CHAPTER - VIII

VILLAGE BY THE SEA
- TALE OF PRISTINE INNOCENCE
The novel *Village by the Sea* mainly deals with poverty and misery at the material level. It is entirely different from all the other novels of Anita Desai. Unlike the other novels, it has little to do with philosophical, psychological and existential concerns. It is the story of a family disintegrating under the pressures of poverty, illness and drunkenness but not of alienation and self-brooding. In almost all the novels of Desai the inner workings, the inner sensibilities are more compelling than the outer weather, or the visible action. Her strong point in her novels is an exploration of sensibilities. But this novel as P.F. Patil says "is a departure from her familiar preoccupation with problems of human psyche." The novel is written for children. It also accounts for its remarkable lucidity, simplicity and concreteness. The chief protagonists are two rustic, illiterate and naive children. Lila and Hari aged thirteen and twelve respectively. Their father is a heavy drunkard and mother is sick and bed-ridden. They have two little sisters, Bata and Kamal. As their poor Indian family has fallen on hard times they feel responsible for looking after their young sisters as the eldest children of the family. Seeing no way out of their poverty, they are forced to accept it and desperately they try to keep the family together.

The novel, according to Prof. S.P. Swain has "the charm of a primitive tale of pristine innocence struggling against experience and fighting for survival against the natural backdrop." The narrative is direct and most charming. It "leaves the impression of an old primitive ballad narrating the adventures of an adolescent boy and his sister trying to pull their family out of the marshes of poverty, sickness and drunkenness", as observed by J.P. Tripathi. Desai makes a thematic detour in this novel. The theme, the
novel deals with, is the tragic predicament of an individual and the problem of his survival in a society at cross-roads between tradition and transition, the rural way and the urban scientific and sophisticated approach to life. The problem of survival in this novel is economic in nature. But the economic class dealt with here is different. She deals thematically with the lower classes of society and the village rustics. "Alienation has not been dealt as minutely as it has been done in the preceding novels. It has ... received only a surface touch. ... the alienated self is entrapped in psycho-emotional problems and hence the nature of alienation is socio-psychic, but in this novel alienation is socio-economic in nature." as Prof. Swain aptly says. The rural folk represented by Hari and Leela stand for working class. They are financially hard pressed and materially alienated." The theme of the novel is steeped in an emotional atmosphere marked by longing and yearning. But the structural design is based on substantial, natural, realistic and solid human action centering round the existential strife of the protagonists in the face of a grave identity crisis.

The Guardian described the novel as a book "really for readers in their teens", it can aptly be called a miniature David Copperfield or 'a mini Kim'. The novelist has delved deep into the consciousness of the children and does not like to touch the adult human psyche. She probes the labyrinthine lanes of the teenager consciousness. Desai has come out of usual obsession with the exploration of the human psyche while writing this novel. In the preceding novels, she was solely preoccupied with the problem of depicting a private vision. The focus of interest in this novel shifts from psychic delineation and private vision to 'social documentation' and 'public observation'. By the subtitle, An Indian Family Story it is quite clear that the story is an idyllic portrayal
of social and rural theme and background. With the publication of this novel Desai's illus ioned vision attains disillusionment. In this novel she stages a domestic drama of tragic intensity but not the fictional use of the individual psyche. Emotional and psychic maladjustments do not find any place here and for the first time Desai deals with the lower classes of society and rural life. Her attitude to society and people in this novel is neither socialist, communist nor sociological but it is purely humanistic and classic. Political motivations are not deliberate and intentional. They are but functional and integral to the thematic fabric. They are a natural and organic offshoot of the growth of the story. All mankind is seen as one group without any distinction of the rich and the poor and the higher and the lower. In a special introductory note Anita Desai states that the story is based entirely on fact. Thul is a rural village on the western coast of India and all the characters in this novel are based on the people who live in this village. Only their names have been altered.

