CHAPTER TWO

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The role of daughter in the select novels of Anita Desai namely *Cry, the Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* and *Clear Light of Day* has greater significance from a researcher's point of view. The roles have been analysed from two angles, that is, women as married and unmarried daughters. Maya, Monisha, Tara and Sita are married women whose roles have been differently dealt with when compared to women like Bim and Amla who are unmarried. The problems faced by the former are different from those of the latter.

All the characters in these novels taken for study stand as embodiments of sense and sensibility. They hail from affluent families hardly exposed to the hard realities of day-to-day life. Since their evolution from the swaddling clothes to the cladding of sarees they have been petted and cosseted by their parents. This kind of pampering is not uncommon in Indian tradition and culture. The parents who have taken care to satisfy every need of their daughters hardly understand that there is a need for their daughters to grow as individuals with unique identity. The fact that their daughters too have a right as a human being in cultivating and developing tastes is hardly taken into account at all. The parents fail to teach adult responsibilities while giving them a life of sound education and economic background.

The researcher's sympathies are with these women who form a considerable part of the major characters of Anita Desai's novel taken for study. The researcher's arguments are a defence on the plight to which these women are pushed. Had there been
a little deliberation on the part of parents the lives of these girls would not have been examples as lives that human beings should not live.

In Desai’s first novel *Cry, the Peacock* the protagonist Maya is an example for a child poorly brought up by parents. Despite the considerably poor contribution made by her father Maya fights and struggles to live a happy life. She prefers her education and sensibilities for making her life mellow. But unfortunately the person to whom she is married to is callous even to her basic needs.

As a daughter Maya lacks self-confidence and fails to find her own identity. This gives rise to self-denial and perversity. All reality is shut out of her fairy tale world of fantasies. Though Maya learns after much struggle that life is far more real than fairy tales she cannot assimilate the knowledge in her day-to-day life. Maya understands Gautama’s philosophical and practical ideas theoretically but she cannot live up to those precepts. His world confined within narrow limits of hunger, poverty, political upheavals, death and disease is alien to her. Her crib is her crouch and she is comfortable only there.

The expression of a neurotic urge to possess the child shows the restrictive love of Maya’s father. This brings radical distortions in her character and gives her an erroneous view of the world. Gautama says: “Everyone must bring a present for little Maya … That is what her father has taught her” (115). One can realise that her father had failed to give her a growth-oriented attitude to life.

When a parent like Maya’s father adores a child blindly and expects complete surrender for him he or she prevents a child from arriving at correct self-evaluation. Karen Horney elaborates these injurious influences thus:
A blind adoration may inflate his/a child's feeling of significance. He may feel wanted and appreciated not for what he is but merely for satisfying his parents' need for adoration, and prestige and power. A rigid regime of perfectionist standards may evoke in him a feeling of inferiority for not measuring up to such demands moves towards autonomy or independence may be ridiculed (Neurosis and Human Growth, 87)

Maya is incapable of leading an independent existence. The whole of her life is imperceptibly linked with her father's undivided affection. This filial love showered on the only daughter gathers to itself reverberant context of associated consequences. She is always on the look out for her father in her husband. Father-fixation is the leit motif of the novel. Maya always kept her father humoured. She sacrificed her autonomy or independence as she cannot displease her father. Somewhere in the deep layers of her psyche she knows she cannot afford to displease him and in order to keep her grip on him she remains his adored and admired child dependent on him always needing him as an anchor.

Maya comments that their marriage was: "...broken repeatedly, and repeatedly the pieces were picked up and put together again, as of a sacred icon, with which out of the pettiest superstition. We could not bear to part" (Cry, the Peacock, 126).

The most striking thing about Maya's language is her accurate and poetic description of the physical world. Her language is the language of the flowers and fruits, of sunrises and sunsets, of the dance of the peacocks and the flutter of the butterfly. It is not merely the poetic language of a sensibility translating the sensuous world into vivid and colourful images. The richness of her language, her loving and lingering descriptions
of the good, the beautiful and the fascinating ugly things of the world create, as no more statement can, a whole character. Maya’s imagination and her speech are highly sensuous. She notices the subtle shades of colour, of smell and of touch. The odour of dead flesh once sweet, once loved, then suddenly repulsive, the liquid brilliance of the mirror, the granulated green-ribboned coarseness of the melons all succeed in building up an image of a young woman from a rich family safely protected from the ugly things of life having the imagination and the leisure to observe the beautiful things in life.

In *Cry, the Peacock* the poetic and highly subjective narrative of the outside world describes very often the state of mind of the character and invariably creates the character. These highly sensuous descriptions symbolise Maya’s intense love of life, the flowers, the lemons in all their concreteness convey much more powerfully than mere statement can that obsessive love of life which makes Maya decide to murder her husband. The love visions of the world of nature suggest a sensibility clinging to the beautiful and picturesque things of life. Language reveals character.

Maya observes of Gautama: “…not to be able to notice the odour of limes, not to hear the melancholy voice singing somewhere behind the plantains, not to have the time to count the stars as they come out one by one” (240). Young woman as she is for whom the greatest tragedy would mean that such a person would not have even the remotest chance of enjoying the pleasures of life.

Maya who does not care for life, who dreaded passion and who was detached would not miss life. Hence killing would not be a crime but a favour. The hideous transformation of a sensitive, poetic young Maya into an insane character is the most remarkable aspect of her character.
Maya's difficulties become insurmountable because she cannot take any positive step to solve her conflicts. In her schizophrenic state she is unable to differentiate between the right and the wrong; the proper and the improper. When she finds her present life oppressive and unbearable, she becomes nostalgic about her childhood and tries to find solace by remembering the days she spent in her father's house. But even that does not help her in overcoming her sense of insecurity and the impending danger of death. This leads to a total disintegration of her personality. She loses all balance between her mind and the objective reality. Paul J Sterne observes that in such cases of schizophrenia the underlying cause of anxiety is a feeling: "Some fatal accident is going to befall a loved one, either through the patient's doing or through the blind mechanisation of destiny" (Abnormal Person and His World: An Introduction to Psychopathology, 93).

Burdened with guilt and haunted by self-accusation and self-hate Maya inevitably moves towards murder and self-destruction. She performs the act of murder out of her fear of self-extinction, fear of the forecast about the death of one of them. It is, in fact, an act of self-defence.

Maya is excessively self consumed and her talk is hollow and her behaviour exotic. At a party at Mr. Lal's house she bluntly refuses to let the Sikh read her palm and predict her future. The Sikh reminds her of the albino astrologer. Her father-fixation and death obsession are responsible for her conscious behaviour. She never tells her husband about her childhood encounter with the astrologer and his prophecy. She does not even tell her husband that she has a younger brother. She buries her past and tries to remain whole. In the process she makes herself miserable and makes her husband's life miserable too. He is not as cruel and unsympathetic as he is made out to be. He tries to
understand her, analyse her feelings and clear her doubts but Maya’s morbid fears makes her blind to the realities.

Gautama is aware that she is unhappy and frightened and so he tends to Maya as a nurse. He is not insensitive to her sorrow for he is able to sense her tension. Often he helps her to relax with a cup of tea and takes her for a walk. On certain occasions even Maya acknowledges his gentle gestures. In her moments of lucidity she is quite aware that it is not fate but a chain of attachment that haunts slowly and steadily down the dark corridor to the pit where knowledge remains hidden. As Gautama frequently reiterates that it is her failure to see things in an objective way that causes her downfall and that he could not be blamed for her tragedy. Meena Belliappa’s view is more balanced: “It is her failure to control experiences that results in insanity. She cannot accommodate her tumultuous responses to available patterns of living” (Anita Desai: A Study of Her Fiction, 7).

The novel prevents Maya going from hypersensitiveness to neurosis and this neurosis originates from her father-fixation. He is always there in her unconscious mind. There is ample evidence in the novel to show that Maya suffers from Electra complex. Gautama observes:

You have a very obvious father-obsession which is also the reason why you married me, a man so much older than yourself. It is a complex that, unless you mature rapidly. You will not be able to deal with to destroy. But then it will probably destroy itself in the end, since passion of this sort is almost always self-consuming, having no object within its range that it can safely consume. Any little setback destroys it, leads it closer to its
termination. The delay of a letter, a long separation, the realisation that another person, another person, person very close to both you and your father, whatever you might say- does not place the same trust as you do in the adored figure- all this shakes your faith, proving it to have been...

