CHAPTER II

DESTRUCTION OF SELF IN ANITA DESAI’S

CRY, THE PEACOCK

Anita Desai, a legendary novelist emerged on the scene of Indian English literary scenario when realism, political and social consciousness pervaded. She poured out spirit to the Indian English literature by introducing psychological novels. The place of her fictions in Indian English literature is decisive due to its psychological interest irrespective of masculine or feminine interests. She is successful in revealing male as well as female psychological problematics.

As a writer she is interested in the inner truths of the things; spiritual matters come first and social revolves to the periphery. Shubha Tiwari rightly points out that “Desai lives in her mind and not body”.1 According to her, writing is an effort in which discovery of truth or the “true significance of things”2 is meant to be explored rather than social realities.

Though Desai forcefully portrays the psychological bearings of male and female characters equally, her experience and consciousness as a woman weighs down while portraying the female characters. The portraits of Deven, Baumgartner and Mattoe are satisfactorily revealed but the portraits of Maya, Sita and Nanda are more enlightening. Anita Desai projects the contemporary woman with crises and conflicts who silently suffer at the hands of patriarchy. In the true sense of the word she is a feminist writer. Bidulata Chaudhari has cited her opinion about her being a feminist writer; she opines “any statement” she wishes to make on women’s emancipation has been made in her novels in “one form or
another”. Her novels exhibit women’s struggle for survival in a male dominated world.

Through her women characters, she challenges the Indian notion of ‘ideal womanhood’. Selfless love, sacrifice, and negation of sex are the attributes of women in Indian society. These notions have been challenged with its authenticity. Shubha Tiwari states: “With this burdening of sickening ideals, the innate self as pleasure seeking, as wanton, as selfish, as loving and caring as men, has been over ruled.” Indian society has trapped this ‘true self’ of woman by imposing feminine ideals. Anita Desai has portrayed the true self of Indian women.

The study of self leads to the significant rediscovery of its ‘constructedness’. The social discourses largely contribute to decide the psychic make up of people of which they belong to. So the study of psychic life of the characters in literature is complimentary to the study of social life. The modern psychological theories do not support the ideology of ‘natural self’; instead they demonstrate the truth that the social ethos largely determines the personality traits of characters.

Desai, though, from bicultural heritage, has intimate associations with Indian culture and due to her bi-cultural heritage she has cultivated the objective attitude to look at Indian culture. The force of her writing lies in her portrayal of Indian feminine sensibility which is fighting against the patriarchal hegemony. The characters she is interested in are peculiarly disintegrated personalities and particularly women. She believes that “as a writer one is interested in peculiar and eccentric characters rather than everybody average ones.” These eccentric women demand psychological explanations to conceive their course of action.
which paradoxically brings to the front the unjust social norms that are responsible for their destruction of ‘self’.

The women characters portrayed by Desai with their peculiar personality traits are tried to be located into the conventional patriarchal milieu which creates problems of maladjustments in the social contexts. The maladjustments drive them;

... into extremity of despair and so turned against, or made a stand against, the general current. It is easy to flow with the current, it makes no demands, it costs no effort. But those who cannot follow it, whose heart cries out “the great No” who fight the current and struggle against it, they know what the demands are and what it costs to meet them.⁶

The value of the assertion of “great no”, “demands” and the “costs” these women pay cites the objective of the study. The need of objective assessment of the subjective consciousness, its “demands” and paradoxical “great no” of the society, and the “costs” the struggle pays highlights the significance of social responsibility shouldering in the construction of personality. Hence the source of the destruction of the personality lies with the same source. If the social norms are responsible for the construction of the “self” then it’s certain that the reasons for its destructions should be searched into the same source.

Since the publication of *Cry, the Peacock* in 1963, the book has been in dialogue due to its psychological interest. Maya, the protagonist of the novel highly unsettles the panorama of women’s stereotyping in Indian English literature. She projects herself as an inner force that stands against the social repression and conditioning. She transpires the threat to the institutions like patriarchy, marriage and ideal womanhood. The first
social discourse in which she is conditioned is patriarchal surveillance; the ideology that confines and limits her ‘self’ for self realization and independency. So the first discourse is under scrutiny is patriarchy.

2.1 Patriarchal Surveillance:

Family is the prime institution where the rule of a patriarch is strictly observed. Patriarchy operates through this social system where the relationships between a man and a woman are hierarchally organised. The word patriarch denotes the rule of a male who is particularly the head of the family; ruling over the institution, he creates power politics which aims at the subservience of women. The role a patriarch plays in a family regulates the women’s course of life.

Focusing attention to the Indian social structure, the rule of a male is maintained primarily through the force and patriarchal hegemonies. In *Cry, the Peacock* the self of the protagonist, Maya, is largely affected by her childhood upbringing in her father’s home. Indian culture adopts different attitudes for regulating the behaviour of male and female child. In rigidly Indian patriarchal social structure the life course of women is strictly under observance of patriarchy. It is observed that the feminine attributes should be cultivated in a girl child and masculine in a male child respectively. The parental surveillance contributes in ascribing power to the patriarchy. Therefore the role of Maya’s father in upbringing her, should be assessed.

It should be noted that the father figure who plays an important role in shaping the mindset and personality traits of his daughter is remained untitled. Hence he represents the omnipresent characteristic of patriarchy and the rule of the patriarch who need not title. Maya as a girl child is brought up in a peculiar Indian family, under particular Indian father
patriarch, enhances the significance of a role of culture in conditioning the subjectivity of a woman. The cultural determinants affect the roles a woman and a man play in society.