Hari's family has fallen on hard times. Both Hari and his sister Leela feel the responsibility of looking after their younger sisters. All though this novel is meant for teenagers, Desai creates a vivid picture of a family of life in a small Indian village, Thul and all the teeming hustle and bustle of Bombay. Their struggle for survival is economic in nature. Their hard work helps raise the family. Hari's house in the village of Thul serves as a symbol of alienation and disintegration. Paucity and poverty of the worst type are reflected by the picture of Hari's house. "The hut should have been rethatched years ago - the old palm leaves were dry and tattered and slipping off the beams. The earthen walls were crumbled. The windows gaped without any shutters. There was no smoke to be seen curling up from under a cooking pot on a fire as in
other huts." In this novel, the stygian and subterranean atmosphere of the earlier novels is replaced by an aura of hope and promise. Their piece of land and animals were sold to pay off their debts. Now they have only a patch of land to grow vegetables. S.P. Swain rightly observes "The impoverished and emaciated self of village community, their sub-standard existence and their existential struggle for survival reminds us of the novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Prem Chand." They hardly eat anything but dry bread or dry rice everyday. There is hardly ever any money to buy anything within the bazaar. Hari’s food is a dry chaputhi, a pinch of salt and dry chillies. Their only income is the occasional sale of bunches of coconut from their palms to Malabaris. Hari’s family shares the hardships collectively ‘There was nothing he could do to make their mother well, to keep away the drunken neighbour or his threats........save them from all their cruelty, all around them, but it helped that he too knew their fears and shared their troubles’ (p.57). The traditional community of fishermen and farmers at Thul are hard workers, self-satisfied and religious-minded. Women make prayers and offer flowers at the sacred rock. Both men and women work industriously and regularly for hours together every day. Women wash clothes and do the domestic duties. They also work hard in the fields along with men.

The novel also deals with the impact of modern technological development on a traditional community of fishermen and farmers. It presents as S.P. Swain points out, "hope and promise, anticipation and animation." The poverty-stricken teenagers welcome the government’s proposal to construct a multimillion fertilizer factory at Thul hoping that they would get jobs in it. Men in Thul have never had to consider anything
beyond fishing and farming. Now it is necessary for them to change according to the circumstances. Hari hopes that one day he will get a job and live a new life. Otherwise he and his family will surely fall ill like his mother and die.

Hari's lack of belongingness and the feeling of alienated disgust is echoed. Thus 'Everything belonged here, everything blended together except for himself. With his discontent, his worries and his restlessness he could not settle down to belonging' (p.41).

He knew in his heart that he would leave his native place, Thul one-day. Thul could not hold him for long. At least not the Thul of the coconut groves and the fishing fleet. Perhaps if it really did turn into a factory site one day he would stay on here living a new kind of life. So he determines, 'No! He'd go away cross the sea in boat, somehow find his fortune in Bombay either with Mr. De Silva's help or even without, it. He felt very much alone' (p.41).

Many factories were going to be established. These will bring bus-depots, railway stations and housing colonies. The positive side of it was an industrial development. The industrial development is a sign of modern times for devastation and dangers. The stranger argues 'All the land will be bought up. Factories will be built on it. Your rice will go.' It is a fatal shock to the villagers. They feel that the government is most despotic towards them. It represents the cruelty of modern technology and machinery. It also represents the indifferent attitude of the government in grabbing the land of poor farmers for establishing factories. The farmers react bitterly against government's cruelty. Biju challenges 'Why here?........Go, build your factories where the land is barren and nothing grows but stones and thorns' (p.60). They don't like the government
taking away their land to build factories in their fields. As Swain observes, "The existential plight and dilemma of alienation with the advancement of science and technology have frozen. The general current of the lives of the rural community threatened with insecurity and severance from their roots. The displacement might be geographical but it will create shouldering discontent and anguished anger." in the people.

The village will go and the factories will come in its place. Fishermen and farmers will have to become factory workers. The villagers are angry because they are going to lose their land. They also think that the workers may be brought from outside to work in the factories. The factories will pollute not only the air but also water killing the fish in the sea. So the villagers decide to protest. 'They cannot take the sea from us, the land is ours, the sea is ours.' Hari also wants to support the villagers in fighting for their right. He is tired of domestic difficulties. As he is heavily burdened with family responsibilities at a tender age, he thinks of going to Rewas leaving his sick mother and sisters.

Through the conversation between the cart driver and Hari the novelist presents the impact of new ways and things on Indian Social life in general. The words of cartdriver to Hari are very enlightening on the point of ever increasing Indian population and worsening situation. 'Nothing is enough. We are too many on the earth now. Not enough fuel for all, not enough food, not enough jobs - or schools or hospitals or trains, buses or houses. Too many people not enough to go round' (p.71). This primitive cartman's thoughts focus on a global and also national problem imparting the book a depth.
Hari leaves Thul because he has been upset. He does not like to be a dependant on invalid parents. He has no hopes of affection and attention from his father. His physical and psychological needs are ignored and frustrated by his father. They affect his thinking and behaviour. Talking about the basic requirements of an adolescent, Sudhir Kakar comments: "Psychotherapy and counselling often uncover a long-buried resentment against the father who somehow failed his son by not having been 'there' enough, by not having been a tangible solid presence to lead on, take hold of and measure oneself against in order to stabilize and strengthen one's own psychic structure and masculine identity."

