marital maze, where woman is reduced to the role of a bewildered wanderer or visitor, hopelessly trapped by alien forces, and more responsibilities which may easily transform into burdens.

The type of psychological oppression where Jaya feels that she is in a cage; being limited and stunted to a narrow space is manifested initially in boredom, frustration which subsequently leads to the problem that has no name. She is always angry with her father for rousing ambitions and then abandoning her even before they took shape. Jaya recalls the unfulfilled promises of her father, who always said:

I named you Jaya, Jaya for victory. You are not like the others
Jaya pulling ruthlessly soul of the safe circle in which the other girls had stood, girls who performed pujas ask for nothing more than the destiny of being wives and mother (TLS 123).

But with his death even her confidence broke and she hesitantly and reluctantly once again joined the safe circle of women. The taste of power and freedom spoiled her to enjoy the pedestal post. At the same time she did not dare to
step out of that position for fear of security. Her fear changes shapes and turns into aversion towards her husband Mohan and his weak nature. She looks down upon him for his failures and also blames him for her failure as a writer too. She blames him for shattering the symbolic picture of eternal happiness of “a pair of bullocks yoked together”. This constant reference to animal imagery, however, does not show any anger or anxiety for social reform or intense concern for women.

Saru, in *The Dark Holds no Terror* struggles with another kind of psychological oppression which ‘manifests itself in anxiety and fear of being loved, of being mistreated or assaulted.’ (TDHNT 69).

This oppression has been referred to as the ‘psychic cost of being a woman. ’Her efforts to marry someone of her choice was only to free herself from her mother, who was a victim of the ‘housewife’s syndrome’ with no personal identity and fits into the tradition of silent suffering. But even this effort backfires and her husband Manu brings her more misery. In *The Dark Holds no Terror*, Saru compares her physical relationship with Manu, her husband. She says that her marital relationship is similar to that of ‘protean monster’ at night and a ‘dutiful husband’ in the day. Their sexual life is reduced to macho sadist acts inflicted on woman by man. ...We’re on different planes. He chooses his level. And I to choose the one he would like to be on. It humiliates me (110).

She is scared and runs away from the torture afflicted upon her by her husband, who once upon a time was her dream lover and a man of her choice. Lack of love and support from family and search for fulfillment, for the restoration of loss and deprivation of parental love leads her to Manohar who becomes her nemesis. Saru is lead into a ‘childish rage’ when her mother died as she had lost the chance to “show her’ the independence she had won. But her mother had not waited for the reply.
had gone, leaving the battle unfinished, taking victory away with herself. All her postures now crumbled into dust, into nothingness” (73). Saru then wants to salvage the marriage, even here she feels cheated out when her husband turns from the loving charmer into the sadist lover. This is clearly reflected in the thoughts of Saru:

I saw that the glazed look... with the ‘familiar glaze come over his eyes, the mask- like rigidity come over his face; at night, waiting for the terror to strike, she becomes just a terrified animal. Thinking how she could do nothing against his maniacal strength of the children in the next room who pinioned her to a terrified silence (136).

She dares not to fight against the injustice and pain inflicted on her. Saru is worried about the impact of her behavior on her children. She does not want the suffering to be evident to them. She does not want a repeat of her childhood so she allows the torture to continue and bears the suffering silently. In Roots and Shadows, Indu after Mini’s marriage realizes that psychological oppression exists when a woman has internalized her oppression. It is not only her behavior, defined, restricted, changed and controlled by the external forces of dominant institutions but also her feelings, attitudes and psychic life are equally restrained by the internalized beliefs.

“Creating a sense of inferiority and incompetence within a person is far more effective than any external control, in line with the forms of rules, laws, and restrictive norms, could ever be’ (RS 59).

This is what ails Indu, the liberated woman. Her love for Jayanth is born on the rebound. Her craving for freedom with love which she lacked in her ancestral home results in her marriage. She is so focused and single minded in her love and emotions
towards Jayanth that she fears losing him or being away from him. It is out of this fear that she tries to fit into role similar to the one that she assumes to be Jayanth’s model woman. She never dares to express her true feelings or emotion or passions for fear of losing his affection and falling from the role of model woman. She cannot think of a life without him. To retain Jayanth’s love for eternity Indu tries to fit into the picturesque setting of “not the affluent- In fact, it’s considered vulgar to be affluent. We're the upper middle class”, (13)

She victimizes herself into the role that Akka taught her in childhood with no choices. Indu recalls her childhood experiences in the following lines:

And all my life, especially in this house, I had seen the truth of this. The women had no choice but to submit, to accept. And I had often wondered....have they been born without wills, or have their will atrophied through a life time of disuse? (34)

