A close study of Anita Desai’s novels reveals that she has comprehensively delineated the cause of modern men’s alienation and its disastrous consequences. In her novels, Anita Desai tries to reveal the psychological problems faced by human beings. In fact, she tries to discover the real meaning of life by speaking through her characters. Her characters try to deal with the question, “What does it mean to exist?” She probes deep into the psychology of her characters and depicts their real nature by the forces of self, society, and family. She moves between two extremes that is ‘attraction for life’ and ‘her fascination for death’.

Anita Desai is interested in eccentric characters. All the female characters in her novels are always seen growing and changing. They are confronted with the present, look back to the past and visualize their future also. In her novels, sorrow and death, the quest for life and love get projected rather richly in almost all her novels. What differentiates her from other novelists is her individuality and sensibility and her central theme is the existential predicament of an individual. Anita Desai spotlights an extremely complex nature of life. The real life has an infinite variety, but she prefers inner reality and plunges into the innermost depths of the human psyche, the inner disturbance and the turmoil inside the mind. In her writings, conflicts arise from self’s desire for fulfillment. Those characters who do not realize the true meaning of life lead a loveless and egocentric life making for agony of alienation or loneliness. They do not remember that happiness is not related to any material thing. Their own soul is a treasure house, real happiness. The person, who forgets this and thinks that material things and people around will give him peace and happiness, is lost. In Cry, The Peacock, Anita Desai
astonishes the readers by the neurotic behavior of the heroine Maya who is tortured by the pressures of so many things. Anita Desai’s literary career started with the publication of this very first novel *Cry, The Peacock*, in which she reveals the grim psychological battle fought in the mind of Maya. It is said that Anita Desai’s artistic skills primarily lie in the delineation of the psychic conditions of the characters that often indulge in a self-analysis and discover themselves in the process. A study of her novel reveals that she uses fiction as a site for studying the role of women in society and thereby indirectly offers a critique of the existential social set up, that marginalizes women.

In the present society, husband-wife alienation in their marital life creates a sense of vacuum in the values of life. In spite of having everything, they feel alienated, desperate, lonely; as in *Cry, The Peacock* when alienation arises in the sense of not being able to reconcile with the existing norms and values. Existence becomes meaningless to a person while living through an experience with which one is not able to reconcile. Therefore, there is a feeling of uprootedness; estrangement from the partner, from the society itself. In fact, marital alienation is the most common type of alienation in the present society. Alienation is an inevitable outcome of such societies. The breakdown of a world view, divinely ordained and supported by tradition is the primary source of alienation. Its social context is one in which man is pitied against the power of money and the cash-nexus. Alienation occurs as man is reduced to the status of a thing, as he is alienated from the earth and his fellow men.

In *Cry, The Peacock*, Maya is alienated from Gautama, who is pragmatic, unromantic, unsentimental and believes in ‘detachment on every count’, while Maya, on the other hand, is highly sensitive, gifted with poetic imagination and emotional. Their incompatible temperaments make it difficult for them to have a warm and harmonious relationship and pave way for their
estrangement. Maya rightly says, “Our marriage was based upon 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” (CTP 51). By relating Maya’s neurosis to her marriage, Anita Desai transforms artistically the conventional story of marital disharmony into a moving study of the psyche of Maya, who seeks love, sympathy and understanding, suffers intensely every moment Manmohan K. Bhatnagar says:

Anita Desai’s protagonists are highly sensitive and terribly bewildered by the burden of living helplessly in the society with absurd realities. Therefore, her fictional world is full of imperfection and unfulfillment, hankering and helplessness, agony and anger, struggle and surrender. She is essentially a novelist of existential concerns. (110)

By marrying a man twice her age, Maya probably had already minimized her chances for a good husband-wife relationship. She painfully becomes aware of her ‘loneliness in this house’ and whispers ‘I am alone’. (CTP22). The main theme deals with the total alienation of Maya from her surroundings, from her husband and even from herself. She is made a victim of institutionalized marriage and rigid social customs. The incompatibility of their nature causes deep alienation in her mind and she becomes intensely abnormal. She is being neglected, isolated and alienated in her own home. One of the causes of Maya’s loneliness and alienation lies in the delightful life that she had once led at her father’s place. Gautama does not mean anything to her except a status, untouched by her presence. They live in two different isolated worlds altogether. Maya has lost even order and symmetry of her life in her deep despair. Her mental peace has deserted her completely. The accidental death of Gautama undoubtedly completes Maya’s alienation and aloofness and
she becomes a strangely isolated character of Anita Desai. Iyengar writes in this connection:

The solitude and silence of the house preys upon her, and the death of the pet dog starts a chain of reminiscence and reverie and with startling suddenness, and every bit of experience, long buried under the load of the years, is thrown up like lava and glares at her in all its alienness and fury. (P 466)

Maya has tendency towards neurotic behavior. She is an unusual and abnormal woman, introverted and childlike. She is a prisoner of the past and she is always under the shade of her past memories-her memories engulfing her one after another like wave upon wave. The painful past is always throbbing in her inner consciousness and it has taken the shape of a permanent fixation. The prophecy made by an astrologer in her childhood that one of the spouses would die an unnatural death in the fourth year of their marriage always haunts her. She has the feeling of getting disintegrated because of her marriage with a person who is emotionally dead. It is revealed that her married life is unsuccessful when her dog Toto dies:

And I thought of the long journey of the dead from one birth into another, the brave traversing of mute darkness, the blind search for another realm of lucidity and fingered one soft-petal led flower, a white one. Small white Toto, whining a little, out of fear, his futile barks dying away into a hopeless silence. Small white Toto, Small white corpse in the blaze of the sun abandoned. ‘I shall miss him so terrible Gautama, ‘I cried then, the confession tearing out of me in a stormy rush, and even as I wiped away my quick tears and wept more. I cried to myself-what is the use? I am alone. (CTP 22)
The death of dog has made Maya realize her sense of alienation. She regards the death of dog Toto as the biggest tragedy leading to alienation from her husband for it is something natural for Gautama. She blames her husband for all her problems. The person who has realized her true identity will never do so. The fundamental law of the Universe is that one is responsible for one’s problems and miseries. Blaming on others alienates a person from his real self and consequently from God and his creation. Hence alienation means isolation from one’s own soul. Maya feels the agony of alienation sending her towards meaningless life which she does not want to lead at all. The novel *Cry, The Peacock* explores the individual level of the abandoned self of the protagonist. Every wife desires intense intimacy with her husband. But in *Cry, The Peacock* the protagonist receives indifference rather than affection and Anita Desai presents here the solitude, melancholy and dark world of shadows in the life of Maya. Based on the mythological and typical images and symbols, this novel explores the hidden and latent urges of Maya’s psyche. As a young sensitive girl, Maya desires to love and to be loved. She belongs to a traditional Brahmin line which believes in astrology and other prophetic strain of Brahmanical order. Conversely, Gautama’s family represents the national side of life. Thus, Maya is haunted constantly by the rationalistic approach of her husband to the affairs of life. Maya loves Gautama passionately and desires to be loved in return; but Gautama’s coldness disappoints her. They are different from each other in tradition and modernity, trust and distrust in human relationship, brahmanical and non-brahmanical order of the society.

Maya symbolizes the pangs of the peacock mating, narrating the secrets in the following lines:

Do you not hear the peacock call in the wilds? Are they not blood chilling, their shrieks of pain? “Pia, Pia”, they cry. “Lover, Lover Mio, mio-I die I die” … They spread out their
splendid tails and begin to dance, But like Shiva’s their
dance, knowing that they and their lovers are all to die …
when they have exhausted themselves in battle, they will
mate. Peacocks are wise. The hundred eyes upon their tales
have seen the truth of life and death, and know them to be
one. Living they are in love with life. “Lover, Lover” You
will hear them cry in the forests when the rain clouds come,
Lover, I die. (CTP 57)

The tormented scream for mating, the crying and the yearning for the
male peacock reaches out to Maya but not Gautama she asks Gautama to hear
the call “Pia, Pia” but Gautama remains languid to the cry. He has no sexual
and passionate urge towards her. Maya the ‘pea-hen’ fails to have her instincts
fulfilled from Gautama, the peacock. She feels loneliness, isolation and
desertion. Maya’s loneliness, obsession, seclusion, unfulfilled womanhood,
emotional stimuli and over-ridden death phobia make her neurotic in her
behavior. As a result, Maya kills her husband Gautama in a fit of maddening
cry. Thus, it is alienation which brings a disastrous end to their life.

