THE MAZE OF CHAOS

Women in this large social and cosmic infrastructure of the universe were displaced at some point of time. Her role and contribution in the functioning of this superstructure is either ignored or sided away as marginal or peripheral. Feminist movement as such is woman’s urge for being rooted and regenerated. It specifies her need to have a say (voice), possess a space and live for her fulfilment. Marriage is the sole justification for a woman’s existence in India. The focus on a relentless stamping out of female identity gives a grim picture of Indian womanhood. There is physical, emotional and economic exploitation. Marriage is not just an individual choice but also an economic transaction of two families. Marriage does not provide the conditions necessary for individual growth. In spite of that, marriage remains the predominant institution for most young women in Hindu culture. Through special rituals maidens aspire to gain a husband so that they can procure a respected and accepted place in the society.

A woman before marriage is petted and pampered. Though she is always reminded of her departure all the time she is not taxed too much physically and emotionally. Yet she is not given an opportunity to realize what she wants from life or whom she wishes to marry. Parents make all decisions and she ceases to be a person in her own right.

After marriage, women fret and rebel against male domination and other things attached to a woman as a wife, housekeeper and ideal mother. Only
procreation and fertility give a woman the much coveted status. The psyche of a married woman is agonized on three levels – physical, mental and spiritual. They are torn between the memories of the past and the realities of the present. With the boom of an unpleasant and an unacceptable situation, nostalgic feelings get stirred up.

A married woman is transplanted from her native parental bondage to a new set of relationships. Until she gets re-rooted to establish a strong man - woman relationship whole heartedly, there exerts fear, conflicts and frustration which in an extreme case leads to conflict and separation of the family. The conflict arises as a result of an imbalance between dreams or private fantasies and the bare realities. Such recurrent patterns of action, symbols, character types, dreams, myths or themes are held to be the result of elemental and universal forms of the patterns in human psyche.

The incompatibility between the husband and wife gives the woman a sense of alienation. The inability to belong to both her father’s and husband’s family makes her desperate, as all her expectation go unsatiated. On the contrary she has to meet the expectations of others. The housewife is supposed to have more aspirations outside the family. Her desire ought to be to take care of the house and that is the perfect prelude to the making of a mother. She is looked forward to manage the household, breed, and take care of the kids and also man’s needs.

What a woman wants the most is understanding, sharing, participation and above all recognition – the recognition as an individual that is denied to her.
She is always a shadow of her husband. The longing to be a person in her own right and not as a possession of man, ends in dissatisfaction. The wife wants equality, involvement and continuity within marriage but these desires are not given due importance as man is egoistic.

From birth a girl child is taught the imminence of marriage and is prepared for being a wife and mother. She is instructed to be self sacrificing at all times for the sake of the family. She is expected to confirm to this view and never falter in this. Whatever the circumstances are, a woman has to stick to the husband and family. While this is expected of her nothing in return is to be expected from the husband or any other member of the family. There is no reciprocal involvement in marriage. The one sidedness of culture and justice makes the female exploitation of woman easy for man. The wife is exploited to the maximum and she looks on herself as a victim and is helpless to maneuver the situation to her advantage.

Anita Desai and Rajam Krishnan have created their fictional world around women. Both the novelists show their deep concern and thorough understanding of women’s individual potential, weaknesses and social status. Anita Desai is one of those few Indian novelists in English who have tried to understand closely the predicament of their female characters. She herself contributes psychic novels, which she narrates as purely subjective. Her forte is the quest of sensibility and her writing exposes inner realities and psychic echoes of her characters. The most recurrent themes in all her novels are the complexities of man-woman relationships and the founding and the establishing
of individualism of her characters. She is interested in peculiar and eccentric characters rather than every day, average ones. She presents the plight of introspective, hypersensitive women in her novels. Each of her work is an accelerating exploration of the psychic self. Anita Desai discovers its principles suitable to her themes. "Aspects of Existentialism" are in evidence in the total framework of her stories. It lays stress on the alienation of man from an absurd world, his following estrangement from normal society, and his recognition of the world as negative and meaningless presents the sensitive, individual, fragmented and spirituality destroyed by the particular social conditions of life, a life complex enough to make him obsessed. These kind of characters appear to be a favorite subject of Anita Desai.

The fictional world of Anita Desai is located in the corridor of human consciousness. She is almost obsessively concerned with the dark, uncannily oppressive inner world of her intensely introvert characters on the verge of psychological breakdown.

Anita Desai’s fictional ocurve has undoubtedly carved her a distinct niche in the contemporary fiction world. What makes her remarkable is her attempt to shift the focus from socio-political realities as is evident in the novels of Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawar Jhabwala and Nayantara Saghal to the exploration of the inner reality – the unexplored realm of the female psyche. (Sinha 206)

They are alienated from the world, the society and the family around them because they fail to meet the challenges of life. Their inability to face life forces
them to regress to their childhood world of fantasy. Modern women identify with the heroines because they find themselves in a similar situation, facing the same problem of identity, loss of values and meaninglessness in life. Anita Desai seriously examines, with the consciousness of woman, the effect of the accepted social norms in the life and position of a woman, who is considered merely a drawing-room decoration piece or domesticated animal. The search for understanding and sympathy with the woman, whose life without the support of man means losing safety, happiness, comfort and dignity, is the central point in Anita Desai's fictional world.

The uniqueness of Anita Desai is in giving voices to the psychological, emotional as well as physical needs of women which are hardly considered in an Indian society. She portrays her characters as individuals who are capable of facing the problems single-handed. As a result of disillusionment and a result of isolation from this world there is a tendency towards revolt in female characters.

Women, in Anita Desai's fiction embody the author's quest for psychological insight, awareness and harmony. They are the focal point of contact between the writer's consciousness and the world from which they are alienated. Her women, therefore, have to face conflicts, make effort to break away, to assert their individuality and think whether their decision to do so is the right one, how to resolve the identity crisis and emerge victorious from the trauma. These are some of the questions Anita Desai seems to explore through her women characters. Her themes certainly touch the raw nerves of human experience.
Rajam Krishnan occupies a prominent place in the list of contemporary novelists. Her works are noted for the social consciousness that they impart. The novels are both creative as well as informative. Her creative world is simple and loving. It cares for the fellow human beings. It also records the trials and tribulations of day-to-day life and how human beings react to it. The works also condemn the long rooted customs and practices that are practiced by the society. Her works mirror how the middle and underprivileged class people stand apart from their upper class counterparts.

Using novel as a medium Rajam Krishnan had carried out social research in her career as a novelist. She did not create imaginary stories for mere entertainment purpose. She presents the events and incidents as they occur in everyday life. Since her works are social documents, a reader can learn more about society through them.

In the initial stage of her career as a writer Rajam Krishnan had dealt with women’s issues in all her works. She has portrayed the problems faced by women at home and in the society and has written about the necessity of women’s rights. Rajam Krishnan had dealt with the lives of fishermen, salt pan workers, match stick factory workers and farmers.

Almost all her female characters are feministic in their approach. Rajam Krishnan speaks for the cause of women through all her female protagonists. She opines that women should free themselves from the clutches of culture and tradition and be individualistic.
Be it at home or in the society, Rajam Krishnan’s protagonists stand apart from the rest. They are individuals with unique characteristics. These characters do not confine themselves to the false superstitious practices of the family and compromise with the hopeless marriage. They liberate themselves from the claws of these family problems and lead a free life.

Rajam Krishnan’s approach in her works is that of social realism. According to her, novel is a tool for societal changes to be brought out. She gives hope to the readers through all her works. According to her, education is only a key to the store house of knowledge. Education must also help in tasting the knowledge and applying in life.

Rajam Krishnan’s protagonists do not fly in the sky like tailless kites. They base their foot firmly on the ground and think before they act. Most of her characters are educated and they protest against all the social evils. They also fight for the cause of women.

Anita Desai’s *Cry, The Peacock* is a story of Maya, a spoiled daughter of a wealthy business man. She is married to Gautama, an advocate by profession who is rather insensitive and pragmatic compared to Maya. Hence his clients and their cases are more important to him than the emotional needs of Maya. He fails to understand Maya, a sensitive and emotional partner. In her childhood, Maya has been told by an albino astrologer, that, four years after her marriage one of them would die. And this prediction makes Maya obsessed by the fear of death. Besides, the death of her pet dog creates the atmosphere of death in the family. At last Maya kills Gautama by pushing him off the parapet and then
commits suicide. As Sujata comments, “Cry, The Peacock strongly reflects Desai’s interest in existential interpretation of life. It is the feeling of loneliness, alienation and dissatisfaction that draws Maya, the protagonist from the rest of the world and she confines herself in her own bizarre world” (123-124).

