CHAPTER III

THE SEASON AT SARSAPARILLA

Patrick White has judged that the people in general are endowed with enormous potential. Their talents are being ruined and remain untapped. When they use their skills correctly, they could achieve great things in life. On the other hand, people have been involving themselves in the routine, monotonous activities. Further, they are becoming victims to the sensuality. They find no time to think about progress and development. They have not realized their own ability and they are under performers. They do not even attempt to have an understanding about their value. In this chapter, White’s earnest feelings in this regard has been analysed in detail, with particular reference to his play *The Season at Sarsaparilla*.

*The Ham Funeral* was rejected by the governors of the Adelaide Festivals in 1961. This proved to be a blessing in disguise. It was partly responsible for another major event to take place in the history of Australian literature. Patrick White wrote his second major play *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, which was first produced in the year 1962. In *The Ham Funeral* White concentrated on the development and growth of an individual. He analysed the limitations and the factors that prevented an individual from progress. He had also indirectly suggested the ways and means to overcome the
problems. But with reference to *The Season at Sarsaparilla* his concentration was now not with an individual. He was more worried about the state of his own country, Australia. May Brit Akerholt in *Patrick White* pointed out that:

White’s concerns are now with the conditions of his own country, and he moves from the portrayal of an individual’s solipsistic introspection to the ills of Australian society. (36)

In *The Season at Sarsaparilla* White concentrated on the society. The characters, he had taken to analyse the situation, were stereotypes. It was through these stereotype characters of Australia, the writer portrayed the monotonous suburban lifestyle and its undercurrents of friction and despair. The play is a scornful attack on the Australian ways of life. In *The Ham Funeral*, there are only three major characters in the play. The writer concentrated only on the inner life of an individual. But, in the second play the scenario is different. A large group of characters are introduced in the play. White is dealing with the ills of the society and its disturbing elements. To depict this, wider representation is needed. In the list of the dramatis personae, there are three couples, the Pogsons, the Knotts and the Ernies. The stage setting is simple. Majority of the action takes place in the three kitchens and in the backyards of these families.
Clive Pogson was a business executive around fifty years of age. He played the role of the head of the family. He perfectly fitted into the character of a breadwinner in the family of Australian suburbia. Every morning, he left for his office, his wife sent him off with a parting kiss. He returned home in the evening with the day’s newspaper and the things that he had shopped for his wife. At home, he was always busy with his newspaper. This was his routine activity and he was complacent with it. With reference to his children, he had created a kind of feeling that was a mixture of both awe and respect in their minds. When one of his daughters, Pippy had disobeyed her mother, the mother threatened as follows:

Girlie: … … That is where you are, Pippy. Did you hear me call?

Pippy: (kicking the ground) Yes.

Girlie: And why didn’t you come?

Pippy: I didn’t feel like it.

Girlie: Ooh, you bold little girl! I’ll tell your father, Joyleen. One day you’ll catch it. (SA.S. 1.1.81)

This was a kind of ideal fatherly role Clive Pogson plays. May Brit Akerholt in *Patrick White* pointed out that:
Clive conforms comfortably to the roles expected of him as breadwinner and head of the family. He leaves and arrives with punctuality, and when at home, retreats behind his newspaper. (40)

Girlie Pogson was an elegant woman in her forties. She was known for her perfection and principles. She always appeared trim and tidy. Not a hair would be out of place in her appearance. She played the role of a respectable mother in an Australian suburbia. She was very particular in bringing up her two daughters in a disciplined way. May Brit Akerholt rightly said that Girlie’s main concern was educating her daughters to respectability and daintiness. She never wanted them to be morally lopsided. She always recalled her past life, in her native Rosedale, as a young girl. Everything had been prompt and perfect with her. At that time, she was perfectly beautiful and interested in playing tennis. Now, she had almost become an ideal housewife. She found no time to think about her hobbies or took any extra efforts to maintain her beauty, “Girlie: When you’ve got the home, when you’ve got the kids, when you’ve got the wash on Monday, you forget there was a time for dimples.” (S.A.S. 1.1.85) She couldn’t understand the behaviour of her two daughters. Their activities were rather mysterious and not up to her expectations.

Judy, the elder daughter of the Pogsons, was around 18 years old. She was very pretty and sweet. But, she was rather withdrawn and tentative. She
was interested in playing violin. Judy’s music was sweet and true but, it was not exactly brilliant. Her obsession to violin had brought in many negative comments from most of the characters: “Clive: (throwing down his paper) If there’s something I can’t stand, it’s a squeaky fiddle!” (S.A.S. 1.1.85) Joyleen, the younger daughter of the Pogsons, was often addressed as Pippy. She is one of the most important characters in the play. In fact, the drama opened with an introduction to Pippy. She was a straight forward, shrewd little girl. She was very inquisitive and eager. She did what she wished. Pippy never minded about her mother, who always wanted her to be polite and disciplined.

With reference to the Knotts, Harry Knott was a young salesman. But, his responsibilities had made him look a little bit old. There was nothing distinctive about his appearance. His wife Mavis Knott was expecting a baby. As she was in her family way, she appeared to be a bit miserable and fretful. Normally, she was an easy going and acceptant young woman. She was neither pretty nor plain. She bore the look of an average, decent suburban wife. They were the perfect characters of Australian middle class family. There was nothing so special about them. They conformed to the expectations of the society. They were the young replicas of the Pogsons. J.R. Dyce in Patrick White as Playwright says:
The house on the right of the stage contains the Knotts, Harry, a Salesman, is the husband of Mavis, who is expecting a baby. Beyond that, there is little to tell about them; they represent the large class of people who live and die without notoriety or distinction, but who live well nonetheless. (42)

Roy Child was a brother of Mavis Knott. He was a teacher by profession. He was in his early twenties. He was very casual. He was considered as a representative of the intellectual community. He frequently passed comments about men and matters of Sarsaparilla. A few characters even turned to him for advice at critical time. He was held in high esteem by everyone. J.R. Dyce’s in *Patrick White as Playwright* comments:

> In the Knott household we find the least out-going and perhaps the most materialistic couple allied with the so-called intellectual Roy, who certainly can see further than most but whose judgment is clouded by his own pretensions. (53)

The Boyles struck a contrast with other two couple. Nola Boyle belonged to the group of women characters of Patrick White, who were in ‘dangerous forties’. While introducing her, White addressed her as lioness. Lionesses are especially popular for hunting. They look very different from male lions, and it is the lioness that does the hunting most, so the adjective
lioness emphasized both femininity and ferocity. When Pippy talked about dogs in the opening scene with Deedree, Nola was introduced. Whenever Pippy continued to share her ideas about the dogs, further information and activities of Nola were informed through the stage direction. The real purpose of the animal motif in literature is to underline a theme, or make a statement about a certain character. Animals are used to depict characters more often than they describe themes. White had a specific instruction to the audience. He tried to correlate some aspects of Nola with the dogs, which would be expounded as the play progresses.

Her husband Ernie Boyle was also in his forties. He was very active. He was agreeable, innocent and generous. When compared with the head of other two families, he was from a low social position. Mr. Clive Pogson and Harry Knot were executives while, Boyle was a night soil man. Ernie worked during nights and returned home in the morning. When he entered, other men left for work. In spite of the difference in their social ladder, all the three families lived in the same lane. The entire plot revolved around the day to day happenings that took place in these houses.