The fate of Maya is indeed the fate of the anguished self craving for
companionship and harmony in an emotionally chaotic milieu. It is the fate of
the hysterical mind of an Indian housewife. Prediction and fatalism is a fact to
Maya. The mournful cry of the brain-fever bird, with the advent of spring, is, to
Maya, the Peacock’s cry. It is a cry of intellectual sickness and uneasiness born
of emotional and spiritual atrophy. The spiritual crisis in Maya issues from her
struggle between desire and recognition of loss. She yearns for love and
affection:
Without strong ties with her husband, she feels lost and isolated: What has driven Maya towards insanity? The reason could easily be seen as the impending death, but the real reason is perhaps the unfulfilled desire and the perpetual longing for Gautama’s love and affection. (Rana 40)

Maya’s alienation is human and it is caused by her intermittent psychic confrontations with death. Her quest for identity is concerned with her mental journeys in the world of reality and in the world of illusion. The clash between Maya and Gautama is a clash between illusion and reality. Maya's alienation is existential in nature. S.P. Swain in *The Alienated self of Maya: A Study of Anita Desai's Cry, The Peacock* admits:

Alienation of Maya is Existential for, it centers round her hard and impassioned existence in an isolated world in which even her husband remains aloof from her emotional and sexual urges. The feel of loneliness persistently haunts the mind of Maya. She grows hysterical. Her predicament is indeed the fate of the alienated individual spirit craving to contact and companionship. (44)

Maya's alienation makes her brood over her existence. It makes her a neurotic. It makes her indulge in sexual fantasies with constant phobia. She becomes sick. Commenting on Maya's neurosis and her killing of her husband, Dilip K. Khetrapal in *Anita Desai: First Indian Woman psychologist in Literature with special reference to Cry, the peacock* observes:

Homicidal mania (compulsion to kill) is a strong motive and impulse which is realized by an individual quite suddenly and
unconsciously without its being aware of it. Homicidal mania may also be termed behaviorally as a revenge reaction springing from the deep-rooted frustrations and conflicts. Maya's unconscious desire to kill her husband is a revenge reaction arising out of her own basic frustration, conflicts and unfulfilled longings and desires for her husband's cold, nonchalant unresponsiveness. It is also amply clear that events immediately preceding a depressive disorder often act as the last straw for a person who had been subjected to a long period of mental torture or unfavorable circumstances such as unhappy marriage as in the case of Maya. In fact, through this murder suicide, she experiences glorious fulfillment and gets herself relieved of the past and ongoing present anxiety, conflict and tension gnawing at her psyche since marriage. (85-86)

In Cry, The Peacock, Maya is alienated from her husband Gautama and feels estranged from her entire surroundings. She lives as a virtual outsider in her home, in an environment where love is scanty, not understood and meager. Even her husband fails to understand her emotions. She becomes lucidly conscious of her loneliness. She is living under the constant shadow of death. She is socially estranged on account of being childless and is tormented by fast-approaching death. She wants to seize every moment of life, its emotional felicity in the company of her husband. But Gautama will not permit it. He is entangled in his own philosophical cobwebs. She discovers no meaning of life in the entanglement of what is gross and useless matter of fact and rational. Under the lucidity of absurd existence in a fit of rage, she kills her husband and feels relieved of all her guilt of alienation, dread and boredom.
The character named Maya can be as a victim of circumstances and in the course of action in the novel, she has been forced to become neurotic. The world is full of violence and destruction according to Maya. She is alone and alienated in a dark world. She is hopeless and full of despair. She has to pass through various psychological jolts which damage her value system. Maya was brought up by her father on an emotional diet, who would not say 'no' to any of her demands. Her father loved her dearly and she also loved him with the same intensity. Maya was a motherless child, her father kept her away from all the harsh and unpleasant realities of life. She gets married to Gautama, a friend of her father, who admired him. Her father suggested that she should marry Gautama, who was tall, stooped and knowledgeable friend of his. Here Maya experiences the first hint of conflicts, she has to fulfill either the parent's obligation or the relative's demands with different intentions. It was a marriage for convenience. Clashes of realities started to affect Maya's life. The action in the novel begins in the fourth year of their marital life.

Maya is shocked to find that love or any emotion has no place in Gautama's family. She compares her life in her husband’s house with that of it in her father's house. She is greatly distressed, and becomes desperate in the beginning of her married life. The action in the novel begins in the fourth year of their marital life. Dreams and images of husband-wife relationships formulated in her mind proved false when Gautama insulted her by uttering quotations from The Gita, thinking that she should not expect love from him. According to him love is only an attachment that acts as a meaning.

Maya was blamed for her sterility by her in-laws. She was hungry for love and chooses to offer her love to a dog, Toto. But Toto dies, leaving her alone. A sense of alienation is felt by her through the loss of Toto. She wants to provide an honorable burial to the dog, but her husband seeks the help of the
municipality truck to take away the carcass of the dog. She is shocked by the treatment given to her dog, Toto. His cold indifference to death of a pet is symbolic of his unawareness of the feelings of his wife. It further indicates lack of genuine understanding and communication between the husband and the wife.

Gautama's indifferent and insensitive nature is depicted through an opal ring given by him to Maya. He does not notice the translucent skin beneath, the blue flashing veins that run under and out of the bridge of gold. Gautama's unawareness of the changing colours and beauty of the opal ring is suggestive of his unawareness of the changing moods and sentiments of his wife. Alienation leads to the feeling of insanity felt by Maya.

The principal feature of psychotic disorder is the loss of contact. There is none in Gautama's family with whom she could express her feelings. Maya's alienation from her husband is inherent in her affinity to her father. She thinks that Gautama's love will definitely save her from the imaginary clutches of the astrologer's prediction. But there is no love in Gautama for Maya and hence her alienation begins. Even exhilarating acts of cabaret dancers does not have any effect on Gautama. After returning from the club one night he feels sleepy and smiles haplessly at Maya. It is clear, that Gautama is passive, unresponsive, unemotional and insensitive in comparison to the emotional, high-stung Maya.

The alienation of Maya in Cry, The Peacock is not related to the reality of her circumstances. It is a product of her self-consciousness. It is partly linked to the process of her growing up, from self-alienation to self-identification. The citing of the Gita and the manner in which Gautama preaches it with philosophical detachment is a sure and positive indication of his commitment to a higher and transcendental kind of love. On the other hand,
Maya pines for a life of sensations, a tender touch of his hand and for an exchange of laughter with him; her attachment to him is a physical one. The polarity between these two kinds of love that leaves her in the lurch thoroughly disillusioned. Alienated, she feels uncertain of her stance in the socio-psyched world. Hence she starts searching for her identity around her.

The facts of life and the fiction of imagination are seen to be battling against each other in her split-self. Anita Desai does not make the conflict in Maya metaphysical. The conflict is more psychological than moral. The opening character of the novel which serves as an overture strikes a note of alienation. It opens with the carcass of Toto rotting in the sun. Alienated from the self and alienated from the society, the carcass engenders psychic turnout in Maya. Toto's death blurs her vision. She frantically hurries to make a bonfire of it.

Gautama rationally and coldly views the death of Toto. He cites the teachings of the Gita and attempts to console the agonized self of Maya. He is not totally alienated from Maya. He tries to comfort her with a cup of tea. He helps her by attending to the needs of the dead Totto and sees to it that "they lifted him with care" (CTP 6). In her moments of lucidity, Maya acknowledges that Gautama in an ally and that he has enlarged her world. She views him as a proctor and a guide. She feels that she is lonely and abandoned and none would understand her. Her isolation and aloofness is expressed in the symbol of the peacocks and in which Maya's estrangement is fully articulated. She discerns her identity in the monsoon-tormented peacock pining for love and it is this self identification that generates anguish in her.