The novel starts with the description of Toto’s death that causes an unexpected disaster in the life of Maya. Too heartbroken Maya longs for emotional support from her much practical husband Gautama. But, for him, the death of the dog is a very normal phenomenon that can be easily forgotten with a cup of tea. He remains calm and undisturbed. But for Maya the loss of the dog is something to be mourned. Gautama’s calmness is in striking contrast with that of Maya’s occasional outbursts. Toto’s death is the first sign of her abnormality that leads to a series of mishaps and reactions. Soon after the death of the pet dog, the agony of missing it makes her more and more restless. The self centeredness of the materialistic world and its lack of appreciation of life both big and small disturb her to a great extent due to the fact that she had been lavishing all her affection on it. She could not stand the sight of her beloved dead dog that she rushed to the garden tap to wash the vision from her eyes. She grows hysterical and emotional. Her condition is aggravated by Gautama’s casual and unfeeling remarks. Instead of consoling her in her grief at the loss of Toto, he leaves her to meet a visitor who has come to see him and forgets all about the dead dog. This brings out the basic contrast between the temperament of Maya and Gautama. Maya is highly sensitive and imaginative and Gautama
is unimaginative and unsentimental – a contrast by communication gap on account of his professional preoccupations.

Maya’s conversation with her husband is an indication of her not being able to create a rapport in their relation. In fact he fails to read her signs and is too self-absorbed to understand her words, just as she fails to identify with his:

I had yearned for the contact that goes deeper than flesh – that of thought and longed to transmit to him the laughter that gurgled up in my throat as I saw a goat nuzzle, secretly, a basket of sliced melons in the bazaar while the vendor’s back was turned or the profound thrill that lit a bonfire in the pit of my stomach – when I saw the sun unfurl like a rose in the west, the west and farther west … But those were the times I admitted to the loneliness of the human soul, and I would keep silent. (CP 99)

The reason for Maya’s neurosis is her persistent obsession of the prediction by the albino astrologer of the death either of her or her husband within four years of their marriage. He emphasized that it was her horoscope that would either allow her or the groom to live after four years of their marriage. The vision of the astrologer and his prophecy, though half remembered, paralyses her. This incident has a strong influence on her sensitive behaviour. Maya carried with her only two things from her father’s house – one her imaginary world and the other the albino’s prophecy. Maya miserably fails to occupy a place amidst people and in the fourth year of their marriage she becomes obsessed with the prophecy of the albino that she will encounter death. She suffers from death fixation.
Death lurked in those spaces, the darkness spoke of distance, separation, loneliness – loneliness of such proportion that it broke the bounds of that single word and all its associations, and went spilling and spreading out and about, lapping the stars, each one isolated from the other by so much. And the longer I gazed, the farther they retreated, Hill there was only the darkness hanging, like a moist shroud, ever our heads, and I thought of the long journey of the dead from one birth into another … (22)

Maya and Gautama have a strained relationship because of their incompatible temperaments. Gautama is realistic, insensitive, emotional, detached, philosophical and remote. In contrast to his temperament Maya is full of tenderness, softness, warmth. Maya is a creature of instinct where as Gautama is a creature of intellect. The bond of matrimony that unites them is very fragile and weak. Their marriage was more or less a marriage of convenience. Gautama and Maya’s father were friends. They had a lot more in common. Maya who found a father substitute in Gautama married him. In her childhood, being alone in the family after the mother’s death and brother leaving to America, she gets the most of her father’s affection and attention. In her moments of pain and sorrow she feels that no one else loves her as her father does. The excessive love and affection that she receives from her father makes her take life easily. She feels that the world to be a toy made especially for her painted in her favourite colours and set moving according to her tunes. The only reality that she encountered in her father’s land, a world of poetry and flowers, fail to initiate her into adult life: “… my childhood was one in which much was
excluded which grew steadily more restricted, unnatural even, and in which I
lived as a toy princes in a toy world .but it was a pretty on” (89).

Having spent most of her childhood and adolescent days of her life under
the utmost care and attention of her loving father, Maya dreams and desires to
have the similar kind of attention from her husband Gautama. When he who is
prosperous, busy lawyer, too much involved in his own professional affairs fails
to meet her demands she feels neglected and miserable. Seeing her condition
becoming worse day by day, her husband warns her of her turning neurotic and
blames her father for spoiling her.

The reason for Maya’s neurosis is not her father fixation but persistent
obsession of the prediction by the astrologer of death either for her or her
husband. The words of prediction by the astrologer always ring in her ears and
unnerve her. She is haunted by this black shadow of her fate. As Samuel
Kirubakhar opines,

In Maya, Desai probes the heart of a woman who psychologically suffers
from a mysterious premonition about the tragic end of her marriage.
Maya has to reel under the pressure of the prophecy that threatens to
Shattu her married life. (166-167)

During her stay at her father’s house, the loving care and attention of her
father made Maya forget the haunting memories and words of the astrologer.
But in her husband’s house Gautama fails to satisfy her longing for love and life.
Most of the time she spends in loneliness and silence. This intensifies her
neurosis. She longs for Gautama’s love and care. His negligence irritates and
disturbs her. There is no compatibility between Maya and Gautama for they differ temperamentally.

If Gautama had shown an understanding towards and been attentive to Maya, he would have saved her from the haunting fear of shadow and drums. The gap of communication between them leaves her lonely to brood over the thoughts of the albino astrologer. She attempts to divert herself by visiting her friend Leila and Pom or Mrs. Lal’s party or the restaurant and the cabaret prove powerless to dispel the creeping terror. The visit of Gautama’s mother and sister Nila brings a brief respite to her and she enjoys her busy life in their company. But once they are gone, she finds the house empty and herself alone with her horrors and nightmares.

Maya is so much possessed by the vision of albino astrologer that she recalls his talk about the myth surrounding the peacock. She being intensely in love with life, turns hysteric over the creeping fear of death. She suffers from headaches and experiences rages of rebellion and terror. As she moves towards insanity she sees visions of rats, snakes, lizards and iguanas creeping. Her dark house appears to her like her tomb and she contemplates in it over the horror of all that is to come.

Maya’s conflict arises out of the ungratifying matrimonial bonds which are characterized by a lack of contact, relatedness and communion. She believes in involvement where as Gautama is the preacher of detachment on every count. Although living as man and wife, they are strangers to each other. Maya’s tragedy lies in her conception of love as an ecstatic feeling. She talks of life and
death and like peacocks crying for their mates. But as her circumstances are, she is unable to achieve the interpersonal fusion – the union of body and mind with her husband. She feels that her husband knew nothing that concerned her. Superficially Maya appears to be a fortunate child with doting father. But in her fairy world of childhood she misses one of the fundamental bonds existing between a mother and daughter. Her mother’s untimely death deprives her of the emotional closeness between a protective mother and an adolescent daughter.

Maya, a young, beautiful, intelligent, sensitive and sensuous girl fails to grow out of childhood. She is capable of living independently. Her marriage with Gautama only serves to highlight her total involvement with her father. She constantly thinks of him and unconsciously searches him in her husband. Her helplessness and an intense longing for love are the root cause of her problem. Her basic needs for love and belongingness are not gratified. Healthy development of her personality is blocked. Besides her childhood world of fantasies and adult world of realities clash and create imbalance in her life. Totu’s death, her husband’s passive reaction on its death, albino astrologer’s words, her in–law’s comments on her childlessness shatter her personality. She is haunted by the idea of death.

Maya’s urge for contact, relationship communion remains unfulfilled. There are moments when she shows an almost aggressive urge for sexual reunion with Gautama. But asleep or awake he is a far off figure who cannot be one with her in the world of senses. She expresses her agony with the help of the
imagery of withered flowers. The lifeless roses and carnations on her dressing table belonging to yesterday corpses of today are very much like her desires.