The difference of attitude of Maya’s father towards Arjuna and herself clearly states the vision of Indian culture which rears up the materialistic view, aiming at keeping daughters in confines. The opinion of her father is evident of the view when he cites that “in a daughter he had a treasure”. Maya is kept under confines while Arjuna is left for the persuasion of meaningful things in the world. It is strictly observed that she should be kept to the domestic sphere which ascribes her the lower status into the society due to the inconsequential status of her duties and social status. Maya becomes the “toy princes in a toy world” while Arjuna is a “wild bird, a young hawk that could not be tamed, that fought for its liberty”.

The triviality of the world of Maya is symbolically presented through the imagery of “toy princes”; the feminine world from where a woman belongs to. The world of Maya, everlasting, evergreen, converted into paradise where time is still is far away from the harsher realities of life. Under the guise of an elusive patriarchal care and protection of her over indulgent father, the progressive self of Maya is crushed down. T. Muralidharan rightly points out the benevolent nature of the patriarchy by opining that the father figure in Cry, the Peacock is “an archetype of the indulgent yet benevolent patriarchal figure that most urban, upper middle class Indian girls find in their fathers”. The patriarchal care which boasts of its patron responsibilities actually paralyses the self confidence in women.
The imagery of “wild hawk”, “fighting for its liberty” indicates the nature imagery which demonstrates the advantage of higher status, opportunities, and challenges a male child enjoys. Arjuna’s life is vital and adventurous which leaves behind the life of patriarchal enslavement. The life devoted to the cause of Negros is certainly considered to be more fruitful than the world of “toy princes”. The masculine view of the feminine world has been pointed out through the pronouncement of Arjuna who denounces the life of pleasure without significant vocation; “...life, no matter how elegantly lived, is meaningless when it is lived for nothing but one’s pleasure.”11 Hence the life totally confined to the domesticity is aloof from the masculine stream where domesticity is on the periphery, so the women are.

The material environ not only contribute to define the social status of human being but also to the construction of temperament. The feminine attributes like emotionalism, hyper-sensitiveness, over indulgence, dependency these personality traits are developed in Maya due to her father’s over protective nature. He never exposed to her the bare truths of life which should be meted out while living it. Contrasting her, all her male counter parts show the masculine traits which stand exactly opposite to her psychological developments.

The surveillance of the great Other i.e. the patriarch restricts the intellectual growth of women; moulds and conditions the psychological development. The patriarchal enslavement has been disguised into the caring patronage. Hence the thought of freedom is discarded at the advantage of protection. The over-pampering nature of patriarchy restricts the ‘self’ from actualizing patriarchal strategies which converts into hegemonies where the subordination and enslavement poses the
natural state of things. Thus the notion of revolt against the order of things seems out of question.

The novel is an ironical dramatisation of Maya’s consciousness of her inner self against the backdrop of the domineering patriarchy. She is emotionally handicapped to adjust with the social expectations due her more restricted, unnatural childhood upbringings. Her father has been taken responsible for her ‘unnatural’ development as a human being who is incapable to meet out the social demands. Maya develops the sense of grudge against her father which later on develops into hatred. She revolts against the authority of her father by taking vengeance on him by killing Gautama, her husband who represents and stands for patriarchal authority.

The subjection of the self commences with the parental/patriarchal/fatherly care and confirms in the hands of a husband. The realization of the subjection initiates from the father figure while the sight of confirmation and resistance becomes the husband. Hence the analysis leads to the review of the marriage system and husband-wife relationship.

2.2 Marriage: Discourse of Strategic Repression:

Marriage, the social institution includes the set rules which determine the social status of a woman. It is suggestive of displacement from parental associations, familiar locations, affiliation to unfamiliar personages, and perpetual commitment to husband, in case of a woman. It largely affects the psychic make of the society as well as women towards themselves who subject to these codes of appraisal. To confirm these codes of conduct they are viewed through the spects of sacrifice, endurance, dedication and loyalty.
Marriage as a discourse is based upon the husband-wife relationship. Though this institution has been invented to regulate the sexual behaviour of human beings, it implies more than the sexual regulations. It insinuates the exchange of girl from the father to the husband who supposes to take care of her till her death. It is also suggestive of woman’s complete surrender to her husband without the prospects of her own. Hence the economical incompetency compels her to succumb to the power of husband who rules her remaining life as a husband patriarch.

Automatically the rule of a father patriarch is extended to the husband patriarch through marriage who takes hold of woman’s life in this discourse. The discursive practices related to marriage vary from society to society and religion to religion. In India the lives of the people are governed by the Hindu religion and the religion is dictated by the rule of Manu. Hinduism confers man status and power through holy commandment while the life span of a woman is nothing but series of misfortunes and subjugation. The life of a woman in Hindu religion is determined through the following philosophy:

Pita rakshati kaumare, bhartarakshati, yauwane
Rakshati sthavire puta Na stri swatantryamarhati\textsuperscript{12}

The pronouncement determines the perpetual repression and unsurpassable slavery is conspired against women as she is subjected to the oppression of father, husband, and son. The power is all pervasive in the hands of the male members of the society and they have conferred the right to regulate the lives of women. The omnipotency of religion has been used to establish the male-female hierarchy.
For a woman, marriage and the responsibility of family denote the two fold subjections; one is under the rule of her father in her parental home while second implies under her husband and son, after marriage. The parental home ascribes her boon of protection while her husband’s guarantees fulfilment of livelihood till death, economical security. In both of these systems women are made dependent on men. The institution of marriage covers large period of woman’s life hence it becomes a perpetual confinement without any hope of relief. The attitudes which have shaped these ideologies are under scrutiny.

