



Psychological Servitude of Bim in Anita Desai's 'Clear Light of Day'

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Abstract- Freud's mind theory linked the Id, the Ego, and the Superego at a certain level. The ego was connected to the concept of consciousness and truth. Id is the animal essence of a human being, and ego is the part where logical decisions are made. Superego is the unconscious part which is striving for integrity. This paper tries to understand the psychological connection of Bim. It strives to understand how her actions are outcomes of her childhood psychological servitude. Psychological dependence, unlike many of Anita Desai's protagonists, is handled differently. In this book, Bim embraces her life and truth. Both mental blockages and cognitive issues are accepted at the end of the novel as the characters understand reality. The childhood influence and difficulties all shaped her into becoming a wonderful person.

Keywords: Psychological bondage, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Topographical, Unconscious Mind

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature may be categorized into various types as Hindi Literature, English literature, Sanskrit literature, Urdu literature, African literature, Australian literature, Canadian literature, Parsi literature and the literature of New Zealand. Each country has its own culture and Literature. To define Literature is an almost impossible task. We can simply say that it is a permanent expression in words of some thought or emotion, and that is as far as we need go.

Literature is the mirror of society and reflects the social, political and economic life of its own age. Indian writing in English is a part of literature and is largely encouraged and appreciated. There are three reviews as the Indo - Anglian and Indo - English writing.

- Indian literature in English translation.
- English literature written either by Indians or by Englishmen on Indian themes and thoughts.
- Indo - Anglian journalism and other Indian writing in English.

1.1 Indian Writing

Indian writing in English has produced a galaxy of women writers touching various facets of woman's life. Women's writings in India with its varied dimensions and themes have occupied a very important place in the field of literature. Today, women are not just confined to the four walls of their house, but have scaled each and every arena which was earlier considered to be the forte of men only. The Sita-Savitri image expected of women due to the patriarchal society had kept women bogged down for ages, curtailing their intellectual expressions. But today women have realized the tricks played by the patriarchal society and have come out in the open to show to the world that their work is not just limited to child-bearing and child-rearing, but that they can do wonders when they are given opportunities. Women writers due to the virtue of their feminine sensibility have been able to portray women characters with greater understanding, deeper insight and stronger impact. They are asserting themselves by expressing their feelings through their creative works. Indian women writers in English like Kamala Markandaya, Rama Mehta, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Dina Mehta, Bharati Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy, Namita Gokhale and many other hordes of women writers have shown through their writings the changing faces of woman from the pre-independence era to the present.

1.2 Psychoanalysis

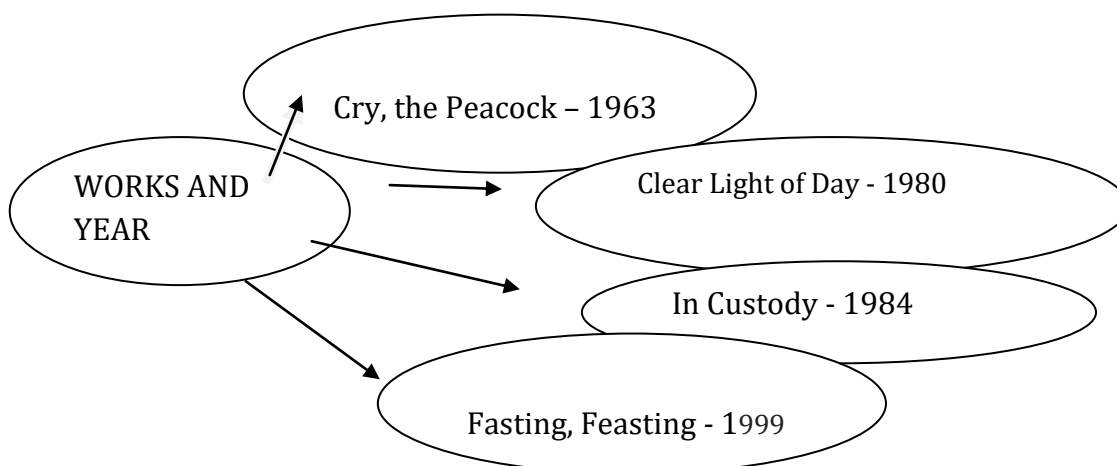
Psychoanalysis, method of treating mental disorders, shaped by psychoanalytic theory, which emphasizes unconscious mental processes and is sometimes described as "depth psychology." The psychoanalytic movement originated in the clinical observations and formulations of Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, who coined the term *psychoanalysis*. During the 1890s, Freud worked with Austrian physician and physiologist Josef Breuer in studies of neurotic patients under hypnosis. Freud and Breuer observed that, when the sources of patients' ideas and impulses were brought into consciousness during the hypnotic state, the patients showed improvement. Freud's free-association technique provided him with a tool for studying the meanings of dreams, slips of the tongue, forgetfulness,

and other mistakes and errors in everyday life. From these investigations he was led to a new conception of the structure of personality: the id, ego, and superego.