(Cry, the Peacock, 146).

His words prove prophetic as Maya consumed by this father-obsession not only kills Gautama but destroys herself.

Maya's unhappiness is in part related to the process of her growing up. She has led a protected life and has been brought up on fantasies. She has lost her mother early. Her father is everything to her and his personality cannot be swept behind the corners of her heart even after her marriage with Gautama. She had a lovely, grand and memorable childhood and her father was at the centre of it all. Her emotional cravings have been entirely satisfied by her father. They are first fixed on father and later on Gautama, a substitute father figure. Maya's tragedy is psychological and it lies in the inadequate transposition of her attachment from father to husband. Says R.S.Sharma: “While the transfer from the father to his ‘image’ Gautama is total, it blocks her encounter with reality” (Anita Desai, 30).

Even after her marriage with Gautama she continues to dwell mentally and emotionally in the world of her father. As a child she enjoyed princess-like a sumptuous time of the fantasies of the Arabian Nights, the glories and bravado of Indian mythology, long and astounding tales of princesses and regal queens, jackals and tigers and English and Irish fairy tales as well that were read out to her by her father, the ‘inveterate reader’.
Often she was taken for a ride in the evenings. In brief she was a: “Toy princess in a toy world” (*Cry the Peacock*, 6).

Maya has this stifling sense of loss of freedom occasionally relieved by the possibility of a release. Her brother Arjuna and his story come as a promise of freedom, a freedom which is denied to her because of her marriage. He mentions the horoscope and the astrologer. His life of freedom makes her almost envious. She compares herself to a partridge, plump and content and Arjuna to a young hawk hard to be tamed, fighting for its liberty.

Rekindled by Arjuna’s letter Maya’s obsession assumes dire proportions. She is: “Torn between the two worlds, the receding one of grace; the approaching one of madness” (19).

Maya’s whole unconscious struggle is to get her father’s image out of her mind. Only then she can be free. She must destroy Gautama, her husband in order to liberate herself from the father in the unconscious. Maya is not prepared for death while Gautama she thinks, has reached a stage of detachment which approximates stillness. She tries to enter his world but he is absorbed in his work and does not realise that she had: “Entered the room, had spoken, had left” (166). She wonders whether: “Cold death disturbs him then?” (166).

She convinces herself that he is the one who should die. She feels that Gautama with his life-denying ideas has no right to live. Maya reaches the breaking point when Gautama says: “Toto? Who was that?” (198). For her the words were as grim as any death sentence, absolute and unredeemable. Her insanity prevails over her commonsense and ultimately she murders Gautama.
Considering her timidity, child-like dependence and her inability to master her life, Maya would be lost without the protection of love. So far it has been her father’s protective embrace. She was secure in it. The flow of love, admiration and sympathy is suddenly interrupted when Gautama shows an aversion to too much physical contact. She feels neglected and unwanted. Describing the importance of love for a self-effacing person, Horney emphatically maintains that this type cannot stand being alone. At such moments they are tortured by self-accusations and are stricken by an unnamed terror. Maya is frightened to be without company because she has no rapprochement with the real self. As long as Gautama attends to her she feels grateful and is flooded with tenderness and gratitude. She thinks of him as her protector and guardian. A slight touch of his fingers brings out spontaneous reaction of joy. Maya feels: “...Fall, fall, long fall into the velvet well of primordium of original instinct of first-formed love” (11). When he does not respond in the expected manner her neurotic pride is hurt. She feels the insult of rejection.

In *Voices in the City* Desai’s second novel the characters who play the role as daughters are Monisha and Amla. These two girls hail from upper-middle class society with all the affluence of a rich family. The time during which these characters grow was just after independence and with the wealth and independence their freedom was at the disposal of their whims and fancies. The parents of these two girls are club going, cigarette smoking people concerned only about their social status and prestige hardly spending time with their children in their vocation, education or marriage. The father was a hardworking non-entity as the father in D.H. Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* with no voice in the family and with limited rights. The mother was the deciding authority and everything in the family depends on her temperament. The mother in the novel hardly
embodies as a role model for the daughters to emulate. She finds her husband's company incompatible and to match her accomplishment she strikes a relationship with Major Chadda, a time-pleaser and time server who acts as a strong emotional bolster for her. Under such conditions it becomes very difficult for the daughters to grow and have healthy, socially acceptable tastes and choices. These women, Monisha and Amla, almost have no identity of any kind. The former has her life in the altar of marriage a grand sacrifice made by her mother without any respect for her feeling, tastes or choices. Monisha is a woman of finer sensibilities not comprehensible for anyone whose life is profound and unfathomable for superficial perception.

Monisha's attempt to suppress all emotions leads to a sense of barrenness, of futility, of being locked in “...a steel container, a thick cubicle” (Voices in the City, 240). Monisha giving in to a sense of helplessness had acquired the status of an actress. She places two facts of her life, that is, life before and after her marriage, side by side, drawing the inevitable conclusion it leads to traceless, meaningless, uninvolved amounting to non-existence. She says: “I am turned into a woman who keeps a diary. I do not like a woman who keeps a diary” (191).

As a daughter Monisha was not given an education of the great ideals of life. With whatever she learnt from the life she had observed she was not able to protect herself as an individual or her identity. If a woman had gone to the extent of feeling as Monisha observes there would not have been any alternative other than suicide. She feels:

To pretend to have forgotten, to pretend to believe in these trivialities, these pettinesses of our mean existence-is that right? To sort the husk from the rice, to wash and to iron and to talk and sleep, when this is not what one believes in
at all? What force of will does it require to shed, as I believe my brother has, at least to an extent, shed, the unnecessary, the diverting, and live the clean, husked irreducible life? 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 to, and so I must stay. The family here and their surroundings, tell me such a life cannot be lived — a life dedicated to nothing — that this husk is a protection from death. Ah yes yes…then it is a choice between death and mean existence, and that surely, is not a difficult choice (121).

The life endowed to Monisha in marriage looms large only to accommodate adversity. She was not trained to lead a life of that kind decided for her by her parents. She could not exercise her will where her aspirations are de-contextualised. Even under such circumstances she plays a constructive role staking her identity to win the love of her husband and the respect of her in-laws. She nullifies her identity only to please her fastidious in-laws. She observes:

For two hours my exile is lifted from me and I am summoned to massage her legs, for the aunts are all worn out. I go and massage them. It is not difficult at all. My heart stays perfectly quiet, enclosed in a sheath of such darkness as none of them would ever dare to touch. And as I massage I do not tell myself: she is Jiban’s mother, her legs give her pain, I am helping to relieve it because she is Jiban’s mother and old. I tell myself: She thinks I am touching her. She thinks I am touching her feet. But I am not. I do not touch her, nor does she touch me — there is this darkness in between. They will never reach through it to me.(139)
Amla is very different from Monisha and her brother Nirode and finds their silence and withdrawal mystifying. But gradually she too finds a sense of hollowness and futility sapping her interest and vitality and also her sense of usefulness. She loses her sense of camaraderie. “Lassitude overcame Amla like a fever, weighing against her temples, making her rest her elbows on the tables and her head droop over unfinished work” (174).

Amla’s relationship with Aunt Lila had grown a little tense. She became secretive about her thoughts and finally fell in love with Dharma, a married man much older than her. She requires communication and reciprocation. Her drama of love and involvement is broken when she learns that Dharma has disowned his daughter. She senses the inhuman power that love wants to exercise and she has the courage to bid farewell to this love which had begun to overpower her.

In Amla’s view their father also acted meanly where Monisha was concerned. She wonders how her sister could have been married to such a non-entity as Jiban. Was it because he was so unquestionably safe, so utterly predictable? She says: “…fathers did unconsciously spite their daughters who were unavailable to them.” (175). Whatever it might have been it was the beginning of Monisha’s death.

Dharma is a father who with a coldness unbelievable in so sensitive a man disowns his daughter when she marries her cousin. While discussing his daughter with Amla he confesses that he had never wanted his daughter to change: “I wanted her the same, always the same beside me” (228-29).

