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Language Politics and Decline of Culture in Anita Desai's *In Custody* (1984)

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Abstract

Aims: *The present paper attempts to provide a comprehensive analysis of Hindi-Urdu conflict and Urdu's resultant decline in post-partition India. It also attempts to shed light on the genuine attempt of the protagonist cum custodian to retain the glory of the lost tradition.*

Methodology and Approaches: *This proposed study is analytical in nature. In order to depict language politics and cultural decline in the novel, an in-depth textual analysis has been done. Since history appears to be pulverizing and destroying the lives of the individuals in this novel, this study analyses the text in historical context. It also follows the explanatory approach in order to delineate the intricacies of human psyche and human relationship.*

Outcome: *This paper offers a reflection on the causes and effects of language politics and cultural decline in the post-partition India. It also interrogates the issue of communalization of languages in India during the troubled and turbulent times of history. This paper addresses the need to preserve the syncretic culture of India which is only possible through its true practitioners.*

Conclusion and Suggestions: *This paper underlines the challenges during tumultuous times of history. Urdu as a language has been depicted in a vulnerable state in post-partition India which is on the verge of perishing. The protagonist's extreme isolation and abrogation of the monotonous poetic/public life is certainly a corollary of irresistible and devastating presence of history. Literally, the entire novel reads as a despondent eulogy on the demise of a language. The film adaptation of the novel can further be analyzed through the cinematic lens.*

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Post-colonial India marked the rise of many notable women novelists on the literary horizon. Kamala Markandey, Chitra Diwakurni, Ruth Prawar Jhabwala, Nayantara Sahgal, Arundhati Roy, Bharti Mukharjee, Githa Hariharan, Kiran Nagarkar, Suniti Namjoshi, Shashi Deshpande and Kiran Desai are the prominent figures which form the part of this constellation. Although the writing conventions and concerns of these figures differ noticeably, yet a common strand can be distinguished in their writings in which they all attempt to explore the unfathomed territories of women's psyche and assert themselves against the dominant patriarchal norms in the society. Anita Desai (born in 1937), a colossal literary figure among her contemporaries, popularly understood as Virginia Woolf of India, explores the emotional and psychic complexities of her characters providing intimate insights into their personal lives. She has penned more than a dozen novels, three novellas and three short stories collections. This paper attempts to study her Booker prize nominated novel *In Custody* (1984), which has also been adopted into a film with the same name. The writing career of Anita Desai took pace with the publication of *In Custody* when she wrote about the social issues related to men and their world rather than continuing with the previous subjects. The renowned writer, Salman Rushdie states about this transition:

> *In Custody* was, therefore, a novel of transformation for its author, a doubly remarkable piece of work, because in this magnificent book Anita Desai chose to write not of solitude but of friendship, of the perils and responsibilities of joining oneself to others rather than holding oneself apart. And at the same time she wrote, for the first time, a very public fiction, shedding the reserve of the earlier books to take on such sensitive themes as the unease of minority communities in modern India, the new imperialism of the Hindi language, and the decay that, now even more than when the book was written, was and is all too tragically evident throughout the fissuring body of Indian society. The courage of the novel is considerable, and so is its prescience. The slow death of my mother-

> tongue, Urdu, is much further advanced than it was twenty-three years ago, and much that was beautiful in the culture of Old Delhi has slipped away forever.("Rushdie on Anita Desai and Urdu")

The plot of *In Custody* centers on the lives of a Hindi lecturer Deven and an Urdu Poet Nur. Deven belongs to Mirpore, a small town in the vicinity of Delhi and stays with Sarla, his wife, and a son named Manu. He is a teacher of Hindi literature at Ramlal College, but he finds solace and delight while reading and writing Urdu poetry, the love of his life which he has inherited from his father. Nonetheless, he always stays dissatisfied since he feels that due to his job he is unable to serve his muse properly.