Rowley Masson was another important character in the play. He was a friend of Ernie Boyle. During the World War, both of them worked together in the army. He was addressed as ‘digger’ Masson by Ernie. He felt proud to be
addressed so. “Ernie (calling): A good mate of mine. Rowley Masson. ‘Digger’ Masson. We was together in the Western Desert.” (S.A.S. 1.1.97).

The term "digger" was widely used in Australasia, to mean a miner. Later, it was applied to the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. The troops were especially, good at digging tunnels between their own trenches and the enemies and were regarded by both sides as diggers. The job of digging between the trenches was very hard. The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps members considered it as a compliment to be referred to as diggers, since it indicated that they were good at a very difficult job. After the war, Ernie was settled with Nola Boyle. The case was different with Rowley Masson. He was still not settled. “Ernie: .. Mind you, I don’t think Rowley ever sticks at anything for long. You’ll like ’im, though. I told ’im to look in and see us.” (S.A.S. 1.1.97)

The opening scene in any play is always a crucial one. Generally, in the beginning of the play, all the main characters would be introduced. Similarly, the theme of the play would also be introduced and let the audience know what to expect. The background music for the opening scene of the play The Season at Sarsaparilla was an outburst of barking from a pack of dogs. Simultaneously, Pippy Pogson appeared in the kitchen of the Pogsons’ home. She was all set to investigate the barking dogs. At the outset, it was obvious
and evident that something worthy and handy could be expected from Pippy and the dogs.

Pippy was very eager to know what had been actually happening with the dogs. It was the mating season for dogs. A pack of dogs was running after a bitch. In order to gain advantage, the dogs fought among themselves. This activity was mysterious for Pippy, who was in her preadolescent age. Her mother Girlie Pogson was known for her morality and conformity to the rules and regulations of the society. She identified what Pippy was after. She admonished Pippy for the over enthusiasm that she showed towards the behaviour of dogs. Therefore, Pippy was very cautious and moved surreptitiously to learn about the dogs. The barking sound of the dogs, in the opening scene, was like a warning tone for Girlie. And she immediately called Pippy to get into the house. But, Pippy evaded her mother. Her little friend Deedree arrived. Pippy very enthusiastically, shared whatever information that she knew about dog with Deedree. Both were like minded and proved to be a confidant of one another. When asked how Pippy was in a position to know about all the details about dogs. Pippy said that:

Deedree: (still in the dark, to Pippy) And when she gets interesting?

Pippy sticks her mouth in her friend’s ear, and explains very forcibly.)

Gee! And does it last long?
Pippy: About half-an-hour.

Deedree: Gee, Pippy! Who told you?

Pippy: (pointing in the direction of Boyles’) Mrs. Boyle. (S.A.S. 1.1.82)

While Pippy and Deedree were sharing their views, Girlie was busy preparing the breakfast. Harry and Mavis Knott were introduced. Mavis was pregnant and was very well taken care of by her ideal middle class husband. The couples of the Mildred Street were busy with their routine morning activities. More or less they involved in the same mechanical, dull and drab routine. This aspect was very well portrayed by the writer, through dialogues. As a point, for example, Girlie asked a question about Clive’s preference for egg. Immediately, we came across the words of Harry with reference to eggs.

Girlie: (calling) Clive? If it’s congealed eggs you want …

Harry: (calling to his invisible wife) A nice, light-boiled egg. Won’t be a jiffy, Mave. (S.A.S. 1.1.82)

Everyone in Sarsaparilla was dissatisfied with the barking sounds of the dogs. Mavis had a disturbed night because of the barking sound. The more worried was Girlie Pogson. She was very much disturbed, because she had to bring up her two young daughters in a respectable way. All of a sudden, Girlie heard Pippy addressing the word bitch to Deedree. She got enraged, scolded Pippy and advised her to use the word “lady dog”. She became more volatile,
when she learnt that the word ‘bitch’ was taught to Pippy by Nola. In anger, she did not even address a word to Nola, who was also there at her backyard. The Pogsons and the Knotts were the representatives of the Sarsaparillans, who were leading a chaste life. They were leading a carefully controlled life guided by tradition. In each and everyone ‘the call of the wild’ lied dormant. This constantly threatened the modest life one had been leading. If it shattered the surface and came out, things would begin to fall apart. Girlie wished that this should not happen. Hence, she advised Pippy to disregard the bark of the dog and become a straight arrow. May Brit Akerholt rightly pointed out in *Patrick White* that:

> The pack of dogs in pursuit of the bitch is both a celebration of nature’s functions and a comment on society’s retreat from the underlying forces which threaten its carefully controlled surface. (43)

In spite of her mother’s warning Pippy was preoccupied with bitch that was on heat. Girlie got busy with her household activities. Clive buried himself in the newspaper. Now and then, he answered to Girlie. While reading the newspaper, he often commented that something had been happening in the outside world and they were not in a position to make out what was what. Girlie herself as a matter of fact often recalled about her home in Rosedale. For her Rosedale was Utopia. In Rosedale, nobody used offensive words such as
‘bitch’. It was said that Girlie and Clive were ideal couple, who were leading their life, conforming to the demands of the society. Consciously or unconsciously, they were aware of the essence of the life, which they were missing. Obviously, they trod on the customary path. In spite of that, there was a kind of dissatisfaction in their heart of hearts. So, they often searched for the life, which evaded them. Girlie’s reminiscence and Clive’s addiction to newspaper were points in reference. May Brit Akerholt rightly pointed out in *Patrick White* that:

The newspaper has a wider significance. The Pogsons are caught up in their present, but with a dissatisfaction neither of them can define, so they search for the life which escapes them; something is happening in the outside world, “but you can never make out what”(40)

The Pogsons’ elder daughter Judy played violin. Clive was disturbed by the violin’s sound and called it freaky. In fact Girlie responded positively and replied, “She plays it lovely, Clive!” (S.A.S. 1.1.85) She showed motherly care and affection towards her daughters. In the interest of playing violin, Judy delayed in taking breakfast. Girlie guided her to take care of her health too. At the same time, Girlie counseled her about the thing that had to be chosen by a girl. According to Girlie, “It’s a man and a washing-machine that counts.” (S.A.S. 1.1.87) She questioned why Judy had not bent up her mind towards
that. She advised her to take her words seriously because “And I was never a sloppy mother. My second name was always practical.” (S.A.S. 1.1.88)

Concurrently, when this argument was going on in the Pogsons’ kitchen, in Knotts’ Roy argued with Mavis and Harry. Roy had made up a decision to quit his teaching job. He wished to write a book. Mavis advised him that all a man need was a happy home. And the Knotts had provided that for Roy. But he replied, “All I want is something that can’t be shut up in a box”. (S.A.S. 1.1.89) Elders like Girlie and Mavis were more worried about safe and comfortable life. They wanted to follow the path laid by the forerunners. They did not want to deviate from it.

