CHAPTER - 1

Introduction:
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It cannot be denied that even the most imaginative male writer is deficient in depicting the female sensibility sincerely. Though women have been the subject of literary work since time immemorial, literature has mostly been created by men. Men are aware of only physical characteristics of women. The psychic characteristic is an area that is a mystery for men. But it is a healthy development that woman writers have shown a natural preference for writing about woman characters which helps a lot in the exploration of feminine psyche. Such preference may suffer from creative point of view but, it does not affect the dexterity of the creation. Jane Austen is an example of that class who (despite the limitation) excels in her 'two' inches of ivory. Among the contemporary Indian woman writers writing in English, Anita Desai seems to be one of the most successful artists in externalizing the internal of feminine psyche. No doubt, she is preoccupied with the theme of incompatible marital couples, yet, woman characters of
different types have been depicted on her large canvas. Her characters represent woman's mind and psyche in its varied moods and manners. Her characters range from one psychological extreme to the other. In her first novel Cry the Peacock, we come across the two extremes. Maya is a sterile woman with a high degree of refined sensibility and emotion. At the other end there is a woman Pom, a woman with love for clothes, jewellery, colour and looks. Maya's marriage with Gautama is not successful. Maya is emotional whereas Gautama is rational. This is clear from their different reactions to the pet dog's death. Being a childless woman Maya had developed a type of filial affinity with the dog. The dog was a child substitute for Maya.

"Childless women do develop fanatic attachments to their pets, they say. It is no less a relationship than that of a woman and her child, no less worthy of reverence and agonised remembrance."

But Gautama, a down-to-earth person takes it very casually and makes the necessary arrangements for the burial of Toto, the pet dog. He, in his typical way consoles Maya and assures her of bringing another dog. Gautama, being
rational and above all a man, cannot fathom the feministic depth in Maya; it is far beyond his reach. Though socially they are supposed to be close, emotionally they are poles apart. To make the matter worse, he offers a cup of tea to Maya. This clearly shows Gautama's indifference to Maya's feministic sensibility. Being a woman, Maya expects much from Gautama the husband; but in vain.

Therefore, in this novel Anita Desai throws light on what goes inside Maya, a hypersensitive and introvert woman in the following passage:

"Showing how little he knows of my misery, or how to comfort me. But then, he knew that concerned me. Giving me an opal ring to wear on my finger, he did not notice the translucent skinbeneath, the blue flashing veins that ran under and out of the bridge of gold (Emphasis added) ... telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me ... it is his hardness -- no, no, not hardness, but the distance he coldly keeps from me. His coldness, his coldness, and incessant talk of cups of tea and philosophy in
order not to hear me talk and talking reveal myself. It is that my loneliness in this house.

(C.P., p.9)

The conflict between Gautama and Maya is more internal than external. The problem with Maya is her loneliness caused by her husband's non-raciprocation. It is aggravated by her being childless and hypersensitive as well. To be very brief, Maya is extremely fragile. To her contrast Porn is a woman who believes in "lust for newness, for brightness, colour and gaiety." She has a world where there are no shadows of family, tradition and superstition.

Logic, tact, diplomacy -- nothing mattered to her who chattered so glibly and gaily all the day long, jumping up now and then to bring out a new pair of shoes, a new set of rings to 'show me, talking with eagerness, and animation of anything that was new and bright, and never, never referring to family, tradition, custom, superstitions, all that I dreaded now. I was certain she hated such talks as much as I did, even if she had no reason to fear them. Such things simply did not stop over the
bright enamelled horizon of her painted world, for such things bore shadows, and shadows were alien to her. (CP, p. 61)

The cabaret dancers represent another aspect of womanhood for whom female body, a stock-theme of poetry is a saleable commodity.

... "Their portruberent posteriors, and of which they made much, arousing chukles of delight .. bouncing movement that made her bosom more prominent ... so that more and more of that white, tallow flesh would rear out of her blouse ... with a little provocative upthrust of her rump, etc. Their provocative display and movements such as though says, "See what I have? Like it? Take it, gentleman, take it, it's yours!" ... "Beautiful! B-beautiful b-bitch!" (CP, p. 85)

Though Maya hates the cabaret girls, the novelist has put much effort in describing them. This is because, Maya is not Anita Desai and Anita Desai is not Maya. For the novelist, Maya is as important as the cabaret girls. Leila is
another woman character who is also a contrast to Pom. A teacher in a girls' school, she has married a tubercular man against her parents' wishes. Thus, she has turned fatalistic and ascetic. She is gloomy having no desire for jewellery or bangles. According to the novelist "she was one of those who require a cross, cannot do without one."

Maya is the pampered child of her father, but Leila's parents had broken all sorts of relationships with her after her elopement. Maya believes in the priest's prediction but Leila, ungrudgingly has accepted what was all written in her fate.

In her attempt to explore the feminine psyche, Anita Desai enters the deeper and further deeper level. The result is, we find some of her woman characters, if not insane, are not totally normal.

Maya does not move and finding her sitting still for a long time Gautama says:

"Haven't you lifted up a book, your sewing?
Nothing at all? But this is madness, Maya."
"Madness?" "I screamed, leaping at him, to strike him, to stab him and began to cry hysterically."

After this we are informed that Maya is not sure whether the event actually took place but what is certain is her mental chaos. Her neurotic state of mind is depicted through unpleasant animal imagery like that of a lizard, a repulsive creature. This image has been repeated in the novel:

Will it be fire? Will it be flood? Will the lizards rise out of the desert to come up -- on us -- either upon him or upon myself -- with lashing tails and sliding tongue, to crush us beneath their bellies?

Will there be blood? Will there be screams?
And when? When? (C.P., p. 179).

Again, the lizard imagery is followed by the rat imagery which is suggestive of Maya's mental breakdown:

And yet, in the neck of the lizard spanned above me on the ceiling, its pulse throbbed, and seemed
a giant pulse for so small a creature, beating furiously as though it were holding its breath fill its blood boiled. And then, in the very height of stillness, its tail switched. One small, brief twitch. But I saw it, and immediately a thousand rats twitched their tails -- long, gray, germ-ridden. Just once, before they were still again, stiff (CP, p. 183).

There are some other animal imageries used by the novelist to externalize the fluid mental state of Maya.

Pushing off Gautama from the roof top Maya goes back to her father's house in Lucknow. Once again, she becomes a girl lost in her world of picture books and toys. The present reality turns meaningless for her:

... Child-like serenity of the girl, Maya, who sat somewhere upstairs, delightedly opening cupboards, pulling out drawers, falling upon picture-books and photographs with high, shrill cries of pleasure hugging them to her, dancing around the room with them, on airborne feet. Now in the silence they could hear her moving above
them, like a poltergeist, light and quick on its feet, eager in its chuckles of merriment, and frantic in its ceaseless movements, like a being that is hunted (CP, pp. 212-13).