Hence, when one of his old friends, Murad who is editor of an Urdu Magazine, suggests him to take an interview of Nur Sahjehanabadi, a great living Urdu poet. Deven considers this as a wonderful opportunity to meet one of the greatest living poets as he thinks that it would also be a little service to the Urdu language he has always admired. He considers this an inspiring mission of rescuing a weakening state of a glorious literary tradition. Nevertheless, things do not turn out the way he planned. After meeting the poet he finds both the poet and his mansion deteriorated, both awaiting their ends soon. Deven realizes that the atmosphere at Nur's house is suffocating and uninhabitable, which infuriates him to such an extent that he tends to disregard the idea of interviewing the poet at all. Nur, turns out to be a frail elderly human being suffering from marital discords and poverty. He finds that the poet's house, which Deven has anticipated to be an abode of peace, is full with cacophonic complaints of his much younger wife Imtiaz Begum. Deven finds out that even the admirers Nur meets with daily are nothing more than flatterers who don't seem to appreciate anything of his poetry and visit his house for biryani and sharab. His fantasies about Nur and his world are devastated, and he returns unproductive. But owing to Murad's insistence, Deven revisits the ailing poet, and is taken aback by the aversion the poet shows for the fact that he teaches Hindi literature. However, Deven empathizes with the poet and decides to protect the dying heritage of the poet. Knowing words alone

won't suffice and voice too should be preserved, Deven decides to record the poet on the suggestion of his friend Murad but Deven doesn't have the tape-recorder and both he and Murad cannot afford it, creates difficulty. Deven convinces his institutional authorities to grant him monetary help and some amount he borrows from Murad. He also buys a second hand tape-recorder and hires a child named Chiku to help him in the recording. But unfortunately because of the lack of technical expertise, the record remains hodgepodge, insignificant from the perspective of scholarly interest. The interview turns out to be a record of revelry, full of rum, kebabs and biryani rather than of an oration of his lost poetry. Despite this huge expenditure on poet and his admirers' food and the bribe given to Safia Begum, Nur's first wife, to arrange the Interview, nothing comes out much fruitful for Deven.

The novel is said to be inspired from the life of a renowned Urdu poet, Faiz Ahmed Faiz from the twentieth century. Though such connection seems no more than a metaphysical conceits based on impractical comparisons except the fact that the novel was published the same year Faiz died. Whatever be the source of inspiration following writing this novel, it is about Urdu lying sick on its corpse. It is about a language becoming extinct which has turned dispossessed because of communal tensions of colonial and post-colonial India. This paper attempts to study and examine Hindi-Urdu Controversy and resultant decay and death of Urdu in Post-partition India which forms the central thread of the novel.

There are various opinions among the scholars regarding the origin of Urdu. The word comes from Turkish *ordu* meaning "camp of the army." An eminent Indian scholar, Mohammad Hussain Azad is of the opinion that Brij Bhasha, a dialect of Western Hindi, is the mother language of Urdu, which in later being influenced by and borrowing from Persian, gave birth to Urdu language ("History of Urdu Language"). Another scholar, Mehmud Sherani, is of the opinion that Urdu evolved as a language because of the cross-cultural encounter between native Hindus and Muslim invaders, especially after the conquest of Mehmud of Ghazni ("History of Urdu Language"). Regarding the birth and early

evolution of Urdu language, Shiraz Fouz in a very significant article "History of Urdu Language" argues:

> But the most established theory relating the origination, evolution and development of Urdu language is that Urdu is a conglomeration of many different languages manly Arabic, Persian, Pashtu, Turkish, Hindi and some local dialects of India. Muslims ruled over India for about 1,000 years. Muslim army comprised of soldiers of different origins and nationalities speaking different languages. Interaction among these soldiers and with the locals led to the development of a new language, mutually understood by all. This new language named as 'Urdu' proved to be a unifying communication tool between the Muslim soldiers during their conquest of ancient India (including Mayanmar). ("History of Urdu Language"3)

Therefore, it can be stated that Urdu was a language born as an upshot of communicational necessities of the invader and the invaded whose origins can be traced back to the invasions of Mohammad Bin Quasim and Mohammad Ghajni. Its consolidation as a language began in the rule of Turks, widely known as Delhi Saltanate. The first literature in the Urdu language is considered to be written by Amir Khusrau (1253-1325). He composed his couplets, poems and riddles in this newly-born language called "Hindvi". It was more prevalent in and around the areas of Delhi, its expansion was almost pan-Indian. Dr. S.R.Faruqi states:

> Early names for the language now called Urdu were Hindvi, Dehlavi, Hindi, Gujri, Dakanī, and Rekhta, more or less in that order, though until about the mid of the nineteenth century Dakani continued to be the name for the form of the language used in Deccan. The English seem to have set up a set of names of their own fondness, or formation. Thomas Roe's companion Edward Terry at Jahāngir's court described the language in his *A Voyage to East India* (London, 1655) as Industan, stating that it was a powerful language which could say much in a few words, had a high content of Arabic and Persian, but was written differently from Arabic

> and Persian. Other names that the English seem to have used for this language include 'moors', 'Hindoostanic', 'Hindoostanee', 'Indostans'. (Faruqi, 22)

With the expansion of the Muslim rule in India, Urdu came into contact with several different local languages, borrowed from and mixed with them, and over a period of time evolved into a distinct spoken language. Through the medieval period, it was called variously "Hindavi," "Zaban-e-Hind," "Hindi," "Zaban-e-Dehli," "Rekhta," "Gujari," "Dakkhani," "Zaban-e- Urdu-e-Mualla," "Zaban-e-Urdu," or just "Urdu" ("A Historical Perspective of Urdu").

This language became more flexible during the Mughal rule. In Akbar's reign Hindus and Muslims came closer to each other which helped in the evolution of the Urdu language. There were several other poets and writers who used this language for creative expression during Mughal rule and its aftermath, notable among them are Mir Dard (1720-1785), Qaim Chand Puri (1724-1794), Mir Taqi Mir (1727-1810), Mushafi (1750-1785), Haider Ali Atish (1778-1846), and Mir Babr Ali Anis (1802-74). It won't be an overstatement to say that 18th and 19th century were the golden periods of Urdu language when, it not only replaced Persian as a court language but also registered an exceptional rise of Urdu literature. MirzaAsad-Ullah Khan Galib (1797-1869) represented this golden period.

Urdu replaced Persian as the official language in 1837. Though all the communities of India used Urdu for creative and commercial purposes, after fall of Mughal Empire in the beginning of the 19th century, Hindus, however, started looking at Urdu as invaders' language. A conflict developed gradually between Hindus who preferred to write Hindustani in Devanagari script and Muslims and some Hindus who preferred to write the same in Urdu script after the 1857 revolt. Though the colonial government encouraged both the languages as a medium of education, yet this resulted into grave socio-economic conflicts associated with the language since the students educated in Urdu and Hindi both competed for the government jobs, leading to the communalization of the language. In the year

1867 some Hindus of Agra province and Oudh demanded Hindi as an official language. In 1871 the Lt. Governor of Bengal G. Cambell banned Urdu in the province at all levels, administration, courts, and even schools, which added fuel to the fire for Hindus in other regions such as Punjab, NWFP, U.P, Bihar, Sindh, and Oudh etc. ("Hindi–Urdu controversy") Thousands of Hindus signed memorandum asking elimination of Urdu. Raja Shiv Prasad in his book 'Grammar' (1875) states:

> The absurdity began with the Maulvis and Pundits of Dr. Gilchrist's time, who being commissioned to make a grammar of the common speech of Upper India made two grammars... The evil consequence is that instead of having a school grammar of the vernacular as such... we have two diverse and discrepant class books, one for the Mohammedan and Kayastha boys and the other for the Brahmins and Banias. (Quoted in "A Historical Perspective of Urdu")

Subsequently a petition to the government was signed by a committee of Hindus in Banaras in 1867 regarding the replacement of Urdu with Hindi, and its Devnagari script. During the visit of Hunter Commission in 1882 Hindu organizations once more tried to attack Urdu. They tried to force the chairman, Dr. Hunter to admit Urdu as the foreign language and to promulgate Hindi for educational purposes ("Hindi–Urdu controversy"). Madan Mohan Malaviya published a collection of documents and statements titled '*Court character and primary education in North Western Provinces and Oudh*' in 1897, in which, he made a compelling case for Hindi. Hence the development of Hindi movement in the later part of the 19thcentury in India created the most difficult situation for the Urdu language. Professor Paul R. Brass in his book, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, notes:

> The Hindi-Urdu controversy by its very bitterness demonstrates how little the objective similarities between language groups matter when people attach subjective significance to their languages. Willingness to

> communicate through the same language is quite a different thing from the mere ability to communicate. ("Hindi–Urdu controversy")