Amla’s basic solution is that of mastery of life. She idealises herself as a superior being able to fight her way through life without being morbid like her sister Monisha. She
is conscious of the "...cold, frosty power of love" (109). She has inherited this from her mother and she secretly embarks upon a search for glory in order to get the satisfaction of experiencing herself as her grandiose self. Amla’s first exuberance and vivacity strike a contrast to her sister who has lost all faith and is moving towards self-annihilation.

Amla comes to Calcutta with a vision and anticipation to become a commercial artist. She is determined to enjoy the city, her new job and her independence. She says, “Calcutta doesn’t oppress me in the least ...It excites me” (142).

The intensity of Amla’s despair can be gauged in terms of the vitiating effect of the monstrous city has on a sensitive soul. In bitter moments she admits that the city is a horrible place where one cannot be one’s self. She has to hide her painting from such sordidness to guard them as a secret.

A liberated and intelligent woman Amla wants: “...something greater than pleasure alone, or the security of marriage alone - something more rare, more responsible” (145).

Amla’s quest is directed towards this aspiration. She strives to master all fears and anxieties of life so as to give meaning to it. The self-confidence and spirit with which Amla lands in Calcutta demonstrate her capacity to enjoy life and give it a semblance of a positive approach. This basic attitude gives Amla resilience and an abundance of light-heartedness. That is why Jit once remarks that Amla has a destructive quality in her. He says: “You destroy- you destroy yourselves, and you destroy that part of others that gets so fatally involved in you. There is this-this dreadful attractiveness in your dark ways of thinking and feeling through life towards death” (175).
Amla’s invincibility and conviction sets her victories. She is secretly aware of her charm, her youth and beauty. She can impress others and she does it successfully. It is obvious from the impressions she has created on Jit, Mr. Bose and even on the obstinate and aloof Dharma. Indeed, it satisfies her pride system to be the centre of attraction because it guarantees her uniqueness. This admiration for the self is termed as Narcissism.

Narcissism does not simply mean an egocentric love of oneself. It stands for a broader concept of one’s love with one’s ideal image. It is one of the several solutions of the conflict between expansive and self-effacing drives. A narcissist is gifted beyond average. He wins early distinctions and “...sometimes was the favoured and admired child” (176). Although he shows optimism, buoyancy and self-confidence beyond average he is basically a pessimistic and suffers despondency.

Optimism and pessimism, joy and despair work side by side in Amla’s personality. Even at a time when she is moving optimistically outward towards life, apparently happy and carefree there is a giant exhaustion growing and swelling inside her, of a feeling of sick apprehension and despair. Later at a party the atmosphere of under lit reality of incomplete life overwhelms her.

Two contradictory emotions toss her. On the one hand, she is drawn by the pleasures of Calcutta life and on the other, she is nauseated and feels that pleasure is the most rotten sensation in this city; it has lost its beauty, freshness and utility.

Amla feels lonely and helpless in Calcutta but she does not seek solution by compulsive activities. She is open to awareness. Her uneasiness and despair are the result
of her constant but unconscious quest to protect her inner life from impoverishment. Her search is directed towards creativity.

Amla finds her authentic self through her profession when she forgets herself in creative activity. Art becomes an exploration. It is an enquiry, a quest, a discovery but not an escape. Amla plumbs the underlying psychic conflicts by moving away from the relentless pressure of the world around her. It is her refusal to be depersonalised by the dehumanising effects of contemporary life. Her struggle is to connect her with nature in order to feel her total self. It is indeed interesting to note that while nature leads her equilibrium it uncovers for Dharma a new meaning in perennial man through her.

Amla-Dharma relationship is not well-defined for either. It is just a balance between reality and hallucination, reality a precarious situation in which Dharma cannot give her the tangibility or permanence. Amla is aware of this deficiency. Her dreams represent her inner conflict. The white birds she dreams of stand for reality. For the dreaming Amla reality is fascinating but it chides her. She, the love-lorn maiden, symbolised by the arching palms is unable to meet her sparkling reflection in the water. This denotes by implication the impossibility of being and living her grandiose self. It indicates that she has to find her real self however horrified she may be of it. All this works at the unconscious level.

The union between Amla and Dharma is not love but only 'psychic symbiotic union', a pattern of relationship in which two persons come closer, their bodies remain independent but psychologically they develop attachment. There are active and passive forms of symbolic fusions. In Dharma's case it is active. He enjoys his sway over Amla and feels inflated and enhanced by her idolatry. He thus escapes his loneliness. In the
case of Amla it is passive. She desires pleasure by being an integral part of Dharma’s art. He fulfills her need for admiration. In him she finds a responsive appreciating audience. She endows him with mysterious faculties, he becomes the magic helper to prop and guide her through life. These are the projections and externalisation of her own imagined qualities.

Amla so young, independent and spirited falls a prey to her passions particularly for a man in Dharma’s position because being a narcissistic subtype of the expansive drives Amla’s idealised self need to be a centre of attraction. Dharma fulfills it. Flabbergasted by her unbearable isolation in Calcutta she drifts towards Dharma, makes him an integral part of her life, renounces her integrity and depends on a force outside herself. The idolatry is significant for Dharma also. He achieves a graceful interaction between humility and the pride of creativity. As an artist he is able to see the human possibilities and limitations. His portraits get depth and he feels gratified to see the archetypal man. Her transparent inner self gives him fresh insight. He admits that she made him see: “...what subconscious does to an impressionable creature, how much more power it has on them than sum and circumstances put together. And this is the revelation that made me ...begin an era” (223).

Amla’s breaking away from Dharma appears as enigmatic as her attachment for him. She feels hurt to learn of Dharma’s callousness towards his only daughter and she leaves him in disgust. A close study of Amla’s character reveals that the reasons for her decision to leave Dharma are not so simplistic. Amla is mainly distressed by her own conflicts—her pride and irritability. Pride, because she is so significant in his life as to awaken his dormant talents. Irritability, because he is lost in his art and is distracted from
her. These conflicts controlled so far explode in the face of reality. Her reactions are both strong and instant.

When Amla struggles out of Dharma’s hold to marry a cousin he turns callous, disowns her and in an attempt to save himself from the assault of self-hate withdraws to his secluded suburb away from the city. This feeds his ego. It is a manifestation of power over the girl. Dharma is troubled when Amla chooses to walk out of his life. He also turns from his seclusion to the full hubbub of life in Calcutta. His old friends, admirers, critics, buyers of his art pieces, agents all serve to gratify his intrinsic need for triumph. Unfortunately Dharma bargains for something mediocre when art opened him the doors for self-realisation. His compulsive need for power and expansion remain unchanged and he pursues them to reaffirm his superiority.

Amla finds Dharma an erring mortal and the image she has of him is of someone mysterious and forbidding. She is shattered when she thinks if Dharma could reject his daughter he could very well shut her out from his life. His distractions towards his creative work are a sufficient indication that she has cultivated her utility for him. Amla dreads the truth because truth carries with it responsibilities and anxieties. Truth dawns on Amla with impunity. Dharma is after all committed to his wife and society and he is a conformist not possessing the strength to enrich her life by giving her the joy of love.

In an attempt to plunge into the dull routine of life which Amla had tried to beautify with love and art she leaves Dharma. She tears up the invitation to Dharma’s exhibition and goes with Jit for horse-race. This is her regressive choice. This backward movement suggests her sickening view of life as a gamble. She also visualises the actuality of life, life is a race where one has to participate and strive to win. One who
fumbles and falls remains an outsider invaded by the forces of self-hate, alienation and self-destruction. In the shadow of death she discovers the value of life. Amla grapples from Monisha’s death her authentic self and maintains the poise she displays at the end of the novel. Between Nirode’s neurotic outbursts and mother’s withdrawal Amla stands as an emerging self.