Whatever the reason may be, Maya is totally unfit for the real world. So, after killing her husband, she draws back to her protected and pampered childhood which provides her a safe haven.

In Voices In The City the chapter division itself shows the importance of women in the novel. In this novel, the novelist has analysed the feminine psyche through the character of Monisha. Monisha is also childless, sensitive and a victim of unhappy marriage. Where Maya cries for company in the family, Monisha seeks privacy. She does not like anybody encroaching upon her private territory. The discussion on her childlessness adds insult to injury. Monisha represents a sensitive, intellectual woman trapped in an unpleasant atmosphere of a joint family. Though she reads the Bhagwad Geeta, she does not find any solace as she, being an intellectual, is a non-believer. 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 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 his 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."

Being unable to adjust herself with life anymore, Monisha commits suicide. But, another character Sarla is just opposite to Monisha. For her life means 'eat, drink and be merry' Another character in the novel is Monisha's mother. She is very beautiful, polished, balanced and contained like a well-cut jewel having a refined taste for music, flowers and good food. But she also suffers from unhappy marriage. Depicting the mother character Anita Desai has done justice to her creative art by not hiding anything that any other writer
advocating for ideology might have done. This is something unique about Anita Desai, for she calls the spade a spade.

Motherhood is a very sensitive concept among women. So, being childless, Maya in Cry, The Peacock and Monisha in Voices In The City crave for motherhood. On the other hand, there is a character Sita in her another novel Where Shall We Go This Summer? who is frightened at the thought of delivering her fifth child. Sita is obsessed with a peculiar thought. She lives in a world of fantasy. She wants to go back to the magic island of her childhood days. Against her husband's rational advice, she wants to visit that island thinking that she could prevent the biological process of delivery.

"Children ... Through her mind flowed a white, flapping succession in nappies, vests ... that would have to be gathered together. She could see the expressionless faces of the night nurses in the gynae ward ... in the greenish night light, regarding her as she came in, revaged by the first pains ... She could see the impassive face of nurses who would stay by her in the theatre, now and then
glancing at her large, flat watch, bored by yet another woman's panic-stricken labour.

(WSWGS, pp. 153-154).

Sita is a very nice example of a neurotic woman. She is irrational for which she is at fault. Though she also suffers from an illmatched marriage, to a greater extent she invites the trouble for herself. Her husband and other members of the family are very accommodative and considerate but Sita being married in a traditional Hindu family, smokes deliberately to provoke her in-laws. That sorts of behaviour of Sita ultimately compels Raman to shift to a flat of his own, but problem doesn't end there. News of brutality and violence covered in the news papers unnerve her:

"... her husband casually handed her the newspaper on his way out to office. They all hammered at her with cruel fists --- the fallen blocks, the torn watercolours, the headlines about the war in Vietnam, the photograph of a woman weeping over a small grave, another of a crowd outside a Rhodesian jail, articles about the perfidy of Pakistan ... They were handgrenades all,
hurled at her frail gold fish bowl belly and
instinctively she laid her hands over it, feeling the
child there play like some softfleshed fish in a bowl
of warm sea-water ... frightened certain now that
civilisation had been created by the god-like efforts
of the few, in the face of a constant, timeless war of
destruction that had begun with time and was now
roaring around her, battering her and her
fish-foetus so that survival seemed hopeless. How
could civilisation survive, how could the child?
How could she hold them whole and pure and
unimpeached in the midst of this bloodshed? They
would surely by wounded, fall and die."

Violence and brutality cannot be ignored in real life.
So, being sensitive to violent and brutal occurrences is
appreciable, but, failure to lead a normal life because of
hyper-sensitivity towards them cannot be accepted as
symptoms of a normal personality.

Once seeing an eagle attacked by crows Sita gets
agitated and drives away the crows by using her toy gun.
Her daughter Menka sometimes sketches and paints. Once,
not being satisfied with one of her paintings, she tears it away which upsets Sita very much. Quarrelling among children, a very natural phenomenon, upsets Sita. She shouts at them to stop, but they do not. Her daughter accepts the naturality of playing but her mother Sita cannot. When Menka says, "They are only playing", Sita says "That is no way of playing."

Being a woman, Anita Desai is not oversympathetic towards her women characters. So, in her probing, she has exposed Sita and Maya in true colours. Though the causes vary, both of them are women of sub-normal, if not abnormal state of mind.

For Anita Desai, the psychological analysis is not one sided. Her interest is not confined to adults only. In her another novel Fire On The Mountain, though Nanda Kaul is also a very prominent character, she brings a girl to her canvas. Raka, a girl, in course of the novel emerges more prominently than Nanda Kaul, her grandmother with whom the very novel begins. The title Fire On The Mountain enhances her importance, because it is Raka, the girl who sets the forest on fire, hence, fire on the mountain. Raka, the very name means 'the moon', but to quote Nanda Kaul,
"What an utter misnomer thought Nanda Kaul...

Raka meant the moon, but this child was not roundfaced, calm or radiant...

Nanda Kaul thought she looked like one of those dark crickets that leap up in fright but do not sing, or a mosquito, minute and fine, on thin, precarious legs.

Raka is the most unchildlike child. She likes to go outdoors all by herself, wandering in the desolate hills and forest. She speaks to herself,

I don't care -- I don't care -- I don't care for anything."

She has developed some unchild like qualities. Like a normal child, she does not take interest in listening to stories from her grandmother. But her abnormal behaviour finds its roots in her unhappy childhood. Once she stealthily peeps into the club of the Research station in a moonlit night. The drunken orgy in the club brings her back the unpleasant memory of her childhood, her drunken father coming home
late at night and beating her mother and she hidding somewhere in the room.

... her father, home from a party, stumbling and crashing through the curtains of night, his mouth opening to let out a flood of rotten stench, beating at her mother with hammers and fists of abuse-harsh filthy abuse that made Raka cover under her bed clothes and wet the mattress in fright, feeling the stream of urine warm and weakening between her legs like a stream of blood, and her mother lay down on the floor and shut her eyes and wept. Under her feet, in the dark, Raka felt that flat, wet jelly of her mother's being squelching and quivering, so that she didn't know where to put her feet and wept as she tried to get free of it. Ahead of her, no longer on the ground but at some distance now, her mother was crying. Then it was a jackal crying (FOM, pp. 71-72).

The portrayal of the child character Raka, in the skillful hands of Anita Desai arouses sympathy for the child. She is a victim of a circumstance for which she is not at all
responsible. In the mind of the readers Raka leaves the memory of a pathetic figure. On the other hand the novelist has created characters like Meera Masi in her novel *Clear Light Of Day*. Though the protagonist of the novel is Bim, the most shining character in the novel, Meera Masi also draws the sympathy of the readers for some peculiar reason. She has developed the habit of drinking alcohol. When she doesn't get it, she steals it. In her drunken state she tears off her clothes, becoming naked showing her shrunken breasts, wasted body with white pubic hair. This makes her a pathetic figure, a mockery of dignity of conventional old age.