Hari gets disappointed when he sees his father as a mere onlooker than an ally in his boyish struggle to cope with his new circumstances. He even feels sorry for he could not have education due to financial crisis of the family.

Other boys in the village are idle and roam about uselessly. They do not have any existential problems as Hari has, as their parents take care of them. But Hari being crushed by poverty, dreams of going to Bombay and earn money to support himself and assist the invalid family. He is full of reveries. He goes to Bombay along with the processionists led by the local MLA, Adarkar. His journey to Bombay exposes him to other relationships and other experiences and leads him to re-examine his own situation. When he was left out of the procession in Bombay he feels lonely and tries to find de Silvas for the job of car cleaner in their house and rejects the life of earning money by criminal practices. Socio-economic factors leave a firm impression on Hari’s mind. The problems of protagonist, of Desai in her earlier novels are mainly psychological and spiritual and more or less social. But this novel clearly depicts, through the character of Hari how the time and destiny along with social, psychological and political problems
enhance the already insurmountable misery and despair in human life. R.S. Sharma aptly sums up: "Anita Desai sees the world in terms of experience as it emerges from the encounter of the experiencing self with the world outside." The desire for a better job and a better life becomes his obsession under the hopeless conditions of his family. He is very much frustrated when he is told that Mr. De Silva does not need his service as he has already many servants. He becomes nervous and loses his enthusiasm. Now for sometime he feels alienated.

The watchman of ‘Sea Bird’ takes Hari to Jagu, the owner of Srikrishna Eating House. Here Hari finds food and shelter. He gets seven rupees a week. He is very happy and proud of his first earning he gets for his family. As it is very hot in the restaurant even at night, Hari cannot sleep there. Mr. Panwallah sees his pitiable condition and advises him to go to the park nearby to sleep. The park changes Hari’s life and makes it rather easier for him to endure. He develops a sort of humanistic and philanthropic outlook towards life. Jagu and Panwallah become Hari’s well-wishers and benefactors. Mr. Panwallah takes Hari as an apprentice in the afternoon and instructs him in watch-mending. He wishes to make Hari watch-mender. He expects him to make something positive and constructive in his life. Hari learns the work in his leisure hours with patience and perseverance. Mr. Panwallah also teaches Hari something about the change of seasons in nature. Solanki says, "The harsh realities of loveless and poor existence produce in Hari intense feelings of frustration and resentment and force him to adopt different solutions to cope with his difficulties."

When Hari falls sick, Jagu takes him home. His wife bangs him for bringing the boy to their house. She feels that she cannot feed an additional member in their family. She also feels sorry for the regular drunkenness of her husband. When Hari tells her of
his poor condition and the drunkenness of his father she takes pity on him. She asks him to stay with them. But Hari has a deep sense of understanding of difficulties and adversities at Jagu’s home. So he does not like to trouble them by staying in their house. He pleases his Jagu by hard work and Mr. Panwallah by his simplicity. He is determined to earn enough money to relieve his family and he succeeds. His success in earning money by watchmending gives him self-confidence and a sense of maturity.

The devastation of storm. and the news of the missing fishermen at sea make Hari to go back to Thul. The fishermen at Thul have got cordial relationship with one another. The cordiality of Hari makes him go to Thul and see his people. He feels concerned about the safety of the fishermen. He comes to know that Biju saved some fishermen caught in the storm. Biju is a man who expects a change and desires for the progress and prosperity of his fellowmen. He glares and tells them ‘one day everyone will have to build boats like mine. Things have to change. Then they will improve. Yes..........improve! change...............’ (p.124). Amidst suffering they cherish hopes.