Amla in *Voices in the City* is a brilliant portraiture of a rebellious young woman eager to master life and triumph over every obstacle. Her ambitious pursuit drags her through various psychic situations till finally she establishes a contact with her real self and achieves equanimity. She moves from revolt to conformity. The death of her sister Monisha accelerates an awakening and gives her a final view of ultimate reality. Before she attains this state she passes through a period of bewilderment, grappling with self-idealisation and self-realisation. The disparity in Amla’s idealised image and reality tosses her between two opposing tendencies of regression and progression and this ennobles her to see her internal conflicts and the external support she needs in order to grow. Amla is not so happy as a home girl. She develops the narcissistic attitude. She, at regular intervals, requires reinforcement from others to counter balance her intrinsic demands with her grandiose self. What she gets in Calcutta does not satisfy her expansive drives and her anxieties increase.

Amla is agitated till she gets an abundant supply of love from Dharma. The change makes her euphorically happy. She steps out of a nightmare into a dream come true. A combination of art and love, profuse approbation from Dharma and a sense of triumph help her to realise her most cherished fantasies. Relationship with Dharma becomes simply a part of the fairy-tale atmosphere for Amla. In frustration she rebels.
Though she struggles to control external reality with her hurt pride she reforms with a chastened vision and maintains a sustained growth without succumbing to fate like Maya or Monisha. She is one with Sita in Where Shall We Go This Summer?

In Where Shall We Go This Summer? Desai’s third novel the protagonist Sita’s role as a daughter is constructed on flimsy foundations. The contributions made by her parents in shaping her life as a daughter and later as a wife are hardly perceptible. In the making of a woman there are so many contributing factors. For proper edification of the mansion called daughterhood the parents have to know the surface as well as the deeper needs of a girl. The parents should give enough room for the development of the identity of a woman as a girl, as a daughter and later as a wife and mother. The formation of an identity as a daughter in Sita has a stultified growth. In fact, there is no growth at all in the process of evolution of Sita from that of a mother. The dubious and diabolic interpretations that Sita’s father invites in his role as a leader hardly makes any impression on the daughter in her growth.

Sita is foresighted and has higher notions about life than an average woman will have. She is over-sensitive, keen-eyed, poetic and imaginative having more than ordinary sense. She feels existence is not possible in an insulated stage of being and feels that existence implies being with others. She has no mother to look after her. She is denied the regular life of a normal child. She lives a strange and unusual life. She was required to spend days on and away from home at different places. There was no schooling to discipline her. Her sense of belonging was extremely tenuous. Sita loses her grip on life and develops in her an uncertain and unrealistic attitude towards life.
It is the responsibility of the parents to inculcate every aspect of life’s demanding expectation to their children. A facsimile of the progeny is not only physical. Mentally, morally, psychologically, emotionally, socially and economically parents have to bring a child into this world with robust ideals. The children should not cower, cringe and feel crest fallen at the adversities of life. They have to fight a bold battle. Only the parents can fulfil this gap and there can be no substitute to a parent.

A family is the most internal group to condition a person’s relationship to himself and then to the others. One belongs to a family and a sense of belonging gives one a feeling of what S.S.Anant says: “...personal involvement to the extent that one feels himself to be an integral and indispensable part of the system” (Conflict Resolution Through Belongingness 63-72). The most damaging situation for Sita is complete lack of family, home and parental matrix.

For Sita life is in the centre of a crowd. Sita fails to feel personal involvement in life. Involvement can be with another person, an idea or a group:

With calm eyes she had watched the surge and flow of such masses, listened to endless speeches on one subject, Swaraj, had her chin chucked, collected discarded garlands and played with the tinsel till she fell asleep against a bolster and was carried away to someone’s house to sleep—always a different someone, it scarcely mattered which one. She belonged, if to anyone, to this whole society that existed at that particular point in history—like a lamb does to its flock— and saw no reason why she should belong to one family alone (Where Shall We Go This Summer?, 55).
Erich Fromm maintains that by uniting ourselves with another person in the spirit of love and shared work man can hope to end his alienation:

There is only one possible, productive solution for the relationship of individualised man with the world: his active solidarity with all men and his spontaneous activity, love and work, which unite him again with the world, not by primary ties but as a free and independent individual (Fear of Freedom, 29).

Sita hardly corroborates her father's dubious ways. His grinding of her mother's jewels for medicine, the hypocrisy of the islanders, the Chelas, Deedar, Rekha and her own father all these have seeped into her psyche as bad human experiences. She knows of the dark aspects of his daylight, practical charisma.

Her strange life did not offer her the freedom to grow and acquire her unique individuality but lets her: "Withdraw into the protective chrysalis of childhood for longer than is usual for most" (Where Shall We Go This Summer?, 63).

Sita's father is a public figure admired and revered by the people and he is too far-off and formidable a person for her to approach with filial affection. There is always an impossibility of talk between Sita and her father.

As her father is immersed in self-glorification Jivan and Sita hardly mean anything to him. They are as important or unimportant as his sycophant chelas and devotees. Not that he is incapable of love. He showers all his love on his eldest daughter Rekha to the point of suspicion of incest. Sita notices her father's arm lying fondly across Rekha's shoulders; she catches: "An exchange of that heavy lidded look between father and
daughter” (79). Sita feels uneasy at this fondness. Not only because of parental partiality but also because it is hard to digest the fact that her father should have a shady side.

Their mother’s absence remains a shrouded mystery both to Sita and her brother Jeevan. Raman too fails to locate her in Benares after Sita’s marriage. Her longing to encounter her mother signals her desire to empirically experience the mature dynamics and also to connect herself psychically with the feminine archetype.

Mother’s unconditional love gives a new shade to an infant’s life. As Erich Fromm observes, its: “Presence gives the loved person a sense of bliss, its absence produces a sense of lostness and utter despair” (The Art of Loving, 58).

In fact, Sita’s mother had revolted against the defined parameters of the father and ultimately in discarding and leaving she had sought independent living. But her absence has caused serious repercussions in the psychic growth of the children. The cause of Sita’s failure to relate meaningfully with her in-laws, husband or children can be assigned to the lack of instinctive training which a child receives unconsciously from her mother. Her brother Jeevan like Maya’s brother Arjuna too violently breaks himself free to strike an independent niche for himself as a trade union leader. But as Sita exhibits no such existential choice her visit to the Manori Island offers an opportunity to reassess and rearrange the dishevelled psychic components.

Sita is a deprived child like Maya. Her failure to connect with the outside reality can be attributed to the psycho-social void caused by the lack of experiencing the love of one’s mother directly and with intensity. It is a universal truth that mother plays a significant role in the psychic frame of a child. Psychologically, however, mother also impacts the emotional and psychic apparatus to differentiate between the unconscious
and the conscious urges and helps to move on to the road of selfhood. Mother as a principal caretaker in childhood is instrumental in bringing about inner coherence and integration. Sudhir Kakkar states:

Whether the infant will emerge from this phase feeling that the outside world is benevolently disposed and basically trustworthy, whether a reassuring sense of inner continuity and wholeness will predominate over a sense of falling to pieces and life for ever lived in disparate segments: these are some of the developmental questions which originate in infancy (The Inner World, 53).

The sense of belonging is a subjective feeling in which an individual experiences personal involvement. The most damaging situation for Sita is complete lack of parental matrix. Her father a hypocrite full of partiality cannot provide her a home.

All along Sita is severely depressed but the saving grace of her situation lies in her not becoming a woman without will and wish like Desai’s earlier protagonists- Maya and Monisha. Despair and dejection, the humanistic psychologists tell us, act as warning signals. People can check the disintegration of their personality if they pay heed to these warning signals. S.Jourard observes that human system has built-in indicators like machines emitting signals when fatigue, frustration or other damaging impulses exceed tolerance levels. If one hears these cues, he can recover the self:

Doubtless when a person is behaving in ways that do violence to the integrity of his system, warning signals are emitted. If only man could recognise them himself, and institute corrective action-.. ‘normal’, self-alienated man, however, often ignores his till signals- anxiety, guilt,
fatigue, boredom, pain or frustration— and continues action aimed at wealth, power or normality until the machine stops (The Transparent Self: Self Disclosure and Well Being, 101).

In Sita there is a temporary blockage of consciousness but she shows steady signs of a dynamism for constructiveness. There is no breakdown of her power to wish and will. It helps her in self-direction. The latent urge in her is to be creative. She tells Menaka that if she had the talent to paint or sing she would have nursed it to full growth. Creativity would have lent meaning to her life. She says:

If only I could paint or sing or play the sitar well, really well, I should have grown into a sensible woman ...I should have known how to channel my thoughts and feelings, how to put them to use. I should have given my life some shape then, some meaning” (Where Shall We Go This Summer?, 117).