While talking of feminine psyche, we cannot ignore Anita Desai's treatment of sex in the characters. Her handling of erotic is very subtle. Maya in *Cry, The Peacock* is denied sexual pleasure. So, she says:

"... longing to be with him, be close to him ... make haste in undressing ... 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, however enticing (CP, p. 93)."
On the other hand, Sita of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* hates sex. Though she has given birth to four children and the fifth is on the way, she hates sex. Her husband and his friends are gross for Sita. For her

"they are nothing - nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter, animals.

"When Raman says, "I thought you like animals" she reacts saying,

My pet animals - or wild animals in the forest, yes. But these are neither --they are like pariahs you see in the streets, hanging about drains and dustbins, waiting to pounce and kill and eat.

(*WSWGS*, p. 17)

Meera Masi of *Clear Light Of Day* is a widow who represents a sexually unsatisfied woman. She became a widow at a very young age, but through her, the novelist exposes the stark turth that had she been pretty she must have suffered sexual humiliation by her close relatives. This reflects another side of the feminine psyche.
As it is found, Anita Desai has touched different aspects of feminine psyche in her novels. Her woman characters come from almost all age groups and different types. We have a child or a girl in Raka, a neurotic married woman in Maya, a middle aged woman in Nanda Kaul, an old woman in Ila Das, an intellectual woman in Monisha, an adulteress woman in Monisha's mother. Her skill as a novelist lies in discovering the stark truth at the deepest level.

1.1 Feminism in Indian English Fiction

The French dramatist Alexander Dumas, the younger used the term "Feminism" in a pamphlet 'L' Homme-femme to designate the then emerging movement for women’s right. Gradually it became a cultural movement seeking equality of women with men in the enjoyment of all human rights -- moral, social, religious, political, educational, legal, economic, and so on. India also saw the rise of such movement where the constitution granted voting right to women alongwith some other social and economic rights. That sort of empowerment brought to
the surface some names like Mrs Indira Gandhi, Jayalitha, Mayawati, Ravri Devi, Madhuri Shah, Kiran Bedi, who set models for other women to follow.

The movement challenged the age old man-woman relationship that was a relationship of master (man) and slave (woman); man, for the field and woman for the hearth; man, the god, woman the devout; man to rule and woman to obey. The challenge at the literary level has been taken up by the novelists and poets, especially the writers of the second generation. Anita Desai, Shashi Despande, Rama Mehta, Jai Nimbkar and poets like Kamala Das, Gauri Despande and others are few of them to name. Their works show human factors the modern educated young woman is facing and how she fights against it. At the same time, they focus on the complexes generated by the new situation she is placed in. In this light, Roots and Shadows by Shashi Deshpande, Cry, the Peacock by Anita Desai and Temporary Answers by Jai Nimbkar speak much of these concerns. Each of the novels has a couple at its centre -- Indu Jayant, Maya-Gautama, Vinneeta, Nagendra /Abhijit. The couples project different facets of the problems involved in the man-woman relationship particularly concerning the
struggle for liberty, equality, compatibility, self reliance and so on. In all the novels, the woman characters are educated and resent the traditional male attitude towards woman. All the three characters, the representatives of modern women dislike being treated as helpless children under the protection of men. The three woman characters Vineeta, Indu and Maya revolt against the old Sanskaras and struggle to come out of that disgusting shackles.

Another facet of the modern educated woman relates to financial independence. Until the sixties and seventies, man was supposed to be the only bread-winner. So, his wishes, likes and dislikes were respected at the cost of woman's: but the modern woman has proved herself to be capable of earning money along with her traditional household work.

For years, women have been under the care of either husband, father or, brother or children. They have yielded to wishes and whims of the males; but the modern women try to assert their own wishes and whims. So, Indu decides to resign her routine job to take up a creative career; Maya asks Gautama to take her to the south, as she likes
Kathakali dances; Maya shows her natural reactions at the pet dog's death, though Gautama calls her chattering like a monkey.

Vineeta declares to go to Nagendra's friend's marriage, though Nagendra dislikes it. No doubt, the modern woman has started the fight against the tradition, but the fight is tough, it is rather a crusade. So long woman is with man, life flows smoothly with feeling of security and togetherness. The absence of that togetherness brings out feeling of alienation in woman. As long as they uncomplainingly accepted and practised the age-old male-dominated tradition and customs like clearing up the mess with her bare hands after each meal, eating off the same dirty plate her husband had eaten earlier, getting married and bearing children, sharing the belief that "a woman can't live her life alone," accepting to be "obedient and unquestioning, looking at husband as a "definite and permanent article, she feels secure.

The modernism in women encourages them to oppose and break the long-preserved motions and taboos, but this crusade, unfortunately has sometimes made modern
women feel alone and alienated.

For Indu a modern woman marriage is " a system which makes one so dependent.(R.S. 117)" ; "love" is " a big fraud, a hoax, a trap -- a process of making one humble and dependent." She revolts against monogamy to be observed by woman only. So, she develops an affair with Naren. Vineeta, a widow makes love with Abhijit ; Maya fearlessly asserts her point of view by " telling Gautama," You knew nothing of me, and how I can love. How I want to love ; How it is important to me ; But you, you've never loved." (C.P. 112). In another situation, Gautama wants Maya to listen to him, but then she says," Now " and further adds," You listen to me tonight." (113). This is the voice of the new woman. Despite the courage, assertiveness and boldness, the modern women, on such occasions suffer from the feelings of loneliness and alienation which is natural for these women passing through a transitional phase.

No doubt, the Indian woman novelists speak much in favour of women, but they do not ignore to highlight the suffering of these women and hold them responsible for these sufferings. A woman like Indu vows to start a new life based
on honesty; but, the next moment she breaks the same vow by saying that she would hide certain secret from Jayant. In (T.A.221) Vineeta asks Abhijit

"You must go away. You must give me a real chance to deal with my problems in my own way,"

but when Abhijit actually goes away, she reflects,

" I thought, when he comes back, in his own time, I would be able to tell him that I loved him."

In Cry, the Peacock Maya internally rebels against Gautama for his autocratic and selfish behaviour. She knows the fact,

" In his [Gautama's] world there were vast areas, in which he would never permit me and he couldn't understand that I could even wish to enter them, foreign as they were to me.(104)

They are physically together, but emotionally apart. She notes it, resents it and yet prefers to live with
him. She does not have the courage to leave him and live the life of her choice. The woman is aware of her problems and solutions to the problems but she has not been able to give up fear within. So, she must shake off fear to live without fear, ... fear of being unloved, misjudged, misunderstood, displeasing, without the fear of failure." (R.S.191). In her quest for liberation she has fallen victims of some complexes. She realises it very well that woman is basically a woman as well as a person. As a woman she needs man but as a person she can, claim to be free and independent but practically, in her social system the two identities of woman and person have been rolled into one i.e. only a woman. Therefore, Vineeta interprets even her womenly instincts as dependence. At one point she needs Nagendra's touch, but then she says,

"I resented the sure response his hands could wake in my body." (T.A.18)

If a man's casual touch does that to her, she must, really be in a bad way." (66).