Ron Suddard, the post office clerk came to meet Judy Pogson. He was interested in her. He had booked a ticket for a musical concert. Previously, both had planned to go for the concert. Judy had almost forgotten that. But, for Ron Suddard, Judy was all. His only aim was to win the favours of Judy. When they were finalizing about the concert that they were going to visit that Thursday, Roy came from the Knotts’ kitchen. He was a bit surprised to know that Ron had booked tickets for a musical concert. He questioned whether Ron was interested in music. Ron replied:

Roy: … … Didn’t know you were interested in music, Ron.
Ron (unperturbed): You can learn, can’t you? You can learn anything if you put your mind to it. (S.A.S. 1.1.90)

He personally did not have any taste of his own. His main objective was to fulfill whatever Judy expected and thus become very close with her. J.R. Dyce in her *Patrick White as Playwright* rightly pointed out that:

Ron Suddards is ambitious and self-disciplined but the impression is gained that whatever he achieves will be for the love of Judy rather than for the love of learning for its own sake. His danger is that he will turn out an opportunist intellectual, unlike one such as Pippy promises to be. (53 & 54)

On the other side, Judy was attracted towards Roy. But, Roy was not satisfied with the routine life. He did not want to get married and settle comfortably in Sarsaparilla. In fact, he himself was in a confused state. At one point of time, he seemed to encourage Judy. But suddenly, he abandoned her. Judy could not guess clearly what Roy was for. She said: “Judy (not in control of herself) When you’re not driving me one way, you’re pulling me in another. It’s quite confusing.” (S.A.S. 1.1.92) When Judy and Roy were thus discussing, Julia arrived to meet Judy. Julia Sheen was a model. She was glorious and perfectly dressed. She was very slim and beautiful. Roy, as a matter of fact, paid undue attention to her. He was enthused to see her and profusely praised her beauty
and appearance in front of Judy. This really upset her. After Julia had left, she commented about Roy's behaviour: “Judy: And cruel. So very often, so very, very cruel!” (S.A.S. 1.1.93)

After this, once again the three housewives were shown involving in their household activities. They did their day to day work like machines. They had fixed definite schedule, as to, what to do and when to do. Monday was for laundry, Tuesday was for shopping and so on. Besides this routine, they were very much particular about the welfare of their family members. They did things with their husbands’ interest at heart. They were also very particular about the budget. Patrick White time and again, repeated this action throughout the play. Whenever we came across the words “razzle dazzle is on” in the stage direction, they involved themselves in their household activities. White had very meticulously used this technique. He wanted to highlight how far the Sarsaparillans were caught up in their routine day to day mechanical activities. They had not risen up from the normal level. Nothing fruitful or productive came out.

When Girlie came to her backyard, she found Nola in hers. Girlie just ignored her. But, as an afterthought, she asked explanation from Nola for having used the word ‘bitch’ with her daughter Pippy. But, Nola was of the type who called a spade a spade. Nola defended herself:
Girlie: And some of them not very nice for a little girl to hear. It’s the dogs I’m trying to refer to.

Nola: Go on! Dogs is dogs.

Girlie: It’s the female dogs, Mrs. Boyle.

Nola (bursting) Strike a light! Mrs. Pogson, you’re gunna take the stuffing out of nature! And what’ll you have left? Skin! Dry skin! (S.A.S. 1.1.94-95)

Now the little girls Pippy and Deedree arrived. Simultaneously, Ernie Boyle returned from his work. He was a man, who respected woman folk. He wished Girlie good morning. But, Girlie did not respond to him. Instead, she asked Deedree to go home. She just ignored the people, whom she considered to be just below her standards. Pippy expressed her anxiety over dogs. To add fuel to the fire, Ernie gave a very detailed explanation about the pack of dogs, bitch and their whereabouts:

Ernie: Too right I did! The bitch was leading the whole pack. .......

There she was. A little bit of a blessed thing. ’Er tongue get a whole lot drier. ’Er tongue almost hangin’ on the ground. Lickin’ the dust she was. And gunna get a whole lot drier. .... (S.A.S. 1.1.96)
This was more than enough for Girlie. Pippy who very well knew about her mother’s state of mind simply got into the house, without a word. And the door was banged.

Nola and Ernie discussed their work. Ernie said that on his way he met his old mate, Rowley Mason. During the World War, they had worked together in the Western Desert. Actually, Ernie had extended an invitation to Rowley to visit his home. Rowley was expected any time. He was not like Ernie. He was not settled. Nola was not happy over the issue: “Nola: Some dirty, no-hope truck-driver! I don’t see why you’re gunna let ’im bludge on us!” (S.A.S. 1.1.97). As they continued with their discussion, reference had been made to Nola’s erstwhile lover Stan. Like Mrs. Lusty of The Ham Funeral, Nola too had a lover. Reference to his name instigated Mr. Lusty. Similarly, here also, there arose a feud between Nola and Ernie. Nola accused Ernie of being jealous about a lot of silly things that happened a long time ago. Finally, they arrived at a compromise. Nola was introduced with the adjective “lioness”. When Pippy talked about the bitch in the opening scene, Nola was introduced. Already she had been associated with the qualities of animal. At this juncture, a new man was about to arrive. It was really going to be an acid test for Nola’s personality. J.R. Dyce in Patrick White as Playwright rightly pointed out:
Nola has already been identified with the animal motif of the play, so that the proposed visit of one Rowley Masson, Ern’s mate from the Western Desert could prove inopportune, a fact later to be confirmed in her spoken reverie. (48)

Towards the end of the first part of Act I, Roy soliloquized on the state of Sarsaparillans. Now, he was in his summer holidays. He was free from the busy academic schedule. But, he felt that he could not relax. He was worried about people, who were dissolving their personality in their day to day affairs: “Roy (meditating) … … … that the TV will continue to dissolve human personality, like gelatine in tepid water.” (S.A.S. 1.1.99) He hated the present scenario. He would like to escape to a better place. He lamented that none had the capacity to think above the normal day to day mechanical activities. In fact, they found a kind of solace and safety in the routine.

It was tuesday, Nola went for shopping. Clive and Harry returned from their work. Clive had bought fish as instructed by his wife. Harry had bought breasts of chicken for his pregnant wife. While scaling the fish, Girlie recalled her past, as a girl, how she had lent a hand to her mother in doing the household activities. When she and Clive were newly married, Clive had helped her in scaling fish. But, now the condition had been different.
In the second part of the act, once again Roy and Judy met. This time, Judy had made up her mind. She said all the afternoon, she had been busy in cleaning her belongings. She had cleared all the useless and unwanted things. This included the things shared by both of them to express their love for each other. She had tidied up not only her belongings, but also her life. Now, she was out of it. Roy replied that he had decided to write a book. In view of accomplishing the writing task successfully, he had decided to leave Sarsaparilla. Ron Suddards made a visit and presented a book for Judy. He presented her *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire Vol. I.* Roy was actually bored with the interruption of Ron Suddards. But, Judy encouraged him and promised to read the book. In the mean time, Julia arrived with Mr. Erbage. Mr. Erbage was a member of local council. He was in his middle fifties, a married man. He was interested in Julia Sheen. He accompanied her. She had come to show a newly bought hat to Judy and to have her opinion about it. Judy and Julia went up the Pogson steps to view the mirror. Mr. Erbage and Julia were now supposed to have an affair.