Her divided self, lack of self analysis, the fast withering spirit and the receding contact with outer world leave the core of her integrity impaired. Maya finds herself spiritually ruined. Maya cannot accept her own limitations. She cannot understand Gautama or grow to his level of argument. Maya is in need of a sharing human friend and a companion. Gautama’s meagre love and scant understanding cannot fulfill her emotional needs. She submits herself to loneliness and to its occasional fits by nostalgia and hallucinations. Her loneliness cannot be filled by the blissful couplets of Urdu poetry or rise to the strains of music. She is haunted by the albino astrologer’s prophecy. She cannot explain the prophecy of death to Gautama. It is this mysterious power that haunts her as a living death. Gautama is a disinterested intellectual, totally out of element to help Maya. According to Gautama the path of life is beset with attachment, wonder, excitement, unhappiness, depression and disillusionment. Therefore one has to discipline one’s life to hold it safe and secure. Maya cannot control her insane passions. She cannot see the fine evenings melt without fulfillment. Aware of death and craving for love in life, Maya cries like the wild peacock. Her heart palpitates for others and weeps, knowing that their words are hers. Caught in the inescapable net where her father, brother or husband cannot save her, she pines for death. It is a wish fulfillment. Maya is dying for Gautama’s love. And what remains is guilt, delusion and irritation all convoluted into forms of loneliness
Gautama’s logic and faith are beyond her. The death of Maya’s pet, Toto is the starting point of Maya’s horror. An unexperienced, immemorable sorrow dawns upon her as yet, with the death of Toto, and a kind of loneliness begins to haunt her. Childless as she is, Maya develops a “fanatic” attachment to the pet like as inevitable order of attachment. All day the body lay rotting in the sun which reminded Maya of the albino astrologer who predicted an unnatural death either here or her husband’s. Gradually this reminder of the prediction of death develops into a morbid obsession from which Maya is incapable of detaching herself. The obsession results in Maya are rapidly increasing psychic disintegration. Running parallel with the disintegration is the stature of the albino who introduced as something indefinable, unrecognizable, a strange uneasy persistent haunting presence that there remains hardly anything but him in the world of Maya. Even harmless creatures like domestic lizards and rats get metamorphous into albinos in her private world.

It is fear of death that is the dominant note in this novel, almost all the objects and events are related to it in one way or the other. The novel not only begins with death and develops with an increasing obsession with death but also ends with it. After Toto’s cremation, Maya begins to suffer from an unknown fear. Every action of Gautama reveals to her his rational native. All that Maya desires is an absolute happiness with Gautama to annihilate the torture of loneliness. She hallucinates a demonic creature deafening her ears with the dance of death.
Maya’s life with her father had been a fairy tale of good breeding, culture, leisure and comfort. Having grown in a bower of bougainvilleas and jasmine buds Maya feels a lack of love with Gautama that to one loves her as her father did. Gautama’s mother, an emerging socialite is happy that Gautama is married to Maya though Maya understands if something was told, out of affection or with some motive removed from any personal feeling.

Maya is vulnerable to sorrow with an emotional temperament and views things in a highly subjective way. She even seems to doubt her senses. All these signs indicate that her psychic disintegration has already begun. Maya evinces not only the symptoms of schizophrenia but also of obsessive compulsive neurosis which involves thoughts and actions the individual recognizes as irrational but which still persist. Being a pray to such a disorder, a person is forced to think about something that he does not want to think about. Though Maya knows that the prophecy and its impact can just be a nightmare, still she is obsessed with the albino and his forecast. In yet another incident she is also frightened of the kathakali dancers whom she knows that they are ordinary human beings like her own self.

Maya’s abortive marriage to Gautama and its lack of emotional attachment stands in sharp contrast to her jolly and love-laden infancy. Her childhood memories overshadow her present with gloom. What pains Maya most is her “utter loneliness in this house” (CP 9). She can establish no effective communication with her husband Gautama. Maya’s worldly nature makes her well inclined to derive the fullest satisfaction from the intimate experience of
sex. But for Gautama’s age and attitude to sex, she remains a much disappointed woman. Even when they do make love, the act is utterly devoid of passion. Maya admits frankly of her sexual dissatisfaction born of Gautama’s unpardonable negligence:

How little he knew of my suffering, or of how to comfort me------. Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me, to either the soft, willing body, or the lonely wanting mind that waited near his bed. (9)

Maya’s life is intricately woven to her instincts and she expects emotional and physical satisfaction in married life but both of these are denied to her, one by Gautama’s cold intellectuality and the other by his age. Maya’s longing for the sensuous enjoyment of life is dampened by a liberal dose of the Gita’s philosophy of non-attachment. Their marriage becomes unfruitful and is punctuated all along by “matrimonial silences” (12). Gautama, who indulgently quotes from the Gita and explains the theory of Karma, blissfully ignores his marital responsibility towards his wife---an unquestionable command of the theory of Karma.

Maya perceives that she might lose herself as nothing eventful and significant is taking place in her life. The sphere of her social intercourse is a restricted one and she feels suffocated. Her secure home, earning husband, and well-defined future are insufficient to her. She longs for outdoor life, which is always nullified by Gautama. She wants to visit Darjeeling to refresh the childhood memory of its scenic beauty and cool weather. But Gautama refuses
the proposal. The Kathakali Dances of Southern India had a great attraction to Maya———“I want---- I want;----to see the Kathakali dances” (92) but her husband coolly suggests her to wait till a Kathakali troupe comes to Delhi.

By the passage of time she begins to lose grip over herself, suffers from Neurosis, and turns into a psychopath. All order has gone out of Maya’s life alongwith physical deterioration. There is no plan, no peace, nothing to keep her within the pattern of day-to-day living and doing. Maya has entered into another world, the world of insanity.

Where Shall We Go This Summer? is a novel that talks about the loneliness of a woman, a wife and a mother. This loneliness according to the writer is conditioned by society and family. Sita’s pain and suffering is only domestic and temporal. There are moments of pure terror and void in her life. She is depressed due to the attitude of her busy and indifferent husband and the grownup children. They feel that she reacts abnormally to ordinary incidents and think that her outbursts are melodramatic. Every little incident, for example: the lone young dead eagle being torn apart by the crows and the tearing up of the sketches by her daughter disturb her very much. Sita who is very pessimistic and whimsical is a victim to things and incidents that happen around her. Her being sensitive is the cause of most of her troubles. According to her the people in the world are pariah. When she first enters her father-in-law’s house, she is infuriated by the sub human placidity and “sluggishness.” Sita, unlike other women of her kind, is bold enough to fight and protest against the age old customs and traditional facts of life. Her revolt is expressed through her
provocative behavior such as smoking. She goes to the extend of shifting to a smaller flat which she can call it her own. A series of incidents take place making the tide of emotion swell in Sita’s mind disturbing her peaceful life. The violence of the world around is the ultimate cause for her decision of not delivering her child. She wants to escape from the brutal realities and harsh facts of human life. She forgets that life is one part full of violence, suffering and pain. Treasons, betrayals and treacheries are mixed up with pleasure, joy and happiness to colour it. She is not satisfied with her present life that she decides to leave for Manori. Raman tries to enlighten her mind about the “contraries” in life, saying “other people put up with it – it’s not so – so insufferable” (WWS 143). But she lacks courage, practical knowledge and wisdom which make others believe that “life must be continued, and all its business…why can’t you? Perhaps one should be grateful if life is only a matter of disappointment, not disaster” (143). She feels so wretched that she decides to run off to the island where she thinks she would attain all her lost peace.

She is a symbol of nature and cannot adjust with the mechanical world. She seems to be an “odd one” where she is alienated from her family and society. In an incident, where a wounded eagle being targeted by crows, she tries her best to protect it with the help of the absurd cork and the toy gun. The way she behaved and reacted in that situation makes her ridiculous before her children and husband. The turmoil, clash and clamour of city are once again depicted through the quarreling ayahs. The aggressive and violent women remind her of the modern soul. Another incident that distracts her attention is the
fight of her two sons. The childish yet furious fight ignite the subdued sentiments of Sita. Destruction in every form frightens her. Her childish behaviour that she has exhibited in this incident throws light on her innocent nature. She failed in her attempts to save the eagle from the crows and later when Raman came to know about this, he took it lightly. In the morning, there was nothing on the ledge but some feathers and stains of blood. Raman said, “They’ve made a good job of your eagle. Look at the feathers sticking out of that crow’s beak” (41). Sita as a symbol of nature finds herself a stranger in that atmosphere. She feels disturbed by this chaotic and violent society. She finds fault with everyone around her and even with her own children and husband. She feels that the world around her is not moving according to her whims and fancies and can no more offer security to her. She feels that the outside world is filled with cruelty and destructions. For her, the city is nothing but a place of madness where children enact scenes from movies, fight with each other, even the grown up quarrel in the roadside dumps. She is shocked at the behavior of ayahs, who in an uncivilized manner indulge in cheap quarrels in the streets. She is shocked when she sees the destructive element in her children’s behaviour. She watches Menaka, her daughter crumble a sheet of new buds and unable to bear the sight of such destruction, shouts at her. She is upset when Menaka destroys her paintings which she has drawn with great care and were really too good.