To Indu, even wifely attachment for Jayant makes
her wonder,

" Am I on way to becoming an ideal woman? " A woman who sheds her "I", who loses her identity in husband's? (R.S.54).

This shows that attraction, love, hate, tiffs are different shades of life. Without these elements life will be abnormal. So, woman must make some compromises, (when needs arise) at the cost of her separate identity for the smooth flow of life. She must revolt only when some severe injustice is inflicted upon her.

Another weakness in modern women is the overdose of suspicion and doubt. This is clearly seen in almost all the woman characters. Abhijit returns from Ahmedabad but without any deliberate plan, does not inform Vineeta of his arrival; this pains Vineeta a lot and when, Abhijit visits her and asks her to stay with her, she reacts thus,

" What do you want me to stay? So I can make more of a fool of myself? or do you feel proud
that you have so much power over me? Shall I describe in detail how desperately lonely I was without you, how hurt because you didn't write? Will that make you feel even better? (T.A.132)

Similarly, Maya accuses Gautama of treating her as a tiresome child and of calling her as a third-rate poetess's mind, he sincerely denies them; but Maya overlooks that and asserts,

"You did, and you believe it now. Because I love you." (C.P.113)

So is Indu. She starts suspecting the intention of all men. When she is asked by Naren, about her expectation from Jayant, she says,


So being practical and rational, the modern woman must understand that blind submission and as well as unwarranted suspicion is unwarranted.
The position of woman in general and an Indian woman in particular has been paradoxical. She is the key or the master figure in the family, but she has lived the life of slavery, subjugation, suffering and suppression. Of late, she has become conscious of her rights and responsibilities, distress and destination she has started the war against all the injustice meted out to her. The war has started, but it is not easy to reach the goal, because, it is against some human elements like ego, greed, ambition, selfishness, sadism etc. At present, the Indian woman of the modern age is passing through a twilight period. The most needed message for her is

"Assert yourself.. Don't suppress it; let it grow and flourish never mind how many things it destroys in the bargain." (R.S.115)

At the same time, it must be remembered by her that smoothness in relationship between man and woman is not possible through constitution and legislation alone; mutual understanding, love, respect, and dilution of ego as shown by Rama Mehta in Inside the Haveli also play a vital role in maintaining the relationship.
1.2 Tradition and Modernity

When we discuss the treatment of human relationship in earlier Indian English fictions in general, we find that it has been depicted in a traditional context. The themes themselves reflect the old, orthodox values and concepts. Irrespective of social structure, values, customs and problems existing in different parts of India, the themes of the Indian English fictions are typical standing in sharp contrast with English fictions in England, America or elsewhere. Most of these novels depict an idealistic tendency. Speaking about man-woman relationship in Indian English fiction, Meenakshi Mukerjee points out that the man-woman relationship in which the man's role is dynamic and the woman's passive is a pattern that goes very deep into the Indian ethos. This ideal is such an important part of the Indian mind that a woman character is always expected to be the symbol of purity and goodness. No one asks whether the novelist has chosen the material from real life or he has followed a literary convention only. In the earlier Indian novels written in English the women are portrayed as devoted, submissive, faithful, loyal and sacrificing. This is because, the characters are modelled upon the women in the
Ramayana and the Puranas. The Ramayana, not the Mahabharata is preferred to be the source of literary inspiration. The Mahabharata deals with evil in its various forms - adultery, deception, rape, treachery, pride, lust, etc. Every form of human depravity has been handled here in a very realistic manner. But, the Ramayana, being the source of inspiration, many harsh or evil aspects of man-woman relationship or position of woman in the family and society have been ignored.

As T.D. Brunton says, tradition has been more like a dead weight on Indian English writers rather than a fertilizing influence. This dead weight makes an Indian writer of English fiction handicapped in depicting a character with a psychological insight into human nature. Therefore, the art of fiction has been made secondary to the ideal or cultural values. So, the novels of this type are valued not for any artistic value, but for their content of national quintessence.

The period extending from 1900 to the present day can be considered modern as during the said interval of time several events of great importance have affected the life of
human beings - both rural and urban. Science, being on the forefront has brought many changes on every aspect of life. For a long time compelled to remain inside the four walls, never saying 'no' to their male counterparts, the Indian women are exercising their right of equality. T.V., radio, and magazines having a wide reach, particularly in urban area, have propelled each of them to show that she is more modern than her next-door neighbour. Many myths of social taboos have been shattered to be much-liked phenomena. "The gyre is widening; the centre cannot hold ..."

Sita and Savitri are now role models of the past for many women. For them, cine stars and models having ultra modern life style are the new role models. At the slightest provocation the modern women take their husbands to task. The crossover from sacred matrimony to formidable divorce seems to have been reduced to seemingly inconsequential issues. When psychologists (like Sanjay Chugh) refer to it as defence of 'comfort zone', others call it 'bickering over trivial issues'. But all of them agree that it is leading to a restructuring of marital boundaries. Ritu Menon of Kali for women, a publishing house calls it 'the economic independence of women'. Some say that it is the '
breakdown of the male-female prototype in households that has made space an issue in an Indian marriage, now.

In bedrooms, choice of books and C.D.s 'His' and 'Her' labels are marked. Space has become a zealously guarded possession, an in some cases, the new mother-in-law in a marriage.

If separate living spaces signified marital problems earlier, for post-liberalisation adults in their 20s and early 30s with too many channels, choices and work-pressures that make time a precious commodity, it is an acknowledgement of individual preferences and life styles. According to Chugh, women are no longer expected to conform to the traditional stereotype of the ideal spouse and men are no longer allowed to conform to it. So, claiming separate ownership does not apply only to gadgetry and bathrooms, but also to social circles. Richa Lahri, a P.R. executive in Delhi says, 'We have seen our parents live out of each other's wallets and cupboards. It does not have to be that way any more. My mother was required to accompany my father, an army man, to official parties. I am thankful I am not expected to do it. There is no peer pressure either; it is understood that women have careers and don't have to tag along with their spouses.'
Experts say, a large part of this transformation has to do with how women perceive their roles. Arpita Anand, a counsellor says, 'Couples enter into a wedlock thinking it will be only one of the roles they will perform and that it will not keep them from fulfilling other roles. Therefore, literature from the Indian sub-continent, though continues to romanticise suffocation in the marital maze, for a whole generation of women, individuality has become a way of life rather than a yearning whined about in agony columns. The fast paced reality of jobs and hectic social lives leave little time for pondering and resentment. Shimona's husband Anoop and Shimona herself are associate lawyers at top rated firms in Delhi. They often take separate holidays. Many of Shimona's friends are single and she teams up with them for a weekend in Goa or the south. Anoop is often too busy to take time off, but does not see why it should come in the way of Shimona's holidays. His relatives, however, find it odd and have mentioned it to his parents.