Again a visitor arrived and disturbed the meeting. This time it was Rowley Masson. He appeared to be shabby. He asked the whereabouts of Boyles’ house. Roy gave direction to him. Even after identifying their home, he did not get in. He just wandered in the backyard. He was surprised about the way Ernie was settled. Inside the house, the ladies had a show with the
hats. Girlie said that she did not prefer to have a hat like that. She was ready to wear the hat, unless it was common among the people with a look of difference. Girlie was a kind of woman who wanted to conform to the existing conventions. In that she wanted to be different from others:

Girlie (scornful, warding Judy off) Pffh! I was never out of fashion. But what I mean to say is: I like a hat to look different, so long as it’s what other are wearing. (S.A.S. 1.1.106)

This outlook of Girlie Pogson very clearly portrayed the Sarsaparillans mind set. People feared to express their individuality. In fact, they did not even take an initiative towards that. When individuality was suppressed, there was no growth. Perhaps, here Girlie feared to wear a hat that looked different. Then how come, she could set her goals and proceed towards that? Even with reference to her personal interests, she succumbed to the external interference of the society. A person associates himself with the society, to further his own interests. But, in this suburbia, one’s own interest was stifled. This point was further proved, when Judy later decided to give up practicing violin. This had been very clearly pointed out by May Brit Akerholt in her book *Patrick White*:

Individualism and initiative are rejected, even feared in Sarsaparilla’s Mildred Street where the inhabitants of three brick homes go through the
motions of daily routine. The characters represent a cross-section of typical suburbia … (36)

Judy, Julia and Girlie discussed the engagement between Julia and Erbage. They were actually in the process of choosing engagement ring. Now, they were on their way to dinner. Roy had a word with Mr. Erbage about his principles, as a counselor. But, Mr. Erbage was not of that sort. He very clearly stated that many a counselor had half-killed himself for the public interest. Therefore, he was not for it. A man, who should have public interest at heart, had the objective of flirting with a model girl. When Julia came out, Roy teased her by asking her a date. Julia’s response was: “Julia: (eyes just glancing, lightly) Seriousness was never your line!” (S.A.S. 1.1.107)

As Julia departed, Roy made a coarse remark about her. He said, he would rip every stitch off that girl, and make her eat the dust. He stated this in the presence of Judy. She could not bear this. She maintained her composure and thanked Ron for his present. Masson backed Roy’s comments and said that these kinds of girls should be treated harshly. If men were unkind towards them, they would be kind. Judy while discussing with Ron understood that he did not have any particular aim in his life. She was attracted towards a man like Roy. Unfortunately, she had to put up with a man like Ron. She could not tolerate this. She got into her house with tears. Girlie found Judy in tears. She
could not understand, what actually was happening with her. Similarly whenever she heard the barking sound of the dogs, she asked Pippy to get inside. She noticed the undue importance given by Pippy towards the behaviour of dogs. She felt that it was not decent. Therefore, she warned Pippy then and there. But actually, she could not see things from the point of view of her daughters. As a matter of fact, Girlie was at least aware about what was going on with her daughters. But, with Clive it was entirely different. Whenever we found him at home, he was busy with the papers. He was much worried about who was going to win the Handicap, or to whom the lottery had gone. Both of them were not sensitive with the issues that were going on in the minds of their daughters. As J.R. Dyce rightly pointed out in her book *Patrick White as Playwright*:

> There is a clear indication of the generation-gap between the Pogsons and their children. Girlie and Clive appear to be unconscious to the conflicts that are swirling around their doorsteps. (51)

Masson had not yet got inside the Boyles’ house. He had seated himself in the Boyles’ step. He conversed with Pippy and asked her name. Her reply suggested the way ladies have to behave with men in Sarsaparilla. She said by rights, she was not supposed to talk to men. Pippy enquired whether Masson knew all the details about the Boyles. As he replied negatively, Pippy
explained things in detail to Masson. She said she liked Nola Boyle very much. She smelt good. But, her mother could not stick with Mrs. Boyle. On the other hand, her father considered Mrs. Boyle to be generous. Pippy’s concern was for dogs. Therefore, she said Mrs. Boyle knew a lot about the dogs. This really proved to be a handy clue for Masson. Shortly, he was going to use the myth of dogs in the seduction scene.

All of a sudden, Ernie came out and was surprised to meet his mate. He gave him a very warm welcome. Masson expressed his surprise with reference to the way Ernie had been settled decently. Ernie replied “Well, the wife you know … You gotta make a place decent for the missus” (S.A.S. 1.1.111). Masson recalled the tough experience that they had in the trenches. Ernie too acknowledged that he still remembered. Nola arrived after her day’s shopping and noticed the arrival of her husband’s mate. Ernie told that Masson was going to stay in their home for a few days. Nola was not happy with the decision. As Ernie insisted, she was left with no option. They had decided to give the sofa in the longue, for Masson to sleep. Actually, there was a problem with the spring of the sofa. But, Masson felt it very comfortable, compared to the foxholes during the war time. Masson learnt that Ernie had to leave for his work at night.
Girlie judiciously judged the evilness in the unpleasant atmosphere of the Boyles’ home. While discussing with Pippy, Masson told her that he would find out the behaviour of dogs with Nola:

Pippy (to Masson) Well, Mrs. Boyle knows all about the dogs. What their habits are and all.

Masson: I better ask ’er. (S.A.S. 1.1.110)

This indicated that already Masson had made up his mind with regard to Nola. Ernie Boyle having confidence in the “mate ship” went for his work, leaving behind Nola and Masson. Nola offered ham with tea for Masson. This reminded us of the wake scene in *The Ham Funeral*, where Mrs. Lusty served the relatives with ham. Masson initiated the dialogue by offering Nola with a cigarette. She accepted with hesitance. He appreciated the ham served by Nola. With the intension of hitting the bull on the eye, Masson made a reference about the dogs of Sarsaparilla. Nola said she could not discuss such issues with a man like Masson. With that Nola could not put an end to the discussion. She further expressed her pity over the bitch, which was being pestered and tormented by other dogs. Their talk led to the details of Masson’s wife. Masson was also a married man. But, he called his wife as “a rotten, dishonest cow”. Nola wanted to defend and asked whether he was completely honest. Masson accepted his dishonesty too. Nola remarked that as a matter of
fact, he was not a woman’s man. Masson replied without knowing things in
detail, one should not pass comments. Suddenly, both of them realized that
they had crossed the limits. She provided the necessary bed clothes and bade
him a very good night. Not much harm had been done during Mason’s stay on
the first day. Nola too kept her glands under control.

By the end of the second day, Roy involved in another soliloquy. He
commented about the people, who were sleeping in the brick boxes. He felt
that Sarsaparillans were adhering to the codes strictly. Nobody was ready to
break them. As a result, many people’s intensions had become dead ones.
Soon, it was going to dawn. He considered day as the least substantial moment
of all. During the night, he was involved in the process of writing a book. But,
he could not come out successfully. J.R. Dyce in *Patrick White as Playwright*
comments on the Roy’s soliloquy thus: “Allowing for his late defeat at getting
words on paper, these are more bitter sentiments than the situation demands,
and should be read as such.” (49)

The beginning of another day was presented. The razzle-dazzle was on.
Clive and Harry were busy in getting ready to go to their office. Girlie and
Mavis were busy in the kitchen. Roy decided to put on life as other people put
on clothes. When Harry and Clive ran down the steps, Ernie Boyle entered the
lane. Nola received her husband and enquired about the day’s work. Ernie was
very particular about his friend’s opinion on her. Nola replied: “You should be asking me whether I like him!” (S.A.S.1.1.120). Men and women in Sarsaparilla had started a new day. But, Rowley Masson had not woken up so far. He woke up very late. His behaviour actually struck a contrast with other men characters. He was not settled. He and his wife were living separately. He did not have a job. The other three characters, Ernie, Clive and Harry went for job and returned at the end of the day. They were very conscious about their commitment towards their family. But, Rowley was not so. J.R. Dyce has rightly pointed out in *Patrick White as Playwright*:

Rowley Masson is the complete sexual opportunist, who contrasts with the responsible householders, Harry, Clive and Ern, if coming home at the appointed time is an indication of reliability. (54)