Being disintegrated she wishes to go to Manori, the island where she had spent her childhood happily, in order to gain integration. But this escape to the
island proves to be futile since her past existence in the island and her curious childhood reactions which were merely illusions.

The husband wife alienation forms the basis of the novel as Raman and Sita differ a lot in their temperaments. Sita is over-sensitive who finds herself confined in the urban life after leading a carefree life in rural area under the protection of her father. The artificialities, fast pace and harshness of city life nauseate her to such an extent that she longs to go back to the island where she has cherished all the delicacies of rural life and where she thinks her roots are. After being taken away from her father and her place, she feels the void and expects more love and care from her husband Raman. She feels insecure and finds everything wrong with Raman. He had nothing more to give her, or he was just unaware of her needs and demands. He raised his hand and stroked Karan’s hair with a gentleness she herself ached to attract, and stared at him, bored into him with her eyes, wanting and not being given what she wanted (132). Sita always accuses Raman for his lack of understanding and Raman, could never understand the emotional state of Sita and he considers her deeds as immature and foolish ones. Sita’s lack of understanding has given rise to marital discard. Between Raman and Sita it is a discard of temperaments. Sita’s emotional outbursts are not against Raman but his devotion to duty, to reason. Raman seems to have a very “practical” view of life and nothing disturbs him in anyway. His nature is exactly opposite to that of Sita’s who takes anything and everything seriously.
She is scared of the customary life, the old routine and friends. Sita always prefers to live alone with her husband away from his friends and relatives. She could never tolerate Raman’s friends visiting them for she feels ‘appalled’ and ‘frightened’ by the guests. Their guests were his business associates who according to Raman are pleasant and tolerable. He regards them with little humour and with restraint. But to Sita, “they are ‘nothing’ – nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matters. Animals” (47). She uses harsh words about her guests and calls them “pariahs… in the streets, hanging about drains and dustbins waiting to pounce and kill and eat” (47). She never got used to anyone, not with his friends or with his relatives. When they lived in the first years of their married lives with his family in Queens Road, she had great problem in getting along with his relatives and even after moving to this new flat in the city too she could not change.

Sita craves for love from Raman and wants him to pamper her like her father, whereas, Raman who is pragmatic in his approach fails to understand her. Sita unable to understand this continues accusing her husband and dislikes her kids for being like their father – practical and insensitive. It is only to be relieved from this patterned life, Raman’s routine of order and the city, she tries to escape to Manori. She is hurt by the stereotyped, the boredom hidden under the familiar patterns that she refuses to give birth to the expected baby. She feels that the beautiful world is being disturbed by violence. According to her, her husband Raman and her four children are a part of the world that gives undue importance to violent acts and destruction around her. The gossip and quarrelling
of the servants, the fight of the children and the society ridicule her effort to protect and preserve the environment. For her simple acts of her children seems to project violence. Small children’s fighting a dual like their heroes in the films is natural. But Sita, who is too sensitive, cannot stand this and feels irritated. Her concern to save the fallen eagle from the ferocious crows shows her tender heart full of boundless compassion. The sight of her daughter Menaka wantonly ripping the buds off a plant or destroying her own paintings horrifies her. Her reactions are considered rebellious because she is opposed to the mundane world. She realizes that Raman and her children are very indifferent to her own nature and wonders whether she has gone insane or the world around her is so. The violent news in the newspapers, the endless fights in the streets are sickening to her and she longs to protect herself and her unborn child from them. She is not only disturbed by the violence of the life around her but also the violence in the world at large.

Sita’s character can be evaluated in the light of her childhood experiences. She is a motherless child and she experienced partiality, neglect and a indifference right from the beginning of her childhood. Sita’s father had no time for his children and especially Sita did not get even a drop of his love and care. It was Rekha, Sita’s sister who was close to his heart. She always has a doubt about Rekha and her relationship with her, for there is no resemblance between the two sisters. When she learns that Rekha is not her sister, from Jivan she is upset that “his words had dropped on her skin like acid…..” (79). Her much suppressed emotions in her childhood is responsible for her perturbed
mental state in future. The indifference of her father, alienation from sister, lack of love and care from her mother has made many psychological changes in her. Soon after their father’s death the family disintegrates. Rekha, leaves, without even shedding a drop of tear, Jivan vanishes without any sign and only Sita remains to marry Raman. Family plays a vital role in the growth and development of individual and broken homes definitely has its worse effect on an individual. Sita is one such victim who because of her bitter experiences in her childhood alienates herself from everything around her.

Sita is considered by many as a bit abnormal. But in reality she is normal to her own self. As she is too sensitive and romantic, every single act of violence disturbs her to the core. Protest here is defying the violent acts of the normal world. This is an outcome of an acute sensitive and romantic nature. She is unable to face the brutal realities and harsh fact of human life. She, who was different even as a child, feels like a fish out of water in her in-law’s house. She does not like the members of the family bossing over her instead she dominantes. As a result of her rebellious nature she remains lonely and prefers solitude. She cannot even be affectionate towards her children because she regards them to be brutal. She feels that both the human and non-human world around her is full of cruel violence. Sita lacks the capacity to come to terms with the reality around her. Her over sensitive nature and unrealistic expectations make it impossible for her to accept the vagaries of her life. Belonging to upper class society, Sita does not have a separate position or role outside her home. She does not hold jobs and hence becomes economically dependent. When she
finds that she is pregnant for the fifth time, she feels that it is the right time to revolt against her violent society, the indifferent family members and the cruel human and animal world. Sita loses all feminine, all natural belief in child birth she does not want her child to be born in this chaotic violent society. Her protest of not delivering the child may be taken in two senses. One she is prejudiced against society or a kind of life that harbours even minimum violence. Every act of violence frightens her and she never wants to deliver the fifth child. This may be very insensible but it must be understood that the trauma which Sita would have undergone with the prevailing violence and indifference. In another sense she is unhappy or even disturbed by the mundane, routine life that treats women as a machine, a being without a soul.

    Sita, undergoes bouts of depression in her struggle to find her individuality. As an urban, educated, middle-class woman. Sita finds herself moved by the intellectual and emotional demands of an awakened consciousness. Sensitive and rebellious, she senses new dimensions of discontent. Discontent gives way to frustration, bellicosity, paroxysms of rage, irritation and fear. Unlike the traditional mother-figures, she cannot reconcile to the monotony of a settled down routine of domestic life.

    (Bande 180)

    Like Maya in Cry, The Peacock, Sita is also unable to put up with her in-laws. Anita Desai deals with the entry of Sita into the island after living a “life was a crust of dull tedium, of hopeless disappointment” (WSS 52).
In *Fire on the Mountain*, Anita Desai explores the alienation of Nanda Kaul, the vice-chancellor’s wife and her great grand daughter Raka. She presents the loneliness and isolation of the two in detail. Living all alone, except for the company of the servants who dare not disturb her privacy, she brooks no human presence. Discussing the trauma of Nandha Kaul, Ramesh Kumar Gupta opines,

Anita Desai’s *Fire on the Mountain* presents a study of trauma of a housewife, the trauma that takes refuge in seclusion. The life-long faithlessness of Mr. Kaul to Nanda Kaul and the hypocritical situation force her to avow this severance. Nanda Kaul has conceded this after passing through psychic suffering and bitter experiences of a marital life. (184-185)

In the beginning of the novel Nanda Kaul, a great grandmother is shown completely disillusioned with all emotional bonds—Matrimonial as well as filial. Nanda Kaul, the wife of an ex vice-chancellor of the Punjab University, after her husband’s death, buys a house named Carignano built on the ridge in the hill town of Kausali. She comes to settle there along with the servant, Ram Lal, to escape from the haunting ghosts of her past. She feels happy in the bareness and emptiness of the house. She has lived a very busy and tiring life as vice-chancellor’s wife. Nanda Kaul had witnessed only betrayals and demands in life before her retirement to Kasauli. She had lived a monotonous life receiving and treating the endless stream of visitors who used to call on her vice-chancellor husband.
There had been too many guests coming and going, Tongas and rickshaws piled up under the eucalyptus trees and the bougainvilleas their drivers asleep on the seats with their feet hanging over the bars. The many rooms of the house had always been full, extra beds would have to be made up, often in not very private corners of the hall or veranda, so that there was a shortage of privacy that vexed her. Too many trays of tea would have had to be made and carried to her husband’s study, to her mother-in-law’s bedroom, to the veranda that was the gathering-place of all, at all times of the day. Too many meals, too many dishes on the table, too much to wash up after. (FM 29)

So she wishes to enjoy complete peace in her old age without any disturbance. However a letter from her daughter Asha, requesting her to take care of Raka, the child of Asha’s daughter Tara, disturbs her. Another intruder in her privacy is Ila Das, her friend.