Anita Desai gives this message through Biju. Hirabai feels proud of Biju’s boat. She lifts her hand to the sky and says ‘Leave it to the gods - that’s all we can do leave it to the god’. The novelist presents a realistic picture that the villagers give credit to positive, constructive and glorious actions of god. The aim of Panwallah is to make Hari a watch-mender. He expects him to set up a watchmending shop when he goes back. He treats Hari very cordially and affectionately when he goes to his house. He doesn’t like Hari to stay on in Bombay and he wishes him to go back to Thul and earn his livelihood. When Hari explains to him their miserable condition at home and helplessness, Panwallah gives him hope. He advises him ‘You can find work anywhere...As long as you can use your hands... If you cannot stop it, you must learn
to use it - don’t be afraid… you’ll find you can sell the vegetables……to buy a cow or chickens and make a living for them’ (p.128). He explains him the new ways of earning money for livelihood. Hari’s journey to Bombay exposes him to other relationships and other experiences and leads him to re-examine his own situation. He no longer feels so helpless, the drunken father is shaken out of his torpor by the removal of his ailing wife to the hospital, a removal which is brought about by the eldest daughter with the help of the Bombay visitors. This little push from the outside world helps to reshuffle the disintegrating relationship into some kind of cohesion. The different worlds interact, and with the coming of industrialism to Thul, the interaction becomes unavoidable. The encapsulated world of the village cannot continue an isolated existence.

When Panwallah sees the desired effect in Hari he feels delighted. Hari develops a sort of anxiety to learn new ways and techniques. He promises Panwallah, ‘I want to learn more.’ It indicates a change in Hari. Then Panwallah says, ‘Good…that is what I wanted to hear you say. Learn, learn, - so that you can grow and change. Things change all the time, boy - nothing remains the same… they are still changing - they will go on changing - and if you want to survive, you will have to change too. The wheel turns and turns : it never stops and stand still” (p. 129). It reminds us of a stanza in Tennyson’s renowned poem ‘In Memorium’.

Their roles the deep where grew the tree
O earth, what changes hast thou seen;
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the cultural sea.

Change is the law of life. Panwallah tells Hari how things in this universe have undergone changes. He prepares Hari to change and accept new ways and techniques.
Pawallah finds a real change in Hari when he takes him to the sea on the occasion of the Coconut Day. On seeing Hari’s success, he feels quite confident of Hari and delightfully declares, ‘you will manage alright - I can see I don’t have to worry about you anymore.’

In this novel Desai presents the feelings of alienation of modern man through the character of Billu, the coconut seller who violates the social norms of society. He represents this attitude when he says to Hari. - ‘I find for myself - I’m a man and depend on myself. That is the best way to be, boy - free and independent. Don’t say ‘please’ and don’t say ‘thank you’ - take what you want. Be a man, be independent’ (p.85). Modern man is in the process of cutting himself off from the others around him. This self-made separation in course of time makes man anxious for communication. His alienation may be due to the attachment to popular or mass-culture and also because of the alienation from social norms.

Hari is a simple village boy, finds himself job in the city and eventually comes home with positive plans for the future. He returns home full of self-confidence and with a changed attitude. He sees their unchanged house and its unchanged atmosphere. He determines to change it all. It is positively voiced ‘He would change it all; he would rebuild the hut. He would work on it now that he was home and make it bright to set up a poultry farm on it’. He also plans for a watch-repair shop in his village. He feels cheerful and optimistic. There is much philosophy of optimism in the novel. As fortune always favours the brave, chance favours Hari. Whenever Hari’s family is in miserable financial crisis, De Silvas pay a visit to Mon Repos. When Hari wishes to go to Bombay the procession helps him. Good luck and chance takes him to Hira Lal. Jagu
and Panwallah, and sends Sayyid Ali to Mon Repos in Thul to enable Lila to earn some money. Chance sends an old man to rebuke the policeman for bullying Hari while he was sleeping in the park. God helps those who help themselves. A conversation between Ramu and Hari makes us understand the situation. Ramu says, 'everything is going to be different.' But Hari interrupts 'we have to change too, we shall have to become different as well'. The village Thul and the city Bombay become symbolic of two facets of India. Thul represents agricultural rural life with magic cures and freedom. Bombay represents industrialised urban life in metropolitan cities with science and medicine. "Hari’s training in watchmending in Bombay and his idea of establishing a watch shop in Thul are symbolic of bringing a consciousness of time to the timelessness of Thul".\(^\text{12}\) Observing on the revolutionary change that has taken place in Hari, Jasbir Jain says, "The movement from childhood/adolescence to adulthood, which is consciously presented in this novel, is present both at conscious and unconscious levels in the lives of other protagonists".\(^\text{13}\) The subtitle also epitomises Desai’s concern with family relationships which become a method for exploring and defining the self in her work. ‘The self’ is at one level, a product of the social and cultural forces, and at another it is also the projection of an ideal. Both are true in the case of Hari and Lila.