Initially the materialistic attitude towards women projects them as the entities for the possession. The parents assume girls as ‘other’s property’ which should be exchanged to the rightful owner i.e. her husband on the rightful time. So the rituals of donating girls in marriage are performed in due response to the ideology. This perspective creates complex psychological problems in women since she loses her sense of belongingness in the due course of time. The consequences of all this philosophy result in psychic abnormalities in women due to emotional gulf between her parental associations and in her in-laws rude behaviour.

Instead of all these far reaching disastrous consequences of marriage, women marry as it has become social imposition rather the self will. It is viewed as a social coercion irrespective of the desire and economical position of the woman herself. Inevitability of marriage invites inexorable state of psychic abnormalities if it has been taken place under the intimidation only. In a highly conventional social set-up of India marriages are arranged by the elders and the possibility of it becoming a burden rather responsibility increases, particularly in case of a girl, she has been never considered appropriate to uphold her views and express it. Hence the marriage system in India emerges as a highly
suffocative discourse for women where they strive for identity, meaning, self-acknowledgement, and independency. Particularly the loss of self creates psychological tensions. Through the protagonist of *Cry, the Peacock* the tension between the inner self and socialized self is enacted which results into the disintegrated personality of Maya.

The male characters in the novel act as catalysts to annihilate Maya’s self. After her father, the albino astrologer represents the patriarchal power. The description of the astrologer and the dark temple room highly symbolize the authority of patriarchy to determine a woman’s fate. The albino astrologer’s scene is packed with erotic images, suggestive of a superior male sexuality, symbolizing dominancy. His existence is like a “sluggish white worm”\(^{13}\) -a phallic symbol-in a dark temple room where “the central lingam was painted a bright, vicious red, as though plunged in sacrificial blood.”\(^{14}\) His ghostly shadow spreads over her whole existence. He comes near her, “his shadow lapped” her “playfully, flirtatiously”. He exhibits his sexuality by twitching “the fold of his grimy robe between thighs that flashed through holes and openings, here, there, obscenely”.\(^{15}\) The phallic symbols in the delineation collaborately stand for the father patriarch and ‘the central lingam’ for archetypal religious sovereignty which hold the power to affect the lives of women to the extent of destructing their existence.

Albino astrologer’s prophecy is an archetypal statement of the patriarchal discourse that predestines the life of a woman. It proclaims the availability of alternatives a woman has in her life. It definitely suggests the intimidation of marriage and the subsequent consequences i.e. loss of self, identity and existence. In most of Desai’s novels marriage has been made synonymous to death. The death of one of the partners in the four years of Maya’s marriage implies the annihilation of her ‘self’.

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The source of the destruction of Maya’s self lies into the prophecy of Albino Astrologer and the condition of marriage. Because of the disastrous influence of prophesy her childhood perishes. Though devastating, the option is unavoidable and Maya has to marry. Arjuna even cites it as “of course” and states that “I heard you are married. Impossible to believe, yet it was of course, the inevitable for you...”\textsuperscript{16} the discriminatory attitude of Indian mentality is projected through the above pronouncement. When Maya’s wings are clipped, Arjuna is left to decide his own destiny while Maya has to accept the intimidation of passive acceptance.

More or less to add her tragedy, Maya’s marriage with Gautama is not a voluntary decision of herself. This marriage is a marriage of convenience as Gautama and Maya’s father are friends. Just in order to please her father she decides to marry Gautama. It’s important to quote that it is not hers but her:

...father’s proposal that I marry this tall, stooped and knowledgeable friend of his, one might have said that our marriage was grounded upon the friendship of the two men, the mutual respect in which they held each other, rather than upon anything else.\textsuperscript{17}

The marriage based on commitment is abandoned to please the father patriarch. The right to choose has been denied by sacrificing the freedom. Hence it is viewed as an adjustment to replace the patriarchal care.

By many critics, Maya’s acceptance of her father’s proposal of marriage has been ascribed to “Freudian libido” or “Lawerntian Oedipus Complex”.\textsuperscript{18} According to them her marriage with Gautama only serves to highlight her total involvement with her father. She does not grow out
of her childhood so constantly searches her father in her husband. It becomes clearer when Gautama explains to her:

If you knew your Freud it would all be very straightforward, and then appears as merely inevitable to you – taking your childhood and upbringing into consideration. You have a very obvious father-obsession–which is the reason why married me, a man so much older than yourself.\(^\text{19}\)

Maya suffers from the self consuming passion of being loved, cared. Gautama being intellectual does not pamper Maya’s childish obsession. According to him, Maya is a “neurotic”, “a spoilt baby” and her father is the “one responsible for this…”\(^\text{20}\)

Jasbir Jain views her father’s character as possessive, extreme, selfish and confined by his social personal image. She opines that “Maya wishes to continue the father-daughter relationship… Her sensuality clashes with the idea of the father-daughter relationship. This is indicative of the split in Maya’s being, of her neurosis”.\(^\text{21}\) Her instincts demand the socially taboo relationship i.e. sexual relation in a father and daughter. Her self-will contrasts to the social taboos. The self must outgrow to adulthood by accepting the social norms. If it does not, it strives to fulfil it. So she replaces Gautama to her father. But the lack of love and care with fatherly affection sprouts in her hatred for both of the patriarchs. Confronting the limitations of achieving it, Maya becomes neurotic.