The relationship between Nanda Kaul and her children is ungratifying. For Anita Desai childhood experiences are everlasting as they shape the personality of an individual. However she also believes that traumatic experience that one may undergo in adult life can also obstruct the process of growth and harmony. So Nanda Kaul’s love for privacy is not something inherent in her. Her desire to live unseen, unknown is the result of her unhappy and cumbersome relationship with her husband and children.

… she has become so much immune to tender emotions that she does not feel any difference between a living person and an inanimate object. Life
has not honoured her claims. So much is made of the protagonists’s
rebelliously detached attitude and her desire to live in complete isolation
that we tend to regard Nanda Kaul as a formidable old woman who has
snapped all her and discarded everyone. (Purohit and Bissa 51)

Even after the death of her husband the children had never thought of having
their mother with them. All were busy with their own life.

After her husband’s death, her sons and daughters had come to help her
empty the vice chancellor’s house, pack and crate their belonging and
disturb them, and then escort her to Kasauli. For a while, they had stood
about, in carignano, like too much furniture. She had wondered what to
do with them. Fortunately, they had gone away. Brought up by her to be
busy and responsible, they all had families and employments to tend.
None could stay with her. (FM 33)

The arrival of Raka disturbs her and she is reminded of her past life with
her children. In her old age she longs and desires to live alone, unseen. Her
children were all alien to her nature. Bringing them up had been more of a duty
than an act of love or a source of emotional satisfaction for her. In fact as
a natural rule, due to the strong maternal instinct women derive a peculiar
pleasure in bringing up their children. The memories of their childhood later fill
their heart with tenderness. But Nanda Kaul is an exception of this rule.
Children are infact the pictures of innocence and the source of pure joy and they
can brighten the saddest moments of one’s life. Yet it is not so with Nanda
Kaul. The memories of her children make Nanda Kaul shudder at the very
thought of her past. As a mother of several children, all demanding and unaccommodative, she had been given too many anxious moments.

Nanda Kaul does not seem to remember anything pleasant or gratifying about her children. She is not at all in hurry to open Asha’s letter and to go through its contents. On the other hand it disturbs her privacy and reminds her of the most troublesome of her children. She doesn’t want “to be drawn into a child’s world again – imaginary or real, it was bound to betray.”

Nanda Kaul’s relation with her husband was also a mere duty and obligations they had for each other. Her husband treated her simply as some useful object. All the time she played a role of a gracious hostess and enjoyed the comfort and social status of the vice-chancellor’s wife. But deep down her felt lonely and neglected. To make matters worse her husband had an affair with another woman. Her relationship with her husband was not very intimate.

She had lived a monotonous life receiving and treating the endless stream of visitors who used to call on her Vice-Chancellor husband. Her husband had carried on a life long affair with Miss David, a mathematics teacher and had abstrained from marrying her because she was a Christian. Even her children who should have supported their mother and compensated for lack of husband’s love had always been over demanding and non-accommodative. (Rana 129)

He was like a commander till his death. He made every decision and she had to abide to what he dictated. She led her life with a sheer sense of duty with no emotional feelings at all. She never considered his house as her own. Thus one
finds Nanda Kaul as a forsaken woman deceived and betrayed by her husband and children. She is an embodiment of frustration and agony, experienced in her unfulfilled interpersonal relationships. She is completely disillusioned with all matrimonial and filial emotional bonds. Her life was full of disappointments and betrayals for about three decades. In her total isolation at Carignano, as she remembers her past life as vice chancellor’s wife and mother of a large number of children, she feels nauseated. Therefore in order to survive she opts for withdrawal, an existence away from the world of messages and visitors.

But even in Carignano, the feelings of hoplessness, depression continue to torment her. She is not happy even in her solitude. The arrival of her great granddaughter Raka disturbs her privacy and the tragic end of her friend Ila Das takes her to tragic end of her life.

The novel also deals with the effects of the environment upon the psyche of a young child Raka, the great grandchild of Nanda Kaul. Raka, who is a young girl, considers loneliness to be her inborn quality. She prefers to stay away from company. Like a wild animal newly caged, she keeps prowling barefoot in her room, looking at the stone heaps. She is not interested in flowers or playing as children of her age normally tend to do. The age difference is so much between the grandmother and great granddaughter. But still Raka understands Nanda Kaul.

Raka’s traumatic experiences in her childhood have a great effect on her desire to be alone and always in solitude. Many factors have been the cause for her traumatic childhood. The fore most reason is the ill health of her mother and
the aggressive behaviour of her father. Raka by birth was not a person who wished to be alone but all the terrible circumstances made her become an introvert. Throughout her childhood she had witnessed only bitterness, distrust and violence. Her parents don’t love each other. Her grandmother Asha is worried about Tara’s relationship with her husband, Rakesh. Their marriage has been on the rocks all the time. The father has no time to look after the well being of his child. This had a very great effect on the character of Rak. All these traumatic experiences had deprived her of the innocent trust and feeling of joy. Like other normal children she is not interested in the stories about people, about relations. Her curiosity about people and what they do has been blunted.

According to Nanda Kaul, Raka is abnormal in comparison to her other children and grand children.

Raka was not any other child. She had to admit that Raka was not like any other child. She had known, no like any of her own children or grand children. Amongst them, she appeared a freak by virtue of never making a demand. She appeared to have no needs. Like an insect burrowing through the sandy loam and pine-needles of the hillsides, like her great grandmother, Raka wanted only one thing: to be left alone and pursue her own secret life amongst the rocks and pines of Kasauli. (FM 52)

Nanda Kaul’s strong resolution to be alone in Carignano begins to crumble in the presence of Raka. Maternal love and her basic nature weakens Nanda Kaul’s self imposed detachment. Once again she looks for someone to care for, to love and to be loved. She directs all her energies to win Raka.
Inspite of all betrayals and disappointments she received from the faithless husband and selfish friend. Nanda Kaul feels drawn towards Raka.

Rajam Krishnan’s *Lamps in the Whirlpool* portrays the struggle of an educated young woman in an orthodox Brahmin family to find her and come out of its stultifying routines and not to submit to its painful demands. The protagonist Girija is a typical middle class girl, educated only to be suitably married off and to perform the duties of a Hindu wife. She has been conditioned to regard being a dutiful wife and daughter-in-law is the only goal of a woman’s life. She is a post-graduate and has served as a teacher in a school for eight years. She married Swaminathan who is qualified and well settled in life. Her mother-in-law symbolizes the cruelty that woman perpetrates on womanhood. After bearing two daughters and a son, and serving her mother-in-law with uncompromising devotion for seventeen years she realizes the emptiness of her life. She is shocked to know that she has all along been exploited both by her husband and mother-in-law. Girija’s mother-in-law selfishly makes her observe strict rules of austerity and piety described in Tamil as “madi” and “aacharam.” Swaminathan’s mother in fact is as much a central character as Girija because she symbolizes the cruelty that Indian women inflict on womanhood. Having chosen Girija as a daughter in law calculates the prospect of her becoming a thoroughly obedient person. On the eve of the marriage she presents Girija with a pair of diamond earings and a pair of nose studs. Such generosity is rare and Girija’s mother and brother are deeply impressed. They do not expect anything to go wrong in Girija’s life.
Her husband is the embodiment of crudity. He is totally insensitive to the feelings of his wife. As far as bread winner/home maker concept is concerned Samu remains masculine and that forces Girija to be feminine by being compelled to follow certain traits as a housewife. He could not be rational which is one of the qualities of masculinity. If he is rational, he can also listen to the words of Girija and certainly can remove atleast some of the “madi” rules which have no meaning. He becomes insufferable when Girija begins to question his authority. He starts questioning her when she leaves without informing anybody and comes back home after four days. He doesnot want to give a chance to her for an explanation of her departure. He expects feminine roles from her and when she breaks it once, he gets angry because his masculinity is disturbed. He has no guts to question his mother and just blindly follows whatever she says. That shows how he is irrational in following his mother’s ideas without being practical. He quarrels with his wife, for no reason he quarrels and the only demand will be his needs have to be fulfilled. When Girija questions him for any purpose, he gets irritated and claims that food is not good and throws away the food, which shows his cunningness in avoiding her and her wishes. She is awakened by the talk of Ratna, her husband’s niece.