Literature, literary research, and psychoanalysis have historically been attracted to one another, but there has always been a long relationship among them. It seems like each discipline believes that the other contributes something useful, even essential to it and tries to strive for that perspective. It is difficult, however, to work in an interdisciplinary environment. It is a matter of trying to establish connections without isolating either one or both of the disciplines, a consequence which, unfortunately, is not uncommon. Psychoanalysis is widely used in the present literary scenario. In the basic sense id is the animal nature of a human, and then ego is the part where rational decisions are made. The mixture of good and bad, but superego is the unconscious which aims for purity. But the theory of ego was not without controversy.

II. STRUCTURE OF CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY

Desai's *Clear Light of Day* deals with the Das family chronicle. The narrative is divided into four untitled parts: Part I is set in the present; Part II goes back to the summer of 1947; Part III is set in an even earlier period of the Das children's childhood, and Part IV returns to the present with a futuristic perspective. Each part also deals with an important phase in the life of the main characters. In an interview, Desai stated that *Clear Light of Day* was an attempt to write "a four-dimensional piece on how a family's life moves backwards and forwards in a period of time" ' The fourth dimension, Desai states, is 'time.' In fact, the four parts of the novel parallel the *Four Quartets* of T.S. Eliot whom she admired greatly. As in the '*Four Quartets*'. in *Clear Light of Day* too, time is the destroyer and the preserver. The very theme of the novel is to do with the paradox of change and continuity. Time is used as a structural device by Desai in her novel. The action delineates itself at: "three-time levels -- the past, the present and the vision of the timeless in which past, present and future fuse into a homogeneous entity. About the time-structure of the novel, Biraj Singh states: The past is not at all-in-one lump and the present in another; the two are so interfused that we keep going back at different times in the present to the same event of the past. . . but always with the knowledge that the intervening description of the present has given.'⁷² The four-dimensional structure of the novel allows Desai to present reality from different angles. There is no linearity to the events in the novel. Desai uses the stream of consciousness technique in her narrative which link up events imaginatively rather than rationally. She is the omniscient observer.



2.1 Technique of *Clear Light of Day*

Anita Desai's fifth novel *Clear Light of Day* (1980) is once again a family drama. This novel is, as Desai has herself said in an interview:

A four-dimensional piece on how a
family's life moves backwards and
forwards in a period of time

The novel has elicited criticism but little on the technique aspect. Jasbir Jain comments on the use of fantasy in the novel. Anita Desai makes use of poetry in the novel but what is more important is that she quotes lines from two poems by Emily Dickinson and T.S. Eliot as epigraphs to the novel. From the point of

view of techniques, the most important thing about this novel is the effective use of poetry. The novel is divided into four parts. Each of these deals with distinct periods in the lives of the principal characters, the first and the last of them being set in the present. Desai too, feels that her novel is about:

Time as a destroyer, as a preserver,
and about what the bondage of time
does to people

In this novel Anita Desai also makes use of flashback technique which is appropriate, since the novel covers a long period of time, a generation as observed earlier.

2.2 Psychological Study of Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*

This paper is going to examine *Clear Light of Day* by Anita Desai using the psychological lens. Anita Desai is a wonderful writer and her books are the windows to deep psychological understanding. She is not merely interested in portraying a character with a social life or some kind of conflict. She is particularly concerned about the deep psychological problems of psychology. R.A Singh rightly points out that "Desai fiction can be analyzed taking into consideration the psychological motivations of her novels as psychic drama"(9). In fact, her works can be considered as psychic dramas with doubt. This novel is a good example of it.