Alienation refers to estrangement that occurs in the relation between an individual and that to which he or she is relating to. It is a feeling of not
belonging. This feeling can be physical, mental, religious, spiritual, political or economical. At one time or the other, each one of us has experienced alienation in one form or other whether in school, college, among our family members, in religion, in politics or in society. This aloneness, alone for them is the treasure worth treasuring. Alienation of Maya is existential for it centers round her hard and impassioned existence in an isolated world in which even her husband remains aloof from her emotional and sexual urges. The feel of loneliness persistently haunts the mind of Maya. She becomes hysterical. Her predicament indeed the fate of the alienated individual spirit craving for contact and companionship, the agonized memory of the past keeps on dodging her and leaves her forlorn and lovelorn. Her alienation from Gauthama is marked by loneliness and no communication. She pines for an attachment and an association with him but her efforts prove futile. Maya desires to annihilate time but time keeps on chiming in. The alienation between Maya and Gautama is rooted basically in the latter's philosophical aloofness and imperviousness to the splendid yet tremulous beauty of the natural world. Her sequestered existence is spasmodically interrupted by Gautama's unwarranted philosophical intrusion. The physical intrusion of Gautama into Maya's psychic 'Odyssey' is incidental and is chiefly designed by Anita Desai to reintroduce the real theme of the novel i.e the psychic alienation and temperamental clashes between the husband and the wife. She becomes seemingly aware of her loneliness. Her desire for life turns into a death-wish and this abrupt metamorphosis is of first communicated through the symbol of the moon and later through the symbol of the Peacocks.

Her alienation is aggravated through the indifference in his family and society that makes her, lead an anguished life. Her alienation is existential, for it is accompanied by the awareness of the loneliness of time and impossible vastness of space, issuing out of her morbid reaction to the death of Toto. Later
it becomes nostalgic, and melancholic. The cooing of the doves irritates her. She longs to drive them away, yet not disturb their amour.

The most common theme in her novels is the complexity of human relationship, particularly the man-woman relationship. She writes mostly about the miserable plight of women suffering under their insensitive and inconsiderable husbands, fathers and brothers. So the man-woman relationship brings characters into alienation, withdrawal, loneliness, isolation and lack of communication that frequently occurs in her novels. Most of her novel's protagonists are alienated from the world, from society, from families, from parents and even from their own selves because they are sensitive, high stung individuals. When these characters have to face alienation, they become rebels. Tension, worries, depression, disappointment, anxiety and fear become their lot and they lose their sense of sanity and mental poise, for example Maya in *Cry, The Peacock*, Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* and Nanda Kaul in *Fire On The Mountain*. Some characters like Maya and Nanda Kaul are unable to reconcile to alienation and meet with a tragic end. Most of her protagonists are alienated ones. She portrays her characters as individuals "facing single-handed, the ferocious assaults of existence" (Dalmia 6). The aspect of alienation that springs from constant neglect or rejection and the failure to communicate or understand is realistically portrayed in the sensitive individual, Maya. This idea of alienation develops into the next phase. i.e. self-alienation, observed in Nanda Kaul and Raka. This kind of situation more or less prevails in Desai's first novel *Cry, The Peacock*.

*Cry The Peacock*, published in 1963 can be considered as a trendsetting novel as it deals with the mental rather than the physical aspects of its character. It also deals with the total alienation of Maya from her husband, Gautama and from her surroundings and even from herself. Both husband and
wife have different attitudes towards life. She wants to be attached to the world and its abounding charms, while Gautama wants to remain aloof and detached so as to attain 'peace of mind' This attitude alienates them from each other. This incompatibility of nature causes deep alienation in the mind of the protagonist, Maya who becomes intensely abnormal. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar writes: “Her intensity—whether she is sane, hysterical or insane—fills the whole book and gives it form as well as life.” (Iyengar 468)

The mental incompatibility and disharmony is the root cause of Maya's alienation, which is made clear by their reactions to the things around and the attitude to death. Gautama thinks that she is immature and has never been brought face to face with the mundane realities of life. The dream world of Maya and the solid world of Gautama can't go together any longer. Peacocks are wiser in that they have really looked into the truth of life and death. Maya echoes the trembling passion of the Peacocks, the traumatic agony of their cry for love and death. Even in childhood she has walked to the rocks and jungles, watching the beautiful Peacocks there, but then she has not given her mind to the significance of their cry, their inner wisdom. Now she understands the real meaning of their call. 'Lover, I die', weeps for them, knowing their words to be exactly hers. Maya's tragedy is fully articulated in the symbolism of peacocks. It is really the struggle of life-in-death and death-in-life.

The novel, *Cry, The Peacock* written in 1963 is “a remarkable attempt to fuse fantasy with perceptual experience” (Belliappa 25). It is the faithful description of psychosomatic growth of a female character, who cannot cope up with the practical world of the husband and feels deJECTED, forlorn and demoralized. It is mainly concerned with the theme of disharmony in the relationship between husband and wife. Desai looks into the reasons for marital discord and illustrates how such discord affects the family. Sometimes, the
inability of an individual to be responsive to the behavioral patterns of her partner leads to strain and tension in the relationship, while sometimes it is on account of varied levels of sensitivity, that relationships become strained. In this novel, Maya and Gautama have been projected to live in sharp contrast. Maya, the central figure, is alive through all, she senses and lives intensely for each moment. Her husband Gautama is remote, detached, intellectual and somewhat bewildered by his wife’s hyper-sensitiveness. Both of them are, as a matter of fact, poles apart in their nature. Maya is dreamy, sensitive and emotional, while Gautama is realistic, insensitive and rational. Maya in Cry, the Peacock is a pioneering effort towards delineating the psychological problems of an alienated person. Maya’s moods, obsessions, dilemmas and abnormality are conveyed very effectively in it.

Thus it is considered to be the first psychoanalytic fiction in Indo-Anglican, since it introduced the new idiom and direction to it. Anita Desai’s novel, however, is far more profound in understanding human psychology. Much of its success occurs from its working out the configuration of the inner world of the protagonist, as Meena Beliappa maintains:

The ardent introspection of Maya marks a valuable introversion in Indian fiction. It points to a line of significant development exploration not of the ‘social’ man, but the lone individual. (26)

The feeling of being alone can be seen throughout the novel. Maya’s alienation leads her on to utter dislocation:

All order is gone out of my life…no peace, nothing to keep me within the pattern of familiar everyday living and doing that becomes those whom God means to live on earth. Thoughts
come, incidents occur, then they are scattered and disappear. Past, present, future. Truth and untruth. They shuttle back and forth, a shifting chiaroscuro of light and shade… those are no longer my eyes, nor this my mouth...The pattern for an order of lines and designs, a symmetry…has deserted my own life….strangers surround me. (CTP 179,80)

This is the typical condition of an unfortunate person who is alienated through and through. Her obsession drives her to a curious insanity. In her psyche, “Yes, I am going insane,” she herself admits. “I am moving further and further from all wisdom, all calm, and I shall soon be mad, if I am not that already.(108) Desai’s presentation of the plight of the alienated Maya may not be always convincing and profound, but it heralds the beginning of a new kind of psychological novel - a novel, of sensibility rather than action. Her very first novel incorporates her vision of self and goes a long way towards presenting the personal problems of a helplessly sensitive character caught in the crisis of isolation and insecurity. Also, Maya, does not think herself to get adjusted in her family with her in - laws. According to her, love for men or life does not exist or matter for them and so she is isolated from the family.

To understand Maya’s psyche, we have to begin with her childhood. She is a motherless child born in a god - fearing traditional Brahmin family with a cultured, refined, rich and doting father. She also has a brother, Arjun with whom she shares pleasant moments, participating with him in kite - flying but not so adept as he, feeling his superiority. In her mind she thinks: “if I was a partridge, plump, content, he was a wild bird, a young hawk that could not be tamed, that fought for its liberty”(134). Her childhood had been happy, secured and she had enjoyed finer thing of life. She says, “I had the happiest childhood. They were my happiest times”(115). Having been brought up in a world which,
in Gautama’s, her husband’s, view was incapable of equipping one to cope with world of reality. He blames her father for her immaturity. He says: “Life is a fairy tale to you still, what have you learnt of the realities? The realities of common human existence, not love and romance but living and dying and working, all that constitutes life for the ordinary man. You won’t find it in your picture books”(117).