Mrs. and Mr Lahri also enjoy separate holidays with no resentment or grumbling. Counsellors say, an increased need for individualisation, specifically expressed by women, is on the rise. No doubt, domestic violence,
resentment over domestic chores and lack of emotional support by men continue to be the prime reasons for marital discord, but problems like - clash of different work-cultures, the woman's insistence on including her family and friends in her life on a daily basis and the right to use material possessions - bought jointly - are now among the top five reasons for marital discord.

In the changing scenario, the awareness among women has got its reflection in literature also. Both novelists and poets, especially of the second generation - Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Rama Mehta, Jai Nimbkar, Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande and others show the rebelling attitude of the woman characters in their works. Roots and Shadows by Shashi Deshpande, Temporary Answers by Jai Nimbkar and the novels of Anita Desai speak much of the concerns.

1.3 Identity Crisis

The novels of Anita Desai are an exploration of individuals, their passions and emotions. Dealing with the
innerselves of her characters, Desai exposes, the growth of the protagonist from self-alienation to self-identification. J.P. Tripathy discovers a "pattern of positive growth in her novels. Thus, the hysterical and saturnine abnormality in Cry the Peacock gives away to a jovial, delectable and diurnal life view in Clear Light of Day and In Custody. The progress of the self in her novels is from self-desertion to self-assertion; from neurotic phobias and diseases to normalcy; from unreason to reason; from disorder to order. Desai's characters like Maya and Monisha invite their tragic realities by self-denial and self-annihilation, by their stubbornness in not succumbing to the trivil and mundane realities of life but Deven and Bim realize that willing submission and acceptance of existence will lead to fulfilment through positive self-alienation and not through destructive self-abnegation.

In almost all her novels, the images of isolation in the beginning gradually lead to the images of affirmation. The self is found to have mustered courage to assert itself, though, it is through the abnormal and the unnatural. The rational manifests in the irrational. Most of her characters who are disintegrated and fragmented in the beginning
attain integration and harmonious wholeness towards the end. In *Cry, The Peacock*, Maya is torn between the inner and outer reality. Matrimonial silence and temperamental disparities are the causes of her woes and despair. The intense feeling of isolation pushes her into their mythical world of fables and fantasy. Her initial obsession in death, desolatron and violence symbolized by the dance image, the image of albino, and the dead Toto take her away from life. Put in an estranged world, she begins to identify herself with caged birds, monkeys and bears or in a disturbed or agitated state with the tempestuous dust-storms. But all the morbid images soon faint when she discovers that she loves life. It is her overwhelming desire to live, her spiritual identification with life that shifts the death sentence on to Gautama, and urges her to kill him. The Natraj becomes, at the end, a symbol of liberation and identification. In the process of her individuation, Maya comes out of her isolated death dungeon and moves towards self-affirmation.

In *Voices in the City* the three main characters viz. Nirode, Amla and Monisha, like their mother are alienated from society. Nirode is a visionary, a rootless nihilist, a psychic outlaw. He has developed the habit of withdrawal; to
such an extent that he becomes more and more weary of contact and companionship. He remains alienated from his mother whom he calls, "that old she cannibal." A "broken bird in the aviary" (129) he condemns the world as well as himself. The indifference of his family members towards him, makes him feel castaway and forlorn. Loneliness was his natural condition. He moves from self-alienation to self-idealization which he hardly achieves and is reduced to the identity of a "Shrunken, etiolated, wasted thing." (139) dedicated to nothing. Like Hamlet, Nirode is also overpowered by dilemma "to move or not to move."

"I would never go to David. I never shall pack my bags. I arrive at the station and when I have one foot in the train, I hesitate." (39)

Monisha's death brings a great change in Nirode. He realises something that he had not realized so far. He draws the conclusion that wisdom lies not in avoiding the expense but in making the journey worth the expense. With that realisation he begins to identify with the suffering of others. When Monisha was alive, he was and indifferent towards her sufferings, but after her death,
"Nirode's silence broke and fell away. In a brief flash of comprehension, he realized what he must do. He must take Monisha away. (246)

At intervals Nirode said,

"Go to sleep Amla, go to sleep, I will stay."

To his aunt he would say,

"Go to bed, aunt, you must have some rest." (248)

Filled with an immense care of the world, he reaches out to touch Amla's hand

"He pressed them to him with hunger and joy, as if here joiced in this sensation of touching other flesh, other's pains longed to make them mingle with his own, which till now had been agonizingly neglected." (248)

Like Nirode, Monisha is also alonging for release.
Disgusted with the monstrous life her innerlife is crying silently. Her relationship with her husband is marked by loneliness, despair, silence and discontent. A life full of hollowness haunts her. Between such a mean existence and death, for she identifies herself with death, it is death which delivers her from the hard existence.

Amla is a rebellious and disgruntled self, who undergoes different psychic situations. Her movement from revolt to conformity ends in surrender and resignation. She explores and explores ultimately discovers her real identity with her emotional attachment to Dharma. Her inner emptiness and her disgust for the ugly and conspiring metropolis finds its aesthetic identification in the paintings of Dharma. Isolated from the relentless pressure of the world around her, she struggles to connect herself with nature in order to feel and complete. Dharma's art gives her life a new meaning. The identity of the artist ultimately merges with the identity of art.

Anita Desai's another novel *Bye-Bye, Black Bird* speaks much of the self-discovery of the educated Indian immigrants. There, we find the her characters oscillating
between self-alienation and self-identification. The novel describes the psychological process of the immigrants who try their best to adjust themselves with an alien soil.

Seeking emotional identification with his new home, Dev tries hard to discover his own identity in a strong social set-up. Sandwiched between acceptance and rejection he undergoes severe intellectual and emotional tortures and lack of decision and choice results in a psychic deadlock. The search for self-identification leads Dev and Adit to two different ends. The feeling of "otherness" in Adit, after his visit to the in-laws makes him an anglophobic and forces him to say good bye to London. On the other hand, the emotional identification with English country, side makes Dev an anglophile from an anglophobe.

The worst affected character in this novel is Sarah. Marrying an Indian like Adit, she is alienated from her own culture and also from her individual self. Being cut loose from her moorings, she begins to drift round and round heavily and giddily, as though caught in a slow whirlpool of dark, deep water.
Sarah fails in her efforts to discover her identity and attain self-actualization in the life of Adit and Sarah, the fusion of two cultural traditions takes place when Adit decides to return to India.

In Anita Desai's another novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, the protagonist Sita suffers from feelings of hollowness and waste, futility and nothingness. The sense of loneliness haunts her husband. She feels alienated not only from her husband, but from the children too.

