CHAPTER II
HARMONY IN COMPANIONSHIP

Even now, in the last lap of the twentieth century, women are considered second class citizens. They are expected to adjust themselves to the whims and fancies of the male members of the family whether they be fathers, husbands, uncles or brothers. They are expected to model themselves on the puranic heroines like Sita or Savithri or the so-called ideal women, depicted by men in their fictional writings. Even with the advent of women novelists, there has not been much change in the concept of the ideal woman. Therefore companionship between husband and wife as a factor of marital happiness is seldom a matter of deliberate portrayal in fiction; yet companionship between husband and wife assumes great significance when we consider family to be the basic unit of society, and man and woman to be individuals of equal importance, sharing duties and responsibilities in maintaining the family happiness.

Companionship generally means the happiness and tranquillity of mind one gets in the company of another. Companionship between the marriage partners exists where each plays to perfection his/her allotted role and finds fulfilment. People with similar interests, likes and dislikes make good companions. When husband and wife have common aims and objectives, and when they work together, mutually depending, for the realisation of their objectives, they become good companions. Even without shared passions and shared objectives, a man and a woman can have companionship, if they are
intellectually mature. But if they are temperamentally poles apart, and intellectually immature, they can move only in parallel lines. Today, with the woman striving for identity and freedom, with the woman rejecting her pre-given role, companionship in family and marital relationship is fast becoming an anachronism.

In the conventional Indian society, the honoured tradition of companionship and joint responsibility in married life (Sahadharmascharyatham) has deteriorated. The woman is given the onerous task of keeping up the family. While society is prepared to condone the weaknesses and lapses of man, it is very strict with woman. Woman must be chaste and devoted like Sita or Savithri. She must glorify herself by suffering. Swami Vivekananda in his book Our Women says: "The west says, Do. Show your power by doing." India says, "show your power by suffering" (1). Both Markandaya and Desai reject this traditional concept of woman: the difference is only in the degree of violence with which the rejection is manifested.

Markandaya examines man-woman relationship against the background of the disintegrating traditional home and against the growing awareness of the woman as an individual. Rukmani and Nathan (Nectar in a Sieve) experience something infinitely precious in their companionship, even after their sexual passion has decayed. Rukmani is both a participant and an observer in the novel, besides being a narrator. Whatever happens in and to the family affects her directly and
intimately. Despite each other’s secrecy, the Rukmani-Nathan bond does not get mutilated because theirs is a companionship which has lasted for many years, through many deeply felt events, and has a richness of content and therefore cannot be forsaken for the sake of new-found love. Like Val’s mother (Possession), Rukmani and her husband belong to a generation which is "thoroughly conditioned and ground into acceptance" (173). Rukmani, as an enduring ideal wife justifies Nathan’s illicit relation thus: "she [Kunthi] has fire in her body, men burn before and after" (Nectar in a Sieve, 86).

From the very beginning of their married life, Nathan is aware of the disappointment and anguish of Rukmani at having a mud hut for their home and hence consoles her that "in a few years they can move," perhaps "even buy a house such as her "father’s" (4). Gradually she considers herself to be the most fulfilled woman, rich in love and care from her husband. Leland H.Stott in Child Development opines that "admiration or regard for each other’s qualities makes for a positive reciprocal relationship" (374). Rukmani joins her husband in manual labour and he is full of appreciation for her. He finds his life with Rukmani adequate and proclaims that he is happy since "life is good and the children are good and you [Rukmani] are the best of all" (57). The Rukmani-Nathan relationship is a contrast to the relationship between Nanda and Mr.Kaul in Fire on the Mountain, where Mr.Kaul has no love or regard, nor did he appreciate his wife though his guests has a very high opinion of her. They say that he "is lucky to have a wife who can run..."
everything as she does” (18).

Nathan is a gentle peasant alive to the individuality of his wife and children. Hence, even provocative situations do not lead to confrontations. After their first daughter Ira’s birth, Rukmani fails to fecundate, yet she is not as unlucky as Ira, who is sent away to her parent’s house for her barrenness. Nathan’s patience strengthens Rukmani’s love for him. It is Nathan’s superior qualities that have mitigated her own suffering, to a large extent. She stands by him in their joys and sorrows. They find beauty in their lives, in prosperity and in adversity. The strength of their bond is most felt when they share their long hidden secret, and instead of eruption, they feel enlightened. The greatness lies in Rukmani’s power to forgive Nathan for his unforgivable relationship with Kunthi who bore him two sons. Rukmani’s relationship with Dr. Kenny who helped her in bearing sons for her own husband to continue the family lineage is something more sublime. Even in the alienated city, they work together in the quarry and Rukmani stands by her husband under all predicaments. Rukmani stands in comparison to Mulk Raj Ananad’s Laxmi, in the novel Coolie, who though lives in sub-human surroundings stands by her husband Hari in the face of extreme poverty and hardship without questioning her lot. Rukmani as a wife is capable of radiating peace, order and tranquillity, and exercises a quiet control over her husband and lends him warmth even in the evening of his life.
The Rukmani-Nathan relationship is perhaps the most beautiful ever portrayed in fiction. Even after Nathan’s death, Rukmani experiences his companionship. The novel begins with Rukmani, as an old widow, recalling during day time the intangible presence of Nathan during some nights:

Sometimes at night I think that my husband is with me again, coming gently through the mists, and we are tranquil together. Then morning comes, the wavering grey turns to gold, there is a stirring within as the sleepers awake, and he softly departs. (1)

If there is comradeship between the husband and wife, it can serve as an inspiration to both and consequently can help the woman develop courage, initiative, resourcefulness and wit in a higher degree even after the spouse’s demise.

Sarojini (A Silence of Desire) is an ideal wife and companion to her husband, who has no high aspirations in life. She is the symbol of the ‘perfect’ wife:

She was a good wife, Sarojini: good with the children, an excellent cook, an efficient manager of his household, a woman who still gave him pleasure after fifteen years of marriage, less from the warmth of her response than from her unfailing acquiescence to his demands. He was lucky . . .

For instance, now that she had heard his step in the courtyard she would be putting the potatoes into fry. The agreeable hiss would last until he had washed and changed, and by then she would be ready for him,
and so would the evening meal. (6-7)

Markandaya has resorted to the technique of the third person omniscient narrator, thus giving free play to her realism, and is at liberty to shift the narrative point of view. The maturity of her art is seen in the fact that the story is more attractive and moves at a faster pace than in her other novels. She spins her crisis and tension round the eternal topic of jealousy and blind religious faith. Dandekar’s and Sarojini’s ideas clash at several levels but the most crucial encounter remains between her unshakeable belief in superstitions and his stubborn rejection of them and placing faith in western science and technology. While Sarojini worships the tulasi plant, Dandekar takes care to call it a mere plant. Knowing that every husband likes being appreciated, she admires his actions, and receives gratefully the presents he brings at the end of the month. But, deep down in her innermost heart, she prefers the spiritual companionship, not the superficial closeness. Aware of his westernised views, she cleverly conceals her goings to the Swamy to avoid creating unnecessary problems. Dandekar, who strongly believes that an ideal Hindu wife will not flout tradition, is bewildered to find her movements suspicious. The peace of their once happy home is shattered. They begin to lead an estranged life.

The husband-wife relationship is like the prop and support of a building. It is only in Sarojini’s absence that Dandekar experiences a vacuum and looks forward to restoring peace and
domestic bliss at any cost. Dandekar’s love and concern for Sarojini is revealed in his act of covering her when she moves out to sleep in the next room. Sarojini as a true wife takes the responsibility of her husband’s frequent visits to the prostitutes. Despite this carnal pleasure, Dandekar longs to have his wife back, for it is in her that he receives true companionship. Inspite of their estranged life, Sarojini as an ideal companion reminds Dandekar of his routine of bringing presents to his children:

‘I was wondering if you could get the girls something this month . . . I know they miss it.’

‘I was thinking the same thing.’

Their eyes met and Sarojini smiled lightly: this had happened before. For a moment or two there was a flicker, a sense of their old companionship. (101)

Both Dandekar and Sarojini are striving to achieve companionship, but the method each one adopts shatters their serene life. Peace is once again restored when the Swamy moves out of their life and Sarojini comes out of her fantasy; Dandekar in turn realises that his wife has longed more for spiritual grace than for physical companionship. The banyan tree that figures immediately after Sarojini is successfully operated upon, indicates Dandekar’s rapport with happy peaceful life:

It’s over, atlast it’s over, he thought. He could hardly walk, . . . sat down in the shade of the nearest tree . . . The comonest of trees, scarcely if
ever noticed: yet now he was touched by the beauty
. . . his eye moved slowly down the quiet vista, and
he thought: perhaps my life be as peaceful too,
hereafter. It was the quality he longed for above
all. (156)

Companionship can be attained when both external and
internal factors are favourable. The internal factors most
often are the products of one’s own creation, but the economic
factor can be a sure cause for marital disharmony. Like
Sarojini, Nalini (A Handful of Rice) is full of appreciation
for her husband, even when she knows that it is foolish to
desire for luxury items; yet to please Ravi, she feigns
approval of his plans:

. . . She had only wanted a bed to please him, to
show wifely appreciation of the bursting fervour
with which he looted the future to lay promises at her
feet. (85)

At first Ravi loved to be with his wife. He felt that her soft
tender ways "were like a caress" (118) and enjoyed her company.