The other women characters in the novel have some bearing on Maya and her reaction towards them manifests some aspects of feminine psyche. However, all of them are different from Maya. Her reaction to the cabaret girls is important and typically feminine. The cabaret girls may have appeal to the men, but to Maya the sight of these girls displaying their “fleshy wares” is a “performance as revolting as it was remarkable”(83).

In Anita Desai, men are shown as highly professional, competent and sedate characters with a precise attitude and a practical stable temperament. They are self contained holistic personalities autonomous and free in expressing themselves. The women on the other hand are parasitic on the men, needing them as a trap for all their activities entirely dependent on them and yearning and longing to be recognized by them. Maya in Cry, The Peacock is stung by the nonchalant attitude of her husband and she yearns to be noticed by him and be loved by him. She expresses her dissatisfaction “he (Gautama) knew nothing that concerned me” (CTP 9). She feels miserable and is full of self pity, as she reflects Gautama’s attitude. “Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at the papers, he did not give another thought to me, to either the soft willing body or the lonely wanting mind that waited near his bed”...(ibid).

Her pet Toto is her sole companion and she is inconsolable at his death. She remembers his excited, wild bark welcome her back after a morning in
town. He hurls himself on her and the little body against her is more comfortable than anything can be. Maya is demented by his death a feeling that is not shared by her husband she exclaims. “Oh, Gautama, pets might not mean anything to you, and yet they mean the world to me (CTP, 19). There is a formidable gap and distance between Maya and Gautama. She withdraws into herself, driven by the loneliness around her as she reflects. “It is that – my loneliness in this house. I was alone. (p.14). A total alienation from every aspect that underscores her life. She concludes her life is “Only a dream. An illusion. Maya – my very name means nothing, is nothing but an illusion” (144).

Maya’s inability to forge a meaningful relationship with her husband makes her withdraw herself, where she creates a private world of dreams and fantasies, a utopian sphere that is most unreal. Her yearning for an intimate sharing with Gautama is shattered when he closes his eyes to her: “But when I went to rouse him from the couch, with a touch, I saw that he had closed his eyes, not with mere tiredness but in profound, invulnerable sleep and was very far from any world of mine. I hesitated, wishing to summon him to me yet knowing he could never join me “It was no use” (81).

She retreats into a closed space, which is filled by her inner voice growing stronger, directing her and taking control of her life. She sinks more and more into herself until she sees “no rain no clouded sky, “no promise no sweetness” (144). Her sanity slowly ebbs away, all order is gone…no plan, no peace nothing to keep. (149). She envies her friends Leila and Pom, who are invalid and preoccupied with their lives, their wants and raising up to meet the demanding responsibilities of their homes. Maya continues to languish in a limbo of nothingness, wild Peacocks crying in anguish as they mate, fill the
landscape of her mind, the unceasing prophesy of the Albino drums through her fevered brain incessantly.

Instead of breaking out of the mould which is endangering her, thinking and existence itself, she gives up the battle as acknowledges, “My body breaks in the battle”(148), “her world grows smaller and it shrank, shrank soundlessly”(151). Amidst the madness which envelope her, there remains her stubborn singular desire to return to her past, her father, Arjuna her brother, to Darjeeling and the little things which had powered her existence, given her happiness and joy trapped between the two worlds-one of grace and the other of madness, she fights a losing battle as she gets no help from all that who mattered to her. Her escape route to survival of self, results in annihilation of Gautama her husband, her alienation from self, friends and relations, society and her environment is complete. She disappears like ‘maya’, an illusion as her name implies As Indira Nityanandam rightly opines, To be alienated from self and society is one of the greatest tragedies of modern man or woman. Desai presents this problem of alienation being faced by most of her protagonists” (19). Among Anita Desai’s protagonists who constantly encounter a sense of rootlessness, isolation and alienation,

Maya is a brilliantly documented figure portraying an alienated consciousness tortured by her own phobias and neurosis. In her earnest appeal for love, her child like responses to life problems and her hyper-sensitivity, she reveals all the traits of an alienated being in modern society. (ibid 69)

A close study of Anita Desai's novels shows that she delineates the inner lives of her characters. Most of her characters suffer from a nagging sense of
insecurity and a desperate need to belong. There is a spiritual dryness, and a lack of faith found in them. These things emerge from a traumatic interpersonal relationship and a pernicious home environment. The peculiar childhood, ungratifying adolescence and dissatisfying middle years do not render them an opportunity to reach maturity of thought and feelings. They are deprived of marital joys and satisfaction. Their fathers are indifferent to them.

‘Voices In The City’ does reveal the alienation of the three voices i.e. Nirode, Monisha and Amla. Nirode is alienated from his mother who lives with Major Chadha, with the surroundings that dehumanize man and with the whole cosmic order, where he finds no consoling destiny. He perceives the reality of the universe in close kinship with Camus. Nirode feels that in default of inexhaustible happiness, eternal suffering at least would give us a destiny. But he discovers that "even our worst agonies come to an end one day" (VC 40). He decides to live an uninvolved, irreducible and husked life. He wants to free himself from all the make-shifts and myths and so called protective shells of the world. Monisha too feels alienated in her family and is contemptuous of the mean lives, traditional Bengali women are condemned to suffer within the confines of their apathetic and indifferent walls. She courts her life closed in a container and suddenly concludes it to be a waste and consigns herself consequently to flames. Amla is tormented by the absurdity of Calcutta where love cannot pine at them beyond tomorrow.

In Anita Desai’s ‘Voices In The City’, the theme of alienation is treated in terms of mother-children relationship, which itself is a consequence of dissonance in husband-wife relationship. All the three characters-Nirode, Monisha and Amla are alienated from society as well as from their mother who is in love with Major Chadna shirking from doing a meaningless and mechanical job. Nirode a sensitive and talented artist drifts from one person to
another and experiences emptiness, meaninglessness and alienation in life. Nirode knew by instinct that he was a man for whom aloneness alone was the sole natural condition, aloneness alone the treasure worth treasuring” (VC 24)

Monisha is equally alienated from her mother and husband and commits suicide. By becoming a commercial artist in which she was not really interested, Amla alienates herself from her job. The alienation of Nirode, the protagonist, begins with the departure of Arun on a foreign trip. Nirode envies him for travelling in a train and going out of the dark pandemonium into the open space. Nirode returns from the station brooding over his own helpless condition, over his wretched loneliness, contrasted to which stands Arun, a social, optimistic and intelligent person. Nirode fully alienated as he is, dislikes even marriage, family and all worldly relations hampering the healthy growth of his individuality. The female protagonist of the novel, Monisha is all the more lonely and sad. She even appreciates Nirode’s sense of duty done in solitude-editing of newspaper and magazine, and helps him financially by the so-called stealing from her-in-laws at the time of his serious illness. She herself wants to do her work alone, whether it be the cutting of vegetables, serving of food or anything else. Married against her will to a ‘blind moralist’, a ‘rotund, minute-minded and limited’ official, addicted to quoting complacently and indiscriminately various authorities like Burke, Wordsworth, Gandhi and Tagore, Monisha finds her life a virtual imprisonment. She turns a sleepwalker, ghost, and some unknown and dread entity (P 146). She is always ‘eager to get away and be alone’ (P 148). But finally Monisha’s suicide is only an attempt to rebel against the meaningless existence and death-like isolation and loneliness.

Monisha’s predicament in Desai’s Voices In The City is similar to that of Maya. Monisha and Jiban have nothing common in their personality. Her married life begins with “the reception arranged by the heads of this many
headed family” (VC 109). She is forced to touch the feet of all the elder members of the family to receive their blessings. Having come from the mountains and being used to open atmosphere, the very bars of the window seem to her as barriers. She feels suffocated. Her sister-in-law openly discussed her inability to give birth to a child. She hears them discussing her tubes and ovaries and tries to stop listening to them. All this bare scrutiny and lack of privacy upsets her and alienates her emotionally from all around.