Girlie was found watering the plants in her garden. Mavis could not maintain composure in her state of pregnancy. Many things worried her. She shared her anxiety with Girlie. Girlie consoled Mavis saying that the symptoms, she was experiencing, were only casual to those who were pregnant. Masson just came for a walk in the Boyles backyard. He greeted the ladies and wanted a discussion with them. Girlie was interested but, felt embarrassed. Masson shared his views in gardening. Girlie responded carefully, in a conservative tone. All of a sudden, she got stuck up with the tap and struggled
to stop the flow of water. But, she could not manage. Masson came forward to help her. He entered into Girlie’s backyard by dragging a couple of loose palings off from Boyle-Pogson fence. When Girlie was worried about the fence, Masson replied that it looked friendlier. As in the words of J.R. Dyce in *Patrick White as Playwright*:

> For all his duplicity, Masson serves some purpose in the neighbourhood in breaking down the barrier between the other families and the Boyles, and by bringing Nola, indirectly, to a greater understanding of her own problems. (54)

As Masson responded to the call of Nola for breakfast, Mavis and Pippy were left alone. They discussed the thing that was worrying Pippy for a long time. Pippy said she was much upset over the behaviour of dogs. She wished to go and have a look at the bitch, which was on heat. Mavis, the conventional wife, counseled Pippy not to speak so. She was a big girl, growing up and was different now. Big girls should not talk about like that. Pippy questioned, if things happened like that what she could do. Mavis replied that one could just note but not talk. Pippy replied:

> Mavis: They notice them, perhaps. But don’t talk

> Pippy: There’s too much you don’t talk about. You’d pretty soon blow up. (S.A.S.1.1.123)
Pippy felt choked by the so called conventions. She found no room to develop her inquisitive intellect. She could not find a teacher, who could explain rationally to all her queries and allow her intellect to grow naturally. Instead, she was told about the traditional norms a girl should follow:

Mavis: (sighing) Well, that’s the way it is. (Sententious) Girls’ve got to learn to be nice. Then they marry some nice man. And have a lot of little babies. (S.A.S.1.1.124)

Pippy was left looking panic stricken. She could not identify the rationale behind the association of the two areas; the behaviour of the bitch in the season and the maternal role to be played by a girl. As, J.R. Dyce correctly pointed out in *Patrick White as Playwright*: “The linking of two areas of information is so disturbing to Pippy that it is all she can do to cram the morning’s kedgeree down her throat.” (49)

Ernie and Rowley Masson had gone for an outing to a pub. Nola was left alone at home. She enjoyed a walk in her garden. She enjoyed the beauty and fragrance of roses. She would like to lie naked among the falling roses. She was very much interested in enjoying the touches of falling roses on her body. But, one thing that prevented her from having that experience was the “prissy operated” neighbouring women. Even, Nola could not behave naturally in a conventional society. From another point of view, her interest very clearly
said that Nola was a prisoner to her body. Like Mrs. Lusty of *The Ham Funeral*, she also expected more of life. Though, she was in her forties, she did not reach the saturation point with reference to sensual pleasures.

Nola expected the arrival of Ernie and Masson. They were not punctual. She commented in general that men were dirty buggers. They returned home fully drunk. It was already time for Ernie to go to his work. At tables, discussion led to the topic of children. Masson enquired the Boyles about not having kids so far. Nola replied that they tried, but it was not in their line. She did not join them for dinner. Instead, she prepared to have a drink. Ernie was surprised to see her drinking. She replied that still there were few other things left for Ernie to see her doing. She did not even bid Ernie a good night. Masson tried to pacify her. He said they were delayed only because of him and only he was at fault. But, Nola wished him to leave their home that night for the sake of everyone’s goodness. She commented that Masson was trying to bring out the worst in her. In fact, she did not like men, but she only wanted them. When they were discussing as such, Pippy on the other side, watched the bitch being caught by a dog. Now, she felt that it was all wrong and she should not look at them anymore. She wished to talk with somebody about the experience that she had witnessed. Pippy immediately thought of Mrs. Boyle. She felt at home only with Nola. Previously, while Pippy was discussing with Masson, she told that if her mother was not crook about Mrs. Boyle, she would
spend most of her time in Nola’s house. It was Nola who allowed Pippy to grow naturally by explaining things without any prejudice. In fact, she helped Pippy to tackle the conflicts that arose at time of transition from pre-adolescence to adolescence. If Nola had a child, she would have been a better mother than Girlie. On the contrary, in reality the situation was quite different. J.R. Dyce has aptly commented with regard to this point in her book *Patrick White as Playwright* that:

Pippy, a hopeful, and Deedree, “a late starter”, will take their problems only to those who can help them, not to their parents as such. The most feather-brained woman has clever children; the woman most fitted for motherhood has no children; … (51)

The other side of Nola was different. It was Masson, who brought out the worst in her. In the Boyles’ home, Masson proceeded a step further and seduced Nola by telling an adventure, that he had experienced in the desert. Nola also yielded and remarked that she very well knew, from the beginning itself that he was a bastard and had proved the same. She led Masson into her bedroom. As in the words of May Brit Akerholt in *Patrick White*:

Secondly, through his presence the play explore another side of Nola which adds to the ambiguity of her nature; she is not only the woman
who is a prisoner of her body, but the woman who is prepared to fight a futile battle because she loves. (55)

Pippy entered into the Boyles’ house to share, the facts about dogs that she had learnt recently, with Nola. However, she was placed in a situation to watch Nola’s affairs with Masson. She was unable to bear the shock and burst into tears.

The second act began with Mavis and Harry. Mavis felt that the day of delivery had neared. In the Pogsons’ house, Clive as usual was busy with his newspaper and Girlie often boasted about her Rosedale. Clive was fed up to hear about Rosedale, again and again. He addressed his brother-in-law as “cow-cocky” and father-in-law as “bullock”. His father-in-law luckily died before the mortgages could catch him up. This sudden attack was like a shock treatment for Girlie. She accused that Clive had changed since her operation. Clive said he too had undergone an operation, but without a knife. This had a point in reference to Mrs. Lusty. In the funeral scene, the relatives found fault with Alma for having killed Will Lusty many a time. Clive felt that his wife’s priggish nature had a resemblance to that of a grater and no man could stand for twenty years continuously without losing a bit himself. Actually, this scene helped the audience to relax a little bit after the seduction. J.R. Dyce has rightly pointed out in her book *Patrick White as Playwright*: “As comic relief, Clive
Pogson rallies sufficiently to make a firm counter-attack against Girlie’s pretensions.” (50)

Girlie expressed her anguish over the things that were happening in the Boyles house. She smelt something wrong had been taking place. But, Clive replied that they need not mind about it, because it was not their business. Girlie viewed the happening from the point of view of two young girls’ mother. But, Clive cut it off with the comment that their daughters had their own business and they were not on a watch out for such happenings. Clive refused to fetch Girlie’s brazier from the tailor. Judy supported her mother saying Mr. Boyle carried everything for his wife. Clive very clearly pointed out that Mr. Boyle was Mr. Boyle and he could not lower himself to the level of Mr. Boyle.

The most expected character Pippy arrived. In Act I, she had remained restless. She was very much interested in mucking around. The mystery behind the dogs was the reason for her restlessness. But, now there was a noticeable change in the behaviour of Pippy. She very calmly ate her breakfast and read the book, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Her mother was surprised to see her reading books. When she asked Pippy to lend a hand for turning the mattresses, she readily obeyed. This was really a great surprise for her mother:
Girlie: Pippy, dear, come and help me turn the mattresses. Some mornings they get that heavy.

Pippy: (flat) Yes, Mum.

Girlie: (looking at her closely for a moment) There’s nothing wrong with you, is there?

Pippy: No. Why?