Anita Desai has shown the parallel between the forlorn life of Sita and the smaller island Manori which is away from the Marve mainland. The waters of the sea surrounded the island like the layer of memories overflowing the mind of Sita which actually cut her off from the inevitable responsibilities of the empirical world. The recesses of Sita’s mind are as unfathomable and mysterious as the sea. Sita’s thought and activity are determined more by the past events than by the actualities of the present and the probable course of future events. She wants to live in the continuum of suspended time disobeying its inevitable flux, development and destruction. The grown up Sita thus has the unrealistic mental attitude of a child or at best of an adolescent. The mental makeup of Sita does not correspond with her chronological age and she is a pure combination of the real and the
unreal, the ideal and the trivial, the beautiful and the ugly. Anita Desai has depicted the two aspects of Sita's personality which are poles apart.

Bim the chief protagonist of *Clear Light of Day* is an interesting study of the self in transition. She possesses many attributes that Third Force Psychologists associate with healthy human development. Although she is often unsteady, oscillating between alienation and confirmation and almost losing herself in the struggle in the end she discovers the structure of her own consciousness and achieves wholeness. The melancholia that shatters her balance for the twenty long years is a measure of her failure of life to honour her aspirations. But nonetheless, her courage and intellectual strength remain unaffected.

A change of heart, calmness and love settles in the life of Bim. She has also failed in her quest to conquer the world but ended up by conquering herself. The awareness of time and importance in human life is a development in Bim. She remains whole and sane amidst all the decay, destruction and death. She transcends all hindrances that obstruct her growth into a truly liberated soul. But Bim is a victim of circumstances. In her weak moments she resorts to resignation wishing to run away from life but these forces do not completely overwhelm her. Despite her frustrations, failure and pain Bim's vision increasingly embodies a transfiguration of her sense of alienation into a new consciousness of wholeness through psychic renewal.

Bim's dreams are directed towards becoming free and independent shaking off the limitations imposed on her by her sex. She becomes a heroine without even realising that she is becoming one though people who surround her point this out from time to time beginning with Dr. Biswas and working through Bakul, the Misras and finally Tara.
Bim looks after the house and its inhabitants, allows Tara and Raja to escape and Mira Masi to indulge herself and looks after Baba who is unable to relate to external reality. Without quite realising it Bim builds up barriers between herself and Tara and Raja. Tara tries to get through to both Bim and Baba and finally succeeds in it, as appearance and reality become distinguishable and reveal hitherto hidden aspects.

Bim herself has devoted her life to looking after others: Raja during his deadly illness in 1947, the alcoholic Aunt Mira, the retarded brother and everyone else who needed care including Hyder Ali Sahib's dog.

In *Clear Light of Day* Desai portrays the existential predicament of the protagonist who strives to re-create a reality of her own by her innermost faith in her will. In a heroic bid to overcome her disintegrating family conditions Bim the protagonist, conceives an egocentric worldview wherein she places herself centrally – she sees herself as toiling and sacrificing for her brother and sister. And in doing so she feels that the freedom of her will is thwarted and she moans in anguish to find herself gratuitous and derelict in a possibly impossible world deprived of reason and the contingency of reality.

Desai insinuates Bim's present state of stasis by contrasting the worldviews of Bim who has remained confined to her home since her childhood and her sister Tara who lives abroad but who has come back on a holiday after several years. Their present meeting triggers off the poignant anguish that Bim has been experiencing which has stagnated her growth and existence as an individual. Bim's statement about herself suggests this stagnancy: "Oh I never go anywhere" (4). She adds, ...you think animals take the place of babies for us love starved spinsters ...we are strange" (7).
The confinement not only suggests the acute anguish that has filled her mind but it also shows the opacity of her apprehensions that has prevented her from appreciating the reality of the abjective world.

The atmosphere under which Bim has to grow shows a picture of her emerging inner landscape: "...the dog barking in the night and the mosquitoes singing and stinging in the dark" (3). The atmosphere is a premonition: "The pangs on the roof ... the shaded darkness, silence that had the quality of a looming dragon" (13).

Such a decaying and degenerating atmosphere not only proves the opacity of the world that Bim inhabits but it also becomes the objective correlative of the internal confinement that has contained her.

Bim has an extremely romantic apprehension of herself which finds gratification in an unhindered ego-assertion. This is clear from what she says to Tara about the decisive moment in her life: "I was not frozen or hungry or mad; or even quite alone. I had Baba. After you married and Raja went to Hyderabad and Mira-Masi died, I still had Baba. And that summer I got my job at the college and felt so pleased to be earning my own living" (42).

Underlying her declaration is a defiant will that derives contentment from fulfilment of her desire. This is further endorsed by the fact that as a child she wanted to be a heroine: "I shall work – I shall do things ... I shall earn my own living and look after Mira-Masi and Baba and be independent" (140).

This gratification of this ambition has prompted her to see herself as a redeemer – redeeming her family from disintegration – which constitutes the central attribute of her self-apprehension:
What was he trying to say to me? Was he trying to make me thank him – go down on my knees and thank him for this house in which we all grew up? Was he trying to threaten me with eviction and warn me what might happen if I ever stopped praising him and admiring him? (29)

This shows that Bim is too obsessively self-absorbed to understand others as being separate and independent individuals. Her self-apprehension consists of her imminent faith in her will as a means of asserting her identity and her inability to go out of herself to understand and appreciate others. This makes her innocent in that her perceptions are bereft of the worldly experience of the reality of others. She says:

‘So now there are just you and I left Baba ... does the house seem empty to you? Everyone is gone, except you and I. They won’t come back. We’ll be alone now. We needn’t worry now that they’ve all gone. We are just by ourselves and there’s nothing to worry about,’ (101).

Bim fills in the emptiness by shouldering the responsibility of taking care of Baba and the family insurance business. In executing her role as a redeemer of the family she has drawn a view that her self is all that is known to exist for her. When the actual moment of action comes she is rendered incapable of rising to the occasion without a firm grasp of the real.

They had come like mosquitoes – Tara and Bakul, and behind them the Misras, and somewhere in the distance Raja and Benazir – only to torment her and, mosquito-like, sip her blood ... Now when they were full, they rose in swarms, humming away, turning their backs on her, (153).
Bim moans in resentment in the face of reality beyond her solipsistic self. The contradiction in her mind is this: Her earlier decision to look after her family and to be independent is not as much an act of volition as it is imposed on her by circumstances. The individual’s search for authentic selfhood, therefore, can neither be carried out by actions in total isolation nor by ways wholly explained by circumstance:

There are long still stretches – nothing happens – and then suddenly there is a clash – mighty deeds take place, momentous events – even if one does not know at the time – and then life subsides again into the backwaters till the next push, the next flood? That summer was certainly one of them- the summer of 47,(42-43).

The summer of 47 bears significance for it saw the symbolic re-enactment of the historic partition in the partition of the Dass family. The painful responsibility that she is forced to take up after this dramatically modifies her self-apprehension by lending a romantic dimension to her perceptions. This prompts her to see the event as being the most important thing that has ever happened to her as a consequence of which the meaning of other events has eluded her. Thus she perceives life in stretches and the historicity of her past for her is not a homogenous experience but something which is perceived in terms of solitary and significant units.

Both Bim and Tara feel that life had bypassed them in their childhood which implies that they were unable to extract meaning from their experiences: they had the experience but missed the meaning. In this sense they are both escapists though they escape in opposite directions. While Tara goes into wider world by marrying a diplomat, Bim recoils into solipsism and self-absorption. But Tara is keen on redeeming the past in
order to live with it by keeping in touch with her parental house. Bim on the other hand, interprets the past as being meaningless and insignificant. Tara’s interest in evoking the past haunts Bim’s present spiritual dilemma, whether to act in total isolation or to reconcile her actions with the reality of others. Bim says:

I don’t understand the insurance business. Father never bothered to teach me. For all that father cared, I could have grown up illiterate ... So I had to teach myself history, and teach myself to teach. But father never realised – and Raja does not realise – that that doesn’t prepare you for running an insurance business ... How my students would laugh at me. I am always trying to teach them, train them to be different from what we were at their age, and if they knew how badly handicapped I still am, how I myself haven’t been able to manage on my own – They would laugh. Wouldn’t they? (155)

Such an excruciatingly painful self-scrutiny fills Bim with an emergent and unwarranted anguish because of which she bursts out at Baba: “I came to ask you – what would you think of that? She was hitting the target - hitting and hitting it. Are you willing to go and live with Raja in Hyderabad?” (163).