Monisha feels depressed and shattered unable to pursue her interests. She becomes secretive and silent. The readers hardly find Monisha and Jiban talking. Even Amla senses that all is not well with her sister. She too can see that Monisha has nothing in common with Jiban. Amla asks her aunt, “Why did they marry”. (VC 198) She wonders:

Why had their father chosen him from amongst other young men surely known to him, or to his friends and relations, whose names must have been proposed when word was sent around that the eldest daughter was to marry? Was it merely because Jiban was so unquestionably safe, sound and secure, so utterly predictable? (VC 198).

Her inability to communicate and copy with the situation transforms this “quiet, sensitive, mild, self-centred, beautiful girl into a barren, neurotic diary-writing woman” (Patel 135). Anita Desai describes one of Monisha’s postures, “Her head, protruding from the dark window, was like that of a stuffed rag doll with a very white face nodding insecurely on its neck, its eyebrows and mouth painted unnaturally dark” (VC 160). She cried to her younger sister, “in the sudden, harsh tone of a night jar, a wild bird flushed from some unexplored depth of jungle, ‘Amla, always go in the opposite direction!’”. (VC 160)
Monisha feels frustrated and alone. She is unable to share her feelings with others and in a moment of extreme desperation, she burns herself. It is Jiban who gently “draws the sheet up over the face and hand” and begs forgiveness of her relatives (VC 145) Monisha is an escalist and “self-hate turns into self-destructive impulse” (Bande 68). Quite unhappy that she has not given birth, Monisha feels emotionally isolated and frustrated by the knowledge that life is nothing but “a conundrum that I shall brood over forever with passion and pain never to arrive at a solution” (VC 125). Her frustration leads her to “self-destructive urges” (Bande 68) and Monisha commits suicide.

Amla’s longing to flee, in *Voices In The City*, is expressed through the image of horses bursting forth to release themselves from the massed impatience and the lust of the mob. The horses symbolize the possibility of isolation and escape from the pressures of conformity. The prey-and-predator image occurs in the race –course scene in which a horse, while running fast, falls on the ground hurt, and then a flock of hungry birds swoops down. One can remember the abandoned corpse of Toto, encircled by cows and rotting in the sun. The characters in the city live corpse-like, isolated from the general current of life, going their own way. Calcutta itself is imaged as an ugly, ghastly monster which grips the three desperate preys-Niorde, Monisha and Amla-gape and gasp for breath. Monisha calls Calcutta “this devil city”(VC 117), “unrelenting city” (P 236). Images of putrefaction, like filth, squalidness and adversity create in Monisha, distaste and dislike for the city. Amla keenly feels the demonic, ogre-like presence of the city; its throbbing pulse attracts as well as repels: “… This monster city that lived no normal, healthy and red-blooded life but one that was subterranean, under lit, stealthy and odorous of mortality, had captured and enchanted-or disenchanted-both her sister and brother…” (VC 150).
The city with its callousness presents a subtly tilting picture of aloofness to Amla: “At every turn, on every road, the city thrusts its ugly apathy at her like a beggar thrusting his mutilated hand through the window and laughing because he Knows she must pay him her conscience money…” (VC 193).

Amla calls Calcutta a ‘harsh’ and ‘insidious’ city. It is a city with a brooding, dull, weary and vacant face. “This city, this of yours, it conspires against all who wish to enjoy it, doesn’t it?” (P 153) Vacant and brooding and at the same time rapacious, the city has a Janus-like existence. This orge and monster city gobbles Monisha, while it leaves the remaining two-Nirode and Amla-awfully battered and shattered. Washed in the monsoon, Calcutta presents a moving picture of desolation and dissolution, decay and disintegration to Monisha, Norode and Amla who like to keep aloof from it. They are all emotionally suffocated and isolated. Thus, the novel Voices In The City does deeply explore the isolation and alienation of Nirode, Monisha and Amla doomed to reside in Calcutta, ‘The City of Death’. It is nothing but a tragic exploration of the personal suffering of Nirode’s wounded self, Monisha’s agonized self and Amla’s insecure and isolated self. This novel also portrays the distortion of human values and the consequent dehumanization of man in a mechanical society, where an individual remains alienated from the human aspect of his identity. Though Nirode, Monisha and Amla remain alienated from one another, they are basically united by the common note of protest and rebellion against the city of Calcutta.

Opposed to Nirode are his two sisters, Monisha and Amla. Both these women are victims of alienation not of their making like Nirode but which is enforced on them. Alienation becomes an integral aspect in their life that there is no escape from it. Alienation to Nirode might appear even to be a youthful fad, but it is ‘real’ for Monisha and Amla. Monisha in Voices In The City is the
worst affected, married to a ‘blind moralist’ a man with a limited mind, ‘minute-minded’ and limited she finds her life deprived of any ‘purposeful meaning with nothing to define her person, she is turned into a sleepwalker, ghost, some unknown and dead entity (p. 146), she often seeks to ‘get away and be alone’ (p.148).

As rightly expressed “Monisha in Voices In The City” is a study in female alienation. Against the backdrop of the huge, palpitating city of Calcutta, Monisha stands out as a modern Indian woman, uprooted from her natural surroundings in Kalimpong. She has no kin in her new abode at her in-laws place. As she is educated, intelligent, sensitive and well-read she cannot fit into the worn-out pattern of joint family and convention. (Parikh 22)

*Voices In The City* is a more intense novel as it minutely examines the ‘voices’ within the ‘voices’ are the expression of the inner anguish, angst, agitation that is experienced by the characters. Monisha remains alienated from all relationships, her in-laws, her brother, sister and mother, she gradually sinks into an apathy that is killing, implying she has reached the bottom nadir of her faith and belief in life; she has no religious faith that which usually sustains an individual during times of crisis and breakdown. She writes in her diary:

“If I had religious faith, I could easily enough renounce all this. But I have no faith, no alternative to my confused despair, there is nothing I can give myself...a life dedicated to nothing then it is a choice between death and mean existence and that surely is not a difficult choice” (VC, 121). Being educated
and sensitive to issues her mind incessantly questions the logic of the drab existence lived by women, particularly the Bengali women. Whose,

Lives spent in wanting for nothing, waiting on men self-centered and indifferent and hungry and demanding and critical, waiting for death, and dying misunderstood that terrifying ...that shut us in, in the old houses in the old city. (130)

She feels totally stifled in the house, as Sinha points out, “The novel offers a brilliant exposition of the alienation suffered by those dislocated individuals trapped in the monster city” (210). Locked in an incommunicable self, she yearns to reach out to others, particularly her husband Jiban, but with no help coming from any quarter, she impulsively ends her life, she torches herself even as she realizes “She fought it, it was not what she wanted – she screamed ‘No! No! No!’” (VC 240). But all too late, Nirode and Amla too drift rootless in the city. Amla appears to be the anchor for the hopelessly scattered family but very soon her love affair with an artist leaves her disillusioned and bitter. For all three the city appears to intensify the dislocational angst they undergo the crowds ‘passive but dispersed’ (118) press on Monisha and while to other it is ‘cheerful, cheerful Calcutta, with its jolly madman, magicians marriage processions, vendors, film posters (119) to Monisha despite ‘all ashes and rages, poetry and flame, appears to her “Swamped by smog and the stars that follow it are pale with tuberculosis (119).

Monisha and Amla who are rooted in more realistic situation, cannot escape the emotional and psychological scars left by their existence. Amla manages to survive the crisis of rejected love, and emerges as a strong character with the help of Nirode, it is Monisha who sinks under, unable to
sustain the agony of her privacy, under severe scrutiny and entrapped within a family that fails to understand her. The novel, *Voices In The City* is divided into four parts – Part 1 for Nirode, Part 2 for Monisha, Part 3 for Amla and Part 4 for Mother. It tells the story of a brother, two sisters and their mother. But throughout the novel Nirode, the hero of the novel, remains the dominating figure.