Financial stress often spoils family relationships.
Absence of creature comforts owing to lack of funds can spoil
the perfect harmony. Howsoever two persons love and understand
each other, some points of disagreement might arise in course
of time which disrupt marital happiness. Disgusted at the
dissatisfaction with life and the shattering of his dreams,
Ravi explodes and begins to ill-treat his beloved wife. Both
Ravi and Nalini are ideals in their respective roles, but the
intrusion of financial stress, strains their relationship. Similarly it is the economic factor that is responsible for the tantrums created between the father and the mother in Desai’s *The Village by the Sea*. The father turns into a drunkard and the mother is bedridden and finally the children take pains to balance the home atmosphere by doing menial jobs. This serves as an eye-opener to the father who takes care of the hospitalised mother, hence love and companionship is restored.

When a person has no high aims and ambitions in life, he is contented with the little that he gains from life. Nalini’s sister Thangam leads a companionate life with her husband despite their poverty. But when she compares her good-for-nothing husband with Ravi, she feels hurt. Yet, she puts on a bold cheerful face. While the children of more wealthy fathers eat and dress better, and speak of their parents with pride, Thangam has to do the work singly. Moreover when she finds Nalini knitting dresses for her unborn child, Thangam begins to pester her husband who fails to understand why his once docile and easy going wife behaves “like a tigress” (94). Markandaya makes use of the animal image to describe Thangam’s feelings. Though Puttanna has given off his shop which has been running in debt due to mismanagement, Thangam does not belittle him, but joins him in spreading the legend that a partner has decamped with all Puttanna’s hard earned wealth. Finally, when Puttanna absconds, robbing Apu, Thangam as a devoted wife waits patiently for a few days and later accompanies him.

Usually in the joint family system, though the husband and
wife are companions, when it comes to finance, the husband or
the senior-most male member of the family has control over it.
After Apu's death, Ravi takes over this responsibility. The
economic factor disrupts their marital harmony. Apu has not
even a chance to think of the rich exploiting the poor;
Nalini dumbly accepts it, but Ravi rebels against the fact and
by way of protesting, he quietly disengages from the profession
of tailoring Apu has handed over to him. Nalini's mute
acceptance irritates him and there arises incompatibility.

The Nowhere Man is a powerful novel which studies the
problems of alienation and rootlessness. Uma Parameswaran in
A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelists states:
"Personal relationships are Kamala Markandaya's forte. Step by
step she builds up relationships, analyzes them, and
dramatically makes them represent something larger than
themselves" (124). Her narrative is exploratory. She explores
the emotional agony of Srinivas and Vasantha through the
techniques of interior monologue and flashback. She shifts the
narrative point of view from the omniscient author to the
observer.

From the beginning of their married life, the Srinivas-
Vasantha couple represent the ideal Hindu family which is
continued in their life in England. They purchase a house in
England and name it 'Chandraprasad.' They give Indian names to
their children--Laxman and Seshu. Vasantha symbolizes the
traditional Indian wife and mother, obedient to her husband,
and yet has a strong hold over the family. Their life is based on love and companionship, and is therefore able to make a home in an alien land. It is true that there hardly occurred any point of difference in ideas between the couple. They were made for each other and adjusted to each other’s ways. An ideal companionship is not one where there are no differences in opinion, but the way they look at the situations and how they deal with them. Soon after the death of his wife, Srinivvas turns into a desolate bird. It is at this juncture that he meets Mrs. Pickering which brings about healthy changes to his forlorn life. Only after the demise of his wife does he find it necessary to adapt to the western ways. Mrs. Pickering teaches him to cope up with life, to live normally and contentedly with life’s little pleasures. It is her love and concern that prevents him from turning insane. She does not bother about the sarcastic ridiculous look of her neighbours. She nurses him to health when leprosy attacks him. She is truly a companion rising above the racial barriers. Even when the people turn against him, she fights for his cause and tries not to make him aware of his race. It is of course a wife’s duty to look after her husband, but Mrs. Pickering’s concern for Srinivvas is nothing but pure love which is selfless and undemanding. Erich Fromm in The Sane Society discusses productive love, which implies a syndrome of attitudes, of care, responsibility, respect and knowledge. To put it in his own words:

If I love, I care—that is I am actively concerned with the other person’s growth, and happiness; I am
not a spectator. I am responsible, that is, I respond to his needs to those he can express and more so to those he cannot or does not express. (38)

When, towards the end of the novel, Srinivas dies, Dr. Radcliffe says apologetically: "He is dead and we have all had a hand in it" (298). Mrs. Pickering retorts sharply: "Blame myself. Why should I? I cared for him." (299). The novel which begins with Dr. Radcliffe diagnosing the disease of Srinivas, ends with the same doctor diagnosing the disease of the British community, which is also the malady of the modern world: intolerance, suspicion and jealousy.

Mrs. Pickering-Srinivas bond is different from Bawajiraj-Mohini relationship in The Golden Honeycomb. While both the couples experience companionship, Mrs. Pickering teaches Srinivas to lead an independent life, as well as being a companion to him. But Mohini longs for her own individual freedom rather than Bawajiraj's happiness. She therefore refuses to marry him. He is hen-pecked and dependent on Mohini. She is aware of his attraction to her physical charm and plays him at her will. She is free to bestow or withdraw her favour.

Markandaya's later novels, when compared to her earlier ones is a projection of the awakened feminine sensibility and the changing traditional society. Bawajiraj finds a true and lively companion—physical and intellectual—in Mohini, while his wife merely acquiesces to his demands. Manjula, Bawajiraj's mother, is a spirited companion to her husband, totally unlike the
anaemic Shanta Devi. Likewise Mr. Kaul (Fire on the Mountain) finds companionship in Miss David, whom he could not marry due to the existing caste barriers. In spite of his marriage to Nanda, he continues his extra-marital relation with Miss David committing himself neither to his wife nor to his mistress.

Marriage demands devotion, time and energy if it is to last. If both husband and wife crave for individual aims and ambitions, the family is bound to suffer immensely. All successful and satisfying bonds rest on a spirit of sacrifice and self-denial. Co-operation with understanding forms the key factor for a successful marital life. Success in marriage is partly a matter of finding the right person and partly of being the right person.

Sir Arthur Copeland and his wife Mary find companionship even in an alien land, India. During the summer, when Mary and the children leave for the hills, he desperately longs for them and misses them a lot. He loves her and there is perfect companionship between them. Markandaya through the depiction of Arthur and Mary portrays an ideal companionship: "They are distilled products, these two, of what is and has gone before, a fact that gives them a perfect luminous understanding of each other" (96).

The Chief Minister or Dewan and his wife perfectly understand each other. She is a woman of forward fashion though not in Mohini’s class. She will not beguile her husband as Mohini does, nor does she claim freedom that would establish her identity apart from his. Vatsala is satisfied in her
position as his wife. She has a decisive control and management over the household. The husband also does not try to exercise control over his wife. The Dewan’s wife is respected as the acme of Hindu womanhood without having actually to endure its rigours.

Unmindful of his caste and position, Rabi finds friendship in Janaki, the servant girl, and later with the Dewan’s daughter Vimala and then with Sophie, Arthur’s daughter. But these relationships do not lead to marriage. The Dewan who had earlier refused Vimala’s marriage with Rabi, consents to Usha’s marriage with him as he finds their relationship compatible:

A woman of a pared and lucid grace with whom he could talk, or be still, who could move him, and move with him, effortlessly picking up where he left off their common strand. A woman who was at one with him, their lives interlocking at more than one level, with whom, it pleased him to feel, he could wait, or not, to come together. (455)

There is a marked difference in the treatment of man-woman relationship by Markandaya and Desai. In most of Desai’s novels, companionship is an alienated factor, Bye-Bye Blackbird being an exception. To her characters, marriage means annihilation of their true self. Though Adit and Sarah belong to different worlds, culturally and racially, they experience togetherness. Sarah wears a mask purposely for fear of being mocked at for her inter-racial marriage. Sarah is gripped by
fear only when she is in transit from one role to another. As long as she is enclosed in one world, keeping it apart from the other, she seems to be sure of herself and remains cool and contented. Even at home she seems to be safe only within the ‘green’ door of their flat closed behind her. The ‘green’ door is symbolic of the couple’s love for each other and the comfortable married life they lead. She can be herself only within the house or within the school, but never be both (Indian wife and English wife) at the same time. It is Sarah’s greatness that prevents the family from disintegration. Adit hates English cooking and Sarah has not learnt to cook Bengali food to his satisfaction. Adit loves Indian music, she does not relish it in the least. Finally when he proposes to come over to India, she willingly consents to accompany him. It is Sarah’s love and understanding that cements the bond. Though it is one-sided companionship, Sarah does her best to prevent family dissolution. A similar kind of likes and dislikes is viewed in the Kit-Premala relation (Some Inner Fury). While Sarah adapts herself to the double role of being Indian as well as English, Premala remains purely traditional.

