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***In Custody: An Onward Journey to Utopia with***  
**Black-hole Pessimism**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper seeks to focus on Deven, the protagonist of the novel “In Custody” by Anita Desai. It talks primarily of his black hole pessimism combined with his constant walk towards his Utopia while disregarding current circumstances. His journey toward his goal is mired in disappointments and when you think things cannot get worse, it actually does.

**KEY WORDS**

black hole pessimism; Utopia; disregarding; current circumstances; disappointments

**INTRODUCTION**

‘In Custody’ subtly deals with a serious theme of the social and cultural repercussions of politically independent India. The novel is set in a suburb in the North of India; the protagonist Deven is a lecturer in Hindi; his love for the poetic language Urdu and his

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meeting with legendary Urdu poet Nur is the main thread of the novel [1].

## STUDY AND ANALYSIS

Deven is a Hindi Professor and while it looks like he has it all set and his life is secure, it exacerbates how he is stuck in a life, he would not choose for himself. He had other dreams and wanted a fulfilling life with Urdu in it. Having succumbed to the external pressure and now struggling, he longs to make his life better. He had always been a lover of Urdu and had very fond memories of his childhood with his father. To him, 'Utopia' is being able to follow his passion for the poetic language Urdu. He is in a mindless existence in Mirpore. With the arrival of his old friend, Murad, there can be seen a new found desire to live, almost as if he has a purpose in life. He grasps onto the first sign of him finally being able to move toward his dream life. He is led on by his friend and ends up in Delhi. From here on, disappointments keep piling up and closing in on him. The only positive and certain thing is perhaps his attitude.

He believes circumstances will get better and things will fall into place. His encounter with his hero, the Urdu poet Nur is jarring and throws him off-balance. Nur is nothing like he expected him to be and is in an even worse state than him if it was even possible. He doesn't lose hope and powers through the poet's wives'. Finally when he is able to get Nur to speak so he can record, he ends up with a rambling man. This is when he almost cracks and gives up hope. He comes to the realisation that maybe life will never get better and he cannot make a living by following his dream and must make himself comfortable with the idea. After a night's rest though, there can be seen a man rejuvenated with the tables turning on his perception of a dream life. He now sees the poet as a friend and a confidante. The man who set out to live his dream life now has his perception challenged and similar to how he has gone along with life and let it carry him, he takes it in stride this time too.

## CONCLUSION

Deven finds himself changed and fits his description of Utopia to better suit himself and is able to bring down the level of sorrow. He tweaks his dream to get the best he can of his current life. His journey is no different from an average Indian aspiring to follow his passion and looking very longingly to the life that could have been while still giving his best to the life he is living.

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