From the beginning the theme of loneliness, alienation and loss of identity of the characters, is often stressed by the novelist to create an atmosphere of dramatic tension and conflict. Anita Desai’s concern, in the novel, is primarily with human relationships and how in the absence of a meaningful relationship the individuals suffer. She probes the psychic compulsion that may pollute an individual in forging long term and significant relationships and how an individual is affected if he is unable to forge such relationships. Nirode, one of the main characters, is obsessed with the relationship of his mother with Major Chadha and considers her a she-cannibal. She is having an affair in Kalimpong which itself is a consequence of dissonance in husband-wife relationship. Nirode's relationship with his mother is a love-hate relationship. We have veiled suggestions of his mother-fixation and according to psychologists hatred often is a defense mechanism of the psyche to stop one from committing incest. If Maya’s tragedy in *Cry, The Peacock* emanates from her obsession with a father figure, Nirode’s tragedy lies in his love-hate relationship with the mother. The novel also deals with the incompatible marriage of Monisha and Jiban. Monisha’s husband is the prisoner of conventional culture. He believes that a woman’s most important roles besides child bearing, are cooking, cutting vegetables, serving food and brushing small children's hair under the authority of a stern mother-in-law. Monisha feels that her privacy is denied to her. Her husband is busy with his
middle rank government job with no time for Monisha and no desire to share her feelings.

The theme of alienation is treated in terms of mother-children relationship which itself is a consequence of dissonance in husband-wife relationship. Monisha leads an equally fragmented and starved life. She is alienated from her husband as well as his mother. The graph of her mental life can be constructed from her long-searching and self-confronting entry in the diary. Her relationship with her husband is characterized only by loneliness and lack of communication. He reckons his wife as worth nothing in consequence. He does not bother to ask his wife, even when he finds some money missing from his pocket. Monisha’s ill matched marriage, her loneliness, sterility and stress of living in a joint family with an insensitive husband push her to breaking point. The element of love is missing in her life and finally she commits suicide.

There is an acute difference in the alienation experienced by both the sexes. The aspects of alienation gain a gendered underlining as the male alienation being entirely different in its essence and nature from the alienation suffered by the women. Traditions and the socio-cultural mores weigh very heavily on an Indian woman. According to tradition, a woman usually leaves her parental home and enters her husband’s family after marriage. It is never otherwise, except in very rare cases. It is considered below their dignity to live in the bride’s house, and hence this shift which takes the woman from her safe, secure sheltered existence transmitting her to a new household usually joint in nature, to cohabit with numerous relations and cousins.

The new bride experiences a sense of dislocation and has to accommodate herself to new circumstances and environment. While some
women are able to adjust to new lifestyles and cope quietly, there are a few who simply succumb to the pressures of the new emotions. Maya in *Cry, The Peacock* and Monisha in *Voices In The City* belong to the latter, where the household into which they migrate, becomes intolerable and sterile maladjustment and utter frustration force them to take recourse and resort to action that is shattering, and ultimately with no healthy solution in sight.

The theme of alienation, loneliness and depression finds its place rather intensely in Anita’s Desai’s *Where Shall We Go This Summer* too which may be considered Desai’s shortest but most powerful, deeply engrossing and disturbing novel with an inner fury making everyone think about the problems of life. The novelist has beautifully presented the predicament of a lonely married woman who aspires to triumph over the chaos and suffering of her rather unusual existence. Sita, a sensitive young wife is torn between the desire to abandon the boredom and hypocrisy of her middle-class and ostensibly comfortable existence and the realization that the bonds that bind her to it cannot be easily broken., this novel is nothing but a skilful dramatization of an unusual life situation of an anguished woman who finds herself lonely and alienated from her husband and children.

What happens in *Where Shall We Go This Summer*? Is that Sita, the chief protagonist, a sensitive, over-emotional, middle-aged woman saddled with four children, heavily pregnant with her fifth one, feels totally alienated and isolated from her husband and children and undergoes unspeakable and even unbreakable mental agony because of her high strung sensibility and explosive emotionality. She has “a dry warm face” (WSGS 117) which has assumed “the aged stillness” (WSGS 18) Owing to her mental condition, she “continually broke apart into violent eruptions of emotion” (WSWG 32). Temperamental incompatibility resulting in husband-wife alienation figures
superbly in this novel. Dwelling on the theme of incertitude, alienation and in communication in married life, the novelist lays a focus on the alienation of it woman, a wife and a mother, an alienation conditioned by society and family. The children Maya’s angst in *Cry, The Peacock* is existential and psychic but sita’s anguish in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Is something domestic and mundane?

Anita Desai is found here in this novel dramatizing the conflict between two irreconcilable temperaments and two diametrically opposed attitudes to life. Sita the protagonist, is a nervous sensitive, middle-aged women who finds herself alienated from her husband and children because of her emotional reactions to many things that happen to her. She is an introvert a character, whose suffering springs from her constitutional inability to accept the authority of the society. Hence her alienation is natural and dispositional. Quite unable to put up with her in laws, she withdraws herself from her husband which is suggested through the crows preying on the eagle.

Sita finds the prevalent cruelty, torture and violence around her rather oppressive and disgusting. Like Gautama in *Cry, The Peacock*, her husband Raman also is a practical man. He is brisk, active and even precise in dealing with the business of life. Sita’s emotional outbursts are beyond his comprehension. She does not want her fifth pregnancy because she feels it inhuman to bring another life into this cruel world. Actually Sita has the normal balanced attitude of a good mother for she has given birth to four children and proved herself to be a rather fond mother. She has a higher sensibility than common mothers and higher worries and a more keenly imaginative temper and poetic vision.
They all hampered at her with cruel fisto-the fallen Blocks, the torn water colours, the headlines about the war in Vietnam, the photograph of women weeping over a Small grave. Another of a crowd outside a Rhodesian jail; Articles about the perfidy in Pakistan, the virtuousness of our India… They were hand-grenades all, hurled at her frail Gold fish-bowl belly and instinctively. She laid her hand over it. (WSGS 55)

In such a world, children cannot be beheld as “whole and pure and unimpeached”. She is also afraid of different nurses and doctors who will offer indignity to her person; the process of hospitalization and the details of the procreative procedure are repugnant even in their mental picturing or reverie by Sita. Therefore, she wishes to escape from this predicament. She says, “What I am doing is trying to escape from the madness” (WSGS 35).

To Sita, modern civilization is a crazy civilization in which children imitate scene from cinema in daily life, girls read cheap pulp literature, nurses of children enact mini-wars among themselves before children in which of kindness are ridiculed by husbands: “it is all a madness … the people here all around…” (Desai 36) The climax to the disorder of the modern world is the kidnapping of children – sons and daughters – this is the criminality of life in Bombay. Sita’s temper could not tolerate any such thing, hence her rebellion. Sita’s rebellion towards the modern civilization is misunderstood by her husband as a personal family quarrel.

Sita’s husband Raman, like Gautama in Cry, the Peacock, fails to understand her rebellion, violence and passion. Raman is sane, rational, and passive while Sita is irrational and hysteric-manic. Through Sita, Anita Desai
voices the awe of facing all alone “the ferocious assaults of existence.”
(Dalmia 13). The conflict between two polarized temperaments and two discordant view-points represented by Sita’ and Raman, sets up marital discord and conjugal misunderstanding as the leitmotif, of Desai’s novels. The interrogative and inquisitive title of the novel Where shall We Go This Summer? Is a pointer to the ennui of Sita’s anguished soul. Her introversion, like Maya’s in Cry The Peacock, leads to her psychic odyssey. Fed up with the dreary metropolitan life in Bombay and tormented by the paranoiac fear of her fifth and reluctant pregnancy, she leaves for Manori island off Marve mainland. Sita’s father fixation hinders her contract with her husband. She feels alienated not only from her husband but she feels a frog out of water in her father-in-law’s “age-rotted flat’’ where they all live like “pariahs’’ a life of subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness’’ disinclined to introspection and introversion. She regards their soulless existence as a menace to her own martial and conjugal identity and boldly flouts the dehumanizing and destabilising norms and values of a society whose stranglehold it is difficult to escape. The disintegration of their human identify is Emphasized through the recurrent images of prey and predator. Sita says: “They are nothing …nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter. Animals” (WSGS47)

Anita Desai has profusely loaded the first part the novel with images of brutality and violence. Raman’s sadistic delight in Sita’s failure to protect the eagle and Menaka’s indifference to the vegetable life are all symbolic of a subterranean fury. Unable to reconcile herself to this violence, Sita leaves for the island of Manori where her father had created enchantment out of emptiness, Sita, in fact, wants to escape the tyrannous grips of a cannibalistic urban milieu. She wants to escape the forces of fear and destruction which breed archetypal urges. Here alienation from all experience is due to her love
for life and her reluctance to accept violence in any form. Thus, her flight to the island forms the focus of the novel.