In order to substitute Urdu with Hindi as an official language, numerous other movements were launched and various organizations came into being such as Nagari-Pracharini Sabha (1893), Hindi Sahitya-Sammelan in Allahabad (1910), Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar-Sabha (1918), and Rashtra Bhasha Prachar-Samiti in 1926.The continuing communalization of Urdu certainly changed the environment. Sir Syed Ahmed khan, while expressing his opinion on the subject of Hindu-Muslim unity, had once remarked:

> I look to both Hindus and Muslims with the same eyes & consider them as two eyes of a bride. By the word nation I only mean Hindus and Muslims and nothing else. We Hindus and Muslims live together under the same soil under the same government. Our interest and problems are common and therefore I consider the two factions as one nation. ("Hindi–Urdu controversy")

Later, he became one of its greatest adversaries and stated to Mr. Shakespeare, the governor of Banaras:

> When even the language of a nation is not safe at the hands of other, it would be unwise to continue living with them…I am now convinced that the Hindus and Muslims could never become one nation as their religion and way of life was quite distinct from one and other. ("Hindi–Urdu controversy")

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan established Urdu Defense Association with the help of Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk resolving to protest against such biased attitude of the governor and eventually succeeded in getting Urdu declared official language of United Province along with Hindi. Another association called "Anjuman-e-Tarraqi-e-Urdu" was set up by Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk to argue against all potential attempts of the Hindus and the British to debasing Urdu. Syed Ahmad Khan's Scientific Society Gazette also published accounts on the importance of Urdu. Correspondingly, some Muslim newspapers like *Noor-ul-Absar* and

Banaras Gazette also took the responsibility to protect the interest of the Urdu language. In an interview with Ather Foroqui, S. R. Foroqui clearly asserts:

It is neither wrong nor discreditable, I feel, that we now begin to declare, unequivocally and openly, that Urdu is the language of the Muslims of north India. I also oppose the apologetic view whereby Urdu is presented as the language equally of Hindus and Sikhs. Let's be honest. Today Urdu belongs only to Muslims. Yes, it was the language of Hindus and Sikhs at one time. ("The Problem of Urdu in India")

Hence, there can be no dissent that the colonial policy of the divide and rule lead to communalization of Urdu language. Though, it would also be mistaken to assume that there was no effort to bridge this communal gap. Mahatma Gandhi sensed the matter of language communalization and decided to support the composite concept of Hindustani in both scripts as the national language. Initially Urdu was introduced as a compulsory language in secondary school education by C. Rajagopalachari, chief minister of Madras Presidency. Though, the communal divide had grown so strong that it had become impossible to resolve the clash. Abdul Haq's statement adds seriousness to it who remarked in 1961 that "Pakistan was not created by Jinnah, nor was it created by Iqbal; it was Urdu that created Pakistan." ("Review Essay").

In Custody Anita Desai's depicts the weakening status of linguistic and cultural identity of the Muslims in post-independent India. As a matter of fact, Hindi-Urdu controversy constitutes the central part of the novel. Stating the issues of Hindi-Urdu controversy and the status of Urdu in post-partition India Anita Desai remarks:

> I was certainly very aware at the time of Independence that most of the Muslim population had crossed the border and gone into what became Pakistan. Because half of the population of the school I went to vanished at the time, overnight really. I was aware that because of the Muslim population moving out of India, it would be a struggle to keep their language, Urdu, alive. There were certainly many people in North India

> and in other parts of India who spoke Urdu. But the fact is that most of them were Muslims, very few Hindus studied Urdu or wrote it or read it. So it seemed to me it was a threatened language, and I think, since those pre-partitioned days, the number of schools and universities that offer Urdu are very few now . . . So it seemed to me it was threatened, and that an effort needed to be made to preserve it. Of course the government of India also recognizes this, and within India's constitution, which is a secular constitution, and it is a very good constitution, every religion and every language is given equal rights, so they do make some effort to have Urdu programs on the radio and on television. But frankly I do not think many people listen to those: it has very little effect. ("*In Custody* and Beyond")