Her violent outburst has two implications in so far as her self-apprehension is concerned. It suggests that her solipsistic perception of herself as a capable and independent woman gets shattered by her relapse into irrational and inhuman behaviour. Secondly, it also marks her initiation into activity which signifies a release from her existential stasis thus paving the way for further reflection. As she contemplates the whole situation a little later she realises the inadequacy of her approach to life. She stretches and perceives that the meaning of being can only be achieved through love for others.
Although it was shadowy dark, Bim could see as well as by the clear light of day that she felt only love and yearning for them all, and if there were hurts, these gashes and wounds in her side that bled, then it was only because her love was imperfect and did not encompass them thoroughly enough and because it had flaws and inadequacies and did not extend to all equally (165).

The flaw in Bim's love was that of egocentricity which had prevented her from appreciating the otherness in others. With the realisation of the inadequacy her earlier vision of reality and assertion of the will undergoes a modification and comes as a quest for the love of others which demands a transcendence of the will. She achieves this spiritual wholeness by consciously choosing to bridge the rift with others which also enables her to find her own social relevance.

Through the import of her modified perception of life Bim gets a deeper insight into life and its transience as she reads Life of Aurangzeb: "Many were around me when I was born but now I am going alone ... Life is transient and the lost moment never comes back" (167).

Against the transience of life the self tries to seek a spiritual fulfilment which necessitates love. The kind of love thus attained demands an extrusion of the self from the flux of temporality which is conveyed by T.S.Eliot's The Wasteland: "The explorers at the extremity of their strength had the constant delusion that there was one more member than could actually be counted" (100).
Bim responds to the sense of dullness and helplessness created by the parents’ psychological neglect with an intellectual hunger evident in her devotion to reading and learning about the world outside their privileged circles.

Bim is caught within the ideological binds of her colonial education but without male prerogatives and with a strongly inculcated sense of her responsibility for the family ends up being the one to pay the price for the freedom. Bim stands as a model student who fiercely upholds institutional order and social hierarchy. Bim desires to be free and is portrayed as the pillar of a society whose gender norms are all about the curtailment of feminine power.

Bim’s ambivalence about authority is symptomatic of the effects of English education on women. The emphasis on women’s education was an important strand of the reform movements from the nineteenth century which accompanied the struggle for national liberation. Nationalist reformers believed that social evils could be wiped out with education but woman’s education aimed to produce good home-makers and companionable wives and thereby revitalize orthodox gender ideologies.

Such an education was designed not so much to emancipate and empower women as to provide updated supports for the reorganized patriarchal and class system that followed independence. Education would not turn the women away from their familial roles but improve their efficiency as wives and mothers and strengthen the hold of traditional values on society since women are better carriers of these values.

The values Bim adheres to makes her life not a bed of roses. Her role of caretaker confines her and grows into a burden of bitterness. Though Bim is a victim of
circumstances she shows an ability to live herself up during moments of aesthetic experience.

Bim succeeds in her private ambitions and she feels on top of everyone. But when reality peeps in she has to take recourse to the strategy of withdrawal. The fantasised self-image hardly helps her in achieving her desired goals. She can no more stretch her life as a woman to lead an independent life as her dreams and aspirations are thwarted due to lack of lustre in adulthood of adolescent ideals.

Bim entertains a very high opinion of herself therefore her dreams are directed towards becoming free and independent. She does not want to be sympathised for being a woman. She imagines herself to be capable of greater things in life.

Bim’s effort to expand her identity beyond the pseudo-motherhood she had had to take up and to come to terms with a family and society that often curb those efforts make her life miserable. Bim’s identity formation as consisting of a series of efforts to break free of an unwanted seclusion is isolated between the pathologically unchanging home and the prospect of adopting an equally restrictive upper middle-class female identity. Bim strives to be included in the changing outside world. Quite unusually for a girl of her background she finds satisfaction in excelling at school, in sports and in testing the unaccepted gender codes by trying on Raja’s trousers and smoking his cigarettes. Bim responds to the sense of dullness and helplessness created by the parents’ psychological neglect with an intellectual hunger evident in her devotion to reading and learning about the world outside their privileged circles. Her need to establish an identity that would have a function also outside the domestic sphere is evident in her admonishing of Tara for being squeamish at the sight of the sick and the poor: “Oh you poor little thing, you’d
better got a bit tougher, hadn't you- auntie's baby? Otherwise what good will you ever be? If you can't even do this little bit for the poor, what will you ever be able to do when you grow up?" (126).

In her efforts to manipulate the established gender and class systems with her everyday choices at school and amongst her siblings at home Bim also challenges the limits of her position within the family and society embracing education, nativity and change.

Woman's quest for knowledge always has been a destructive and fatal aberration. In the absence of her parents Bim inherits the position of power within the family and changes from a girl trying to transform her femininity with her intellectual and social prowess into an adult head of the household with the same duties as a married man or woman. But without the social status and psychological rewards of marriage Bim becomes dour and gloomy.

Once able to see her life as it is, what it means to others and what it means to her Bim knows that here: "...could be no love more deep and full wide than this one ...no other love had started so far back in time and had had so much time in which to grow and spread" (165).

With this message given, the healing has in part begun: "...there was nothing left in the way of a barrier or a shadow, only the clear light pouring from the sun" (168).

Unable to withstand pressure from all sides Bim makes emotional outburst to give vent to her accumulated mixed feelings. Bim is angry and full of resentment which comes out of in a thousand ways- her skimpy meals, her attack on Baba's world and her attempt to laugh away Tara's memories. But this anger soon spends itself. She wonders why she
attacked Baba and not any of the others and she knows it was because Baba had none of the blatant answers:

The bees spread out and covered everything, the air, the flowers, the grassy slope, it was like a festival and Bim the appointed victim, the sacrificial victim on whom they had draped the ceremonial shawl, drawing it close about her neck as she stood drooping, shivering under the weight of their gauzy wings, their blue-black humming.

The bees here are symbolic of Bim's family members who torment and target her in her later life.

Bim becomes an inseparable part of the house. She is reminiscent of Mira Masi as she ministers to the needs of her patients. To Tara Bim is also like their mother. Such reminders provide for continuity in Tara's eyes.

Bim has a realistic and practical temperament that finds an escape from her dreary world by reading history. This preference for cold, hard facts pervades her whole life. As a child she too like her siblings had sought escape from the drudgery of her home. She had found respite at school where she had been the head girl. Her leadership sees her through her life for she remains behind at home to look after its miserable occupants Mira Masi and Baba. She is the protector of her family honour and she is glad the tall hedges conceal the house from view. Until she is ready to reveal the family secrets the hedges grow wild. Only at the end is she willing to trim them because she realises then how valuable she is to her brothers and sister.

Bim and Tara feel about not wanting to be young anymore. They are glad their childhood is already spent because they had not known how to escape, how to deal with
that first terrible flood of life. As Bim says: “One just goes under—it sweeps one along—
and how many years and years it is before one can stand up to it, make a stand against it. She
wouldn’t be young again for anything (5).

Tara, Raja and Bim had shared joyous moments together even though Tara felt
left out of the adventures of Bim and Raja. Raja and Bim enjoyed pure and elemental joy
that shot upward and stood straight and right above the surrounding dreariness. As
children they comprehended their world quite accurately. Inactivity and boredom had
been distasteful to them so they had sought personal escapes. Bim realises that the soil of
her house contained all time, past and future in it. It was where her deepest self lived and
the deepest selves of her sister and brothers and all those who shared that time with her.
She is able to forgive and forget. No amount of rancour can corrode the tenacious ties
that she shares with her family.