Hari goes to Aliburgh to buy some sweets for the sisters and to bring his mother home. They all come together. They celebrate Diwali happily. The happiest occasion of coming together makes their mother utter quietly ‘I feel wealthy when I see all of you beside me.’ Their father feels sorry for the way the things had been in the past. He also feels sorry that he had been responsible for the miserable condition of the family in the past. There is a total transformation in him. Hari goes to Mon Repos to meet Sayyid Ali.
He finds him studying birds. He goes close to him humbly and tells him of his desire to start a poultry farm and a small watch-mending shop. Sayyid Ali advises him sincerely that he has to adapt himself to the changing situation. Sayyed Ali gains this insight by watching the birds. Desai voices this survival motif through simple and sincere people like the bird watcher and watch mender. By adapting himself to the environment and adjusting to the circumstances man can preserve and protect his identity under the anguished pressures of an alienated existence. The ornithologist, Sayyid Ali exhorts Hari to adapt and accommodate himself to the changed environment of technology. He gains this insight by watching birds. Here lies the clue and secret to the preservation and protection of one’s identity under the onerous and anguished pressures of an alienated existence. Sayyid Ali elucidates this motif to Hari: ‘Adapt - that is what you are going to do. Just as the birds and animals must do if they are going to survive. Just like the sparrows and the penguins that have adapted themselves to city life and live on food leftovers and rubbish thrown to them in the streets instead of searching for gains and insects in the fields.... so you will have to adapt to your new environment’ (p.155) he explained. Dynamic adjustment with changing circumstances is the philosophy for survival of man on earth. ‘You will have to adapt to your new environment.’ Both Mr. Panwaailah and Mr. Sayed Ali lay stress on the dynamic nature of existence and also identity of selves that exist. As Swain points out. ‘Indeed, one has to acclimatise with the milieu. Dynamic adjustment and adaptation of the self to the changing milieu seems to be the core of idea of the novel. The means to the preservation of one’s self-identity does not lie in getting alienated from the milieu and waging a perpetual rebellion against it, nor does it lie in discontent and restlessness but in adjustment, accommodation and
acclimatisation. Without these positive integrating virtues, the self-identity of the individual will disintegrate.14

Almost all the women protagonists in the novels of Anita Desai are not passive; but they are sensitive and sincere to the core. All the characters are individuals. They are really emerging new women. The image of tradition bound Indian women are not seen in the world of Desai. The very image of traditional is shattered in her novels. Although they cross the barriers of tradition, they are cultured, gentle and sensitive. Desai is one of those novelists who has captured the vitality and changing roles of contemporary Indian women. Most of the protagonists in her earlier novels are women who battle desperately with their traditional roles and with society's expectations of them. It is apparent that all her women protagonists exercise their wills and they are the mistresses of their own fates. Lila though a young girl, breaks away from traditional notions of homemaker. She proves to be an independent person and girl of individuality.

Lila, the elder sister of Hari plays an equally important role in uplifting the family. Thematically a greater role is played by religion in the life of Thul and other villagers. Fishermen and farmers think that they live on the mercy of the sea-god and worship the sea offering flowers to it on the stone dunes and coconuts to the waves. The novel begins with Lila's worship: 'Lila took the flowers from her basket and scattered about the rock then folded her hands and bowed' (p.7). Every one offers some kind of worship and the novel ends with worship. She prays God for the family's welfare, does her mother's duty at home, works for de Selvas and Sayyed Ali in order to support the family in the absence of Hari. Mr. de Silva tells Lila so kindly that she need 'not worry so much... I have given your father a little money for his food since he
wants to stay at the hospital. We are paying for the medicines - the hospital itself is free. You will be paid for the work you and your sisters do for us so you will have something for running your household" (p.102). Thus, keeping her family she always inspires and goads, Hari to find out a way for the family predicament. Hari always pays much attention to whatever she says. She manages to send her mother to the hospital with the help and courtesy of de Silvas very tactfully. In the absence of parents and brother, she takes care of the house and her two little sisters Bela and Kamal. She nurses her mother and improves the drunken condition of her father. Lila literally keeps the family together even after the departure of Hari to Bombay. She assumes the role of home-maker. She experiences a new sense of personal worth. She knows that if the family is to survive, she must work for Sayyid Ali. Had Lila remained the traditionally passive woman she would have suffered total poverty and misery along with the rest of her family. She is an emerging new woman. Lila is not a fatalist. She is quite unwilling to accept the traditional ethos. Her instinct for survival triggers her sensibility. She fulfills such domestic roles as are necessary because circumstances require her to do so. Being the eldest in the family, she believes that it is her moral responsibility to take care of the younger children in the family.