Desai has taken a very contemporary problem to probe into, that is the bearing on the cultural relationship of these two countries. It sanctions universality and human significance to her art. Despite cultural differences, Sarah copes up with life and she is therefore successful in her marital relationship with Adit. When he curtly proclaims that their first child will be born in India, she has to acquiesce in order to maintain
peace and save the marriage from breaking off. Sarah’s relenting to Adit’s wishes stands parallel to Sajani in Mulk Raj Anand’s *Two Leaves and a Bud*, who though poor is happy in the hills of Hoshiarpur, but when her husband Gangu decides to go to work on the tea plantations in Assam, she goes along with him. Her husband never asks what her opinion is. The ideal of the Hindu wife is so stamped on her mind that she would rather die than see her husband suffer. Anita Desai, using an animal image, gives a clue to the exaggerated agony of Sarah: “a pony on uncertain legs, startled by each gnat and mayfly” *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, 206). The image brings out Sarah’s sense of inadequacy. Desai’s protagonists in her earlier novels are failures, who are unable to adjust themselves to the challenging new roles. Adjustment comes naturally to Sarah; even though she has every cause to wreck her home, she sticks on to her Indian husband, despite the silent hostility of her people. She has her job, is independent, but does not give much importance to her identity. Adit voices his opinion of Sarah to her:

“You are like a Bengali girl,” he told her. “Bengali women are like that—reserved, quiet. May be you were one in your previous life. But you are improving on it—you are so much prettier!” (73)

So Adit praises her for what she is, only he is the conventional Indian husband and expects his wife to be the same. On one occasion when his Indian company of friends are
ready to disperse after a get-together, reluctant to leave his friends immediately. Adit accompanies them to the bus stop leaving Sarah "to pick up empty cups and glasses and full ashtrays and yawn her way to bed" (27). Sarah adapts to the Indian ways of her husband.

Being a companion to a fellow being induces a sense of involvement. It is one's association with other people that adds to one's pleasures, love, companionship, security, sexual satisfaction, admiration. There will be a perfect blending of love and companionship only if there is involvement. Graham A. Allan in A Sociology of Friendship and Kinship states, "Personal relationships do not simply provide compensation and distraction from the more serious issues of social life, but they are the bonds of social structure" (102). The most intimate personal relationships occur within a family, most often between husband and wife, and parents and children. This relationship depends on the pressure and the tension within the family and the individual's upbringing.

In Clear Light of Day, Mr and Mrs. Das are happy in each other's company, scarcely having any time for their children. The mother suffers from some physical ailments and the father nurses her; the mother in turn is duty bound to entertain her husband and accompanies him in his game of cards and to the club. But with the arrival of Mira masi into their dull, loveless household, the children feel that spring has come to them. They respond readily to her warmth and affection "and with a yell they streamed out as in wild celebration at this
new season in their lives, a season of presents and green mangoes and companionship” (105). 'Green' is symbolic of the spring of love, cheerfulness and companionship the children receive for the first time in their lives. One seeks companionship outside one's family when it is inadequate within one's own family. Raja is bored with the life in his own diseased home and so escapes to Hyder Ali’s home, where he finds solace in their company. Finally he marries Hyder Ali’s daughter, paving the way for religious and social unity. It is the Hyder Ali family that provides him companionship and happiness and the love he longs for. As Robert A. Baron in Social Psychology: Understanding Human Interaction opines:

Sometimes these relationships develop into the most positive ties, and sometimes they degenerate into cumbersome bonds. There are certain personality that attributes, and situational influences that help increase inter personal harmony, between very dissimilar individuals to tolerate, and sometimes to like one another. (199)

While Hyder Ali’s house claims Raja, the house of the Misra’s attracts Tara as it provides a definite contrast to her house. It is a solid middle class family, informal in everything, free, gay and very friendly which soon accepts Tara into its benevolent fold. It is due to them that Tara meets Bakul who finally helps her escape from the stifling atmosphere of her house. Bakul, a junior diplomat, wanted a young wife to suit
his needs and Tara wanted a change from the diseased atmosphere of her home. It is only a naive husband who will easily subdue his wife to his will and mould her as he desires. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* quotes Balzac: "A wife is what her husband makes her." Bakul had made a strong impact on Tara:

And gradually he had trained her and made her into an active, organised woman who looked up her engagement book every morning, made plans and programmes for the day ahead and then walked her way through them to retire to her room at night, tired with the triumphant tiredness of the virtuous and the dutiful. (21)

Most often a wife yields to the male authority, but when it comes to matters she really cares about, she opposes him with covert tenacity. The influences of childhood and youth affect her much more deeply than they do a man. It is because she is more closely confined within the boundaries of her individual history. She finds it difficult to rid herself of what she has acquired in her early life. When Tara returns to her childhood home, Bakul notices the change in her and says that her stay in her "home for a day" will lead her "back to being the hopeless person" (17) before marriage.

Bim chooses not to marry because she finds companionship and love in her relation with Mira masi and her siblings. She finds her life worth living, at home, she tells Tara that she will not marry and "never leave Baba and Raja and Mira masi" (140).

The need for companionship is felt more in one’s declining
state of life. Bim herself turns frustrated in the evening of her life. The novel which is divided into four parts (part I deals with the immediate present in sequential time order; II presents the past immediately behind the present, III describes the earlier past. IV brings back the time sequence to present again) has the third person narrative. The predominant point of view is Bim's. As several points of view of different characters are to be presented, the universal observer technique is dynamically suited. The present reaction (lonely, uncompanionate life) to the past events (happy childhood) are well delineated:

"Yes, and d'you remember Raja . . . reciting his poems to us . . . ? I used to feel like crying, it was so beautiful . . . ."

'They weren't. 'They were terrible,' Bim said icily . . . .'

'Oh Bim,' Tara exclaimed in dismay, widening her eyes in horror . . . (25)

There are occasions when the narrative gives a fine peep into the mind of Bim:

She did not feel enough for her dead parents . . . her love for Raja had too much of a battering . . . Her love for Baba was too inarticulate, too unthinking . . . (165)

Bim, who is devoid of human company, finds companionship in animals too. In Baumgartner's Bombay, Desai shows that in the
city, where alienation is a dominant feature of life, it is only from animals that one can get company and affection. Hugo Baumgartner a German, feels alienated in India. Although he tries to make friends, he longs for his country. It is this unfathomable yearning for his country that finally results in his ghastly murder at the hands of a German. Though Hugo’s parents live peacefully together, they do not actively participate in each other’s world. Baumgartner’s cats (picked up from the streets in injured, dying state and then nursed to health by him) keep him company and give him love in a city where he feels lonely and isolated. Looking after them and being in their cosy company is a substitute for his need for human caring and companionship. He finds “a reason, even a need, to hurry back to the flat” (196). Lotte is a German dancer, living by dancing in a hotel. Her later life is so companionless and depressing that she mostly lives inside the house and drinks liquor. She is driven out of the house by the sons of her husband and therefore seeks refuge in a garage. Even her co-dancer Grisela does not allow her to stay temporarily in her posh flat. The death of Baumgartner is a blow to her desolate life and she brings cards from his flat so that she may have “something of Hugo for herself” (228). His death forces her to comment: “Yes, yes, I go now, I go, too” (230) suggesting her desire to die, since she thinks there’s nothing for which she should live. Contrary to her usual practice, in this novel Anita Desai explores only the conscious state of the mind of her characters.
Marriage should be the instinctual urge of the individual, but even today, it is the demand of the group which includes parents and relatives. Dilip Chitre in his article "Marriage and Morals" is of the opinion that since "the couple together is superior to both husband and wife as individuals, the partners are advised to act in supreme interest of their individual progress" (81). When a man or woman differs little from other men or women there is no particular reason for regret for not having married someone else. But people with multifarious tastes and pursuits will feel dissatisfied, when they find that they have secured less of marriage than they might have attained. In Desai's novels most marriages result in the union of incompatible individuals. Her male protagonists are practical and matter-of-fact, women are sensitive, sentimental, imaginative and emotional, they are also equally strong. Their attitudes and ideas are different and therefore they react to matters differently and hence the incompatibility.