Maya’s father cannot be viewed as a tyrant who purposefully wants his daughter head for grief. He is an aristocratic Brahmin and a fatalist, well known of Maya’s hyper-sensitive nature and the effect of albino astrologer’s prophecy on her mind. He took every measure to keep Maya
out of the perilous impact of “astrology” and “palmistry”. To review the ancestry of Maya’s family, it is of Brahmins:

...for generations had lived their lives- according to prescribed patterns, had married according to the advice and suitability of their horoscopes, had diligently taken up careers that the pundits had chosen for them out of constellations, had had their children’s stars studied and speculated upon before they even spoke their first recognizable words…  

He has already acknowledged that Maya’s peace of mind has been destructed due to the prophecy; he is wise enough to choose Gautama as Maya’s husband. Being a friend of Gautama, he notices the sceptical nature of his family; Gautama himself was “no Brahmin” and “no traditionalist” and his brothers and sisters “would hoot with derision at the mention of superstition, with pity and scorn for those who allowed their lives to be ruled by them, and ruined by them.” Even his father and mother laugh at the thought. Maya’s father desires the type of family which is miles away from all these imaginary nonsense. Therefore his is a right decision who craves for his daughter’s happy married life.

The choice of family of Maya’s father is right but not of the husband as Gautama is much older than Maya. The age factor definitely affects the marital relationships; Maya is the dawn of youth and Gautama is the sunset; Maya contemplates and involves in the sensuous things while Gautama deep dives into the sea of religious philosophy. Both of the temperaments suit both of them but it is quite difficult to bring the east and the west together. Gautama does not bother to understand
Maya’s physical need and Maya, of Gautama’s philosophical broodings, thus the emotional gulf between husband and wife widens.

Sexuality is an inseparable part of marital life. Though both man and woman share equal part in satiating sexual urges of each other, patriarchal norms keep woman out of the sphere of sexuality. Women are entirely excluded from the domain of sexuality where the exhibition of appetite for sex has been regarded as immorality. In a country like India the higher state of things is spiritual while sensual are considered as subordinate. Maya represents the fleshy desires which are discarded at the advantage of spirituality while Gautama is an incarnation of the theological philosophies. The disparity of values and priorities for each of them generates clashes into the relationship which results into the cravings of fulfilment of carnal desires. Jasbir Jain rightly points out that “Maya, sensuously aware of her own body, both as a child and a woman, wants this to be recognized by the male world. She wants Gautama to be aware of it, aware in several different ways.”

The title of the novel is also suggestive of Maya’s craving for physical communion. The cries of peacocks symbolize Maya’s utter sexual urge. Maya’s cravings for sexual satisfaction, fatherly love, escape from ominous prophecy and wish for survival are presented through the images of peacocks. Peacocks cry for love and death is a paradox of communal life. The union is the source of fertility and new life. But in Cry, the Peacock, it symbolizes death and end of life. T. Muralidharan rightly points the writer’s view of marriage: “In almost all her novels we can see the images of sexual union and death appearing together. For her female protagonists, death and marriage are synonymous”.

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By exhibiting the appetite for sexual desires Maya becomes the figure that has the guts to revolt by breaking the age old tradition of Stridharma which propagates the passivity of women in sexual congregation. Maya defiles the norms of Pativrata that prescribes the rule for a wife to wait for her husband in sexual congregation. By denying the social inhibition, the culturally constructed self is sacrificed for the self-acknowledgement. The realization of the physical needs and the demands by others is a step ahead to self-assertion. Though Maya, unable to fulfil her wishes, represents the modern feminine sensibility. She strives to assert her inner self. The patriarchy neglects her feminine sensibilities asserting its incompatibility to the patriarchal benchmark but she asserts it by destructing and defiling patriarchal norms.

The frustrated sexual desires create void in her life where a spirit creates decaying personality. As there is no alternative discourse available for fulfilment of sexual desires, the self suffocates to assert. The moral norms are strictly observed to live a chaste life. The stifling circumstances create clashes between the culturally constructed self and the natural self. Rajeshwar Mittapalli quotes Sigmund Freud to validate this conviction:

Experience shows… that women, who, as being the actual vehicles of the sexual interests of mankind, are only endowed in a small measure, with the gift of sublimating their instincts, and who (…) when they are subjected to the disillusionments of marriage, fall ill of severe neurosis which permanently darkens their lives.\textsuperscript{26}
Marital-morality strictly confines women for sexual satisfaction in the marital cords. Biologically speaking, marital unfaithfulness could be a viable cure for the ailment. Freud continues:

The more strictly a woman has been brought up and the more sternly she has submitted to the demands of civilization, the more she is afraid of taking this way out; and her sense of duty, she once more seeks refuge in a neurosis. Nothing protects her virtue as a securely as illness.\(^{27}\)

The social inhibition suffocates women biologically. The way out for the problem is breaking the marital bond. Maya has the choice to break the marriage or not to marry at all but the social imposition on women to get marry has compelled her to fall from her father’s paradise. The social foisting to lodge in the oppressive marriage frame and the inner urge to shatter it fabricates Maya’s life troublesome. “She has a secure home, earning husband and well defined future.”\(^{28}\) According to Indian standard her life appears to be an ideal. But these seemingly ideal external conditions are however not acceptable to her unconscious where her desire for unbridled freedom is hidden.