"They had betrayed her. She prefers to withdraw into the protective chrysalis of childhood" (63).

She is yet to attain consummation as a human being. Escaping to the island, she realizes that part of her self, that she had not realized earlier.

The escape to the island suggests her attempt at self-identification. Therefore, ultimately she reconciles with life, accepts it and drifts with the current of life. Her final identification is with life, not with death. This psychological change in Sita convinces her that all reality is
existence; that there is no reality beyond the one that one lives. Her self-identification turns a neurotic Sita to a practical Sita. The life that she had been rejecting, becomes for her a source of optimism. Despair disappears, life assumes a new look only when has she discovered her true-self.

In her another novel Fire in the Mountain, Raka and Nanda Kaul choose self-destructive isolation as an escape from their self-contradictory conflicts. Their narrow world shuts them out from the outside world; at the same time, they are also alienated from their own selves. Nanda Kaul has been living all these years, all alone, "with no one and nothing else." Doubly alienated from her overbusy and hedonistic husband and also from the children, she revels in her life's "barenness, its emptiness." Raka to her is an "outsider". but Raka does not feel alienated as she is basically a child of solitude. She identifies herself with the desolation and bareness.

Failures of her life develop the extremes of self-hate and self-despair. Though at the outset Nanda Kaul thinks Raka to be an outsider, gradually she tries to capture
her interest and longs for her company and love. Usha Bande rightly points out that the need to reclaim Raka's love indicates Nanda's unconscious longing to be loved. Thus, Raka's seclusion helps Nanda Kaul in realizing her own self. According to Shyam Asnani,

"The demented wandering of Raka and her complete identification with the place transforms Nanda so much that she comes to terms with the myths which shrouded the hard realities of her bygone days as daughter, wife and mother."

Both Nanda and Raka are "components of the barrenness and stillness of the Carignano garden." Nanda's final revelation of tenderness and love for Raka is an emotional identification with her juvenile self of bygone days. She is the fragment of what Raka is a complete whole.

In another novel Clear Light of Day we find Bim grappling to discover her own self. In her struggle to realize her own self, she suffers from intra-psychic conflicts. Usha Bande says,
"Slowly out of the vignette of a disgruntled spinster, emerges a woman of seraphic vision of the clear light of day, of clear sunshine."

We mark a positive growth in her self, because her trapped self continues her journey till it establishes a viable and enduring contact with her surroundings. Bim rejects Aurangzeb as he is the symbol of ego-centricity. Only after disowning him, she attains self-awareness. She disowns her fake self to realise her real self. This is clear when she, like a mother takes care of mentally-retarded Baba. She identifies herself with the balustrades. This change in her psychology makes her forget all the bitterness that had taken her away from Raja and Tara. Now, she shares with the weal and woe of other characters. She discovers her real self not in self-insulation but in self-actualization. Now she awakes, all dualities vanish. Bim discovers herself.

In Desai's novels, we find that the protagonists, most of them being women, suffer from the identity crisis. Initially, they suffer because they cannot realise their real identity. Therefore, they invite all the problems -- moral, psychological, social and emotional. Standing at the cross
road of reality and illusion, most of her characters find themselves alienated. They discover the authentic existence only when do they strike a balance between the constructive and destructive aspects of self-identification.

1.4 Husband - Wife Alienation

Anita Desai distinguishes herself from her contemporaries by not being hypocritical in exposing the institution of marriage in the modern context. Most of her novels deal with the themes like the existential problem, the alienation of the modern woman suffering as a result of maladjustment in marriage.

She treats marriages in her novels as more or less business transaction, the under-counter profits naturally handed over to the male partner.

In an interview she says,

"Writing is a process of discovering the truth --- the truth that is nine-tenths of the iceberg that lies submerged
beneath the one-tenth visible portion of what we call reality. Writing is my way of plunging to the depths and exploring this underlying truth. All my writing is an effort to discover, to underline and convey the true significance of things."

This clearly shows her interest in thought, emotion and sensation than with action, experience and achievement.

Her novels speak of the catch-22 situation a woman is put in and her destruction at the altar of marriage. As she believes, most marriages, prove to be union of incompatibility. Man being practical and rational and woman being sentimental & emotional, their approaches and reactions to the same situations are different.

Desai's first novel, Cry, the Peacock sets the pattern for her other novels. The protagonists Gautama and Maya and all other couples around them are victims of the existential problem resulting out of maladjustment in marriage. Maya's marriage to Gautama is more or less a marriage of convenience. The disparities between them are clearly stated in this way -
Maya with her "round, childish face, pretty, plump and pampered ... The small, shell-like ears curling around pretty ignorance, the soft, overful lips, ... the long, curled lashes and the very heavy, very dark black brows, the silly collection of curls...... choice of a posy " (105)

Gautama is tall, thin, gray haired, having stooped form, pallid skin, nicotine-stained long, bony fingers, practical matter - of - fact approach and clumsy mannerisms. Their marriage lacks the basic quality of an ordinary marriage. So, Maya whispers,

Is there nothing in you that would be touched ever so slightly, if I told you I live my life for you ? (114).

This excess involvement of Maya and Gautama lacking it completely leads to Maya's psychosis. In four years, Maya is transformed into a neurotic homicidal manic from an ordinary hypersensitive child-bride. This results from Maya's hard efforts to compromise with maladjusted
marriage. The peculiar element in this novel is that neither Maya nor Gautama is responsible for their tragedy. Gautama is dutiful and loves Maya in his own way. He is tired with Maya's childish tantrums; still he loves her. On the other hand, Maya's volatile temperament defeats the very purpose of her all-consuming love and her heart is crushed with the depression. There had been .... a stone, a wound. (210). But the communication and comprehension gap is too deep and broad to be bridged by good intentions and intense love. Thus, it ultimately leads the victims to the tragic end.

In this novel, Maya is shocked at the apathy, hypocrisy and hatred revealed through other marriages around her. Her mother finds no mention in the novel. Gautama's parents also lived an unnatural conjugal life. Each of them was too busy to care for the other. They only showed outwardly that theirs was a normal conjugal life.

Her friend Leila is also a victim of maladjusted marital life. Her husband is a T.B. patient, but it was on her own accord that she had fallen in love with him and against her parents' willingness had married him only to bear a cross of her own. Mr. and Mrs Lal also suffer from this
disharmonious relationship. Mrs Lal publicly condemns her husband as a charlatan, and an opportunist, revealing the gloomy side of a sacred institution like marriage. Nila, a divorcee declares,

"After ten years with that rabbit I married, I have learnt to do everything myself."

Plump and pampered Pom has complaints against Kailash who is unwilling to have a separate establishment. Mrs Sapru pleads tearfully with Maya's lawyer father that makes her more disdainful.

Desai's second novel *Voices in the City* shows this maladjustment in marriage with a wider aspect. The disturbed relationship affects the children, friends and other relations also.