Markandaya's men and women are average people who do not run after individuality. In their struggle for survival on the physical level, their emotional bonds become their source of strength, security and happiness. They are endowed with a strong and dependable homeostasis system which helps in adjusting themselves according to the situations. When their interpersonal relationship is disturbed, they do not simply sit and brood or turn inward and become indifferent. They try their
best to restore balance. Therefore most of Markandaya's characters find companionship. Even the few who lack it strive to hold the family at any cost. The traditional Indian wives dare not imagine a life apart from their husbands'. Rukmani is of the opinion that a wife's place is always besides her husband. In answer to Rukmani's curiosity about Kenny and his family, he says: "I have the usual encumbrances that men have--wife, children, home--that would have put chains about me, but I resisted, and so I am alone" (70). Kenny, who has devoted his life to social activities, does not find his wife in tune with his objective. This relation stands in comparison to Dr. Radcliffe and Marjorie Radcliffe (The Nowhere Man). While Radcliffe is wholly dedicated to his profession, his wife, a worldly woman, is always conscious of her social status. She wants her husband with all its attendant privileges, perks and comforts. She hates him, as well as his patients who get in the way of "vital social engagements" (239). Like Clinton, (The Coffer Dams) who wants his wife to be like other women, Marjorie wants her husband to be like other men. She asks her husband: "Why can't you be like other men?" (3). Finding that she is least concerned in his profession, he stops discussing official things with her. Marjorie has eyes and ears for other people's affairs. She tells him of the Maitlands who have just bought a nice little villa, with its own beach and a maid. Radcliffe gives scant attention to such matters and as days go on, they become strangers under the same roof, so many obstacles block their lines of communication. Tired of her
husband's negligence, she retorts sorrowfully: "what about me? Do you ever stop to think about me? I'm still your wife, aren't I?" (12). He hardly responds to her needs and despite his knowledge that "he and his wife were living in sinful marriage," (14) he takes no pains to change himself.

People of high rank most often take their wives for granted. The time for making decisions for them is before marriage, and once they are married they fail to think that a cord of disharmony can strike in their married lives. Being officers who have command over their subordinates, they do hope to rule over their wives too. Clinton has his own interests and preferences in life:

He would have preferred to sit in the darkness of his verandah, worrying at some problem . . . Or to lie in bed with Helen, who seemed to recede from him a little further each day. To take possession of her, to know her, know this woman who was his wife carnally, spiritually, wholly, as he felt he did only by night when they lay together and loved. (58)

It is his profession that matters to him, not his wife. During their early married life, when Clinton proposed to come to India, he thought it was no place for Helen, but the prospect of being separated from her was so bleak that when she agreed to accompany him to India he was glad for "she was in love with him, she wanted to be with him" (12). Markandaya later describes their relationship thus: "They fell asleep laughing.
as closely together as if they were one" (15). The 'as if' in the sentence clearly indicates that both of them are in fact trying to live harmoniously despite the fact that basically they are very different types of persons. Their marriage is a union of two strong, but opposite kind of personalities with hardly anything common. Markandaya in this novel stands in a clinical detachment to the points of view expressed, and adopts different narrative points of view. Sometimes she narrates from the point of view of Clinton, sometimes from the view of Mackendrick, Helen, Rawlings or Bashiam. Helen tried to share her ideas and interests with Clinton, during their early married life, but when he showed no interest, she gave up her effort. It was from Mackendrick that he knew that Helen could understand the tribal dialect. But Clinton did not say so to him:

I didn’t know she had, Clinton nearly said, but again he stopped himself in time. It would be, it seemed to him, a sleazy parading of the privacies of marriage: a disloyalty to her for him to reveal there were areas in her life from which she shut him out. (35)

Despite the unhappiness and incompatibility in Markandaya's man-woman relationship, it remains within the four walls, and the question of divorce hardly arises.

Clinton amidst his busy schedule fails to notice the beauty in his wife. While in England, though they did have ideological differences, it was subdued, it opened wide in India. Her attitude to the tribals irritated him. He liked her to behave...
like other women, that is to keep away from the aborigines. He likes her qualities of unpredictability and non-conformity, but believed that these qualities would not work out in India. Later he himself says: "I do not know this woman who is my wife" (176). Even in their daily conversation, it seems that they speak from different poles in different languages. Markandaya very beautifully describes their strained relationship thus:

Sometimes, after they had eaten, and long before they could decently take to the separate halves of their bed, and rain had blotted out the separate lives they had etched for themselves, they had nothing at all to say to each other. (200)

It is when such broad differences take place, that people take to extra-marital affairs, a solace for the time being. Helen finds companionship in her relation with Bashiam and adores his human approach to individuals. Tully (Pleasure City) has given full freedom to his wife who is unpredictable like Helen. Though Tully loves his wife and very much wants her to stay with him, he "accepted her absence" (133) with stoical calm and cool resignation. But Corinna misconstrues his lenient attitude as his "extreme capacity of enduring boredom" (123). As a contrast to this couple we have Contractor and his wife Zavera, "a happily married couple" who "usually did things together" (197). Even though her husband is away she adjusts to the situations and even manages to make life easy and comfortable.
Tully-Corinna marriage is a relationship without any emotional intimacy, but of convenience and social binding. Though married for eight years Tully has made vain attempts “to coax a single ember from the woman to whom he was tied . . . suspicions coming all that time, that what she had to offer would never be enough” (265). Rikki observes the estrangement between the couple:

They were standing side by side, as he had once seen them, long ago. Except that this time nothing suggested they would kindle if they touched, no fly apart. Both possibilities were done with. The two he saw, were burnt-out people, insofar as they affected each other. They were standing quite close together, gazing at the pool but the impression he received was of distinct space between the two figures that were, in actual fact, touching. (267)

Tully feels that his relationship with his wife “held elements of sanity by comparison, and a good deal more honesty” (134) which highlights the generation gap. Tully is a liberal, polite, well-bred gentleman, their marriage is on the rocks owing to a lack of understanding on the part of Corinna. Rikki’s ineffable fondness for Tully compensates for the emotional void created by his wife. Despite the age differences, and cultural and racial barriers, Rikki the fisher boy (who represents a section of Indian society) and Tully find intimate companionship in each other’s presence. He prides, calling himself Tully’s assistant. His affection for Tully is
so profound that he feels jealous of Corinna as he fears that she will take Tully away from him. Rikki’s love for Tully is so great that “he would have worked for Tully for nothing” (64) and when Tully desires for a boat, Rikki tries to make the best boat not for money, but for his innate love for him. It is again Rikki’s ardent love for him which instinctively goads him to save Corinna from being drowned. The genuine affection and companionship between the old and the young is commented upon in unambiguous words through the omniscient authorial intrusion: “They shared a language that went beyond English, and was outside the scope of mere words” (340).

Kit-Premala (Some Inner Fury) relationship finds similarity with Clinton-Helen and Tully-Corinna relationship. In India arranged marriages are the accepted norm, love marriages a rarity. In arranged marriages the couple get acquainted physically and it is much later they get a chance to discover each other’s mind, and develop companionship. Despite Kit-Premala marriage being experimental, (a man and a woman may be allowed to lead matrimonial life temporarily in order to find out if they can settle down permanently) it ends in failure. Kit, who is westernised tries hard to modernise the traditional Premala but in vain. He likes playing tennis, she does not. He asks her to put on shorts for which she has no liking. She prizes honesty, which for Kit signifies nothing. Kit has no taste for classical music, she loves to play on the veena. Despite their discord in behaviour, Premala, modelled on
the Sita image tries hard to please Kit. Kit being fed up with her traditional ways gives up his efforts to modernise her. Premala is an example of the deep silent love that the Indian wife possesses. While Nathan, Dandekar, Ravi are happier with such wifely qualities Kit is disappointed in Premala. Premala becomes quiet and withdrawn and they live in their different worlds. During their early married life they used to enjoy going out together, later Kit gives up asking her to go out with him, except to official or government functions, where it is politic that wives should be present with their husbands. She stands for the traditional Sita image and to stray away from it, is a failure. Both Kit and Premala are good as individuals, but their upbringing disrupts their marital life.

When people receive no companionship within the family, they turn to seek it from outside. Premala finds solace in going to the village school "for she could find no place in the one her husband inhabited" (134). It is broken hearted women who are often driven to become good reformers. To quote Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel*: "Only a broken heart makes women reformers rather than passive lovers, that feminism is the result of ill-regulated or ill-bestowed passion" (216). If Kit had really loved and accepted her, the problem of her adopting a child would not have arisen. He himself was aware of it. He tells Mira, his sister, that Premala goes to the village school "because there is nothing for her here" (142).