It's in the same atrophied state of emotion that Indu remains. It is Naren who awakens her and reminds her of her elevated and noble status. "You sound like those families in the advertisement slides. Happy, smiling, healthy and in colour…” (65)

She safeguards her true feelings and self so carefully in a desperate attempt to salvage the aspirations of an important mood in her life. This is expressed in Jaya’s following lines: “I had learnt to reveal to Jayanth nothing but what he wanted to hear: I hid my responses and emotions as if they were bits of garbage” (TLS 49). This is because Indu cannot visualize a life beside or beyond Jayanth. Such is her dependence on him and his love that she lives and exists only for him and he becomes cardinal part of her being its only lasting bond with reality.
'When I look in the mirror; I think of Jayanth. When I dress, I think of Jayanth. When I undress, I think of him. Always what he wants, what he would like, what would please him? And I can't blame him. It's not he who has pressurized me into this. It's the way I want it to be. And one day I had thought, isn’t there anything I ain't at all? Have I become fluid, with no shape, no form of my own? At that moment a savage truth had stared me in the face... without wants there is no ‘I’ (RS39).

This is in accordance with the male construct of woman with the result that, as Gilbert and Gabar point out in The Madwoman in the Attic, she finally cannot even see herself. Even when she is looking in the mirror she is looking at the male construct of herself.

Simone de Beauvoir has rightly said that ‘a person is not born but rather becomes a woman.’ This is very true for in our society the girl is made to realize from her early age to accept that she is ‘paraya dhan' and marriage as the ultimate goal of a girl's life. This early molding of a girl's mind set is reflected in these women. Women in their anxiety to make the dream of happy marriage a reality do not struggle to take the role of the other. They consent and accept man as the superior looker who must be pleased by his counterpart, the woman. To fulfill her destiny woman must suffocate herself. She does all this to please her husband and the in-laws. The wife changes her outward appearance to husband's taste, Jaya chops off her beautiful long hair. There is every attempt to mask her real self. Indu is besotted by her husband. But she is not happy because, she wants from him not the affection he gives her, but a total
commitment like her own to him. She begins to think of love as a trap which makes women humble and dependent and often helpless.

Even their values are jettisoned. Both Indu and Jaya are false to themselves as writers because of their husbands. Jaya takes to writing pretty riddles an acceptable 'Sita’ column. The one time she writes a good story, her husband hurts her by commenting ‘how could you write these things, how could you write such ugly things.’ (63)

But, when Indu wants to give up her job as a journalist, her husband dissuades her by saying, “that’s life: what can one person do against the whole system; no point making yourself ridiculous with futile gestures. We need the money, don’t we” (71).

This shows his nature for depending on her earning to be luxurious. In the case of Saru marriage turns sour because of professional jealousy. While Manu is an underpaid lecturer Saru is a successful doctor. Manu’s attitude is ambiguous. To him wife is the prized possession to show off. In Manohar there is a deep resentment at Saru stripping him off in his career. When Saru offers to give up her practice so as to save her marriage, Manu does not allow it because he has grown accustomed to a life of luxury and ease.

Marriage calls for clearly segregated areas for husband and wife. Jaya for instance learns slowly and painfully what she is not. During their first quarrel, she is loud and shouts at Mohan in anger and this shocks him. As she rages at him he goes blank-faced and silent. He repeatedly says, “How could you? I never thought my wife would say such things to me. You're my wife...” (TLS 79).

But what really shakes Jaya is the distaste on her husband's face on the day she loses her temper as though my emotions had made me ugly, as if I'd got bloated with them. Later, when I knew him better, I realized that to him made woman
unwomanly. (47). ‘So, she learns to cook well, sew on buttons, keep the house shining, and keep her temper in check. It is part of “the burden of wifehood”. (29)

Indu, on the other hand resents the fact that she is a woman because it closes so many doors. Woman learns to adopt certain strategies to survive within marriage. These strategies conceal her true self. Another important factor which forces these women into the cloistered corners is the fear of turning into their alter egos. It is a real struggle for the woman to retain her sanity and suppress the voice of rebellion which would end her up as an insane person. Jaya’s alter ego is Kusuma. She is Jaya’s cousin but has been deserted by her husband. She wants to jump into the village well and end her life. Kusuma is normal in her behavior only with Jaya. With others she is screaming and beating and appears to be an animal, Jaya is worried that if she does not keep up with the role of a woman she will start losing the sympathy and develop an antipathy which would free her emotions and expose her true self to all.

Thus, it may be said that the women who do not have either a blissful childhood or married life are sure to succumb to psychological oppression resulting into depression or at times leading to perversion or hysteria as seen in Kusuma of That Long Silence.