The reason behind Maya’s development into an aggressive personality lies in her unfulfilled sexual urges. The need of sex plays vital role in shaping behaviour and attitude of human beings. Sex is an instinctive need and she is tense and disturbed because of the non-fulfilment of it. Her philosophy of compulsive companionship, contact and communion is a spontaneous response to the sexual impulses. She always makes “haste in undressing, preparing” and “joining him at last”\(^{29}\) But Gautama shows disinterest and abhors at the thought of too much
contact. Therefore Maya feels neglected, rejected and discarded. Freud says, “The amount of destructive instinct which remains in the interior either combines with erotic instinct into masochism or with a greater of lesser erotic addition it is directed against the external world as aggressiveness.” Hence she grows aggressive and hostile towards the things outside including her father and Gautama. Most of the times, she screams, shouts, complains and cries. Her identification of her own anguish with the cries of the dancing peacocks, “Pia, Pia, Mio, Mio” echoes her own anguish, her suppressed and unfulfilled desires. The peacocks’ imagery symbolizes that her love for a mate becomes destructive.

The objective of Maya’s aggression is not lust for destruction but the preservation of life hence it can be called as defensive. If the love of Gautama is attained, the aggression will automatically dissolve but Maya fails to attract Gautama both physically and mentally. After her marriage with Gautama he has become emotional equivalent to her father. Hence he becomes her object of desire and devotion. When she is unable to evoke love in his heart, feels shattered. This is the state of rejection of self. She loses control over self and wants peace within. Closing her eyes to sleep, she tries to relax but her libidinal urge does not let her to have peace of mind; “But sleep was rent by the frenzied cries of peacocks pacing the rocks at night—peacocks searching for mates, peacocks tearing themselves to bleeding shreds in the act of love...” Her agonized state of mind is reflected through the frenzied imagery of the dying peacocks. She longs for love, life and attachment and Gautama is aloof from the contact and communion, the very source of life and survival. When she asks him about the cries, his reply of complete ignorance shatters her all expectations of his attachment to her sensual world. Therefore she
concludes: “The man had no contact with the world, or with me. What if he dies and lost even the possibility of contact? What would it matter to him?”33 The consequences of negation of prime instincts like sexual love leads to the psychic frustration which further enhances the possibility of death of one of the partners.

Freud maintains that “aggression originates from a death instinct i.e., an innate tendency to undo the process leading to life and revert to the inorganic state from which life originally arose.”34 Maya’s fears of death and the death instinct play an important role in shaping the deteriorating condition of her personality. The conflicting psychic states lead her to think of death as the only means to find solace in the existing circumstances. The albino’s prophesy seems true to her and she thinks of destroying the cause of her unhappiness. She muses silently: “Could death disturb him?”35

Maya bewilders to think on the alternative left to her and debates over murder. The thoughts of the murder evoke in her horror and the guilt. She feels dejected and helpless. “And sometimes I paused to feel the arrow of that word, Murder, sink into my flesh, and to cry”, “Is this what I have come to?”36 Maya’s anxiety has reached to the point of alleviating through the murder of Gautama. The unconscious will of survival surfaces her conscious self and she consciously holds the view that in Gautama’s death her survival and happiness lies. The storm symbolizes her violent efforts to free herself from all fears, anxieties, frustration and phobias.

Talking about the life and death instinct, Freud maintains that the death instinct is “directed against the organism itself and thus is a self destructive drive, or it is directed outward, and in this case tends to
destroy other rather than oneself.” In Maya, the basic conflict is now between ‘life instinct’ and ‘death instinct’. The life instinct and sexual drives both stand against the death instinct which is the root cause of human destructiveness, directed either towards the person himself or the world.

Maya’s ‘life instinct’ takes other way and adopts the self-assertive-aggression when she decides that Gautama is doomed to die. Self-assertive-aggression is an essential quality for survival. Maya is driven by the passion to destroy Gautama due to her survival instinct. After discovering the futility of Gautama’s existence she conspires to kill him and searches for the suitable opportunity to get herself free from the unwanted burden of death. The aggressive impulses overpower her when Gautama follows her to the terrace. She pushes him to death by destroying the source of her uneasiness at the same time the very capable source of her protection, love and fulfilment.

After Gautama’s murder, instead of feeling relieved, Maya is haunted by the sense of guilt. Maya’s act of aggression against her husband turns into an act of self-destruction. So the pangs of conscious unable her peace of mind and she commits suicide as there is no guarantee of self-fulfilment.

By murdering Gautama, Maya defiles the ideal Indian womanhood pattern of Sati, Savitri and Sita. Instead of immolating herself, she prefers to preserve herself. As Indian marital discourse does not support the existence of a woman after her husband’s death; she has to die either physically or socially. Though she lives physically, socially she is doomed to die. In any case, a woman is not left to live by herself. The unmarried state brings social condemnation, the married state brings
submission and the widowed state brings social degradation. Hence the destruction of self is guaranteed in the patriarchal social system.

2.3 Motherhood: A Social Coercion:

The life of a woman is a series of social intimidations; so getting married is not enough for her, afterwards they should bear children. Childlessness affects the social status of a woman at the same time the psychic health due to the social imposition. Maya’s psychological break up commences from her father and ends at the desire of being a mother. Her father develops her into an incapable person to cope with bare realities of life and her husband negates her primary expectations of sexual fulfilment which terminates in neurosis. The deprivation of a child is an enough cause to make her frantic.