Premala has the right knowledge needed for a happy and
satisfying marital relationship. She adjusts easily to Kit’s family, but Kit’s ways are different. In spite of it she tries hard to please him. Even Mira observes Premala’s attitude towards Kit:

If she had not loved Kit so much she would not have tried so hard to please him: and the very earnestness of her endeavour, the awkward conciliatory concentration with which she strove to do the right thing, would have driven many a man more patient than Kit to irritation (122).

The docile Premala fails to reach up to his expectations. Instead of trying to find out what is wrong with her, Kit approaches Mira for clarification: “I don’t know what’s wrong with her? Is it me? Do you know?” (125). If there had been companionship, the need for a third person would not have arisen. Kit’s and Premala’s different upbringing and conflicting views on life prevent them from interpersonal fusion. Marriage between two persons should be based on the compatibility between their bodies, minds, sharing of joys and sorrows. If a relationship is to remain permanent and stable there must be mutual understanding and more than superficial liking.

Apu’s and Jayamma’s (A Handful of Rice) was a loveless marriage. He was much older to her and it was her sense of duty to him that made her serve him. A similar kind of relationship is depicted in Pleasure City wherein “Amma hardly noticed Apu.
She rarely did. He was that old, may be twenty years older than herself" (18). In A Handful of Rice, despite appearances, Apu ran the business, took decisions, was in full authority of the house. Jayamma, large and vocal, carried the appurtenances of strength, but it was Apu who exercised it. The novelist portrays Apu as a “mouse like husband,” who is physically too small and frail for the large Jayamma. Their life was indeed happy, Apu was happier than Jayamma. Markandaya employs an insect image and compares Apu’s attraction towards his wife, just “like a moth that is attracted to flame” (166). When Jayamma observes her daughter living in penury, she is thankful to her husband, for she has never in her life experienced poverty. Despite the crowded household, Apu confesses his loneliness. He is against the joint family system and the idlers, and calls them “Jackals,” (39) suggesting they are awaiting his death to get control over his money. Jayamma is sexually frustrated in her relationship with Apu, yet she does not flout tradition. She is dutiful and loyal to her husband, suppressing her sexual desire and also her inner need for companionship.

In The Golden Honeycomb, Bawajiraj’s relation with his wife Shanta Devi is devoid of love and companionship. She is chosen for her suitability and pliancy. She lives a life separate from her husband. Her upbringing teaches her that “a woman’s supreme attribute lies in her ability to submit to men in general and to her husband in particular” (42). When her husband carries on a life-long affair with his mistress, she is unable to react,
and is forced to console herself, since the spirit of submissiveness is ingrained in her:

she tells herself that one of the perquisites of marriage for men is mistresses. She accepts the position. Her own background has early informed her that Maharajahs have more than one wife and sometimes more than one mistress. (43)

Manjula, her mother-in-law, was a spirited companion to her husband, who, with her limited freedom, used to joke about and knew how to overlook her husband’s affairs. But to Shanta Devi “there is only bitterness of truth that is so brutally thrust upon her” (43). This shows their different outlook towards life and living.

This silent way of protesting stands in comparison to Desai’s wonderfully created heroine, Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain*. Nanda, who was deprived of her husband’s love, discharged all duties as a wife and mother and never rebelled as long as he was alive. Anita Desai compares marriage to a circus show wherein the principal participants manage to put on a show, just to please and entertain everybody. There seemed to exist no love between Nanda and Mr. Kaul. To him she was merely an ornament who decorated his house. In *Family Relationship in Shakespeare and the Restoration Comedy of Manners*, Swarup Singh speaks out his opinion that “women should be treated as the lieutanant of her husband, sharing his confidence and trust and not as chattel and slave” (9). Nanda merely served as a
mechanical appliance for the efficient running of the household. She never had a place in her husband’s heart and all through her life she “had suffered from the nimiety (sic), the disorder, the fluctuating and unpredictable excess” (30). The intense and busy world as the Vice chancellor’s wife had not pleased her. She could never think of any happy moment in her busy life:

Too many trays of tea would have to be made and carried to her husband’s study, to her mother-in-law’s bedroom, to the veranda that was the gathering place for all, at all times of the day. (29)

The painful memory of the days when the Vice-chancellor went to drop Miss David home haunts her even in the isolation at Carignano. All along Nanda was a puppet in the hands of adverse circumstances. She was loved neither by her husband nor by her children. Anita Desai is disgusted with the women who hide their marital incompatibility to preserve the hypo-critical sense of social honour and prestige. It is the women who are the obstacles and enemies to their own sex. Wifehood and motherhood have blinded them to all values in life.

In most of Desai’s novels a wife is only a bothersome encumbrance, at best a social ornament. In these marriages, there is no trust, understanding or love between the couples. At present, women demand esteem from the men they marry as they recognize that no companionate marriage is possible without mutual esteem; where this esteem is lacking and the man treats his wife as a slave, the relationship degenerates into conflict.
and misery. Nanda, inspite of doing everything for her husband and children selflessly, was not given an honourable position in her husband’s home. According to Ruth K.Rossenwaser, Nanda not only plays the role as a mother nurturer, but also plays the role of a "vicarious achiever" (86). Though the social circle approves of her household abilities, her husband does not recognise her contribution to the success of his career. A woman, whatever be her role (wife, mother or beloved), cannot reject or escape from the suffering as per the Indian tradition.

Nanda considers her great granddaughter’s arrival to Carignano as an intrusion. She refuses her peace to be shattered. Desai makes use of ordinary gestures and movements to suggest the inside revolutions of the protagonist. A simple gesture indicates her irritation at watching Raka and Ramlal cross the yard in happy companionship. Nanda’s hand “shot out of the folds of silk and slapped at a pair of bumbling flies on the pane” (55). Nanda consciously uses fantasy to interest Raka as she is jealous of her getting intimate with Ramlal and avoiding her. Ramlal could arouse Raka’s interest and hold it as Nanda could not. Here too Nanda was denied companionship.

Companionship is the mingling of the head and the heart. If it is intellect that controls an individual, the possibility of attaining unity will seem impossible. Only the individual with developed powers of intuition can grasp the polarities of experience and see them in their true relationship. Maya
(Cry, The Peacock) is highly imaginative, devoid of intellect and reason. Gautama is too logical but lacks emotion and sensuousness. The death of Maya's pet dog Toto is a painful experience; Toto could be a symbol of her desirable companion, warm, passionate, faithful and intimate, it represents everything that Gautama is not. The novel is divided into three parts and deals with the three stages of Maya's neurosis—growth, development and climax. Desai explores the consciousness of Maya, who is intensely involved with life, her fears of impending death, her loneliness and her longing for love. Instead of presenting man in conflict with the society, Desai wishes to keep the focus on man in conflict with his mind. The first and the last parts of the novel are in the third-person narrative, the middle part is in the first-person and is full of poetic passages and flashbacks. Desai's way of narration is such that we feel along with the characters, their hopes and changing moods. The scenes described come alive to the reader.

Although Maya-Gautama's marriage has been in a state of disorder, they continue to be together, each one shut off from other's life:

It was discouraging to reflect on how much in our marriage was based upon a nobility forced upon us from outside, and therefore neither true nor lasting. It was broken repeatedly, and repeatedly the pieces were picked up and put together again, as of a sacred icon with which, out of the pettiest superstition, we could not bear to part. (40)
Rikki (Pleasure City) notices that there seemed to be no love lost between the Bridies. When the Bridies die and are buried side by side, the "over wrought" Rikki reprimands people who have buried them, that they "shouldn't have buried them like that," for "she could never bear him to touch her" (16) suggesting the incompatibility in their relationship. Gautama's failure to distinguish the smell of lemons from that of petunias indicates their lack of common sensitivity (Cry, The Peacock, 19). This stands in comparison to Tully-Corinna, wherein Corinna is unable to distinguish the smell of casuarina from hair oil (Pleasure City, 263).

Maya-Gautama's marriage was more or less a marriage of convenience grounded upon the friendship of her father and Gautama. There appeared to be no single link either in their physical or mental outlook to bring them together. Meena Belliappa in Anita Desai: A Study of Her Fiction remarks that the "incompatibility of their character stands revealed--Gautama who touches without feeling and Maya who feels even without touching" (11). Like Rosie and her husband in R.K. Narayan's The Guide Maya's and Gautama's relationship disintegrates because of the temperamental and attitudinal differences. When Maya is bitter or forlorn, Gautama's immediate and only remedy is "you need a cup of tea" (Cry, The Peacock, 7) instead of a touch or a pat.

