

Week -  
29 April - 3<sup>rd</sup> May

## NOTES ON DESAI'S 'IN CUSTODY' LANGUAGE

Anita Desai as a woman Indian writer evinces the language - medium of expression in manifold signs, through images, symbols. She explains,

"I imagine each writer ends thus by revealing his own mythology, a mythology that symbolizes his private morality and philosophy..... Next to the exploration of the underlying truth and the discovery of a private mythology and philosophy, it is style that interests me most - and by this I mean the conscious labour of uniting language and symbol, word and rhythm..... One must find a way to unite the inner and outer rhythms, to attain a certain integrity and to impose order on chaos."

### Desai on Theme of 'In Custody'

She said,

"I was trying to portray the world of Urdu poets. Living in Delhi I was surrounded by the sound of Urdu poetry, which is mostly recited.... But although there is such a reverence for Urdu poetry, the fact that most Muslims left India to go to Pakistan meant that most schools and universities of Urdu were closed. So that it's a language I don't think is going to survive in India... There are many Muslims and they do write in Urdu, but it has a kind of very artificial existence. People are not going to study Urdu in schools and college anymore, so who are going to be their readers? Where is the audience?"

## OTHER CONCERNS OF DESAI IN THE NOVEL

1. Language - confrontation
2. Male Dominance, hence subordinate position of women
3. Existential concerns - of poets like Nur of yesteryears, his wife / wives, of Deven who gradually gets to grips with the ultimate reality the catastrophe awaiting him.
4. Yet it is also about his will to struggle which makes him an indefatigable traveller in his never-ending quest for identity and purpose in life.

In Society - Who is the Custodian and of what?

Central protagonist you all have made out is Deven. The novel is about his ceaseless efforts to preserve the name and works of Nur for posterity, he takes a lot of pains and is exploited financially as well as emotionally. Thus, it is his story to protect Urdu language from ignominy, to preserve it against all odds. He is trying to be, you can say, the sole custodian of this historically rich language and its legacy.