Her obsessive attachment with the pet Toto is a natural output of her motherly feelings. The death of motherhood is resented through the death of the dog. The observation of the writer has been cited through the confession of the protagonist herself; she says that “childless women do develop fanatic attachments to their pets, they say. It is no less a relationship than that a woman and her child, no less worthy of reverence, and agonized remembrance”. The social perspective has been made evident through the clear indication of the word “they”. The Indian concept of ‘ideal womanhood’ includes fulfilment of the criterion of motherhood. A woman has been identified in relation to her marital status and children to which Maya is unable to fulfil, becomes discontent with the present state of affairs.

Desai has successfully probed into the patriarchal Indian social structures that impart corrupt ideologies where a male member of it is left from all of the inhibitions and a woman is kept under eternal state of
subservience and subordination. The woman who wants to liberate herself from the burden of motherhood has to pass from ordeals that are difficult to the extent of excommunicating her from the domain of sanity.

Desai is a spokesperson of the changing dimensions of the modern Indian outlooks from where a woman as a discourse can be viewed from the modern stand point of feminist theories. To liberate women from the identities of a daughter, wife, mother and so forth, though seems a difficult task but the transition period has been proceeded and Maya represents that viewpoint. It is also successfully communicated that the consequences of being different may invite psychological abnormalities of which Maya has been charged with.

Hence Maya’s reaction to Toto’s death of total attachment proves to be the traumatic experience. Toto’s death extinguishes all of the hopes of regeneration and the hope of the life after death which is guaranteed in the next generation. The process of annihilation of Maya’s existence completes at the death of the dog and the obsession for the self preservation starts from same event itself. The event brings with itself the desire of choice and continuation of life. The instinct of survival takes hold of power where the norms created by human beings fail to keep order of things.

2.4 Annihilation of Self: Psychological Explanations from Third Force Psychologists

Since the publication of Cry, the Peacock, Anita Desai has been acclaimed for the psychological interest in her characters. It is always emphasized that she disowns the social concerns and asserts emphatically that she is interested in individuals and not in social concerns. But the study of Desai’s novels is incomplete without the dialogues between
psychological abnormalities of her characters to the social background that highlights the poignancy of psychological disintegration.

Anita Desai’s characters are eccentric and peculiar. They are conscious of themselves and perceive the truth that their sensibilities clash with outer reality. The centre of the existence of these characters is the ‘self’ which is the core of human existence. These hyper-sensitive characters, particularly women portrayed by Desai create their own value system based on the unconscious cravings, question the authenticity of the established value systems. So the superstructures on which various patriarchal discourses are based should be investigated.

The psychological existence of human beings is largely determined by the social circumstances of which he/she is a part. Patriarchy, viewed from the Marxist perspective, leads to propound an explanation that culturally it is a ‘base’ and all other organizations are ‘superstructures’ that are evolved out of its basic precepts. ‘Self’ as a cultural construct is largely affected by the patriarchal orientation of all of the ‘superstructures’.

A human being, a part of the society, succumbs to the social determinants. As a conscious being the self is a direct output of its associations and relatedness to the ‘superstructures’. Acquiring unity with the prescribed norms of the evolved culture the subject fulfils the condition of sanity otherwise it is expelled from the sphere of sanity.

Anita Desai’s most of the characters demonstrate the characteristic of expulsion from social norms and consequently the alienation. Her characters create their own counter ideological value system which clashes with the existing ideals. Being unable to assert and adjust with the
prevalent social conditions, the self destructs itself, sensing absurdity of its existence.

Anita Desai lays emphasis on exploring and exposing the dark recesses of human psyche, particularly female psyche. The healthy dialogue between an individual aspiration and cultural ideologies assist in creating a balanced personality. If the social ideals strive to hamper the basis needs of human being by institutionalizing the subordination, the process creates the personality traits in human beings like social incapability, alienation, insecurity, disparity and neurosis. The bleak vision of the outer world compels them to reside in the inner world of imagination to striving for meaning. Since the gulf between the inner and outer associations increases, aggravates a kind of neurosis.

Women in Anita Desai’s novels live out to the standards of patriarchy which patterns their life to the level of total subjugation and degradation. Being unable to cope with the outer expectations of life and alienated from the main current of life, they lose the sense of significance and self. The inner forces constantly challenging the established authority brings to the front the corrupted value systems that are governed by patriarchal assumptions.

The institutions, under scrutiny, affected the material prosperity as well as psychological health of women is parental care, marital imposition, burden of unwanted motherhood and false ideals of womanhood. These ideals create the mental disabilities to nourish the self respect, heightens mental stress, anguish for unfulfilled aspirations and cravings for unsatisfied desires. The domestic walls not only confine the physical existence of a woman but crushes down the psychological exasperations.
Anita Desai’s characters are the psychoanalytical case studies, find
the real world too harsh, unpleasant, difficult and too complex. They
create their inner world by withering from the hostile world full of
misery, sorrow and suffering. The process creates the disparity between
the ideals and the actual self. To cope with the environment the subject
develops some strategies to alleviate the basic anxiety by diverting his/her
constructive energies.

Concentrating on the character of Maya, the study of her character-
type, leads to neurosis, “a common symptom into the people who become
psychologically imbalanced.”\(^{39}\) Her father sows in her the seeds of
emotional dependency through excessive love and his over-protective
nature. The handling of children by the parents is the most important
factor to sculpture a balanced personality of an adult. Though Anita Desai
emphasises the ever-lasting effect of childhood experiences, the adult life
too contains the traumatic experiences. Viewing the source of Maya’s
neurosis, it is found in her childhood upbringing under her father’s care.