Ratna could not tolerate the way Girija is treated by her mother-in-law. The so called “madi” rules irritate the rational Ratna and she is confused why Girija, an educated woman blindly follows all these outdated customs. She says to Girija:
You are a part of this society. You are not an isolated individual. You are not utilizing your talents as a teacher. Do you have to sacrifice your talents as a teacher? Do you have to sacrifice yourself to this idiotic concept of ‘madi’. (LW 21)

This motivates Girija to think upon Ratna’s words.

This cage in which she lived was so constrictive that a mere question became a major transgression. Ratna was right: this was repression at its worst, insidious and severe. What was the use of having provided her with creature comforts and gadgets if the woman in her was denied the right to speak. (29)

She questions the comforts she possesses and there is no meaning in enjoying them. Samu and his mother do not treat her as human being and treat her as a machine. When Girija questions Samu, it irritates him and feels she has no right to question him and thus throws away plate of food, which affects Girija at the maximum. He could not tolerate when he sees his wife somewhat incommunicative. She was not given a chance to mumble at least and outlet her feelings. Both the son and mother have been taming an animal and when Girija refuses to obey them then she starts thinking rationally. She feels that:

Circumstances have reduced me to a machine working unceasingly from morning till night. More over I am sandwiched between two generations. On the one hand, my children are raring to break out of the cage of convention and on the other; my mother-in-law tortures me with her harsh madi rules. I am a bonded slave to both. I now realize that I am living in
a void empty of even an ounce of human feeling …. In the frame work of marriage is the woman’s role only of subservience. (54)

While continuing to serve the family in simmering resentment, an incident which would appear almost utterly insignificant in every household, rouses the dormant senses of self-respect in Girija. After a long tour, Samu drops in only to pack up and leave on yet another professional trip. He is insensitive to his wife’s state of mind. In male egoistic anger he throws down the plate, when the food is not to his liking. He humiliates her and goes away. His crude behaviour shocks her and rouses her dormant sense of self-respect.

He had callously dismissed her selfless devotion, trampled on her innermost feelings and crushed the values which she cherished. He was the pivot of her existence, yet he treated her like a worm …. She knew he was devoid of compassion. She had endured infinite pain. The walls of patience which she had built up so carefully around herself were now in flames. (30)

Girija was shocked by her husband’s behaviour. All the trust she had on her husband shattered into pieces. She never ever dreamt of such a rude behaviour from Samu whom she considered as a focal point of her existence. Not able to tolerate such kind of treatment anymore she decides to leave home.

Girija, has been the key player of the family and is used as a draught animal by her mother-in-law and her husband and there is not even an appreciation of her sincere works. The “madi” and “aachara” constitute the social ideology of a Brahmin society. It is this austerity and purity that made
Girija serve her husband and mother-in-law for seventeen long years uncompromisingly. Though an educated woman, she is equally foolish to sacrifice her life for the domestic harmony which the family enjoyed. Girija allowed herself to be treated like a worm and worked like a machine for her family to be at peace. She realizes her state of ignorance only when Ratna makes it clear that a single note, however melodious, does not create harmony. Girija, being the single note, is not a real zest in the family. It is nothing but exploitation.

Girija’s husband, on the other hand, considers her as a worm destined to serve him and his mother. She is dazed at her husband’s unkindness towards her when she enquired about a small briefcase. She is totally disillusioned and disturbed. Samu shouts at her not to pester him with question. He also flings the plate to the ground. When questioned about his being irritated and his angry mood he says:

Who is shouting senselessly? You or I? You think the entire burden of the household is on you and you can do what you please. I won’t tolerate disparaging remarks about my mother. If you don’t like me or my mother. Get out. We can run the house without you. Don’t destroy my peace of mind. (29)

An uncontrollable urge and an inexplicable desire have impelled Girija to leave home. She has torn herself away from her family with the implicit faith that she would find peace on the banks of the Ganges. The currents and whirlpools of life has wiped her courageous spirit and left her vulnerable and
afraid of life. However, Girija’s encounter with the old lady nourishes her intellect and strengthened her body. She refreshes her spirit and plans to return home.

Contrary to her expectation, the mother-in-law and her husband charge Girija with infidelity and order to clear out of the house. She is horrified by their cruel assumptions. What pains her more deeply is that Samu tells his son Bharat that Girija is a “loose” woman and has run away. Since there is none to defend her, Ratna and her friends understanding her predicament, give her temporary refuge in the hostel and take her as if she were a wounded bird. While staying with her cousin Ratna she realizes that

in a traditional society, any woman who leaves her home is considered immoral. If she speaks or associates with any man, other than her husband, she is censured. However the same yard stick is not applied to man. It was unthinkable that an educated woman, who could earn her living, has to come to this state. (67)

*When the Kurinji Blooms* is a saga of three generations of Badagas spanning fifty years. It begins with the Badagas leading a tranquil and contented life at a time when the Nilgris hill sides were covered with Kurinji flowers every twelve years and ends with the advent of hydro electric power in the Nilgris.

Jogi, a nine year old badaga boy, lives in a hatti surrounded by mountain which keep at bay the hustle and bustle of the outside world, its colours, scents and artificial glitter. As he grows up, the environment in the Nilgris undergoes a change. All that the mountain had kept at bay creeps in despite this protective
presence. It destroys the peace and contentment of the inhabitants and creates dissension and enmity between hitherto united families. Families, which had so far cultivated samai, ragi and potatoes for food and to whom the taste of money was unknown, take to toiling on the land and growing tea with the sole objective of making money. Once money becomes the primary goal, culture and tradition begin to fade. The family of Jogi, who stubbornly clings to the old ways, remains backward; while that of Kariamalla, who moves with the times, progresses. The rift between the two families widens. When Nanjan, from one family and Vijaya, from the other fall in love, their enmity stands in their way. Paru, the protagonist of the novel is portrayed as a silent yet bold woman who faces the life’s troubles bravely.

The custom of marrying cousins in order to keep alive the family tradition is practiced in our country. Likewise Paru the heroine of When the Kurinji Blooms has been made to believe from childhood that Jogi would be her husband. In the Baduga tradition it is a practice to get married to cousins. Such marriages were based on mutual consent of the families of both the bride and the bridegroom. But neither the bride nor the bridegroom’s consent was taken into consideration. Though Paru had ideas of marriage from childhood, there was drastic change in her mind as she grew. Jogi who she believed would one day marry her, renounced his worldly life and spent twelve years of his life in the temple serving the lord. Her other cousin Rangan also ran to far off place and was not to be seen for quite a long time. Due to consequences she falls in love with Krishnan who returns to his home town as a well-educated person. The
traditional setup of the family does not allow Paru to be married to a person of her choice. As per their tradition when a girl has more than one suitor competition would be held to decide the correct match for her.

At the appointed time, Paru’s grandfather stood up and said, “friends, only in stories have we heard of Swayamvarams, where a princess could choose a husband from among many suitors. I feel proud that you have come in large numbers today to witness this unusual spectacle, where there men are going to compete for the hand of one young maid. It was in jest that I had said, “The one who lifts the stone wins the girl.” (WKB 104)

Like-wise stone lifting competition is held among Jogi, Rangan and Krishnan to decide the life partner of Paru. Jogi, who was aware of Paru’s intension to marry Krishnan willingly, loses the competition. Krishnan couldn’t win it and as a result Paru is compelled to marry Rangan who was strong enough to win the competition. Paru, though not happy over the decision of the elders to marry Rangan, could not express her objection to them. Jogi’s father Lingaiya feels that a girl like Paru would be the right choice for Rangan to change his ways and lead a right life. He says to Paru that she is a great shakthi that safe guards every family. She has come in the place of Rangan’s mother Mangalam and it is her duty to take care of the family that is under destruction. He convinces her to change her mind. Paru, though burdened with the thought that she has been cheated by Jogi and his father in marrying Rangan, convinces herself. She feels that it is her house and it is her duty to take care and safeguard that house.
Rangan is a person who always hates to be caught in the trap of the family. Paru, being the wife of such a person, leads a life of frustration and bitterness. This bitterness in her life with Rangan made her to hate Jogi and Lingaiya the more. She thinks that it was the father and son who had ruined her life. She diverts her hatred, bitterness and frustration to a piece of land that her family owned.