Most of Desai's heroines have a crisis which is immensely psychological. They are a recurrent theme in her novels as well. The novel 'Clear Light of Day' was published in the year 1980. The novel is set in old Delhi, and it is divided into three parts. The story is about the siblings Tara, Bim and Raja. Bim and Tara meet after many years and they are all set to go for the wedding of Raja's daughter. Bim is not very happy to attend the wedding as she is not in speaking terms with Raja. The childhood memories which are very much part of the subconscious play a major role in her adult sensibilities. In the same way Tara always is guilt ridden that she left Bim to look after Baba who is certainly not able to do anything on his own. So, even in the most outward level one can see that they are bound psychologically in a certain way.

Bim is like old Delhi, her thoughts, her lifestyle, the neighborhood did not change much. The house was not even painted, and she remains a rigid, rough and also a spinster throughout her life. The psychic state is also in a way stuck in the old times. As she retorts with an exasperated Tara she says, "Changed? How? You mean the house newly painted, the garden newly planted, new people coming and going? Oh, no, how could I, Bim?"(12).

The flashback technique is used effectively, by using the flashback method the psyche of the characters can be brought forth. And also, through Bim, Desai is able to talk about the impact of their childhood life. The characters themselves are unaware of the unconscious effect on them which is directly related to their childhood. This can be seen in the way they are treating their children, and how they are carefree about them. They let their aunt Mira Masi take care of their children.

Bim chooses to have a different life than her sister. She prefers to be an independent woman, and she is in a way a rebellion. She spends her life like a spinster and she seems to be sacrificing her life for her autistic brother. She also seems to have an attachment towards animals, and she talks about pets to Tara in this manner, "you think animals take the place of babies for us love –strayed spinsters', 'But you're wrong'.... you can't possibly feel for them what I do about these wretched animals of mine"(16). These little incidents show the real personality of Bim, and how independent she wants to live. She is a history professor and she seems to enjoy whatever she is doing. In fact, she has a great attachment with the students as well.

Tara on the other hand is not like Bim, she is highly dependent on her husband. She had left this old house as she wanted to be free from all kinds of responsibilities. Even though Bim is a strong woman she is also a traditional woman, and she takes care of Raja which can be safely attributed to her husband who felt the house is a boring place and wanted to move away from the place. Bim also reads Byron for Raja, and in a psychological manner she feels a connection with all the brave characters. She takes everything as a challenge and she believes she can achieve things. But apparently, she is also longing for love, and she invariably gives her love to others hoping she will receive it from them.

A doctor named Biswas is also interested in her and tells her that she is living for others, and that is the reason she is not willing her life with him. This comes as a shock to her, and she says she cannot accept such a proposal like Tara who chose to be married. This is also a psychological attachment that she

has with her own childhood. Her childhood is a major part of her adult life, and also the understanding of her life. For instance, when she was a child she wanted to act like a heroine.

“She would hear their voice ringing, as pure as glass, or flame. Raja and Bim, tall and straight and true, their voice ringing out. I will be a hero, one had called out from the pure white peak of candle flame, and the other had echoed back, as in a song, And I will be a heroine”(125)

Like many other Indian female characters, she is not merely protesting against the hierarchy, and she is also not sexually deprived. She is in fact above such desires, but no matter how tough she is, Bim certainly wants to pour her love and be a part of others, and her love for Raja and Baba are not questionably. From her childhood she wants to become someone like Joan of Arc, or Florence Nightingale. This was her desire from her youth. If one considers closely on about the choice of her inspiration, one can see that both Joan of Arc and Florence Nightingale were women who selflessly served other people. She is also treated like a lamb who is getting for sacrificial. “Bim of course worshipped Florence Nightingale along with Joan of Arc in her private pantheon of saints and goddesses”(200).

III. CONCLUSION

All this influenced Bim, and all this can be considered as a psychological bondage. A mental bondage of childhood dreams and desires, or in other words they are all in the realm of ego according to Freud. She also feels that her siblings have not be grateful to her, and also compares them to blood sucking mosquitoes. Of course, one can see a transformation in Bim by the end of the novel. Literally Bim could see the clear light of day. She decides not to go the marriage, but she does something that she enjoys much. She sends Tara and Bakul to the marriage, while she participates with music consort arranged in Misra's house. The psychological bondage unlike many characters of Anita Desai here is treated in a different manner. In this novel Bim accepts her life and reality of it. All the mental blockades and unconscious problems that tormented are not solved, but they are accepted with a mature insight by Bim. This is the though process that is shown in this paper. All the constraints of Bim are no resolved when considering the psychological bondage, but they all accepted is the crux of the paper.

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