The persistent problematic personality trait in Maya is her
continued childhood from which she is unable to outgrow. Being kept
away from the bleak realities of life, her father keeps her in an eternal
childhood, thus no chance of the growth of the ‘self’. To outgrow from
childhood to a healthy personality needs genuine love from parents and
lack of it creates “basic anxiety”.\(^{40}\) The factors which hamper the growth
are the dominating, over-protective, intimidating, irritable, over-
indulgent, partially indifferent, hypocritical elders endanger a child’s free
use of his constructive energies, damage his sense of self-respect and
reliance. The child becomes unable to relate himself to the outer world
with his spontaneous real self. To cope with the environment the child
develops some strategies to alleviate its basic anxiety by diverting its constructive energies.

The root cause of Mays’s ‘basic anxiety’ is the clashes between the adulthood drives and the unfulfilled basic needs. The struggle starts with the actualization of the ‘real self’ which leads to generate the ‘glorified self’ and the impossibility of the attainment of the ‘glorified self’ creates the ‘despised self’. The banishment of the real-self leads towards the self-alienation a tragic state of self-hate, self-condemnation, self-accusation and self-annihilation.

The process of self-destruction starts itself in the childhood and reaches to the summit in adulthood. In case of Maya, the process of neurosis commences with the wish to marry an old man who may fulfil the evolutionary drives of love. The reason behind getting married Gautama is a wish to self-fulfilment, to alleviate the basic anxiety. But as soon as the realization reaches to the conclusion that the basic needs are at the stake, Maya submits her creative energies to get love by crushing down the ‘real-self’.

The clues to understand the meaning of ‘real-self’, ‘glorified-self’, ‘despised-self’, ‘self-actualization’ and ‘self-alienation’ can be found in the systematic analysis of the two leading spokesmen of Third Force Psychologists, Karen Horney and Abraham Maslow. Maya as a case study of neurosis can be studied from the standpoint of these psychologists’. Along with the basic need of love for the healthy growth of the human personality, ‘relatedness’ and a desire to ‘belong’ are the integral part of the human personality. The threat to these needs create neurotic tendencies. The threatening environment evokes in the child the dread of the others and the self. Feeling impotent, weak and dependent, it
represses the hostility. To remain meaningful to itself, it adopts self-glorification by acquiring three strategies of defence:

1. It moves towards people.
2. It moves away from people.
3. It moves against people.

The social and familial conditions and the individual temperament contribute to adopt these defence mechanisms. The child who moves towards people becomes compliant and self-effacing. The child who moves away from people becomes detached and the child moves against the people shows the characteristics of aggressiveness.

The person who moves towards people becomes a compliant individual and his drives are mainly stuck to love. He exhibit two characteristic features:

1. The self-effacement nature and
2. Morbidly dependent

A self-effacing person pose inferior to other and subordinates himself by cultivating the qualities of helplessness and dependence and expects loves in return. He effaces all wants, needs and desires and consequently effaces himself. He cripples the instinct of self-preservation and self-interest. Horney calls it the “shrinking process”. Feeling secure in the “self-minimizing”, he creates a glorified image of himself, values his lovable qualities and expects others to value it. But when the expectations are failed, he retaliates. But being a self-effacing person he cannot be violent to the others. This creates self-pity and a sense of guilt for personal inadequacy which further generates self-hate. The imperative
demands clash with the reality, arise tension and inner conflict torn him inside. In some cases it leads to vindictiveness and the fear of rejection turns him to disillusionment.

From the above explanation, it is evident that Maya is a compliant person for whom love holds the key to all of the problems of life. Maya’s father fixation is more out of childhood cravings for love than the “Freudian libido”. She never dares to displease her father since she fears the loss of belonging and rejection. She remains an adored and admired child of his. She even notices that the rebellious Arjuna loses the ties of their affectionate father. The continuous longing for her father and love never allows her to grow up from the childhood drives and achieve adulthood. The very longing for love drives her to take decision of getting married an old Gautama, who may please and protect her with fatherly affection. But as soon as she enters the discourse of marriage, her childhood fantasies clash with the adult world of realities. This produces the imbalances in her life. The demands of a grown up mature married woman brings to her the actualization of her ‘real-self’ but the gulf between the temperaments of husband and wife shatters her expectations of communal life.

In the adulthood the tenderness of fatherly affections transforms into the desire of sexual contact which becomes source of love and life. The longing for sexual union becomes the very cause of ‘self-effacement’. For her, salvation lies in contact, relationship and communion. She is aware of her body and complains about her psychological and physical needs: “Giving me an opal ring to wear on my finger, he did not notice the translucent skin beneath, the blue flashing veins...that waited near his bed.” The wish to surrender of a morbidly dependent person is stronger when the protection of love is denied.
Gautama is far away from her and cherished the philosophy of detachment by showing strong aversion for too much physical contact over which she felt neglected and lost. The utter need of sexual union in case of Maya is meditated through the erotic orientation of the male and female Papaya tree:

...I contemplated that, smiling with pleasure at the thought of these long streamers of bridal flowers that flow out of the core of the female papaya tree and twine about her slim trunk, and the firm, wax- petalled blossoms that leap directly out of the solid trunk of the male...⁴³

Her intense longing for companionship and love is further heightened by the vibrating insect imagery in the novel.