Another character to undergo change was Judy Pogson. In Act I, she showed interest in playing violin. Everyone’s remarks about her playing violin were negative. Roy commented, “I’ve had to listen to your bloody old Bach.” Since Judy was interested in Roy, she expected much support from him. But, she was just humiliated. In her presence, Roy had waxed eloquence for Julia’s beauty. Now, Judy had decided to give up her music for a business career. Her mother Girlie was worried for all the money that had been spent on her. She had decided to conform to the expectation of the society. She would like to get married, probably to Ron. And she had come to a conclusion that it was man and washing machine for woman.

Judy: That is life. The way I begin to see it, it has a fascinating regularity.

Roy: But it’s just from that that we’re trying to escape!
Judy: And then there’s marriage. I suppose one can reasonably expect ….(S.A.S.2.1.140)

Judy remained always moody before she had made the decision to give up violin. Now, one could perceive a kind of happiness in her tone. Therefore, J.R. Dyce’s remark in her book *Patrick White as Playwright* proves to be apt: “The decision made by Judy to give up the violin in favour of domesticity with Ron appears to be the right one, judging by her happiness.” (50) The situation could be analysed from another perspective. As an individual, Judy was independent. She had every right to practice, what she liked. Only if a man had the quality of self esteem and confidence in his own talents, there would be room for development and progress. On the contrary, in Sarsaparilla people surrendered their individual talents and agreed with the customary mode. May Brit Akerholt has rightly pointed in *Patrick White*:

The retreat from vitality to mundane conformity is a denial of inner voices, of growth and potential; it is, in short, a denial of one’s rights as well as responsibilities as a human being. In Sarsaparilla the safety of conventional behaviour reigns with a supreme hand. (49)

Roy enquired whether she would keep in touch with, after he departed. Actually, he did not fix his destination, but had decided to leave Sarsaparilla. His motive was to successfully finish writing his book. He invited Judy to
accompany him as his stewardess. But, Judy was for life that had “fascinating regularity”. She did not want to be in an unsettled state. At the same time, she knew the fickle mindedness of Roy. She had been placed in embarrassing situation many a time, when Roy praised Julia in excess, even in the presence of Judy:


Judy: And in the streets of great cities, I’d need every bit of every possible disguise … as I listened to you learn the language of the diamond women. (S.A.S.2.1.141)

Julia arrived in an agitated state. So far, Julia was fully confident. Whenever she arrived, a sophisticated ambiance was maintained. Her admirers like Mr. Erbage accompanied her. But now, she “craves for company and languishes for conversation”. As Judy had guessed that Roy was in love with Julia, she decided to leave so that, Roy could advise Julia over her problem. As guessed by Judy, he did not have any love for her. Whenever he met her, he just teased her. Roy was uncomfortable to be left alone with Julia. Julia, having faith in Roy, disclosed her state of pregnancy and sought Roy’s advice. It was made known that Julia was pregnant because of the frivolous relationship she had with Mr. Erbage. But, Roy was not in a position to counsel her. He
deemed it as her personal problem. Roy was a school teacher. Actually, he had been branded as a member of intellectual community and regarded, as such, by many of the characters. He had made comments and criticized the behaviour of Sarsaparillans. But, when situation demanded, he was not in a position to guide them. J.R. Dyce in *Patrick White as Playwright* rightly pointed out that:

The tragic note of the play is when Julia, finding herself pregnant, comes to Roy for help. Despite his ability to criticize, he has no help to give and no comfort to offer her in her distressed condition; … … (50)

The same idea had also been pointed out by May Birt Akerholt in her book *Patrick White*:

He is superior in the eyes of everybody, including himself; they come to him for help, believing in his superiority because he tells them about it, but instead, through ineffectuality, he hurries them along their way of destruction. (57)

On the other side, Ron had sent *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire Volume II* for Judy. He could not explain why actually he had selected that particular book to gift her. He wanted to get little more close to Judy. Therefore, he decided to gift her. There was no significance in selecting the particular book. For the sake of giving a gift, he had sent her the book. Judy’s
love for Roy was quite casual and it came out without much efforts. But, Roy eluded her. With reference to Ron, she struggled hard. She constrained to develop a kind of attraction towards him. In fact, Ron pestered her to find words to express her love for him.

Judy: (to Ron) If I could love you ….

Ron: (clenching his fists on the table, very awkward, but determined) I’ll make you, Judy. I’m going to make you… ...

Ron: When you’re ready to say it, Judy….

Judy: (distracted) I’m struck dumb! (S.A.S.2.1.144 -145)

On the part of Ron, he lacked individuality. Girlie informed that Judy had decided to give up music. Ron’s response was “No. I know nothing. I only know that Judy will always decide what is best” (S.A.S.2.1.144). He was not in a position to comment and suggest. This was one of the reasons for his inability to draw Judy’s attention.

The next morning after the seduction scene, Masson decided to leave Ernie’s house. Nola though shattered inside, appeared to be serene and self-controlled. As usual, she had prepared breakfast. She served breakfast to Masson. Masson felt sorry for the state of Nola. But, Nola replied that she did not need anybody’s sympathy. Masson’s eyes fell on the piles of bedclothes. They were neat and remained unused. He felt that Ernie might guess what had
happened, by glancing at the blankets. Therefore, he advised Nola to muck up the blankets. She would have agreed and tried to hide her sin. But, Nola said a firm no. She wanted to remain a bit “honest in her dishonesty”. In spite of her faults, this proved to be one of her positive qualities. She realized her weakness and called herself “the dishonestest cow”. Ernie was also partly responsible for the happenings. He had actually given room for things to take place. On the other side, he had confidence in his wife and in the ‘mate-ship’. Masson really proved to be a worthless mate by making his friend a cuckold. Ernie returned from his work and smelt the rat. He stood for a moment, looking at the bedclothes that remained undisturbed.

When Nola was left alone, she soliloquized. She recalled what had happened to her. She analysed the pros and cons of her trouble. She contemplated about the conscience. She felt that when we were weak our conscience moved away from us and let us commit the mistake. She slept with Masson, not because she disliked her husband. She could identify her weakness. But, she could not overcome that. It did not mean that she completely wanted to get away from her married life. Actually, she respected and loved her relationship with her husband. She wanted to sustain it. She thought it was not too late. She had not completely drowned. Now, there was possibility for her to come out of the sin. She condemned her body, to which she had become a prisoner:
Nola: … … I would like to be left in peace with what I respect most, and love. Not kill. (In a panic of shivers) I don’t wanta kill! Thank Gawd, I never ran the knife all that far. Or did I! (Holding her head, in agony) Have I? You do if you keep at it! (Throwing up her head in a blaze of protest) Whether you like it or not. (After a pause, choking, running her hands down her flanks) It’s this blasted body! It’s put together wrong.