The marriage of Nirode's parents is also a marriage of convenience. The husband is boasting of his family name and title, of having the tea-estates and a house. The corrosive relationship ultimately transforms the father from an easy-going, sports loving, fond father into a drunkard.
debased and dishonourable creature. This changes the mother from a sensitive, accomplished, beautiful young woman to a coldly practical and possessive woman lacking all human warmth and tenderness even for her own children. Amla tells Dharma

"I saw such terrible contempt and resentment in her eyes .... when he came to Kalimpong, he never followed her. He used to lie back against his cousins; idle, and contented in his malice I think (207).

This sorts of relationship seem to be more terrible and fearsome than Dante's purgatory, because this maladjustment burns its victims continuously all day, each day, chasing them step by step.

Amla and Jiban are another couple falling prey to this accursed relationship. Amla asks, "Why did I marry?" (198).

This disturbing relationship like a slow-poison transforms a sensitive, quiet, beautiful, mildly self-centred girl like Amla
to a barren, neurotic, diary-writing woman.

Her head, ... was like that of a stuffed ragdoll, with
a very white face, nodding, insecurely on its neck,
its eyebrows, and mouth painted unnaturally dark.

(160)

She lives in Jiban's house, shares his bed, serves
Jiban's family, is accused of stealing Jiban's money and it is
Jiban who gently covers her charred body and begs
forgiveness from her relatives. But her death at last cut off
the bonds that mutilated her soul and body in life, and
Monisha, "is taken away, unaccompanied by them, in peace."

Aunt Leila hates men, particularly her obese and
self-satisfied husband. Rita's marriage is short-lived.
Sonny's two married sisters married life (Lila's and Rina's)
speaks much of the relationship." Lila had married for a
title....

Jit Nair and Sarla suffer from distrust and disgust
for each other. Mrs Basu is nothing but an attractive play
thing for Mr Basu. He tolerates her thing to the extent that
they are not unpleasant and unacceptable. Arun's wife, a nurse lives in her world of medicines and has nothing in common with Arun. Sonny's father admits with noisy laughter

"Babulpur was there for my wife, and for the occasional visit to reassure the tenants, so to speak."

For Dharma, marriage relationships are never straightforward and ordered. Thus, Anita Desai shows marriage as a farce, rather a cancerous growth that slowly but steadily destroys body, mind and soul completely.

In her other novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* also Anita Desai throws light on husband-wife alienation. Sita's marriage to Raman was not based on proper understanding or love. The marriage was settled " and finally -- out of pity, out of lust, out of a sudden will for adventure and because it was inevitable, he married her."

From the very beginning it was clear that the marriage was destined to collapse and it collapsed when Sita went to Manori islands. She went there to get rid of
delivering her fifth child (through miracle). She was tired of the violent and murderous world and it was not beyond her capacity to compromise any more by delivering another child. Sita represents the woman who, as a mother, wife and woman is a victim of utter loneliness imposed upon her by family and society. The ongoing clash between the hypocritical world and her inherent honesty resisting her to make any compromise results in her mental disturbance. This changes Sita, an ordinary wife and mother to a creature

"who lost all feminine, all maternal belief in childbirth, all faith in it and began to fear it as yet one more act of violence and murder in a world that had more of them in it than she could take."

Sita's husband Raman was a businessman having purely business attitude to life. He had no time to think for Sita. So, once Sita said about his businessminded freinds, They frighten me -- appal me.

Raman not being introvert, or extrovert -- a middling kind of man, he was dedicated unconsciously to the middle way.
"Living with Sita, Raman never knew that Sita was bored, dull, unhappy and frantic.

So, Sita says,

"They are nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter. Animals." (47)

Sita's peculiar existence is nicely described as follows,

"She was always waiting. Physically she resigned, she could not inwardly accept that this was all there was to life, that life would continue thus, inside this small, enclosed area, with these few characters churning around, and then past her, leaving her always in this grey, dull, empty shell. I am waiting, she agreed -- although for what, she could not tell." (54)

Her mental state forces her to rebel at the time of the imminent delivery.
"She would not wait for it to come, for anything to happen, - for happenings were always violent."

(55)

Sita who was feeling insecure always, needed the solidity of streets, the security of houses.

Sita had never thought of married life to be full of dullness, hopelessness, boredom and disappointments.

"To her Raman had been sent by providence only to put an end to the theatrical era of her life, her strange career and lead her out of the ruined theatre into the then sun light of the ordinary, the everyday, the empty and the meaningless (100)"

Knowing that, accepting that, she knew it was because ordinary life, the everyday world had grown so insufferable to her that she could think of the magic island again as of release. (101) "If reality were not to be borne, then illusion was the only alternative". (101)
Sita made compromise for years together despite her passive resistance. Seeing the Muslim woman loved by a man in the Hanging Gardens (145-146) she says,

".They made me see my own life, like a shadow, absolutely flat, uncoloured."(147)

But, it is too much for her."

It all became harder than ever before, for me. Very hard -this making of compromises when one didn't want to compromise, when one wanted to - to -." (148)

Then Sita says,

" Put up with it? It would be cowardly to put up with it (143).

The conjugal life of Sita's parents was also not a happy one. Her mother, tortured and neglected by her father had run away to Benares.
The same aspect of life i.e. marital disharmony forms the basic ingredient of Desai’s two novels *Fire on the Mountain* and *Clear Light of the Day*. The existence of Nanda Kaul as described in *Fire on the Mountain* gives a very vivid picture of the stark reality Nanda Kaul’s marriage with her Mr. Kaul was purely based on physical lust and circumstantial convenience for the man. Though outwardly their married life seems to be normal, all is not well. Nanda Kaul looks after the family, his children, his house, shutting the doors, supervising cooks and servants; she keeps herself ready to entertain the visitors; but Mr Kaul keeps his beloved Miss Davidson on the teaching staff, drops her back at night and comes back secretly to his separate bedroom. Always with a frozen smile on her face but with a burning, soul-destroying hatred for her husband, she desires a blessed widowhood. She prefers a life with absolute solitude sans man and children. The death of her husband signals her long cherished freedom from a jailor and escape from the condemned cell of spiritual annihilation. The conjugal lives of Tara, Mrs Kaul’s granddaughter and Ila Das are also not harmonious.

**In Clear Light of Day** the chronic physical
illness of the wife is at the root of the marital disharmony. This alienates her from her husband and the children. Her marriage (whole marriage) was a card house, anaemic reproduction in faded water colours of a flesh and blood marriage. She is forgotten after her death. Raja and Tara escaped in marriage. Bim stayed to look after her retarded brother Baba. Baba is the victim of that maladjusted marriage.

Tara and Bakul's married life is similar to the married life of Maya and Gautama. Tara is saner than Maya and Bakul is not indifferent as Gautama. But there also the unhealthy relationship leads to the catastrophe.