Couples who find love and companionship between themselves will not mind sacrificing their personal freedom. Maya longed
to live passionately like the peacock who tore at each other before making love. As a husband, Gautama’s first duty is towards his wife, but sticking on to the Bhagavad Gita and the principle of detachment, he fails as a husband. He injects her child-like mind with logic instead of winning her over to his point by faith. Gautama’s principle of detachment finds similarity with Sindi Oberoi in Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner*. Oberoi works on the theory that one should be able to love without wanting to possess. He opines that “... marriage was more often a lust for possession than anything else. People got married just as they bought new cars... One should be able to detach oneself from the object of one’s love” (67). Gautama, who longs for fame, name and money fails to understand the true meaning of their marital bond. Even after four years of marriage, the absence of a child in the family leaves Maya destabilised and depotentiated. He tells her: “No, you are too young” (*Cry, The Peacock*, 20) thus leaving her a barren woman. Maya, who cannot communicate with Gautama, laments that he is never at her side but “across a river, across a mountain, and would always remain so” (114). With the death of Toto, she cries out, “what is the use? I am alone” (22). Critics are near unanimous in the view that the dust storm symbolizes Maya’s mental upheavals, her inner struggles, her desire for warmth, love and companionship and her obsession with death. In *Anita Desai: The Novelist*, Madhusudan Prasad remarks that the dust storm symbolizes “the storm raging in Maya’s sub-conscious mind” (19). R.S. Sharma in his book *Anita Desai* says that the
dust storm "symbolizes the barren fury and frenzy of her tortured self" (43).

Desai employs the technique of the 'fugue' to suggest the ghastly fears by which a person feels constantly threatened. Maya's mind is threatened with the prophecy of an albino astrologer foretelling the death of one of the spouses, four years after the marriage. Finding no companionship in Gautama, she does not share her feelings with him. She laments the loss of her idyllic childhood and links it with an idealized father who remains a symbol of love and security. Having lost this security and personally incapable of encountering reality, married to the practical Gautama, Maya turns neurotic. All that remains in her marriage is but a feeling of pity, and regret, for she is conscious of the "great passage that always had and still existed between us like an impassable desert" (200-201). She therefore murders her husband, thereby relieving herself and transferring the prophecy of death on to him. In her insane mind, she feels she has conquered death and freedom. To put it in Albert Camus's words in The Rebel:

Suicide and murder are thus two aspects of a single system, the system of an unhappy intellect which rather than suffer limitation chooses the dark victory which annihilates earth and heaven. (17)

Thus annihilation is possible through both physical suicide and philosophical suicide. Albert Camus goes on to say that the "man who kills himself in solitude still recognizes a value"
Maya-Gautama’s marital life is punctuated all along by "matrimonial silences and conversation" (12). Marital relationships are established with the explicit purpose of providing companionship to each other. This element of companionship is lacking in their life. The Maya-Gautama relationship stands in comparison to the relation between Saroj and Inder in Nayantara Sahgal’s Storm in Chandigarh, wherein Saroj’s attempts to build up a relationship based on love, companionship and equality with Inder fail (1). Maya’s demand for contact, intimate relationship and communion is so strong that she becomes aggressive in her urge to join him when he hosts a party for his friends (Cry, The Peacock, 93). Maya employs images to highlight their opposing temperaments. In The Achievement of Anita Desai, Darshan Singh Maini aptly observes that through "simile, metaphor and symbol, the two spouses are evoked for us as opposed archetypes" (218). Maya thinks of herself as "a patridge, plump and content" (134) and her hand is like "a well-fed pigeon" (72). Her happy and contented childhood is evoked through these images. Gautama is like "an antique owl" and "a meticulous tortoise" (203). This shows he is slow, dull and stupid at times in understanding certain matters that are vital to her. She visualizes him as "the meditator beneath the sal tree," (8) symbolizing the image of Buddha. In her lucid moments, Maya feels that "he alone was my rock in the wild sea-calm, immobile" (79) and in moments of anger she finds his "long, papier-mache face broadened out as
though it was made of clay after all" (143).

Companionship includes sharing of joys and sorrows, but there is no such sharing between them. Maya ponders over his indifferent attitude and reticent behaviour: "In his world there were vast areas in which he would never permit me, and he could not understand that I could even wish to enter them, foreign as they were to me" (104). Mahadev Desai quotes M.K. Gandhi in *The Gita According to Gandhi* that kama separated from dharma leads "not to moksha but to perdition" (246). There should be a synthesis of the demands of the libido and super ego, so as to achieve a balanced personality. Maya’s neurosis results from Gautama’s forcefully created imbalance and his indifferent attitude to things and matters. Maya on the other hand is not practical enough to see the reality of life and fails in her wifely role. Maya’s longing for companionate life keeps reminding her "of the peace that comes from companion life alone, from brother flesh. Contact, relationship, communion . . . " (18). Finally when she turns to her friends, it is clear that both Leila and Pom (who are married, and leading a fulfilled marital life) cannot act as her anchor anymore.

While Maya longs for companionship, Monisha (*Voices in the City*) pleads for privacy. Jiban wants Monisha to "be a little friendly" (118) to his family. Monisha and Sita (*Where Shall We Go This Summer*) consider it humiliating to be in contact with their husband’s family. The mother (*Voices in the City*), and
Nanda (Fire on the Mountain), who remained stoic and unaffected amidst the incompatibility in their marriage, should be appreciated; while Maya turns insane, Monisha commits suicide and Sita becomes nearly or so neurotic. Shyam M. Asnani in his article, "Desai’s Theory and Practice of the Novel," opines that Desai’s male characters are "dismal, callous, inconsiderable and ill-chosen" and their wives are "acutely sensitive" (5) and imaginative and this results in marital incompatibility. Jiban appears to Amla nothing more than a "boring non-entity, this blind moralist, this complacent quoter of Edmund Burke and Wordsworth, Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore, this rotund minute-minded and limited official," (198) a character unlike Monisha. Monisha, who longs for loneliness, always thinks of her life away from the family:

Almost as often as I catch myself thinking about Kalimpong, I find myself thinking about Jiban’s last posting, out in a district, away from the city and the family . . . Jiban away on tour, I alone with myself, no visitors at all. Our house which we had to ourselves, its rooms almost bare of furniture, its squares of empty space and silence—friends to me, and I’ve had to leave them behind. (116)

Monisha feels trapped "behind the barred windows" (120) of Jiban’s narrow minded family, "lives spent in waiting for nothing," and "waiting for death and dying misunderstood" (120). To maintain a healthy and stable married life, a certain amount of love, respect, care and security is essential. In her
interview with Jasbir Jain, Desai says that "all human relationships are inadequate." "Basically everyone is solitary." She opines that "involvement in human relationships in this world invariably leads to disaster" (65) and that is portrayed through her characters, Gautama, Monisha, Nirode, Sita, Nanda.

True marriage is a relation based on mutual trust and recognition, but if the material values are esteemed higher, the relationship is likely to become a failure. Jiban’s relation with Monisha has no special significance. He does not like her touching his purse without his prior permission; and when she takes money to pay off Nirode’s hospital bills, she is accused of theft, which leaves her humiliated. Being devoid of love and companionship her life becomes "only a conundrum that I shall brood over forever with passion and pain, never to arrive at a solution?" (24-25). Monisha’s relationship with Jiban is "frozen with distrust" (136) and her only trusted companion is her diary. Desai uses the documentary diary technique to narrate Monisha’s dilemma.

Her indifferent attitude towards her husband’s family might have taken roots from her own family. Amla tries to analyse the failure of her parents’ married life: "I’m afraid the marriage must have been something of a financial settlement and--and I don’t know if my father didn’t regret it later" (205). The mother engages herself in things that please her, by concentrating on "flowers and music and fine food, things he
shunned" (208). Both of them choose their different ways, without the slightest thought of reconciliation, stubbornly shutting off their spouses from each other's mind. This indifferent behaviour is reflected in their children's lives. Nirode develops a negative attitude towards life and does not like to establish intimate relation with anyone. He gives up his company with Amla, who was once his favourite and allies with Monisha, who too like him, is incapable of loving another person. Desai uses the omniscient narrative technique and gives an account of Nirode's attitude to marriage:

Marriage, bodies, touch and torture . . . All that was Jit's and Sarla's, he decided, and indeed all that had to do with marriage, was destructive, negative, decadent. He could waste no time on it . . . (35)

Nirode is "like a lost unhappy bat" (17) "a wandering caterpillar" (51) and "an epicurean rabbit" (193). Amla says that it is his suffering that has made him an "ill-tempered rabbit" (194) refusing to reply to his mother's letters. Monisha, who finds it humiliating to be friendly with her husband's family finally seeks companionship in death. Annis Pratt in Archetypal Pattern in Women's Fiction has thus commented:

Love is revealed as violence and romance as fraud; suicide and death are imaged as comforting and attractive, while loneliness and isolation become, for the heroines means to self knowledge and contentment. Adolescent female resist social norms by a retreat
into nature, a green world which is later seen as a lost state of innocence. (24)

Susan Siefert in *The Dilemma of the Talented Heroine* proposes a third group of female protagonists, "the talented heroine," whose talent is "a combination of intellectual acuity, moral sensitivity and aspiration" (9). Desai's women belong to this type of heroines, "who struggle with ennui, discontent and boredom arising from the tension between individual aspiration and uncongenial society" (7-8). As a result the conventional heroines remain a threatening force to the talented heroine who is in search for self fulfilment. In Monisha's family the other female members who are conventional threaten her very existence, so Monisha seeks fulfilment in death.