Anita Desai, within the limited milieu achieves remarkable depth and intensity. Her characters are neurotic. She conceives a small world and a limited setting. So is her descriptive focus which is also limited. Her sense of detail is outstanding, her pictorial observation, and noticing things which are mostly ignored by other contemporary woman writers is noteworthy. This is one of the attributes that Tolstoy gives to those writers he thinks is unique and qualifies to become a great writer from a good writer. She is insightful, when going deep into the psyche, to those places in the soul and mind where everything acquires distinctive characteristics.
Then she also focuses on feelings, emotions, and moods including all the things that influence the mind by leaving their mark. It is in these instances that her prose is more like lyrical poetry. Anita Desai’s main focus in writing is to explore the quest for truth. In an article she says:

Writing to me is a process of discovering the truth- the truth that is nine-tenths of the iceberg that lies submerged beneath one-tenth visible portion we call reality. Writing is my way of plunging to the depths and exploring this underlying truth. All my writing is an effort to discover, to underline and convey the true significance of things. (972)

For Anita Desai, it is not only the theme that matters, but also the inner and outer rhythms of human psyche are more important. It is apt to quote Elaine Ho:

The modernists anticipate the preoccupation with psychic inwardness, by means of which the self is transformed into a cosmic centre and mover, as this will later become characteristic of certain modernist writers, but they still seek to relate this preoccupation to transcendental values, if not sources, in the external world. For them the universe is still alert, still the active transmitter of spiritual signs. (Ho 13)

From the above quotation it can be interpreted that Anita Desai is one of the modernist writers who shares very few common features with other prominent contemporary writers. Some significant features specific to this type of writing are discussed at length by Ralph Freedman. He says:
The main figure in the novel is the symbolic hero, a passive purveyor of visions, who in quest of meaning of life absorbs the external world and mirrors it in all its multitudinous manifestations. He is a character, with an aesthetic image, wearing the novelist's mask and thus through his contradictory self, in the end, produces a picture of a unified or total self (Freeman 5).

According to Freeman the inner self of the protagonist, driven by the physical objects which serve as the catalyst, ensuing hallucinations and dreams, is expressed through a series of images. These novels are psychological plays that mirror the inner struggle, through aesthetic objectivity. The novelists with poetic fervor mirror themselves in their specific area of interest and remain detached, until a spiritual self-image is produced. The main subject of a lyrical novelist is to show the natural relationship between the inanimate and the animate objects.

The novel, *Cry the Peacock*, begins with captivating imagery and it is only towards the end of the chapter that all the characters are introduced. Thus the inner world of Maya’s psyche captivates the attention of the reader involuntarily. The representative self-portrait of Maya is painted bit by bit juxtaposing it with other characters and scenes like Gautama, his mother and sister, Maya's father, Pom, and Leila, the image scenes portray like the one which depicts the encounter with the albino astrologer, the dinner parties, cabaret dancers and storm scene towards the end of the novel, all these are presented very intensely. This is evident in events that lead to increase Maya's inner state of turbulence.
The doting father, who cared and loved his only living relation, Maya, this dream-child Maya, is remembered with special affection, he has looked after me alone and his beam is especially tender, In attention especially loving. I think, that he is like a silver oak himself with his fine silver white hair brushed smoothly across his bronzed scalp (CP 39).

Maya's marital life is in total contrast to her previous status as the much adored daughter. Gautama, her husband holds, "Reality and idealism is one and the same thing. Life is not a matter of distinguishing between the two but of reconciling them" (20-21).

Gautama's mother is totally contrasting from Maya's father like some busy rhinoceros charging through the forest, to her dispensary, or her crèche, or her workshop for the blind, the disabled, the unemployed’ (71).

Leila and Pom, a couple who are the self-contented, representing compromise in marital life are juxtaposed with Maya's married life. Maya’s words echo the absence of understanding and communication and the ensuing silence between individuals. This is evident in her statement, “There was not one of my friends who could act as an anchor any more, and to whomsoever I turned for resources, betrayed me now” (64).

Maya assumed that marriage would be similar to her rosy childhood. She feels that neither her father nor husband nor even her friends would be able to remove the terrible feeling of despair and desolation. She assumes that Gautama would take over the role of the understanding father-figure. But the past accomplishments and expectations of the present are sadly 'out of joint'. The consequent depression into which Maya gradually slips condenses into a mental state that resembles
existentialism, which results in high level personal disaster, and culminates in murder, suicide or madness. These suicidal tendencies were clearly established by the Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, Viktor Franklin in his theory of Logo therapy. This theory of existentialism proposes that all failure, pain and suffering emanate from the absence of a great motive or aim in life. Thus the characters of Chekov and Kafka end up in intense personal crisis that removes all human intent and action that may lead to success and leave an emptiness and a meaningless existence that awaits the characters of Chekov’s *Ward Number 6* and Kafka’s *The Country Doctor*. It may result in violence or murder as in the stories of post-modern writers like Jerzi Kosinsky (*The Steps, The Painted Bird and Being There*) Anita Desai (*Cry, the Peacock*)