"He even came close to her & touched her cheek, very lightly, as if he could hardly bear the unpleasant contact but forced himself to do it out of compassion. She felt that she had followed him enoughly; it had been such an enormous strain, always pushing against her strain, it had drained her of too much strength, now she could only collapse, inevitably, collapse." (18)
Bakul's marriage with Tara was also a marriage of convenience - Bakul, a junior diplomat always expected Tara to be a docile wife. On the other hand, Tara always wanted to escape from the dark, disease ridden house into the shining world of youth, laughter and comforts. Love had no place in their marriage; they accepted their marriage as a form of biological need, no more, no less. It was a wonderfully practical and peaceful marriage. But finally, the sanctity of marriage was lost and Tara's spiritual emptiness haunted her again and again. Raja married Benazir more for her property. Bim's married life is also not happy one. The Mishra daughters, Jaya & Sarla were once married but after being used they were thrown away like old pieces of comfortless furniture.

In her another novel Bye-Bye Black Bird, the marital disharmony is clearly dealt with. Outwardly, Adit and Sarah are happy but at heart they are afraid of imminent rejection, distrust and pity from their own people. This fear turns them into involuntary escapists. The two characters are full of paradoxes. Adit has no hesitation in sacrificing self-respect and loyalty to India to become a perfect babu in England whereas Sarah only to escape the dullness of an
English home dies at heart to become an integral part of an Indian family. This contradictory ideological pursues lie at the root of their marital disharmony. Sarah is more sincere in her efforts; so, she suffers more than her counterpart.

"She had so little command over these two charades she played each day, one in the morning at school, and one in the evening at home, that she could not even tell with how much sincerely she played one role or the other." (38)

Sarah is a sensitive and reserved woman. Though she feels insecure she does not express it overtly. Her feelings of insecurity and instability resulting from her marriage is reflected when she says,

"I have never been to a Hindu wedding; so, I don't know how to compare, but I know that a christian wedding is touching and charming and heart-wriving. (217)

Samar and Bella's marriage is also not smooth and happy. Bella speaks out during the party,
"just think, if they had caught an Indian doing it, they would have gone on and on about immigrants in London and how would you have felt getting a bad name for your people?"

A very volatile situation is presented when Desai writes

"Two Indians, two English women frozen in the stances .... (25)

The marriage of Mala and Jasbir also turns farcical. Their maladjusted marriage has made Jasbir an overloud, unpolished careless clown and Mala has become a dishvelled, impractical, impolite, idle young woman who relates with the story of her young son who shouts, "I am grey, grey, not black," when pursued by English children.

In this novel Mrs Roscommon James scolds her husband.

"She scolded him in tones that would lead any one not present in the room to think that she was speaking to an
unusually naughty and tiresome dog, he never answered.

This shows much of their disturbed family life. Sarah is also aware of the disturbed relationship between her father and mother.

Mr Miller opposes his wife; Mrs Gummidge growls at her husband every morning as he stares at Sarah. Adit's typical answer to Dev speaks lot about Indian married couples. He says,

"the married couples in India are not in parks, they are at home quarrelling.

Anita Desai as a novelist speaks the unpleasant truth of life and is successful in convincing her readers to accept it. She treats marriage as a social contract based on human convenience and biological needs. Therefore, her heroes and heroines banish the very element "LOVE" from their conjugal life. She also shows in her novels that though marriage is associated with all sorts of unwanted horrors, only few can escape it. So, the characters (mostly the female characters) seek freedom but as it is conditioned they are not granted it. So, her characters face the reality in three
ways by --
(i) committing suicide and homicide,
(ii) hoping for the better and
(iii) living with it.

1.5 Cultural Transplants

To quote the French naturalist and philosopher Rosseau, 'Man is born free but everywhere he is in chain.' Irrespective of his awareness and status, being a part of a large system called society, man finds himself in chain. Wisely or foolishly, he has to abide by the prevailing traditions, customs and mores that form part of culture. Do's and Don'ts may be prescriptive but he cannot discard them on the ground of not being normative. Seldom does he venture to swim against the current. Not that everything that the society prescribes is irrational, but some of them are certainly notional, not shattering the general and broad concept of good and evil. What is acceptable in a culture, may not necessarily be acknowledged in all the known cultures of the world. A particular behaviour or act may come under Do's in a culture whereas the same may come under Don'ts in some other culture. But when a person knowingly
or unknowingly swims against the current he is subject to mental torture and sometimes physical torture also by his own fellows. Man being social, it is not so easy on his part to revolt against the society and prove himself just because the society has labelled it as a part of culture. In an alien culture also, man feels insecure as he finds the deviation in patterns affecting his life as a whole.

Dev and Adit, the immigrant Indians in *Bye-Bye Black Bird* "find themselves trapped in England, because they are in a country which is culturally different from their motherland.

The systemic influence of the cultural difference on Dev's life makes his condition like that of the eternal immigrants who can never accept their new home and continue to walk the streets like strangers, enemies, in territory, frozen, listless but dutifully trying to be busy, unobtrusive and, however superficially, to belong."

Dev is shocked at entirely different patterns of life in England. In England he finds everyone a stranger and living in hiding. They live silently and invisibly. It could
happen nowhere in India.

Because he is an Indian, he fails to understand why Englishmen should try to be shut up in their own homes.

"The English habit of keeping all doors and windows tightly shut ... of guarding their privacy as they guarded their tongues ... remains incomprehensible to him."

Dev finds in England that there are separate lavatories for Indians. London docks have three kinds of lavatories - Ladies, Gents and Asiatics. At every step he, being an Indian, is made to feel as if he were in prison.

Though Dev has accepted English culture and way of life, he finds himself an outsider. In the words of the novelist, "It is a strange summer, the outraged outsider and thrilled sightseer -- all at once and in succession.

Adit criticised Dev for accepting a subordinate position in England. He thinks that the immigrant Indians are awfully submissive to the British.
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Sarah's mother Rosscommon's behaviour hurts Adit. In Indian culture a son-in-law demands a special place in his in-law's house; but in England he is not given that position and is rather hurt. This cultural alienation urges Adit to go back to India.

The racial discrimination is peculiar in Sarah's case. Though a white girl, having an Indian husband she is humiliated by her own community. Even her colleagues tease her. Julia remarks,

"If she's that ashamed of having an Indian husband, why did she go and marry him?"

Her mental state is described in these words -

Who was she -- Mrs. Sen who had been married in a red and gold Benares brocade sari one burning bronzed day in September, or Mrs. Sen, the Head's secretary -- They were roles - and when she was not playing them, she was no body. Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume. Where was
Sarah? .... She wondered, with great sadness, if she would ever be allowed to step off the stage, leave the theatre and enter the real world whether English or Indian, she did not care. She wanted only its sincerity, its truth.

Smoking by women may not be objectionable in Western culture, but in the Indian context it is not accepted. So, Sita's smoking in Where Shall We Go This Summer? provokes her in-laws and creates tension in the family.