(S.A.S.2.1.149 - 150)

While she was thus contemplating, she saw Pippy. She felt immensely relieved. She invited Pippy to her home. Nola glanced at a hole that had been made and came to know that, it was made by Masson. Pippy expressed her disapproval for Masson. She called him a villain. Right from the beginning, Pippy was the only character, who acted according to her wishes. She was the one, who had respected her inner voice. All the other characters, at one point or the other, disapproved the call of their soul and adhered to the exiting norms. Pippy too conformed to the expectation of her mother, when she realized the facts of nature. But, it was only out of shock, she behaved like that. At present, Nola provoked Pippy by commenting that, if Pippy felt her mother would find fault with her, she need not come into her home. At this, Pippy volunteered to enter through the gap in the fence. Pippy commented that she did whatever she wished to and made her parents to think that she did not do that. May Brit Akerholt in *Patrick White* doubts that:
The end becomes ambiguous with regard to Pippy’s acceptance of the life cycle. She is portrayed as a glimmer of hope through her rebellion, but the play also questions whether she can escape the seasons of Sarsaparilla and their monotonous rhythms of conformity. (49)

But, Pippy would resume her inquisitive nature. At heart, she was still a revolutionary. Nola felt a bit relaxed in the presence of Pippy. She wanted to entertain Pippy by talking with her about the dogs. But, Pippy said she was not interested in dogs any more. She felt dogs were dirty and one should not take a note at it when they carried on like that. She modified her last idea and reframed it with the words of Mavis, “you can notice, but you mustn’t look” (S.A.S.2.1.151)

Nola took Pippy into her home. Pippy was not that much interested and was not casual with Nola, as she had been previously. Nola offered her marshmallows. Pippy accepted it, but with a lack of enthusiasm. She said she preferred paddlepops to marshmallows. Actually, Pippy had learnt the facts of life from Nola. It was Nola, who had taught her the reality. At the same time, Pippy maintained her limits. She did not allow Nola to influence her completely. After witnessing Nola’s affair with Masson, she maintained distance. She felt uncomfortable to move with Nola. This was evident in the case of Marshmallow. After identifying, what actually was happening with the
dog, she wanted to share it with somebody. The person who immediately came to her mind was Nola. Such was the impact, Nola had made in her mind. If Pippy had not witnessed the affair, she would have continued to be at ease with her. Even though she was in her pre-adolescence, Pippy knew what her limit was. She evinced a good sense of judgment. She was clear in her perspective. She knew what to digest and what to leave out. J.R. Dyce in *Patrick White as Playwright* rightly points out that:

Ironically the person who helps her most in this confusion is Nola, the only natural teacher in the neighbourhood. Not that Pippy allows her domination, as is seen in the matter of the marshmallow. (51)

Pippy glanced at the longue. She was interested to play on it. Longue was a symbolical representation of Nola’s guilt. She tried to avoid Pippy using it. Pippy’s thought actually lingered around what she had seen previously. She could not straight away ask Nola about the happenings. Pippy beat about the bush. She asked whether Nola would feel lonely, when her husband left for work at night. Nola managed with the reply that she got along with the night like other women during the day time. During their conversation, Pippy said she loved Nola. Nola felt greatly relieved at the words. This was the first blissful words that she had come across after the crime.
Once again, Pippy came to the topic of dogs. She was interested to know what would happen after the season was over. Nola taught her the facts of life. She replied it would give birth to pups. Pippy wanted to know whether all the bitches would give birth to pups. At that, Nola became serious and replied that some bitches were lucky to escape. She might be worried about the consequences of her contact with Masson. Pippy was shocked to hear from Nola that after giving birth to pups, once again the season will start after six months. She was surprised and at the same time horrified with the behaviour of the dogs.

Ernie woke up and he was also much relieved to see Pippy. After the previous night’s happenings, they were left alone to face reality. Luckily, Pippy came in between to avoid their embarrassment. Pippy said about her recent engagement in reading the book about Roman Empire. Ernie felt inferior at his lack of education before an educated girl. Nola thought that history was something to do with murders. Pippy told that it had a few other areas as well. Ernie was of the opinion that the emperors and empresses would make senses only in movie and not in real life. But, Pippy declined that it was not so and it was applicable to our present life also. What was happening now had already been happened. And history was just repeating. There had been avaricious people, jealous husbands, the emperors who had been attracted by the beauty of other emperors’ wives, resulting in divorcing their own wives. Recently, Nola
had told that once in every six month the season would begin with dogs. Pippy’s knowledge of history and her exposure to Nola’s affair with Masson proved that the same will repeat again and again with human too. In the beginning of the second act, Pippy read few lines from the book. Those lines became meaningful in the present context:

Pippy : (reading, to herself,…) ‘After the death of Galerium, Valeria’s ample possessions provoked the avarice, and her personal attractions excited the desires of his successor, Max . . . (carefully) Max-im-im. He had a wife still alive; but divorce was permitted by the Roman law, the fierce passions of the tyrant demanded an immediate gratification...’ (S.A.S.2.1.136)

After discussing, Pippy wanted to leave. But, the couple was worried to be left alone to face the reality. Pippy had served the purpose. After the fateful night, Nola was guilt-stricken. It was Pippy who gave back her energy by uttering loving words. The couple needed a kind of ice-breaking session. Pippy, by her presence had almost broken the water tight compartment that existed between them. J.R. Dyce has rightly pointed out in *Patrick White as Playwright*:

In return she gives Nola comfort and forgiveness when she most needs it and smoothes the way for her reconciliation with her ever-loving Ern. She has the sense to keep the source of her new-found knowledge from
her mother, despite her satisfaction in being able to air it. Looking the facts squarely in the face, she says that life will renew itself “Over, and over, and over. For ever, and ever, and ever.” (51)

Ernie and Nola were left alone. They struggled hard to come to a compromise. In the mean time, Mavis had her labour pain. Nola analysed the state of Mavis. She compared it with that of hers. Nola expressed her longing to be a “decent, dumb cow” like Mavis. She imagined whether she could have endured the labour pain. But, comparatively she felt it was far better than the mental agony that she had been experiencing. Nola actually could realize that she was in the wrong end. But, at the critical moment, she could not restrain the call of the wild. She was also interested to lead a life of a respectable housewife and wished to conform to the expectation of the society:

Nola: … … … Wonder whether I could have stood that pain. (Closing her eyes, gritting her teeth) Tearing me in half. Tearing. But, oh God, what lovely … lovely … relief … (opening her yes, savagely) Of course I could’uv stood it! It’s nothing to what you bear in your mind. (157)

The preparatory work was being done to take Mavis to the hospital. Even at this critical state, she was worried about their budget. Having monetary constraints in mind, she preferred bus to taxi. On her way, she was reminded about the milk and advised her husband to stop the milk. She was a perfect
successor to Girlie, the ideal house wife of Sarsaparilla. Mavis was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. All the neighbours sympathized with her for her sufferings. Girlie, Nola, Pippy, Judy, Deedreee and Roy gathered in their backyard to see Mavis off to the hospital. It was necessary for a woman to have a person of the same sex by her side during pregnancy. She might not be necessarily a blood relation. But, a man like Roy, though related could not be of much help in this circumstance. Girlie and Nola agreed with her, in this regard. They criticized the corrupt state of the hospital administration in Sarsaparilla, “you can’t call your teeth your own once you get inside a hospital.” (S.A.S.2.1.160)

Judy could not stand the suffering of Mavis. But, Roy was indifferent. He said it was a natural occurrence and there was nothing terrible about it. He took things casually. Judy was sentimental about the affair. She said that the house and the things inside were of importance to Mavis. But without her, it was nothing. Judy felt that she and Roy belonged to opposite poles. Their ideas would never match with each other. Once, she was in love for Roy. Without him she felt, life was impossible. But now, it was not so. She felt that she no longer wanted him. Roy replied that no one was desirable all the time. Judy retaliated that it was not the question of desire, but kindness, affection and love were all that really matter. Judy found that the quality, loving-kindness, was missing in Roy. At this moment Ron arrived, in whom Judy had recently
found this quality. Roy lost enthusiasm and got into his house. Ron questioned whether he had interrupted. Judy said what he had interrupted was of no importance. What appeared to be everything once had become nothing.