Gita Devi, Dharma's wife is the long suffering woman that Indian tradition admires, who constantly sublimes her unhappiness through prayer. She cannot share her husband's intellectual life, but she is self-denying enough to leave him undisturbed to pursue his art and his friendship. This novel is too much concerned with the business of telling (narrating) rather than showing (dramatically enacting) the spiritual crisis of the three main characters. In order to create everlasting relationships, each partner must regard the other as a free agent and make no attempt to exert control. And ideally each partner should consider the likes and the dislikes of the other. Sarah's parents, (*Bye-Bye Blackbird*) Mr and Mrs. Roscommon James, present an extraordinary loathsome and ignoble
picture of marital disharmony. The whole ghastly atmosphere is depicted very profoundly:

... She scolded him in tones that would lead anyone not present in the room to think she was speaking to an unusually naughty and tiresome dog. He never answered. He had acquired the silence of a piece of log submerged in a water meadow, of a scarecrow in a cornfield. ... Visitors and errand boys, seeing him about his land, took him for a paid labourer and ignored him as they walked, whistling up the drive to the front door. (144)

He was never consulted on any matter, but was called for to hand out glasses of lemonade to the guests and she never bothered to introduce him to them. Desai portrays the hollowness of their relationship:

On sundays when she liked to play the ruling gentry of the village ... she felt the need of a squire on whose arm she could make her appearance ... she sternly supervised his bath on saturday night and had him dress "decently for once" ... (145)

Mr. Roscommon James very passively submitted and was contented with his acquired role of a servant. Normally he was given his dinner in the kitchen while Mrs. Roscommon sipped a cup of bouillon in the drawing room to rest herself, from the long day’s work. When Sarah suggests to her mother to go on a holiday, she replies: "Oh, I should love to, dear, but- well, perhaps if I can find someone to look after your father for a
fortnight . . ." (148) which suggests the hypocrisy of the existing marital life. Jasbir and Mala, Adit’s friends, longing for material comforts have brought about a farcical marriage relationship. Jasbir is changed into a loud, unpolished, careless clown, his attention centring on good spicy Indian food. Mala is changed into a dishevelled, impolite young woman.

*Where shall We Go This Summer* reveals Desai’s superb mastery of the stream-of-consciousness technique which is obviously her strongest force and which has been so frequently dealt with in almost all her novels. Throughout the novel, Desai makes an effort to probe deeper into the complex inner life of its protagonist Sita. Part One of the novel deals with the present and immediate past in Sita’s life, Part Two with her remote past and Part Three with her present and near future. The mode of narration in *Where Shall We Go This Summer* and *Clear Light of Day* is more or less the same regarding the time sequence.

Sita and Raman have different temperaments; while Sita is romantic and imaginative, Raman is a down-to-earth realist who favours sanity, is matter-of-fact and accepts the norms of the society. He is a practical man who avoids extremes: “Not an introvert, nor an extrovert--a middling kind of man, he was dedicated unconsciously to the middle way” (47). Though Gautama and Jiban are indifferent towards their wives, Raman is just the sort any woman would love to have, he has responsibility and tries to avoid any disharmony that might occur in their
When Sita begins to live in her husband's home, after her marriage, she finds everyone disgusting and family life intolerable. She feels suffocated by the complacency and stolidity of the well-fed and shrinks from the aggression and violence of others. The women of Raman's family are "like elephants" (48) to her, as the way they consume incredible quantities of vegetables. Sita behaves provocatively in the family by smoking openly and speaking in sudden rushes of emotion, embaraussing them. She fails to adapt herself to them. To her, Raman's business associates are "animals," not the pet or the wild ones that she can appreciate and love, but "they are like pariahs you see in the street, hanging about drains and dustbins, waiting to pounce and kill and eat" (47). Sita's marriage was settled not out of love or understanding but "out of pity, out of lust, out of sudden will for adventure, and because it was inevitable—married her" (99). Desai employs many images to bring out the futility and voidness of Sita's life and marriage. Driving back from the Ajanta and Ellora caves where the family spent a vacation, Sita travels through "an immensely long and curiously empty road through a landscape of heaped rocks and grey-pillared banyan trees that looked like the petrified remains of some ancient vegetable civilisation" (50). The empty road reflects Sita's void life.

When Sita expresses her desire to go to the island to avoid giving birth to the fifth child, Raman thinks she is mad. All her anger and emotions which she has suppressed for long pour...
out: "What do you know about my condition? I've told you--I've tried to tell you but you haven't understood a thing" (33).

Anita Desai depicts their marital discord using the sea image: "In the snarled moment of silence, time was a scummy sea, telling nothing" (35). This is an apt metaphor signifying the gulf of incomprehension and incompatibility that separates them. Sita's discord too must have taken root from her own family, for she believed that she had come to the world motherless, and her father hardly cared for her. A good husband or wife need not be a good father or mother. A philanthropist need not be a good lover of his wife and children. Gautama's mother, though a social worker, fails to understand her daughter-in-law, who longed for love and companionship. Sita's father, who was a freedom fighter, who gave comfort and solace to the public, had no time for his wife and children; his wife therefore rebelled against his vigorous ways and ran away to Benaras.

Desai employs the images of flowers in *Cry, The Peacock*, to bring out the opposing sensibilities of Maya and Gautama; In this novel, she employs the images of sea and waves to suggest the marital disharmony:

Then they [Sita and Raman] trailed down the dunes and began to walk slowly and unevenly along the edge of the sea, she close enough to it to let the cream frilled waves rush up and dash over her feet, . . . then he a little more land-wards where the tide could
not assault his shod feet; his dry dignity, and he could crunch along on the sand’s white crust of littered shells. (142)

The sea seems to have a soothing effect on the agitated mind of Sita. Raman considers her behaviour as frivolous, and as if in protest against his wife’s wild values, he crunches the littered shells and walks on, towards sanity and practical life. He never bothers to understand the emotional complexities and existential agonies of his wife. He simply refuses to involve himself with her inner life of agony and keeps his face always “as stolid as soundly locked gate” (34). He defiantly resists the chance attack of Sita’s emotional wave by bending “his head lower, pushing back the wind that thrust at him, and looked stubborn, sullen” (143). Finally Raman takes a positive step by wanting to know the cause of her anguish and infinite distress, which suggests an improvement in their marital life.

It is financial crisis that alienates the husband-wife relation in In Custody. Deven considers his family and his job as “heaps of rubbish” (146) that stand in his way towards achieving literary fame and glory. But he is not aware that it is his own obsessive sense of insecurity and unsureness that becomes the stumbling block. He is assailed by doubts all the time, and always regards himself a prey, “a caged animal in a zoo,” a “trapped animal” (131) trapped in the cage of family life and profession.

Desai uses the direct form of narrative, that is, the third-person universal observer technique, and she herself is
the narrator. There are occasional psychic probing through expressionistic technique, though the major part of the descriptions are objective:

Nur . . . was a name that opened doors, changed expressions, caused dust and cobwebs to disappear, visions to appear, bathed in radiance. It had led him . . . to another land, another element. (105)

Desai employs the stream of consciousness technique to convey the magical effect of Nur’s name on Deven. While Deven finds satisfaction in poetry and in his relation with Nur, Sarla, his wife, has nothing to turn to. Her frustrations find expression in Sarla’s occasional silence and sullenness. Deven had been more a poet than a professor when he married the prosaic Sarla. Theirs is a union freely entered upon by the consent of two independent persons. Sarla was not his choice but that of his mother and aunts. They had known her to be “plain, penny-pinching and congenitally pessimistic” (67). Sarla dreamt the magazine dream of marriage:

. . . herself stepping out of a car with a plastic shopping bag full of groceries and filling them into the gleaming refrigerator, then rushing to the telephone placed on a lace doily upon a three-legged table and excitedly ringing up her friends to invite them to see a picture show with her and her husband who was beaming at her from behind a flowered curtain. (68)
But when none of her dreams had materialized, she was naturally embittered. Sarla had been as much disappointed in him as he had been in her. In spite of understanding each other, it brought no closeness of spirit or comradeship, the two victims avoid each other.