Nur, in the novel is constantly apprehensive about quick loss of Urdu *jaban* (language) and *tahzib* (culture) and thinks that Urdu is declining fast to be lost into oblivion. It is confined to the limits of universities and does not remain the language of the populace any more. In a notable expression of the agonizing pain the practitioners and admirers of Urdu experience, Nur Shahjehanbadi states, "Urdu is supposed to have died, in 1947. What you see in the universities – in some of the universities, a few of them only - is its ghost, wrapped in a shroud" (*In Custody* 56). When Deven meets Nur, he is displeased to hear his connection with Hindi and disapprovingly declares:

> That vegetarian monster, Hindi . . . That language of peasants . . . The language that is raised on radishes and potatoes. . . . Yet, like these vegetables, it flourishes, while Urdu -- language of the court in days of royalty -- now languishes in the back lanes and gutters of the city. No palace for it to live in the style to which it is accustomed, no emperors and nawabs to act as its patrons. (*In Custody* 15)

Nur staunchly believes that Hindi, under its governmental patronage, would soon devour unparented Urdu as a language. When Deven informs Nur regarding his

proposal to contribute to the special issue on Urdu poetry, Nur comments that Urdu is a dead language and that it is futile to write the article.

Nur expresses his ironical surprise and extends his mockery that a Hindi teacher has arrived to interview him in order to preserve a language that is on its death-bed. Nur is infuriated about the biased favour Hindi receives. He is knows very well how cultural nationalism has led and keep on leading to exclusion of Urdu and its glorious literary and cultural tradition. Nur is aggrieved to notice the communal association of Urdu with the Muslims and often ridicules Hindi, its practitioners and supporters. In one such moment of rage, he states:

> What is the matter?' Nur mocked, glaring at him with small bloodshot eyes. Why did he choose to pick on Deven, the only one who had remained silent and not expressed any opinion at all? Forgotten your Urdu? Forgotten my verse? Perhaps it is better if you go back to your college and teach your students the stories of Premchand, the poems of Pant and Nirala. Safe, simple Hindi language, safe comfortable ideas of cow worship and caste and the romance of Krishna. That is your subject, isn't it, professor? (*In Custody* 55)

Nur is of the opinion that language is not apolitical rather it influences and is influenced by the ruling class. To him, the decline of Urdu in the newly Independent India is inextricably associated to the decline of Muslim community and culture. At times Nur is found eccentrically right in his opinions regarding the politics of language. He staunchly believes that there is no respect for Urdu language left and it is lying abandoned on its death bed. Though Deven is his devoted admirer, he unhesitatingly and contemptuously calls Deven a spy sent to hunt and kill Urdu. He admonishes Deven telling him that "now the time of art is over and it is the time of commercialization it will be better for you to go back your college, and teach your students Hindi" (*In Custody*46). Such occurrences of language antagonism and horrendous eccentricity can also be found in the gathering at Nur's place when Deven hears one of the Nur's sycophants commenting:

> Have you heard Sri Gobind's latest poem cycle?' he bawled. 'They are saying in the bazaar that it will win the Sahitya Akademi award for Hindi this year. For Urdu we can of course expect the same verdict as usual: "No book was judged worthy of the award this year. (In Custody 55)

Further, Deven and Murad mirror a notable difference in their approach to Urdu poetry. While Deven thinks of interviewing Nur as a service done to Urdu language, for Murad, Nur's interview is nothing more than commodity which would be used by him to run his magazine. Murad explicitly tells Deven, "I get all the material I want, I get it - then I print. I want a full feature on Nur—Nur in his old age, the dying Nur before he is gone, like a comet into the dark. I want you to do that feature" (*In Custody*17). In an evident contrast to Murad's views, Deven is of the opinion that the death of Urdu is the death of India's rich heritage which he attempts to protect at any cost.

Deven believes that recording poet's composition in his own voice is the only way to protect this sublime world of poetry. Nevertheless his journey is not without difficulties due to his financial constraints and an ever-growing antipathy for the Urdu language. When Deven seeks permission for leave in order to take an interview with the legendary Urdu poet Nur Shah jehanabadi, the head of his department Trivedi intimidates and forewarns him:

> I did not need to see your stupid mug again. I'll have you demoted, Sharma—I'll see to it you don't get your confirmation. I'll get you transferred to your beloved Urdu department. I won't have Muslim toadies in my department; you'll ruin my boys with your Muslim ideas, your Urdu language. I'll complain to the Principal, I'll warn the RSS, you are a traitor.*(In Custody* 145)

Trivedi's threatning to Deven evidently signifies how language was linked to religious identity and national loyalty in the postcolonial India. It completely suggests the communal tensions which heightened in the aftermath of India's Independence.