Rangan thinks of Paru as a woman of bad luck. He feels that only after Paru’s entry into his life all his wealth has depleted. He also feels that it was a great mistake in marrying Paru. In his utter hatred his mind thinks ill of Paru. His mind goes back to the days when Paru was in love with Krishnan. He thought that his marriage with Paru would destroy Krishnan’s arrogance. But his thoughts failed him. Krishnan was well settled in life and was respected by the people of hatti. He turned all his hatred towards Paru. He thought that even Paru had moved closely with Krishnan before marriage. Krishnan’s act of sending the car to take Paru to Othai infuriated Rangan. In his rage he thought that it was possible for him to get rid of Paru and bring home Gowri who had willingly captured his heart five months ago. Paru was reduced to a shadow of her own self. She had a strange feeling of hatred towards Lingaiya who she thought had ruined her life by convincing her to marry Rangan. After his death when she came to know that Lingaiya had given money to Rangan evoked in her searing anger against the dead man,

She wanted to shout ‘Are you happy that you turned an innocent girl’s joy into sorrow? Even on the day of the contest, I would have refused to enter
this house. Like offering bitter medicine coated with jaggery, you enticed me with honeyed words and convinced me to do so. (WKB 140)

Her white-hot rage found release in tears. It was in the same room that he had given advice. The fine image that he had created had melted in the heat of marital discord. All her love was now lavished on her two daughters. She thought that her only aim in life was to work for their well-being.

In great frustration and disappointment she compared her life with that of Rangammai and Girijai. Rangammai who couldn’t even hold a pitchfork was cherished by her husband. Girijai who was skinny, small, dark complexioned and barren was unconditionally loved by her husband. She also thanks of the bonding between Lingaiya and Madhamma. “Why Chithappa? Didn’t you yourself wish to bask in the love of your dear Madhamma till your dying day? Yet you broke a young girl’s heart” (140).

The calm countenance of Lingaiya unlocked her heart and flood of bitter memories poured out of it. The absence of Rangan, while Lingaiya was dead, made everyone talk about him. Paru’s mind started thinking of how Rangan had never been a good husband. He had never helped the family, how can she expect him to do anything in such a circumstance. “When she had hundred and fifty rupees with her, was it right on her part to borrow money for the funeral from Kariammala against a promissory note” (142).

When the funeral of Lingaiya became a problem as Jogi was against all the age old traditions and rituals, the whole village was split into two. People took sides with Krishnan and Rangan and Jogi’s family was left alone. This
aroused the anger of Rangan when Jogi out of a guilty conscience came to apologise for his unruly behaviour. Rangan shouted at him saying,

What ever it was you acted rashly, siding with that new rich fellow. You have both joined forces against me since the day I married the girl you both coveted. Werent you party to the conspiracy to send Paru to Othai in my absence without my knowledge. (151)

When Paru heard what Rangan spoke her anger grew no bounds. She broke the long preserved silence and spoke to Rangan

Arent you ashamed of your self? No body is preventing you from bringing another bride. So there is no need to accuse anyone else falsely. I’ve never stood in your way; nor will I ever do so. I am not the kind of person you think I am. This marriage has been such an ordeal that I don’t wish to go through another. (151)

She said without waiting for a reply from him. She went of to her fields, heedless of the drizzle. She showered all her love in the land and plants and deluded herself that she was content. (159)

And when plague broke out, many people in the village died. Even Rangammai and Paru’s children became victims of the dreadful epidemic. When Paru saw the flushd face of her children, she was devasted. “I chose the names Lakshmi and Jaya with such love” (162). With such a husband like Rangan she had thought of building her life around her children. “What could Paru do? Was the poosai to God of no use? Why should the dread disease cease the tender young bodies? What was left for her? (162).
Even Rangan was aware of her silent misery. He fetched the doctor from the hospital but all in vain. “When Mariamma took away those tender lives, she left Paru’s house deciding that there was nothing left for her to do there. That was the worst blow in Paru’s life and Paru wept uncontrollably.

Mother Nature began to turn green after a severe frost and the villagers returned to their normal life after the effects of plague. Only Paru was inconsolable. It was as though the severe blow dealt by death had sent her into a state of shock unaware of whether it was night or day. She sat sighing, her hair unkempt, going without food or water. Rangan continued his life in his own way. He did not go to Othai to lease land to grow potatoes. He took contracts for felling trees. He also bought artificial fertilizer and helped Jogi to plant potatoes, cabbages and wheat.

When Rangan thought of his wife Paru his heart moved with compassion at the sight of her.

The joy in her face had disappeared. Her golden glow had faded. Dark circles around her eyes, protruding cheek bones, parched, cracked lips, was this the Paru of his dream. The girl he had married. Was this the same Paru who had once made the young man’s heart flutter? (164)

Now he realizes that he had separated a young girl from the man she had loved and had married her. In reality he could not count the days when Paru lived with him as a loving wife. He had seen Jogi and Girijai as young bride and groom working together in the fields laughing and exchanging loving glances. He could see the bloom in their marriage life had not worn of. After started
moving with Jogi and Girijai closely Rangan started realizing that Paru had never been happy with him.

Even in their first flush of marriage when he had lived in intimacy with Paru he had not experienced a fraction of the joy that was evident in Jogi’s marriage. She had never glanced at him with unfathomable mysteries in her eyes, nor had she thrilled him with enticing smiles. (164)

Paru, after the loss of her children could never recover from the fatal shock. Even when Rangan asked her to serve him food, she did it with her eyes staring into space. Raman, Rangammai’s son who had a special affection for his aunt, spoke to her every day and tried to bring a smile to her melancholic countenance. But Paru seemed beyond reach. “It was as if she preferred to remain in her self-imposed isolation allowing no one to trespass on her privacy” (165).

When Rangan slowly approached her and wanted her to leave all her sad thoughts and to begin a new life, Paru bluntly tells him to marry Gowri whom he had been friendly with. When asked if she was not willing to stay in that house, Paru tells Rangan “All I need in life is my patch of land” (168). Even when Rangan realizes his mistakes and feels guilty, Paru tells him to marry Gowri which infuriates Rangan. He loses his sense and starts questioning Paru.

“Answer my question. Do you want to leave me because you have had enough of me? Though you came to me as wife, you cheated me. You have no love for me. You are living here out of duty. Isn’t that so?” (169).
When Paru tearfully asked him why did he harass her and hurt her deliberately he flings off her hands and got up unresolved to make arrangements to fetch Gowri the very next day.

Paru, the protagonist of *When the Kurinji Blooms* serves as the bridge between the three generations of the Baduga community. Paru, a strong woman by nature is portrayed by Rajam Krishnan, as confronting problems in all stages of life. As a young girl she is made to sacrifice her love for Krishnan. Out of compulsion and demands of culture of her society, she marries Rangan who is not the apt partner. Even after marriage, trials and tribulations hover over her. She loses her two beloved children due to plague. All along she had lived her life with the hope that her children and the black soil are the causes for her to live an unpleasant life with her husband Rangan. Her parched life had been made to bloom with the birth of Nanjan. “Finally Paru stands at the cross roads realizing that her journey will be endearing for she has a ray of hope” (Merlin 69).

New hope dawned upon her and she found her life meaningfull only after she became the foster mother of Nanjan. But even that happiness was about to be lost with the love of Nanjan and Vijaya. Throughout her life span, one finds Paru fighting against all odds, but still being very strong and balanced. Paru’s character reveals the fact that culture and tradition forms the base of a society.