The system of polygamy exists in the novel. According to the Indian tradition, if a wife fails to bear her husband a male heir, he is at liberty to marry for the second time. Nur’s first wife fails to be an intellectual companion and thereby chooses Imtiaz, whom he encounters in a brothel. His first wife cooks, cleans, washes, and manages his household. Imtiaz Begum writes poems and recites and thereby wins over Nur’s audience. She is both an adversary and an adorer to the poet. She wants the upper hand, and Nur, who is in love with her, cannot go against her will.

Desai’s latest novel Journey to Ithaca, explores the ambiguous nature of spiritual love and profane love. Like so many other people Matteo leaves his Italian home and journeys to India to seek spiritual enlightenment in the ashrams. His wife Sophie accompanies him but does not find the mysterious Mother as inspiring a guru as Matteo does. As Matteo worships at the Mother’s feet, Sophie struggles for his love and companionship, and cries out fiercely: “I want to go away, I want us to be by ourselves” (47). Unlike Matteo, she preferred a life of luxury. She could not adjust with the life in the ashram, least of all, Matteo’s blind faith. She was “determined to take no part in Matteo’s life anymore” (76). Sophie who was
companionless pondered over the fact that they had come together to share the adventure but now realized that a "dark inexplicable gulf" (77) existed between them. She preferred the company of the animals to that of "the inmates of the ashram" (78). Matteo, who is spiritually attached to the Mother, tells Sophie that in "her presence he feels more alive than in the presence of any other living creature" (141). Yet Sophie loves him and when she receives a telegram to say that Matteo is hospitalised, she returns from Italy to nurse him. Finally, when she learns that after the Mother’s death Matteo has left to the north, to the mountains, she too decides to follow his path.

In Anita Desai’s novels, even if the marital relationships are incompatible, the question of divorce very rarely comes up. Divorce was not heard of in traditional families. In India belief was such that men and women once united by God should not be separated. With growing individuation, one thinks of what is acceptable to oneself not in terms of what is acceptable to society. This attitude obviously makes room for divorce. For the longer span of life, people invent divorce to replace death. In Cry, The Peacock Nila has come to consult Gautama, her brother, regarding her divorce. Gautama refuses, and is against her decision and therefore says: "I haven’t time to waste on a case like hers--the mess she makes by being too bossy and self-willed and bullying" (161-162). Nila who is tired of her life with her husband says: “After ten years with
that rabbit I married, I have learnt to do everything myself" (162). Women want their freedom rather than the security through marriage. A divorced woman may be financially backward, but that will leave her in high spirits and happier. The Misra brothers *(Clear Light of Day)*, Brij and Mulk, "were silly, idle and obese" (161). Their wives were disgusted with their lives and so moved into their own homes. They want change "and cut their hair short and give card parties, or open boutiques or learn modelling" (151). The Misra sisters who were married when they were hardly sixteen and seventeen were very soon rejected by their husbands. Bim who loved the independent life wonders during her childhood why the Misra girls "were in such a hurry to get married." (140). Bim believed that marriage would not last the whole of one’s life. She had many other plans to be fulfilled in her life: "I shall work--I shall do things, I shall earn my own living--and look after Mira masi and Baba and--and be independent (140). Anita Desai, through the voice of Bim and the Misra girls indirectly opines that though marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society women have learned to lead an independent life, and have given secondary importance to marriage. They try to find companionship within the family or in other social activities.

Very often the main problem of the urban poor is that the man falls a prey to the numerous temptations of city life and squander whatever money he makes, thereby the woman has to support herself and her children. Murugan *(Nectar in a Sieve)* deserts his wife and children for another, thereby leaving her
poorer, but happier. Jacques Mousseau in Readings in Marriage and family has argued:

The safety valve of death has disappeared and the very concept of divorce has changed. It was once a means to resolve an unusual and irreparable situation. Today divorce has become security for couples who cannot tolerate each other for so many years. (73)

Roshan Merchant (Some Inner Fury) who used to write poetry and was a newspaper columnist, is drawn as a magnetic character on whom divorce has left no scars. She tells Mira of her relationship with her husband:

"We haven't lived together for years," she said. We used to squabble like anything when we did, but now--funny thing we're the best of friends." (61)

Living together as husband and wife is impossible for them, but friendship is possible. In The Nowhere Man, Mrs.Pickering who has been a very good companion to Srinivas ponders over her married life. She says to Srinivas that hers was a miserable marriage and was glad that she was divorced. She expresses her relief;

"It was a miserable marriage, I was never so happy as the day my husband left me" . . . "it was a relief" . . . "such a relief, when it was over. Like a lot of knots being undone." (50)

Liberation for women in India is not a static, free-standing concept. It is of recent origin. The concept of the
faithful, patient, long-suffering Sita is slowly dying a hard death especially in urban centres. Woman is coming gradually to be perceived as not being archetypally different and inferior but as having the same drives, ambitions, needs, egoism, sexuality and humanity as man. Lila Chatterjee (Voices in the City) approves of her daughter’s divorce and prides in her ability to choose her profession.

Aunt Lila’s talk markedly shows the changing position of women. She encourages Amla to continue her career. She is in turn dissatisfied with her young days when they were not allowed much freedom:

‘My dear, how marvellous to see you like this, Amla, absolutely free and in the centre of such an exciting world. You do have fun and how right you are to make the most of it—not all of us had that pleasure in our young days . . .’ (144)

The traditional all-suffering woman image is broken. While Lila Chatterjee is a firm supporter of her daughter, we find that the position of mother takes an altogether different turn in Cry, The Peacock and Fire on the Mountain. Tara’s mother Asha tries her best to prevent her daughter from breaking off. And therefore when Tara’s husband, a diplomat, is given a new posting in Geneva, Asha persuades her to join him, to give him another chance. The mother who dedicates her life to improve her beauty has only little time left over for her unfortunate daughter, who tries hard to pull herself together with her husband.
The destiny of a woman is marriage in both Markandaya's and Desai's novels. We find women who are married or have been or plan to be or suffer from not being. The celibate woman is to be explained and defined with reference to marriage, whether she is frustrated, rebellious or even indifferent to it. Illa Das and her sister Rima spent all their life in poverty, inherited no family fortune, which was shared among their brothers and therefore had to earn hard for their living. Illa Das joined as a lecturer in the Home Science College, Rima had given piano lessons going from home to home and then coming home to nurse their sick mother. Both the girls must have found companionship within their home, and may not want to take a further step into the institution of marriage, which would have been either a success or a failure.

Companionship is the most vital element in human relationships and without it life would appear dull and meaningless. When this element is denied to sensitive and emotionally surcharged people, they turn neurotic and most often are forced to commit suicide. Only when there is sincere love between two people will there be true and sincere companionship; or else, their life is a mere drama, putting on shows. The family is the private garden where man need not wear any mask, where he is able to forget the haunting guilt of the past in the silent love of the family. When companionship is lacking, the individual is very often prompted by the sense of frustration in him to neglect his responsibility towards his
family and society.

In Markandaya's early novels the couples do not crave for companionship. To quote Meera Shirwadkar in *The Image of Woman in the Indo-Anglian Novel* illustrating the biased view regarding the Indian women's lack of companionship: "As for companionship, the Hindu woman does not know the meaning of the word" (12). They live the normal life, they are the normal peasant class who strive for survival. For them existence or survival is the main problem. So companionship is a distant factor in family relationships. Anita Desai’s women long for love and communion of the spirit which they perceive as the panacea of the ills of the world. They refuse to compromise and surrender and the inability to accept the perspective of their partners inevitably results in isolation and loneliness. Desai’s women are educated, and think highly. There is no love, understanding or communion of souls in any human relationship in her fiction. But most of her heroines seem to be more successful in their relationship with nature. Desai’s husband-wife relationship is similar to the relationship between Alfred Brangwen and his wife in D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*. To quote D.H. Lawrence: "They were two very separate beings virtually connected, knowing nothing of each other, yet living in their separate ways from one root" (8).

Both Markandaya and Desai argue that for a peaceful and comfortable family life, adjustment is an important factor. Only those who adjust and cope up with life will turn out successful. Even if the spouses belong to different races or
cultures, the marriage might turn out successful with mutual understanding and togetherness. While Markandaya's protagonists adjust themselves to the differing situations in their marital life, Desai's protagonists turn rebellious for lack of companionship and love and sex.