Bim is inextricably bound to her siblings as dependant on their love and approval
as they are on hers. Whether such a denouement is wholly satisfying or not the direction
it takes is significant for two reasons. Bim grows organically without becoming static and
the novel does not degenerate into little more than an anecdotal narrative. The kind of
reconciliation with the self that Bim achieves inseparable as it is from her family set up is
equally significant.

Bim shoulders heavy burdens. She does not explode with anger or impatience.
When she does give vent to her fury she thinks that Tara and Bakul even Raja and
Benazir feed on her blood. Bim realises that this is not true as the Das home from which
she is inseparable provides solid ground roots to them. She realises that her brothers and
sister and even Bakul are all part of her.
Bim participates in the very unfeminine tasks that fall on her such as having to keep the family business going or the alcoholic aunt from putting her family to shame. The novel dramatically contrasts Bim’s quite sudden transformation from a child into a rather androgynous adult who is both a decisive and financially responsible father-figure and a nurturing and self-sacrificing mother figure. Through Bim Desai underlines the role an individual’s opportunities as well as obligations to respond to family’s and society’s expectations can play in identity formation.

Bim is a pathetic heroine, an aging spinster, rotting in the decadent old house in Old Delhi, a city that does not change but only decays: “...a great cemetery, every house a tomb” (5).

Her sister’s yearly visit brings her little comfort, the searching memory of a past she would prefer to forget. The family reunion is only partly successful as there are many sour notes among the happy ones. But Bim becomes hysterically acerbic when she is placed in such a situation not only by an unrelenting fate but by her brother Raja. Raja absolves himself of his family responsibilities and on top of it has the audacity to write a self-righteous letter.

Bim becomes irate and unforgiving, sarcastic and bitterly distraught. She wishes to close all chapters of childhood and youth as periods of: “...dullness, boredom and waiting” (4).

Her main concern is to prevent any further disappointment in life. She misconceives that safety and peace can be obtained by leading a life of stoicism. When this strategy does not work Bim slips into a vindictive-aggressive rage. Nevertheless she does not lose the basic charm and strength of her personality. She showers her motherly
affection towards her students. She is admired by Bakul for her: “...decision, firmness and resolve” (18). Dr.Biswa loves Bim for her courage and fortitude.

Slowly out of the vignette of a disgruntled spinster emerges a seraphic woman with a vision of the clear light of day, of clear sunshine.

Bim has a unique quality of vivid perception. She has a clarity of cognizance to accept a situation ungrudgingly when her sister Tara leaves her in the Lodhi Gardens. Her sisterly love and her chivalry lead her to demonstrate her adolescent heroism. Bim’s parents are too engrossed in their Roshanara Club and cards. There is hardly any exchange between the children and the parents. The robust outdoor activities of Bim hardly necessitated the care of a mother. When all her siblings adopt escapist techniques it is Bim who with a vast treasure of literature stacked in her brain – Eliot, Byron, Swinburne, romantic books, adventure stories and history- shifts between past memories and present realities between her self-alienating forces and her strength of spirit and mind.

Bim is mentally alert by declining a marriage offer with a person like Dr.Biswa. When Dr.Biswa fails to understand Bim’s feelings and makes a commonplace observation at her domestic situation Bim concludes that Dr.Biswa was not the person whom she wanted to marry. She stays aloof from a possible romantic idea.

Bim has a glorified self-image of a heroic figure who can achieve something in life. She strives to be really great like others. Trouble arises in her life when her idealised self-image is upheld instead of her real self. Bim’s home atmosphere scuttles her. With the mounting dissatisfaction of her family situation Bim feels lost and also inferior when
others find an outlet in their lives. Though Bim is not jealous the futility of her desires tortures her.

Notwithstanding Bim’s tendency to grab power and glory and her sense of achievement still Bim forces upon the reader a compassion for her. She has an unconscious impulse to defeat others’ impersonal relations. Such impulses in childhood take the name of mischief but for middle-aged Bim even her occasional remarks are cynical enough to inflict deep pain. She is cruel and sarcastic at times and whenever she fails to wield power she turns to vindictive triumph. Bim stands on par with a male in all her activities little understanding that to emulate and equal masculinity is a tragedy of a woman’s life and she becomes the glorified victim of such a tragedy.

All feminine striving for achievement is considered as envy. Such upbringing in a woman is a distortion of character which drives women deeper into personal conflicts. Intellect in a woman is a betrayal of her basic female nature. A woman with masculine thoughts will yield only cold and infertile feelings. External ambition in Hindu social code is detrimental and unnatural. The world of a man is entirely akin to a woman. Woman hardly can conceive of having an independent will to choose for themselves. These consolidate a woman.

Bim’s high ideals of life jeopardised her personal life as she has to salvage her life for the family. Bim’s lofty ideals are redeemed to a pathetic quest. Her high spirited volition to tread new grounds ends in collision with social arbitrariness counter producing conflicts. She forces upon her a supremacy from her inner friction which compels her to make claims on life. Raja’s departure is a blow to Bim as fear of loneliness grips her. Her bitterness makes her exaggerate her suffering.
Unable to withstand the disintegrating family Raja modestly escapes into a life of opportunity staking his high ideals of heroism in life. When Raja strips his false self-image and embraces a mundane life Bim finds herself at a loss when she could not find herself a heroine. When she re-evaluates and re-assesses her ideals she becomes miserable.

When a girl is praised for her intelligence, spirit of adventure and natural vitality she enjoys it all feeling satisfied. But if she were to pay for all her virtues with a demanding sacrifice of taking care of a crumbling family she is pushed into despondency and self-pity. Here Bim stands an example for the latter.

Bim’s personality achieves a continuity in time as she develops an ability to integrate the past and the future. This does not mean that Bim forgets her past. Past cannot be given up and memory cannot be wiped out. Individual personality is made up of memories, habits and reactions. Past is to be digested so that it assimilates with the personality and does not remain alien to it. Past exists now in the person, future exists in the person in the form of ideals, hopes, duties, tasks, plans, goals, potentials, mission, fate and destiny.

Bim assimilates her past and future with her present and gets ready for peak experience. The self actualising peak experience does not come to Bim so easily or smoothly. For twenty years she suffers under alienating forces. There is a long period of self-glorification, the urge to be on the top to rule others.

During this period Bim’s intrinsic qualities- intelligence, spirit of adventure and natural vitality- have been eclipsed by her self-image. She is seen often speaking of herself with a succinct pride. She tells Dr.Biswa: “I could have been a nurse – or a
matron— in a plague hospital. I can handle it all” (85). Behind this statement there lies a compulsive need to elicit confirmation of her devotion. She feels proud in her roles of a nurse, a supporter, the head of the family. As long as she is praised by people she enjoys it all feeling satisfied. But slowly and gradually everybody takes her sacrifice for granted; even Raja leaves. She passes into a state of despondency and self-pity.

The first inkling of self-pity of Bim is seen in her passing thought that there was nobody except her. Later it takes a deeper colouring. At the peak of her desperation she accuses her father for not having taken any care and she feels that she could have gone illiterate and could have fended for herself everything she needed. She also feels that neither her father nor Raja realised this.

Bim forgets that her father did not care for any of his children. Likewise the resolution to remain unmarried and be self-sufficient had been her independent decisions.

As long as Bim is high on the wave of success she does not understand well the situation she is placed in. When she cannot master life any longer she looks for peace of mind by blocking consciousness and shrinking all sensitivity to nothingness. Bim’s untidiness symbolically represents her lack of zest for life. The bright adolescent girl who worked deliberately and continuously to stand first in the examinations and win laurels now turned into a middle-aged spinster wearing faded maxi living in a dilapidated old house with an unkempt garden. Everything about her reflects the decadence of mind. It is like Nanda Kaul’s dictum that when a woman lives alone her house should mirror her state of mind. Her sister Tara is shocked at the condition of the dead old house as if dishevelled by a storm. Bim regales in it and asserts that it indicates the passage of her time that is gone and will not come back.
Bim is afraid of her past as she cannot relate it to her present. She wants to forget it because it means involvement. All she wishes is to lead an existence without will. Under this facade of quiet martyrdom is a subdued rebel. Bim turns her rebellion against her inner self. Outwardly she spends all her fury on Baba and Tara but inwardly she is enraged at her own weakness in having to ask for help from Bakul or Raja. She feels that her students would laugh at her if they knew how badly handicapped she was. She also feels that her students would think about her mismanaging of family affairs and even go to the extent of despising her.