Like her counterparts in the West Lila begins to gain more privileges and assumes more responsibilities outside the home with the advent of industrialisation in their village. Industrialization causes disintegration in the family. Hari leaves for Bombay and Lila is affected by industrialisation. She proves to be a courageous home maker capable of facing all hardships. Inspite of industrialisation she is still the one moral force that withstands its onslaught and helps her family survive hard times. She
is just like Hirabai, a dominating character. She imposes authority on her family. Hirabai never spares the immoral attitude of her sons though she is a drunkard. By pitting Lila’s development with that of Hari’s, Desai makes a subtle comment on the strengths and capabilities of Indian women.

Anita Desai tells that not only man but woman also can be bread-winners. Only when the man is a failure like Lila’s father and absent like her brother, women assert their independence. In the presence of their husbands, they play their roles as wives and mothers. As wives they support their husbands’ occupations and as mothers they are the providers of the necessities of life. By going to Bombay Hari makes himself a confident person whereas Lila by keeping herself at home develops managerial sensibility. Desai makes a subtle comment on the strength and capability of Indian women. “Given the opportunity and favourable circumstances, the Indian women can be as assertive and as enterprising and as productive as the Indian man and she can accomplish this without relinquishing her leadership role in the home” as observed by Ratnakar Sudhakar.

The sense of alienation in this novel is not as deep and profound as in Cry the Peacock, or in Voices in the City. Bye, Bye, Blackbird or Fire on the Mountain. Hari’s sense of alienation vanishes soon after reaching Bombay. His aim of going to Bombay is to seek for some vocation and earn money. After earning some money and learning watchmending work he begins to dream of his village and home. He wants to come back and settle down at Thul as a Watchmender. Lila’s feelings of alienation and estrangement also melt away with the homecoming of her brother. Hari and her mother’s recovery from prolonged illness. Thus alienation experienced both by Hari and Lila is
only transitory. It flashes like crosslight here and there in the story, but it is not deeply ingrained and embedded in its fabric.

Anita Desai’s imagination is imagistic. The village Thul and the surrounding areas are a symbol of the virgin soil which are under the threat of violation. Images are taken from the land, the sea, air, insects, birds and fish, sunrise and sunset, palms and flowers, the waves and the marshes, etc. The nest building activities of the birds, at the end of the novel symbolise the human situation. A close scrutiny of Desai’s symbols demonstrates that she has not appended them to her works. She weaves them so well in the text and the titles of her novels. They “remain almost organic parts of her works without doing any violence to the surface story.” Once Desai clarified that she uses ‘certain images again and again and that, although real, they acquire the significance of symbols. I imagine each writer ends by thus revealing his own mythology, a mythology that symbolises his private morality and philosophy.”

Anita Desai gives a description of nature in this novel. There is sensuousness in her description of nature which we find in the poetry of John Keats. The novelist is more preoccupied with the aesthetic than didactic concerns. The novel presents the concept of evolution, change and adaptation, friendship and fellowship, service motive and horror of the universal forces and a sense of optimism. As Swain says, “Integral to the concept of life view and survival motif in the novel is friendship, philanthropy, altruism which is just the reverse of existential alienation. Hence, alienation in this novel serves only as a foil to the central themes of family, friendship, fellow-feeling, tradition and modernity”.

Hari at times, both at Thul and in Bombay out of frustration has felt
isolated and alienated. He never literally has any idea of withdrawal and escape. His aim in life is to learn and earn money and to support the family. His sense of alienation vanishes as soon as he reaches Bombay. He begins to dream of Thul and his home and settling down at Thul as a watchmender. "Lila's feelings of estrangement and alienation also melt away with the homecoming of Hari, the recovery of her mother from prolonged illness and the improvement of her father's drunken condition. Thus the transitory feel of alienation and its concomitant pangs occur as crosslight flashes here and there in the story; but it is not deeply ingrained and embedded in its fabric"¹⁹ according to Swain.

The novel ends with a number of positive and constructive points. Hari seems to be encouraged and confident. He is prepared to undergo changes in his life. He is ready to do something concrete for himself and for the members of his family. The novelist also explores the feelings of national unity and integrity through the character of Mr. Panwallah. He is a Parsee yet he celebrates all Indian festivals. The inhabitants of Thul share the feelings of one another. The message, "the wheel turns" has remained at the very bottom of the novel from the beginning to the end. It reminds us of the memorable lines of Lord Tennyson, "The old order changeth yielding place to new".
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