In spite of Murad's assistance, Deven can't buy a tape recorder to record Nur's poetry. Following that, he decides to meet the head of Urdu department, the only person at the university who regards Deven for his love of Urdu poetry. The head of Urdu Department, Siddiqui, exemplifies the complicity of culture with both privilege and nostalgic self-indulgence. He is the last heir of a Nawab family and somehow manages to convince the university authority allocate funds to Deven for buying a tape-recorder. However, when the allocated fund does not suffice to the requirement, Deven visits Siddiqui's house one evening, "one of the last of the large old villas of Mirpore"(*In Custody* 132), in the centre of the bazaar, and in complete ruin. Deven meets Siddiqui on the terrace "much in the attitude of a grand landowner, aman of leisure and plenty" (*In Custody* 133). When Deven informs Siddiqui about his economic conditions, he mockingly responds in a painful voice:

> What! Did you think I had a family, wife, children, relatives? Or did you think I lived like a nawab in a nawab's palace? Take a look, my friend, take a look—have you ever seen such a ruin? He laughed and waved at a grimy boy who emerged from one corner of the derelict house. 'Another chair, Chotu,'he called, 'if we have one. And a glass and a bottle - a drink for our visitor. We have that, nah? Be quick, too. (*In Custody*134)

Siddiqui is the quiet observer who scrutinizes the societal shifting interests. His ancestral house is his sole profitable commodity which he plans to sell to some landlord. Desai uses many metaphors and symbols in the novel which marks the decrepit condition of Urdu poetry and its admirers. The ruined houses of Siddiqui and Nur symbolize the ruined state of Urdu. Nur lives in Chandni Chowk which now looks like a market in a nightmare. The very name of the poet, Nur, is ironic which stands for 'light' grown very dim undeniably. One of the major symbols employed in the novel is that of a carcass of a dog and a group of crows feasting on it, "He turned and peered out of the window to see if the dog lay on the road, broken, bleeding, or dead. He saw a flock of crows alight on the yellow grass that

grew beside the ditch, their wings flickering across the view like agitated eyelashes."(*In Custody* 26)

The carcass of the dog stands for the rotting condition of Urdu language in the hands of its new masters, it also bears a semblance to Nur and his exploitation. Murad's face also serves as a metaphor, which is disfigured by pockmarks. His countenance embodies an Urdu speaker who is soiled by his contempt for Hindi. He runs a magazine named 'Awaz' meaning voice. Though, paradoxically enough nobody around is willing to hear the voice of Urdu. It simply encapsulates the very last cries of a dying language. Except Deven, the admirers of Nur's poetry have very superficial knowledge of Urdu indicative of its foreseeable demise as a consequence of lost patronage. The artistic achievement of Anita Desai lies in her disinterested depiction of opposite standpoints. Contemplating over her intent to tell such a story, Desai discloses the fact in an interview with Magda Costa:

> I was trying to portray the world of Urdu poets. Living in Delhi I was always surrounded by the sound of Urdu poetry, which is mostly recited. Nobody reads it, but one goes to recitations. It was very much the voice of North India. 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 school and college anymore, so who are going to be their readers? Where is the audience? ("Interview with Anita Desai").

And, through the character of Deven, she explores the marginalized world of Urdu poetry. With the help of a second-hand tape-recorder accompanied by catastrophic memories and hardships, Deven sets out for an expedition to the poetry of Nur and makes himself a custodian of a vanishing tradition:

> He had imagined he was taking Nur's poetry into safe custody, and not realized that if he was to be custodian of Nur's genius, then Nur would

> become his custodian and place him in custody too. This alliance could be considered an unendurable burden—or else a shining honour. Both demanded an equal strength. (*In Custody* 203)

At the end of the novel, Deven realizes that he has become the 'custodian' both of Nur's poetry and of his friendship. Desai raises her voice for Urdu's elevation and questions its unfortunate downfall. To conclude, the novel is a narrative of the demise of the Urdu literature, a narrative depiction of a plaintive farewell to a lost tradition.

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