Sita considers the flight to the island as a holy pilgrimage, a journey for spiritual purification, a search for identity. “The theme of isolation, estrangement, rebellion and violence is projected in terms of social and psychic forces mould in individual identities…As a result, the novel is based on a very narrow canvas, to reflect the intricacies of Sita’s loneliness and aloofness”. (P34) But the novelist has probed deeper into the sources of Sita’s alienation. Sita is an uprooted woman who wants to regain her primitive self. Ironically Sita’s pilgrimage with its promise of renewal and regeneration is the result of her social alienation. There comes a change in Sita’s identity. But the children refuse to share the life of primitive reality which is the very identity of the island. Hence their alienation has very little or no impact on their individual identities. The island forms the vote of Sita’s conscious existence. The sea and the island suggesting two different polarities of existence provide a picture in contrast in the symbolic design and movement of the novel. Sita’s other identity finds expression on this island. It represents that part of herself which she had failed to realize earlier. The island is a projection of her other self, her other identity. She knows too it is the island that alienated her from her instinctive drives.

Sita’s unconscious identification with the stranger’s irrationality is expressive not only of her own quest for a life of primitive reality, but also of her alienation from Raman who regards it practically as an act of infidelity. Sita knows that since the infidelity was only psychic, it was so much more immeasurable for that. Desai delineates here the physical and psychic states of her characters here through objective correlativites. For instance, the pathetic sight of an old man and a fatally anemic or fatally tubercular but beautiful
woman looking lovingly at one another suggests the alienated plight of Sita in a hard, harsh world beaming with lust and violence. Sita’s return to Manori, like the withdrawal of Monisha and Nirode in *Voices In The City*, is an act of alienation. To the father, the island has the identity of an ashram; to the daughter it has identity of a magician, a necromancer. The father has a non-committed life and Sita’s alienation from her father blurs her vision about his identity. The island figures as a haunting and obsessive presence in her psyche. She is conscious of the isolation not only between her and the island but also between the island and the sea. In his book *Anita Desai: The Novelist* Madhusudan Prasad has rightly pointed out that “Sita is the symbolic equivalent of the modern housewife whose sensibility is perpetually under stress… her mental agony in the outcome of her inability to cope with the modern society”(41). The island and the mighty panorama of it is the same but a violent storm is created deep within the mind of the protagonist Sita touched by the modern concept of alienation and so she has imprisoned, as it seems, her soul within the walls of stark realism and sin and selfishness completely doomed to destruction.

Sita’s alienation and loneliness result from marital discord and maladjustments in her marital life. She has married Raman not out of choice but out of compulsion. Raman, son of her father’s friend Deedar came to the Island to cremate her father and rescue her. “Deedar Son came to cremate her father, shut the house, fetch her away, send her to college, install her in a college hostel and finally-out of pity, out of lust, out of sudden will for adventure, and because it was inevitable-married her” (WSGS 99). Sita was not at all happy with her married life which provides no love, no understanding and no commitment or concern. This created an aching void in the life of Sita who has to face the isolation and loneliness of a woman, a wife and another. Observing and witnessing her relationship with her husband and children, Sita
comes to the realization that her marriage and in fact “all human relationships were just a farce” (WSGS 144). “Bored, dull, unhappy, fanatic”, she is painfully distressed at” the tedium and ugliness of a meaningless life” (WSGS 145). She is not at all happy with anyone in the house either with her husband or with her children for no one understands her. This feeling of agony and discomfort makes her alienated both physically and mentally. So she finds herself difficult to accommodate in her husband’s home:

She never got used to anyone. When they lived, in the first years of their married lives, with his family in their age-rotted flat of queens Road, she has vibrated and throbbed in revolt against their subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness. (WSGS 48)

All these infuriates Sita and she regards their colourless and soulless existence as provocation and even a threat to her own existence. To challenge them to shatter their complacency and to shock them into a recognition of the reality, “she behaved provocatively… she started smoking and began to speak in sudden rushes of emotion.” (WSGS 48). Feeling suffocated by their vegetarian, complacence the solidity of the well-fed, she could not grow.

Used to them and so her husband moved to a small flat where they lived alone. But people continued to come and become unacceptable to her. She took “their insularity and complacency as well as the aggression and violence of the others upon her own living nerves” (WSGS 50). So, Sita spent all her time on the balcony, smoking and looking out a the sea for relief from alienation and boredom. She could not comprehend her and neurosis. She feels so resigned and helpless that “she could not inwardly accept that this was all there was to life…” (WSGS 54). Sita finds herself out and out lonely,
completely isolated and fully alienated, for she is tired of ‘this meaningless
life’ from which she tries to escape and get herself liberated. If ‘art’ is the
expression of life in an objective and subjective way that ‘an artist writing
about himself writes about the age’, no doubt Anita Desai through the creation
of the character like Sita, has vividly captured the pulse of modernity and given
it all serving in the assertion of Sita’s alienation.

The problem of alienation and unhappiness in the life of Sita spring up
from her constitutional inability to accept the values and the attitudes of
society. There are other “small incidents” which are shocking to Sita. What is
normal and usual for others in something abnormal and unusual for Sita.

The skill of the novelist lies in the fact that the novel “Where Shall We
Go This Summer” is integrated with the personality of Anita Desai who
confesses everything through the mouth of her protagonist Sita. She is shocked
to experience violence everywhere. Once she comes across her sons wrestling
with each other, ‘one buckling the other beneath him, being over thrown, then
both rolling, both enmeshed, thrashing, grunting’ (WSGS 44), Sita screams by
saying as ‘That’s no way of playing, Get up, Get up. Stop it’ (WSGS 45),
even though she is informed by her daughter coolly that they were only playing.
This mere play for Sita represents the violence and the hatred that she finds all
around her in the society and also in the family. The other small incidents - her
daughter Menaka coldly destroying all the beautiful drawing carefully made by
her, the ayahs fighting like animals completely oblivious of the crying and
frightened children in the midst, Karan kicking over a tower of blocks and
howling with maniac glee to see them tumble, the headlines of Vietnam war, a
photograph of a woman weeping over a grave, a crowd outside the Rhodesian
Jail, Menaka unconsciously and carelessly crumbling a sheaf of new buds on
the small potted plant. She had been labouring to grow on the balcony-all
represent the myriad faces of a made and violent society and Sita remains alarmed at the sight of such unthinking destruction. It is the same painting through the pen of Anita Desai which has been chiselled by Leonardo-de-Vinci in the creation of Monalisa. Sita finds herself alienated not only from her own self but also even within the closed circle of her family. She actually craves from the concern of her children as well as of her husband who was – “just unaware of her needs and demands”’ (WSGS 132) Sita suffers alienation at the hands of her husband and children through her life. She is not only a failure and crushed but also feels insecure and unprotected. Tired, in one unconscious symbolic action as it were, she follows the trial of foot-prints of Raman than he had laid out for her, “She lowered her head and search out his foot prints So that she could place her feel in them, as a king of Game to make walking back easier and her foot-prints Mingled with his” (WSGS 150).

This gesture of Sita reveals her existential predicament, her acceptance of the values of society around her and her return to conformity. Towards the end of the novel, one finds her ‘tired’, dishevelled and vacant, like players at the end of the performance, clearing the stage, picking the costumes, in equal parts saddened and relieved. Now Sita comes to accept the prose of life which runs through difficult human situations in different ways. The happy ending harmonizes all hues of human life which forms the blood and bone of the novel. Sita finds the courage to face life, in the end, with all its ups and downs.