Anita Desai’s characters belong to upper class where as Rajam Krishnan’s characters belong to upper middle class and lower class. Due to the difference in class to which these women belong, Anita Desai’s characters do not have to face economic crisis. Rajam Krishnan’s women had to struggle hard
against these forces. Anita Desai’s women are extremely introverts and are not
average human beings. Most of them lack purpose and determination. Rajam
Krishnan’s women possess the purpose and determination, the will to act or the
sense of conduct which becomes their saviour

Maya the protagonists of *Cry, The Peacock*, who has turned into an
emotional wreck, kills her husband throwing him from the terrace. She is then
taken to her father’s house and her mother-in-law and sister-in-law converse that
she’ll have to be sent to an asylum. But just after this a cry is heard from the
room at the top and the two ladies go up stairs. The novel ends with sister-in-
law of Maya, looking through the door at two figures in the open balcony. The
novel does not end with the death of Gautama; it is prolonged a little and ends
with the ambiguity of the disappearance of both into the dark quiet. Death of
Toto in the beginning of the novel leads her to a highly disturbed state of mind
and reminding and reinforcing the astrologer’s prophecy of ultimate truth of life
that is death. Her love for living compelled her to kill Gautama and her death
phobia perhaps leads her towards disappearance. Thus Maya’s cry for love and
life remains unheard and unanswered.

Sita, the protagonists of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is again
a victim of the existential anxiety corroding the very identity and existence of
a person. Unlike Maya, Sita does not suffer from the pangs of unfulfilled
motherhood. Yet like the earlier protagonists, Sita too suffers from unsuitable
marriage, with Raman. After her father’s death, she contemplated numbly,
staying alone into old age out of not knowing what else could be done with one’s
long life, when Deedar's son come to cremate her father, shut the house and finally out of pity, out of lust, out of sudden will for adventure and because it was inevitable – married her. Such a marriage did not yield anything pleasant to her, but proved “empty and meaningless” (WWS 100). She wishes to escape this binary polarization and decides to go to the island, her childhood fantasy place. She has four children and is utterly broken due to her incompetence to manage the world of social liabilities and mental fatigue. But the Manori Island has also disillusioned her and she realizes her mistake and misjudgement in coming here from the city of Bombay. And so when Raman comes to meet their children she readily walks behind him to go back to the earlier dull and callous world. The end of the novel is a step of the novelist towards compromise, acceptance of life situations as they are. A sure sign of ipositivity s discernible in the end of the novel.

Sita does not want to bring the child to the world which is so disorderly and violent. She aspires to go to a place where she will never have to give birth to the child. Ultimately, she reaches a solution for the good of herself and betterment of her family to come out of her fantasy and start living in the world of reality as it is. It is the acceptance of compromise with reality that gives uniqueness to Sita’s character amongst all the women characters of Anita Desai.

Nanda Kaul of Fire on the Mountain, an old woman has had too much of the world with her and so longs for a quiet retired life at Carignano. Like Maya and Sita, Nandha Kaul, though an elderly lady has had a traumatic experience as the wife of a vice-chancellor. The lifelong faithlessness of Mr.Kaul to Nanda
Kaul and the hypocritical situation force her to avow this severance. She wishes to be left to herself without being bothered by her family. So after the death of Mr. Kaul, lives at Carignano in the hills of Kausali. She is disturbed greatly on getting the news through a letter of Raka’s, her great grand-daughter’s arrival at Carignano. She feels as though her privacy is fiercely attacked. In the end she gets two news from two places and she is left on the chair almost faint or unconscious. The news of Ila Das’ death shatters her whole being. On the other hand Raka is shown shouting to her Nani, that she had set the forest on fire.

Girija of *Lamps in the Whirlpool* is an educated woman who had sacrificed her professional life for the sake of her family. But her mother-in-law and husband Samu treat her as a domestic animal whose primary duty is to serve them and the children. Her individuality is curbed and she has no say in the matters of the family. She is immune to her own surrounding to such an extent that she notices the beautiful painting in the hall of her house only when Ratna and her friend show it to her. The cruel practices of “madi” and “acharam” suppress her belongingness. Her husband who is supposed to be her life partner treats her as a just another member of the family. He does not appreciate her for all the effort she takes. Girija’s patience and tolerance attain a breaking point when Samu flung the plate of food. She opens up and boldly speaks out her mind. That is when she decides to leave home and seek solace in Haridwar. The three days stay there, prove to be enriching. Her encounter with an old woman teaches her what life is. On her return she finds that she is branded as impure. She takes a brave decision of leaving home for good.
Paru of *When the Kurinji Blooms*, a silent but strong woman, suffers silently throughout her life. From childhood she was made to believe that Jogi would be her husband. But later when she grew up and fell in love with Krishnan life promised to be very bright and happy. Due to Rangan’s evil ways, she was made to marry him out of sheer compulsion of following family tradition. Rangan never proved to be loving husband. Only her children and her land were the source of consolation and solace. Rangan’s cruel words insisting on her past life and her relationship with Krishnan kindle her anger and she goes to the extent of asking her husband to remarry. She proves to be a strong woman, who boldly faces the challenges of life all alone. She becomes the mother of her sister’s son Nanjan who becomes her life giving force. Later in life when Nanjan tries to behave differently she is shattered totally but remains strong. She is seen sacrificing everything she has for the cause of Nanjan. She finds solace in the land which she owned. But she readily sacrifices the land for the cause of the school where Nanjan studied.

All the five protagonists discussed above are found to be victims of unhappy marriage. All suffer due to the indifferent and materialistic attitude of their husbands. They invariably crave to be loved and understood. Their problem is the incompatible marriage and they try to find their source of solace. When life becomes intolerable they arrive at a solution to their problems.

Most of the characters are the victims of the patriarchal society and their own selves too. Anita Desai’s characters are lonely and under some existential spell while Rajam Krishnan’s characters show inherent strength to struggle
against inner as well as outer adverse circumstances. All these women in their
various roles are in search of their respective identities and purposes in life. But
the basic difference still remains between the characters of Anita Desai and
Rajam Krishnan which is strictly based on their will to act.

The women in these novels are handicapped by diverse forces. All
women are suppressed and under the control of men. They lead a life of
triviality. The harassments they tolerate inside and outside home anger them and
there are attempts to revolt. Sometimes they overpower physical onslaughts
successfully but fail miserably when the attack is mental. The mental anguish
they undergo makes them look pathetic. They are seized by a sense of bondage.
If all these women are indispensible with their surroundings, the problems faced
by them also have a similarity on their characteristic way of confining them.

Woman seeks companionship as a wife and the man is after self
gratification. The togetherness and warmth that she expects is denied to her.
The husband who is oblivious of the wife’s physical and sensual needs is
responsible for her anomic behaviour. The indifferent behaviour of the husband,
leading too emotional and sexual desperation makes her neurotic. The husband
is most narrow mind, ruthless and careless. The wife experiences an acute sense
of loneliness, emptiness and boredom due to her sensitiveness. There is lack of
communication and the wife goes back into her shell like an oyster.

Especially a married woman, the transplantation takes place on three
levels: physical, mental and spiritual. They are torn between the memories of
the past and the realities of the present. With the boom of an unpleasant and an unacceptable situation, nostalgic feelings get stirred up.

Inspite of all the material comforts awarded to a woman there is an emotional void. The woman is always disillusioned whenever she searches for communication. A good sensitive intelligent wife wants to have conversation about books, events, ideas and people or anything else, which can be shared by both. This never happens and the woman suffers from loneliness. The loneliness, suffering and frustration leads to disintegration. Marriage makes her lose her poise and respectability, especially when the wife knows that her man desires others company. She feels lonely and sometimes she even hates her husband. Marriage makes her mere lonely, insecure and unhappy. She is fed up and bored. Her life is full of false pretensions, empty and meaningless. There is emotional isolation and the woman is unnaturally subdued. The sense of desolation makes her desperate and she devotes her attention to things other than marriage and husband. Her spirit is destroyed completely.

The wife has to bear many types of burdens. There is an element of tiredness and disgust. To play the role of ideal Hindu wife she has to discard her selfhood and identity. The bitterness that is accumulated creates disgust for the role of a wife. She receives lots of hurts ad injuries. The bottled up emotions burst up after a log stifling tension that she feels emotionally weakens her equipoise. Marriage alters a woman completely. She does not remain what she was before her marriage. The enterprising and intelligent woman hates to get stuck at home. The life she lives is a life of boredom and tedium. She feels
engaged and enslaved. She reacts to the sufferings caused by incompatibility though she does not articulate it.

Both the women novelists respond to the problems of women in an analogous manner. The three selected novels of Anita Desai and two novels of Rajam Krishnan are focused on strained relationship between husband and wife.