



## TIME AND FORGIVENESS: HEALING BROKEN BONDS THROUGH RETROSPECTION IN ANITA DESAI'S CLEAR LIGHT OF THE DAY

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### Abstract

Anita Desai's very insightful psychological novel which deals with and propels the readers towards different themes of trauma, the importance of family, memory, and forgiveness and healing through time. This novel is about the opaque relationship between the Das siblings. The Novel highlights the importance of communication, portrays family as a source of support in every situation and hatred experienced within the family. The novel deals with the theme of the need for time for forgiveness that can be witnessed through the relationship of Bim – Tara and Bim – Raja. The non-linear narrative of Anita Desai, she portrays how unresolved trauma and suppressed anger hinder the relationships within the family and reclaim their identities. Real reconciliation can only happen when the past is remembered, understood, and forgiven.

### Introduction

Anita Desai is an Indian novelist and emerita John E Burchard Professor of Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times. She received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978 for her novel Fire on the Mountain. She won the Guardian Prize for The Village by the Sea (1983). She is on the advisory board of the Lalit Kala Akademi and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, London. The novel Clear Light of the Day which was published in 1980 which depicts the partition of India and as well as the integrated with the Das family. The novel signifies the past and present and also the emotional outburst and trauma response through the exertion of the characters

throughout the novel. The central Thesis of the novel is the Retrospection as a medium of healing from all the past trauma experiences faced by almost all the characters in the novel. That confronting the past and pain becomes an important aspect becomes essential for rebuilding the broken family and relationships. That confronting the past and pain becomes an important aspect becomes essential for rebuilding the broken family and relationships. This novel let the audience know and feel how the passage of time helps the people to analyse and bring out a change and forgive your own family members to protect that relationship and their own peace which plays a crucial role in the daily life of a normal people. This novel also talks about the partition that was happening between India and Pakistan and also about the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The riots, disputes between the Muslim and Hindus, the people's horrible experience in the refugee camps is compared to the partition in the das family. Later, during 1980's the family members discuss about their childhood experiences and forgive. Similarly, the country has also turned into a peaceful state the disputes have been solved and turned to a good state. Anita Desai's expression of the people and country and the incidents have taken us to that time.

### **Disrupted time and unbound ties**

The story starts with the visit of Tara to India along with her diplomatic husband Bakul who is working in US as an Indian ambassador. The visit of Tara reminds Bim about her childhood memories with her and Raja. Eventually, Tara also remembers and revisit her past that is mostly a traumatic experience that made her the decision that to escape from this home. The memory they hold about their childhood is mostly their sufferings even the country was also suffering due to the partition. The ample time that Tara has taken being away from her home shows that she has been changed only for bakul and her daughters not from the bottom of her heart. Whereas Bim had gone through a lot after Raja and Tara left the home and abandoned Bim only for their personal reason. She had a constant feeling that no one ever thought about her and validated her feelings Bim could never revisit all her childhood memories because of this bitter experience. The narrative techniques used here aligns with Paul Ricoeur's assertion that "memory becomes the source of

narrative identity”(Ricoeur 17). Even when Tara to share a difficult childhood she has chosen her personal life and went along with Bakul, but Bim was struck in this house by taking care of Raja, Aunt Mira, Baba and somewhere in all this chaos she forgot about her own self and lived only for all these people. Tara when she came back, she tells Bim that nothing has changed here “old Delhi does not change. It only decays” (Desai 7). Bim doesn’t want to remember her past childhood life, but it is happening now because of Tara’s visit to India.

Trauma in this novel is restrained but it is very persuasive. The children were suffering because the parents are always in the club Tara explains that her mother would take a lot of time in getting ready in-front of the mirror more than the time she used to spend with them. She also says that when Aunt Mira started to take care of the kids without making any time for herself and her self-groom Tara was very much astonished about how she took care of Baba and other kids unlike her mother. The death of their parents shocked the children. The insurance company asked for a person to be in charge. Raja was not ready to take it up and he also left for Hyderabad. So, Baba was made the signing authority to that company. Tara decided to marry Bakul and left the house. Now, Bim and Baba were alone left in the house. Isolation and grievances filled their hearts and minds. The look of the house also defines the mindset of the people living in that house.