Bim’s students would not despise her but she is afraid that she will loathe herself for her weakness. She becomes angry with herself in her rebellion. It is an evolution than a revelation which helps in liberating a person from his neurotic compulsions.

Bim’s psychic movement from self-alienation to self-realisation is the journey of a self temporarily befogged by compulsive drives. The transformation of Bim from sickness to health may be unconvincing. Growth is a continuous process and the real self of man is not completely lost. It is always present and struggles to come up at the slightest opportunity. Bim’s character all through the novel shows many positive qualities. Circumstances and her inability to see what she really wants from life impede her growth and diffuse her energies. Bim in due course of her life undergoes a change in her vision and outlook. She attains internal freedom. She is liberated from her twisted vision and her confused values. By unifying the diverse fragments of her world into a unified whole she achieves wholeness. Till Bim establishes a viable contact with her surroundings and her brother and her sister she is in peril. As soon as she achieves this she is liberated.
When Bim feels one with her siblings she grasps the depth of love, a feeling of empathy binding her to them:

There could be no love deep and full and wide than this one, she knows.

No other love had started so far back in time and had so much time in which to grow and spread. They were really all parts of her, inseparable, so many aspects of her as she was of them, so that the anger and disappointment she felt at herself, whatever hurt they felt, she felt. Whatever diminished them diminished her. What attacked them attacked her. Nor was there anyone else on earth whom she was willing to forgive, more readily or completely, or defend more instinctively and instantly.

She could hardly believe, at that moment that she would live on after they did or they would continue after she had ended. If such an unimaginable phenomenon could take place, then surely they could remain flawed, damaged for life. The wholeness of the pattern, its perfection would be gone,(165).

This new vision implies the acceptance of the inner core of her being. This self-searching or turning inward in a meditative way is a significant quality of a growth oriented person as he thus solves many of his problems.

It is found that self-knowledge and self-acceptance lead Bim to trust herself. Emerson considers faith in oneself as a mark of genius:

To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius. Speak your talent, conviction and it shall be the universal sense, for always the inmost
becomes the outmost. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages (Self-Reliance, 59).

Bim’s moments of inner delight come on the musical evening arranged by the Misras. Soothing tunes of music flowing from the Guru of Mulk bring out a harmony between the subject and the object, the perceiver and the perceived. Through this harmony complete identification of the inner and the outer world is established. As Fredrich Schiller points out, it is only through beauty man makes way to freedom. The aged singers’ sharp but sad voice brought out the: “…storms and rages and pains of his life” (Clear Light of Day, 182).

The pain, frustration and beauty of that voice consists in it the revolution of the timeless within the condition imposed by time. In the experience of artistic beauty the abstract and the sensuous lead to a greater recognition. Iqbal, Eliot, the Guru, his music and Raja all become one in her absorption. Bim sees through the limitations of human perception beyond time. She enjoys the comfort and solace of this experience. The aesthetic contemplation leads Bim from inconclusive temporal experience to the comprehension of the eternal unity.

Bim rises above the limitations of the ego-centric self. She unconditions her mind by becoming totally attentive to a holistic experience. The perception becomes relatively self-forgetful and ego-transcending. During such self-validating moments her quest for identity ends. She finds her real self. The crises of her adolescence and the problems of her adulthood that had staggered her are now substituted by a coherent self.
This experience does not make Bim a paragon of rarefied visions. She is a character in the process of fulfilling herself rising above the limitations of pettiness. Maslow believes that a very important theoretical conclusion arising out of his study of self-actualising people is that the dichotomies usually seen as part of human nature—masculine-feminine, head-heart and maturity-immaturity—are resolved and are merged with each other to give unity to a self-actualising individual. Dichotomies express the condition of a mind still locked as bitterness. In Bim’s case all dualities vanish. Separation between the observer and the observed comes to an end and conflicts end. Bim connects the artistic observation of life with its reality.

Bim’s old rancour against Raja further deepens as the invitation letter of Raja was addressed to Tara but not to Bim and he did not even refer to Bim in it. This letter reminded her of her old letter in which he had mentioned the reversal of his role from brother to landlord and had hinted at raising the rent of the house in which now only she and Baba lived helplessly. Bim realises that Raja established now a new relationship with Tara whom he had always neglected in his early days and now he neglected Bim with whom he had a very intimate relationship. Utterly neglected Bim begins to muse painfully on how the passage of time has ravaged the old relationships of childhood and created a changed pattern of relationship in the family.

At last the adored, the admired elder brother was paying attention to her whom he had always ignored for now he has turned his back on Bim. Bim saw all their backs turned on her. She folded her arms across her face—she did not want to see the ugly sight. She wanted them to go away and leave her.
Raja’s letter regarding the retention of rent for the house without raising it badly humiliates and hurts Bim. It creates in her a web of deep misunderstanding with her brother. Bim’s wounded sensibilities and deep seated anger with Raja are quite evident in the following passage:

But I still have it. I still keep it in my desk to remind me. Whenever I begin to wish to see Raja again or wish he would come and see us, then I take out that letter and read it again. Oh, I can tell you. I could write him such an answer, he wouldn’t forget it for many years either! You say I should come to Hyderabad with you for his daughter’s wedding. How can I? How can I enter his house- my landlord’s house, I, such a poor tenant? Because of me, he can’t raise the rent or sell the house and make a profit- imagine that. The sacrifice! (28)

Bim has developed a large myth which has grown beyond her control and she finds it hard to accommodate it in real life. She finds her life empty and the void looming large. Tara’s reminiscence of Bim into the past is perceived as a journey into Bim’s subconscious. Just before Bim comes to terms with her real situation she is shown as dangerously close to neurosis. She resents the unspoken opinion that spinsterhood was making her queer.

Tara and Bim in Clear Light of Day move towards a rehabilitative process. Their conscious realisation of unconscious fantasies has the effect of extending the conscious horizon by the inclusion of numerous unconscious contents; secondly of gradually diminishing the dominant influence of the unconscious; and thirdly of bringing about a change of personality. To this process is ascribed the transformation of personality, a
transformation which in itself may be a continuous process, analysis in itself not being enough.

Tara was always expecting: “...to find treasure, to make her fortune, discover herself a princess” (102). She also plans to get married, be a wife and a mother. Her dreams are dreams of escape, of shying away from school, running away during the attack of the bees on Bim and escaping to the Misras because their home provided a contrast to hers with its: “…solid middle-class bourgeoisie position” (137).

Tara observes:

She had always thought Bim so competent, so capable; everyone had thought that- Aunt Mira, the teacher at school, even Raja. But Bim seemed to stampede through the house like a dishevelled storm, creating more havoc than order. Tara would be ashamed to run a house like this. Bakul would have been horrified if she did. Then how had Bim acquired her fine reputation? Or had her old capability, her old competence begun to crumble now and go to seed? Tara saw how little she had really observed—either as a child or as a woman. She had seen Bim through the lenses of her own self, as she had wanted to see her. And now she tried to be objective when she was old enough, grown enough and remained enough to study her objectively, she found she could not—her vision was strewn, obscured and screened by too much of the past,(148).

This contrast between the sisters makes a significant contribution in shaping their destinies.
Tara who was initially unable to recognise the significance of the passage of time now comes to realise full well how human relationship, even an intimate relationship like one between Bim and Raja, changes with the passage of time. But Bim fails to see the significance of time and stubbornly continues to remain entangled in the dense musty web of her memories mingled with a serious misapprehension until self-knowledge dawns upon her towards the end of the novel. Bim says:

I will keep it. I must look at it and remind myself every now and then. Whenever you come here and ask why I don’t go to Hyderabad and visit him and see my little nieces and nephews—well then, I feel I have to explain to you, prove to you (29).

In the second chapter the role of a woman as a daughter has been dealt. The characters in the novels taken for study exemplify this through the roles they play in order to upkeep the integrity and the honour of their families. The following chapter is about the role of woman as a wife in the novels taken for study. There are many characters that are wives in these novels and the battle they wage against the odds in their familial as well as social life embodies the specific roles they play as wives for the unity in the family.