Death always haunts Maya’s thoughts. In the fourth year of marriage, she is constantly reminded of the astrologer’s nightmare and the prediction about the impending death in her marriage. Maya is nostalgic about her carefree life in childhood where the only concerns were centered on her racquet games, parties and the ever-doting dad. Yet when Maya recalls the words of the astrologer immediately her present is eclipsed with gloom and sinister thoughts. The time-conscious individual is juxtaposed against the timelessness of the universe. The popular saying that men may come and men may go but humans go on forever is symbolized in these lines:

Such sea storms had blown since the time when the earth was desert and no living thing, no creeping, crawling beasts, plants or cells stirred upon that great plain. Such storms would sweep the earth erase and the last traces of these huge masses of creeping, crawling, toiling, struggling cell-conglomerations
that now' wracked the earth when the “time came for annihilation (187).

Gautama even tries to makes it clear to Maya by saying: “This life you speak of, this little flash-in-the pan, how insignificant and trivial it appears compared with the immortal cycle to which all humanity is bound” (122).

The negative aspect of albino’s prophecy matches with the symbol of the peacock’s cry. The peacock symbolises life -in- death and death-in-life. This perfect image represents an emotional and ideal love. Maya compares the dance of the peacock with “Shiva’s dance”, a symbol of creation as well as destruction- Maya, like a peacock, swings between her higher aim and pleasure seeking nature. Anita Desai is successful as a novelist in connecting the agonies and pangs of Maya linguistically by using well known conventional imagery of peacock-mating and Shiva’s dance; but disappoints to extend the steadfast wisdom of a peacock which can soothe the tense nervous system of Maya. Her cries become indicative of her communicative ambiguity. The language she chooses reveals the inner threads of her psyche as clearly as the mirror image. The psychological growth of language in human mind has wonderfully described by Noam Chomsky:

There is little reason to doubt that what is true of lower organism is true of human as well, particularly the case of language, it is natural to expect a close relation between innate properties of the mind and features of linguistic structure: for language, after all has no existence apart from its mental representation (Chomsky 93)
The images of ‘window’ and ‘lizards’ indicate Maya’s gloomy mind and her craving to get relieved from all the shackles. The illusion of memory surrounds her, yet it is her awareness of its existence that makes her call it a “treacherous memory” (CP 85). The constant drum-beat in her psyche, the drum beat of her fear-ridden thoughts is evident. Her "giggling in the mirror” creates an absurd image. This absurd image of the mirror justifies her mute language for her "unspoken decision.” (135). The image of the ‘tremendous storm’ generates an urgency in her to follow her unexpressed decision to kill Gautama which results in the image of the dance of Shiva recurs. Before murdering her husband Maya revives the dance of Shiva at the unconscious level with the use of language. This is evident in the following lines:

Having achieved this my excitement which had risen, stammering to a hot perspiring peak, now subsided into that quite... and I led him out towards the veranda from here a flight of steep cement stairs led up to the roof. But just before passing out of room, I caught sight of the bronze Shiva, dancing just a shade outside the ring of lamplight and yet there was nothing frozen or immobile in this pose of eternal creative movement’ (203).

The novel Clear Light of Day is a perfect example of the detailed way of collecting bits to understand the whole by perceiving the world through the magnifying glass. The post-partition India is so very complex, troubled yet awesome that the details like the rotting fruit in the garden, the intense heat that quells movement and ambition help best to understand.
The story of *Clear Light of Day* is set against the historical milieu of separation. There is the geographical and historical separation of India which itself is an imposing backdrop. In addition to the above are the many separations that occur in the Das family. The story unfolds with the arrival of the 40-year-old Tara who returns from Washington with her diplomat husband Bakul to visit her family in Old Delhi. In the Das family lives her older sister Bim who is also a highly reputed history teacher and her other brother Baba who is retarded. There is also the garden that was neglected remains the same and the old well where as per the local belief that a cow drowned there long ago. The memories remain intact. Sometimes one recalls through isolated sequences, and at other times through the struggles of the characters and one finds reality through the rose-tinted glasses. Tara, for example, feels that she was unable to digest the fact that her much cherished memories turn bitter when she visits her old family and the house. She is shocked to have forgotten the drab surroundings. She wonders how they ignored all decay. The following lines reflect her childhood.

It is this struggle with self and circumstances that compels these women to break free from the shackles and establish themselves. The breaking of the long silence and reaching the clear light of day is the only way to emerge from the psychological trap. This then leads to self realization which is discussed in the next chapter Quest and the Reality.