She realizes the fact that escapism is not an answer to life’s problems. She is convinced that life must flow on and she too, must have the courage to flow on with the current life. ‘Life must be continued and all its business ‘Menaka’s admission to medical college gained, wife led to hospital, new child safely brought forth, the children reared the factory seen to, a salary earned, a salary spent’ (WSGS 138-139). Sita is not happy about making a compromise
which she takes to be her defeat. Married life in a perpetual compromise and any compromise or sacrifice for a greater good vindicates one’s victory and greatness’. Only by connecting extremes, one can arrive at an acceptable path in life. This is the positive solution that the novel offers to the present day temperamental and consequent alienation’. In the end, she has to accept

Both Maya of *Cry, The Peacock* and Sita of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* marry men who are older than themselves, and mostly middle aged men set in their ways and who are well past any kind of romantic inclination or even ordinary sensitivity to domestic matters, Maya and Sita, are not exactly in their prime, but they happen to be women, who expect an unpromising holistic love from their husbands, a committed sharing and understanding from them. The two perspectives of Desai’s men and women are poles apart. Most of Desai’s heroines are emotionally dependent on their partners and hence lack any sense of self, or autonomy. Belonging to usually an elite or comfortably well off families, these women do not use their time and resources meaningfully, they seem to be lost in time and space, they have no identity of their own, no sense of belonging, they have to be rescued like damsels in distress, from the predicament in which they strangely find themselves.

But their introspective self reveals another picture, as intelligent as they are, their thoughts are complex, but logically they yearn for relationships which however, turn out to be futile, it is in this instance that they begin to alienate themselves from the immediate environment, from their families, their country land, either escape into an utopian world of shades and shadows or flee their place of existence to another kindly envisions to attempt to find a solution to their existential dilemma, but with very little success. They are returned to their beginnings as Sita affirms at the end of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*
She felt the long, straight, monotonous track of her life whip itself round her in swift circles, perhaps a spiral, whirling around and around till it’s very lines dissolved and turned to a blur of silver, the blurred silver of the mirror-like windowpanes. All was bright, all was blurred, all was in a whirl. Life had no periods, no stretches. It simply swirled around muddling and confusing, leading nowhere. (WSGS 140)

This is a strong existential statement. Most of Anita Desai’s heroines simply kowtow the most predictable path as they find all other options oppressed too. In keeping with what Thomas Wolfe predicts in his posthumous novel *You can’t go home again*, the magic of the island of her childhood to Sita, has all, but disappeared with its magic stripped off, the island appears, drab, the island lets her go, ‘Let her go’ (WSGS 143). As Indira Nityanandam rightly points out. “At the end of the novel Sita shows mere practical maturity than Maya and Monisha who failed to face and tackle the bitter realities of life. Though similar to Maya and Monisha in some respects, Sita rises above them in her capacity for a positive acceptance of reality. She is a true precursor of Bim in this respect.

Most of Desai’s protagonists are alienated characters. She portrays her characters as individuals “facing single-handed, the ferocious assaults of existence” (The Times of India) Thus, characters in her novels are generally neurotic females, highly sensitive and engaged with their dreams and imagination, and alienated from their environments. They often differ in their opinions from others and embark on long voyages of contemplation, in order to find the meaning of their existence. That is why they suffer from their relationships more than others do. In other words, in Desai’s novels, the love
encounters explode into marital disputes as the result of devastating post-
mariage relationship between husband and wife.

_Cry, The Peacock_ is the anguished loneliness of a fairy–tale princess
Maya. Maya's life with her father was a continuously fantastic party. After
marrying Gautama who is much older to her, Maya fails to get rid of her father
– obsession. She strives hard to forget her memories with the past. The death of
her pet dog Toto brings intolerable pain in her life and it once again brings
back to her mind the albino astrologer's prediction about the fourth year of her
marriage. _Where Shall We Go This Summer?_ is a novel which pictures the
inner world of the protagonist Sita. Sita is physically unimpressive and over–
sensitive. Her over sensitiveness does not allow her to mingle with an ordinary
life. It compels her to go away from this burdensome and crowded area. Sita
decides to flee to Manori where there is no crowd except natural scenery. Her
over – sensitiveness does not allow her to give birth to her fifth child. She
wishes to say a positive "No". But her stay at Manori helps her to understand
that she cannot live forever on a make believe stage and that she has to accept
her existence as a whole.

Anita Desai's novels examine thoroughly the dark interiors of the human
psyche and a description of various forms of loneliness and isolation which
alienates these characters. Maya is totally different from the rational and logical
Gautama by her sensitive, sentimental and imaginative psyche. But, her
isolation is at the end when she realizes that he is not able to empathize with
her reactions to events around her. Even her friends do not provide any solace
to her. Maya admits there was not one of her friends who could act as an
anchor anymore and even Gautama could never join her. This existential
anguish troubles Maya often.
Mostly she portrays world of a dissatisfied woman who is a lonely protagonist. She challenges the prevalent version of Indian women stereotype by subverting their quest for fulfillment with an intense dissatisfaction with family system hence a resultant unsatisfied ego. Anita Desai’s women are mostly in search for self fulfillment and the emptiness which they feel even in ties with parents, siblings, friends are yet incomplete. Desai has created a feminist discourse of literary writings showing signs of a seething discontentment, hatred for the patriarchal norms of “civilized” human existence, aspiration for liberation from societal and traditional family norms made compulsory for her acceptable existence in the mainstream of male dominated society. Her female characters are mostly in search of self authenticity, independent of the identity that has been dumped on her. Desai however has a typical style of her own to register protest against patriarchal norms. These may not be to the liking of many.

Any heart core feminist may be restless or even be dismissive of Desai’s writings citing that her characters are hopeless and helpless before male hegemony and conforming to the expectations of the mainstream or rather “male stream” norms laid for an “ideal woman”. Desai’s brainchild a ‘Maya’ or a ‘Sita’ may be groaning and seething in discontentment against the bindings that forcefully binds her to the socially recognized duties expected of women. They end up registering revolt against these in their own way, one by taking recourse to self destruction and the other by escaping to the island of her desire. Unlike in the writings of the writers like Tasleema Nasreen, or Arundhati Roy, or Shobha De or Urvashi Bhutalia, Desai’s protagonists do not take recourse to explicit moves of self liberation. But her characters lodge their protests in their own way, in the typical style of Desai, by way of escapism of one way or the other. It cannot be denied that Anita Desai is one of them who had paved a way for a new type of genre where a new kind of encounter between the “female” and the world awaits.
In Desai’s women we find a constant search of a landscape to accommodate their need for their “refusal” to their “refusal of the patriarchal society”. Thus “garden” of Maya, “Manori” of Sita, “Diary of Monisha” “Kasauli” of Nanda and Raka are their respective resorts to bring solace to their distraught beings. What strikes us in the nature to refusal to patriarchy and bondage by Desai’s women protagonists is that they are conscious of their victimhood and abjection and their inert desire to respond to the need for self-representation, independent of their identity being intricately associated with her male relatives.

The current study of Anita Desai has performed a significant function of instilling a positive “feminine” identity rather a female identity, role model women who deter the dependence on men. She has given a voice to the new Indian women. Like Virginia Woolf of Western Feminist Literary Paradigm, Desai has created women characters through her novels who are no more symbolic “Shakti” mother Goddess, subverted and suppressed. They are human beings who seek liberation, move from bondage to freedom from meek indecision to self assertion from weakness to strength.

To be alienated from self and society is one of the greatest tragedies of modern man or woman. Desai presents this problem of alienation being faced by most of her protagonists. They find that they are unable to fulfill social expectations or play their ordained roles. Hence, they face a sense of rootlessness, isolation and alienation. R.S. Pathak points out that "self-alienation is the more basic form of rootlessness and can thwart the individual's mental and psychic development in an alarming manner" (14). Desai's novels are a probe into the dark interiors of the human psyche and a description of the various forms of loneliness and isolation that assail these characters.