Pippy, who had realized what was what, now assumed the position of superiority. Deedree arrived and pestered Pippy with questions about the ambulance in the lane. Pippy did not give any precise reply. Instead, she advised her to be silent. This was how, Pippy had been treated by her elders, when she questioned about the dogs. Now, she had realized the fact of nature. Deedree was a slow learner. Still, she was shrouded in mystery. Whenever she raised any question, Pippy silenced her. In a way, Pippy was following the footpaths of the elders of Sarsaparilla.

After the amorous play, Nola and Ernie did not come into good terms. Ernie was dressed up. He had planned to have drinks. Nola enquired whether he was going to celebrate an occasion. He bitterly remarked that he was going to celebrate the day, which had really opened his eyes. He hinted the day in which Nola and Masson misbehaved. Nola felt wounded and asked him to carry on with his plan. She used the word ‘shicker’, which Ernie considered coarse. Actually, Nola had learnt the word from her father. Ernie pointed out that her father had “handed on a pretty good line in morals!” (S.A.S.2.1.166) Nola retorted that none would find fault with them for not teaching their
children moral values. Ernie felt hurt at the remark on his impotence. Nola could not withstand Ernie’s disturbed stand. She said that he was not at faults and actually she was barren. She declared that all through their life, they had been accusing each other and in turn got hurt. Now, Ernie yielded, he admitted him as weak. She acclaimed that Ernie was never dismal and in fact this quality of his really made her to love him. Nola did not claim that she was pure. She admitted that she was lost. But, without Ernie, she would be more lost and she could not think of life. She fell at his feet and begged. Now, Ernie’s anger turned towards Masson, who had ruined his happiness. To err is human and to forgive is divine. Ernie forgave his wife and they prepared for a drink. Nola took a deep breath, as if she was reborn.

Mr. Erbage met Roy and announced the suicide of Julia. She had driven her father’s car and dashed it against a wall. Mr. Erbage and Julia had an affair. As a result, Julia became pregnant. In a state of confusion, she had committed suicide. When Mr. Erbage informed the death of Julia to Roy, one could perceive only anxiety and not compassion for her. He was anxious about his prospects as a councilor. He was in public services and therefore very much worried about his reputation. He did not lament about the death of Julia. On the other hand Harry informed the birth of his son. Roy commented, “So they die. So they were born” (S.A.S.2.1.171).
Ernie and Nola had arrived at a compromise, towards the end of the play. They were seen exchanging words of love. But all of a sudden, Ernie found a difference in his coat. Nola clarified that it was dry-cleaned. She reminded him that already they had made the decision to give their clothes for dry-cleaning to the gentleman, who started calling regularly with the van. Ernie listened carefully. Nola added that the man’s wife had undergone eleven operations. One could perceive a sudden change. Ernie became gloomy. Nola further commented that the man was funny. Ernie became further gloomier. He left home thoughtfully and gloomily at the prospect of another man visiting his house, when he was away. With reference to Masson, Ernie and Nola episode all three were defeated. Nola by sleeping with Masson made her husband a cuckold. Masson betrayed her friend and left somewhere. He would continue to remain in an unsettled state. With regard to Ernie, he would continue to live in a state of disbelief and perplexity. May Brit Akerholt has rightly pointed out in her *Patrick White*:

In the end they are all losers; Nola defeated by her glands, Masson leaves for another ‘nowhere’ along the road, Ernie continues his fight with doubt and pain. … An innocuous mention of the dry-cleaner’s visit establishes that suspicion will always torment Ernie… (55)
In Sarsaparilla everything had started again, the razzle dazzle. The wives started preparing food for their family. The husbands were busy in going out and coming in from the work. The wives greeted them conventionally, when they went for and returned from the work. In the Knotts’ family a member had been added. Mavis was involved in the work of taking care of his boy. Mavis and Harry tried to identify the colour of their child’s eyes. Simultaneously, Ron and Judy discussed the colour of their own eyes. Judy was happy because Ron’s eye was brown, which represented faithfulness. Girlie recalled about her Rosedale. She talked about the pleasant evenings, she had enjoyed in Rosedale. Roy commented on the monotonous activities of the Sarsaparillans. Something had ended, and nothing had begun.

Girlie Pogson felt happy that the Mildred Street was free from dogs. She felt that their presence was disgraceful. But, now it was peaceful. At this, Pippy cautioned his mother that it was not the end. It would begin again in six months time. This would continue once in every six months, forever and forever. Girlie felt that she could not endure dogs once again. Pippy commented prudently, “over and over, forever and forever. That’s nature!” (S.A.S.2.1.176) Whether Girlie liked or not it would continue as usual.

Mavis and Harry were absorbed in their child. The child’s small movements and gestures had become all the more important for them. Mavis
very happily informed that it had winked at her. Roy informed that he was leaving. Mavis just enquired where he was going. But, their attention was focused on their child. Roy bade good bye to them. They were busy discussing, whom the child had taken after. Roy felt that Sarsaparillans were immersed in their monotonous customary activities. They were not raising themselves above. He felt that when he returned, the poor people would continue to be in the same position. There would not be any improvement. In spite of this, he had the plan of coming back and said one could not shed their skin as it itched like hell.

Roy thus commented on the happenings in Sarsaparilla. He was like the young man of *The Ham Funeral*. There was a subtle difference between the both. Roy just commented. The young man identified the essence of life was compassion and kindness. He left his aboard with the hope of starting a new life. But, Roy was not so. He criticized the Sarsaparillans but, he himself was influenced by the society in which he was living. As a consequence, he anticipated his return to Sarsaparilla. In fact, he as a member of intellectual community did not contribute anything to his society. May Brit Akerholt rightly pointed out in *Patrick White*:
Roy’s blood-thirsty cry is that of a warrior, not a reformist, and certainly not an artist. He contributes neither to his environment nor his own growth. He is going around in a never ending circle. (61)

Roy’s comments were just a summary of what had been portrayed by Patrick White in the play. It appeared to be extraneous. R. Covell in his article “Patrick White’s Plays” says:

The comments of the school teacher become the interruption, with the result that we tend to wince whenever he comes forward to address the audience. White has here, I think, underestimated his audience or perhaps his own powers in naturalistic exposition for each of school teacher’s direct comments appear redundant: … (11)

Patrick White’s *The Season at Sarsaparilla* is a great success. He made severe attacks on the Australian great emptiness. He satirically portrayed how people had become victims to the social norms and their own weaknesses. In fact, these people had not realized their own pitiable state. White attacked, at the same time, he was compassionate towards them. His actual aim is to make people realize, where they are. Majority of the people have succumbed to society’s conventional behaviour. As a result, there is no room for creativity and vitality. A few others have become prisoners to sensuousness. If these people directed their biological energies towards the constructive purposes,
tragedies could be averted. Intellectuals like Roy become useless because of their pride. Once these weaknesses are realized, the Sarsaparillans will come out of the continuing cycle of fruitless seasons. This has been rightly pointed out by May Brit Akerholt in *Patrick White*:

> The implications are that as long as the roots of nature continue to grow, there is a chance of renewal within the endlessly returning cycles of the seasons. But as the roots of the trees are spreading, so is suburban mentality; thus the combined forces of nature and society hold people in a paradoxical grip of potential growth and inevitable sterility. (62)

Patrick White thus, earnestly appeals to their fellow Australian to realize their own potentials. If they come out of their weaknesses, they could proceed in the path of progress and promote their nation to great heights. The next chapter is entitled “*A Cherry Soul*”. In this chapter a detailed analysis has been made on the Australians attitudes towards religion and moral values.