### **Retrospection as Emotional confrontation**

Tara’s return to delhi becomes the catalyst for emotional retrospection and some of the repressed and unsaid thoughts to be discussed between the two sisters and about Raja which would lead to forgiveness. Tara unclogs how Bim treated her during her childhood. What were the feelings of Tara when she was left alone by her own brother and sister. The time how Aunt Mira was her only support and she got all the love and care from her Tara was not the best student in school infact she was almost all the time afraid of going to school and meeting many people. But Bim was an excellent student, and she had a very close bond with Raja, and she always bullied Tara unknowingly. Tara also felt guilty about an incident where she felt that

she should be with Bim, but she left her one is during the bee sting and the next is when Aunt Mira was ill and Baba was at home alone and Raja was also sick Bim was the one who took care of all of them. That was a burden for her that was never said to anyone but that plays a major role in the life of Bim and why she is like that in the present condition. Both the sisters, Bim and Tara, discuss all those and come to a conclusion that they share a sanctity of emotions and experience. “The guilt of desertion lay like dust on her heart” (Desai 96). The letter from Raja which affected Bim a lot and the old photographs are portrayed as the symbol of everlasting memory that were both bitter and gleeful that are cherished by Bim and Tara.

### **Forgiveness as Liberation through Time**

The change in the stubbornness and sufferings occurs in the novel when Bim decided to forgive everyone Raja. This occurred in the novel when Tara revealed the truth about her's and Raja's life. Why she had to take a decision of leaving this house and going along with Bakul was mainly because of all the past traumatic experiences that she had from her childhood. And the death of her parents and then Aunt Mira who was very much closer to her than the other people in that house. She was also extremely mentally and physically ill. Tara decided to leave her home in search of that same love which she got from Aunt Mira during her childhood days. Then she found Bakul who said he will take a very good care of her and take her away from all her mental traumas and from this house. Raja went to meet and check whether Hyder Ali and his family but then he married Hyder Ali's daughter and settled in Hyderabad itself. Then the truth is that after the death of Hyder Ali, all the properties were in the possession of Raja, and Bim was paying the rent to her own brother. This was even more disturbing to Bim that he left that house for all the wealth and money, and he has completely changed after the wedding of Raja and Benazir. Now Tara says that to bring an end to all your mental torture and trauma, you have to forgive everyone, including me and Raja. “We have all been selfish and ruthless, but we can forgive each other now” (Desai 226).

But this brings a peace and a very huge relief to all her worries and depressed thoughts which she was holding it for a long time. The reconciliation between Bim and Tara calms that the environment as well as Bim says that she wants to meet Raja. “Bring him back with you, Tara” (Desai 267). It encompasses the relationship between the Das siblings.

### **Symbolic Functions of Time, Music and Nature**

In the entire novel, there are many places where the silence in the Baba’s room is mitigated by the loud music played on the old gramophone. This reveals that the silence causes him a trauma and to overcome that, he uses the other. The other part of the novel is where Dr. Biswas gives more importance to music. “Music is one of the greatest joys we can have on earth” (Desai 121). The change of seasons is considered to be an important element in the entire novel. The garden and well in the house was once blooming and very happy, and later due to the passage of time, it becomes gloomy and decays, and again it revives, which is natural.

### **Partition parallel: personal and national healing**

The novel depicts the Indian’s partition between India and Pakistan with the passage of time they have cleared all the conflicts between the two nations, and they had a peaceful life. Similarly, the partition happened between the Das family where all the members like Raja and Tara went from that house and the death of her parents then, Aunt Mira which made the family disturbed and distorted. Then with the passage of time the family have also joined together.

### **Conclusion**

Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of the Day* describes the prominence of time and recovery from the past. The need for retrospection and analysis of one’s own experience leads to the better and best version of a person. The reconciliation between Bim and Tara by sharing their own experiences and trauma caused by each

other. Time is not an antagonist but a pillar which supports a person throughout for best or the worst. In this novel the key aspects of Time and Forgiveness have played a major role and healed people and relationships and move forward in an optimistic path.

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