The novelist through the title itself has communicated the theme of the novel. Two powerful sexual symbols are used to show Maya’s unfulfilled sexual urges; the peacock’s voluptuous dance and the mating calls of pigeons. The cries of peacocks, “Pia, Pia,” “Lover, lover. Mio, mio,- I die, I die”⁴⁴ symbolize Maya’s own anguish and the need to be with Gautama. The anguish ends on the note of fear for impending death, a very paradox of the communal life. The cooing of pigeons in her verandah evokes in her “a longing a dread, a search for solution, a despair.”⁴⁵

Maya draws wrong notions of love where it does not become a motivating force but symptomatic of her insecurities, a medium to relieve her anxiety. As love signifies full faith; it expects “commitment without any guarantee”.⁴⁶ Maya cannot have a mature attitude towards love, a sense of sharing and oneness because hers is a selfish strategy to secure her ‘self’ through love. She wants Gautama to satisfy her desires and if he
stands as stumble block in her desires, she will definitely to do away him from her illusive world.

If Maya craves for love, Gautama recoils at the thought of physical intimacy. Maya belongs to the fantastic world of perfect and ideal love while Gautama’s clear vision of imperfect world creates a wide gulf between them. He resides in mundane superfluities and above all he is a stern realist who find the anchor of life in philosophies of *Geeta* which propagate the principles of detachment. He seems:

…very much the meditator beneath the bow tree, seated upon a soft tiger skin, too fastidious to touch the common earth, with those long, clean-cut hands of his, too fastidious to admit such matters as love, with its accompanying horrors of copulation, of physical demands and even, overbearingly, spiritual demands of possession and rights won and established.\(^{47}\)

Hence the associations and compromises are impossible to achieve. Maya, unable to reach the realistic world of Gautama creates her own vista of imagination which consequently generates the “glorified-self”. She forsakes the “real self” to satisfy her idealized-self. She cherishes exaggerated opinions of herself which falsifies reality. By giving up the mediocrity of everyday life, she creates her perfect and different image from others. She insists on being different from the other people.

Horney has perfectly stated this state of mind by opining that neurotics make claim towards life and expect life should be what they visualize. Believing themselves different they demand resplendent treatment according to the cherished notions. The fantasy of the preferential treatment from the others collides over the course of realities
of life. Anyhow Maya is an ordinary human being and not a fairy living in a protected atmosphere of divine bliss and beauty. Acknowledgement of the impossibility of the fulfilment of the neurotic claims leads her to the everyday world and knowledge as a dark pit “stark, hard and ultimate as the rock bottom of a well.”

As a result of this phenomenon, she abhors the reality, an ever changing process of life where death is absolute. To avoid the finality of life, she deludes herself by taking refuge in illusion; she creates an imaginary “fairy tale” world where time is still, a sigh of losing contact with oneself and the outer world.

The development posits the complete alienation of real-self. So she is torn between the turmoil within and without. Her inner urges dictate her to accept life and should practice non-attachment. The inner dictates of should clash with the neurotic pride. Though she wants to take recourse in Gautama’s path, the security seems remote; “however safe, was so very drab and no longer offered me security.” She fails to find anchorage in Gautama’s philosophy. The problems multiply when her neurotic demands increase and fail to fulfil. The defeat generates the fear, anger and frustration.

As a compliant person, Maya does not express her rage openly because it obstructs her glorified image of herself which poses as an epitome of love. So she disguises her anger behind the self-effacing and self-minimizing process. The projection of herself as a childless woman and panting for the death of the pet dog are the instances of her self-effacing nature. Her cries and suffering is a “shrinking process”—wanting love, affection and undivided attention. Love and care transports life while negligence and hate conveys death. Psychosomatic symptoms
are followed after the realization of the death-in-life existence. Slitting headaches and fever followed by delirium is occurred.

Psychosis is a further development of neurosis where the personalities of the people are so severely disturbed that they totally lose the contact with the outer reality. These people may have imaginary perceptions and “hallucinations” and unjustified conceptions called “delusions”. They react to the things which exist in mind only. Maya’s own reaction to the physical shadow of fate is peculiar symptom of psychosis:

... yet its presence was very real, and a truly physical shadow, like the giant shadows cast by trees, split across the leaves and grasses towards me, with horrifying swiftness, till, like the crowding blades of grass, it reached my toes, lapped my feet, tickling and worrying, and I leapt from my chair in terror, overcome by the sensation of snakes coiling and uncoiling their moist lengths about me, of evil descending from an overhanging branch, of an insane death, unprepared for, heralded by deafening drum-beats...

The complete alienation from the real centre, the self-hate takes hold of her, a logical outcome of the conflict between Maya’s imaginary “glorified-self” and her “real-self” and the constructive and destructive forces work together to bring to the front “the central inner conflict”. The struggle is presented through the mirror imagery. When she gazes over her own image, she watches her own body detach itself from her soul “float away, to rest upon the dim mirror where I could gaze upon it from a cool distance.” This detached body is her glorified self and the
thing that is severed from is the “actual-self”. Maya studies her reflection in the mirror:

...the round, childish face, pretty and pampered, its smooth, silken skin with one, small velvet mole; the small, shell-like ears curling around petty ignorance; the soft, overfull lips arched with the vulnerable sweetness; the long, curled lashes and the very heavy, very dark black brows; the silly collection of curls, a flower pinned to them—a pink flower, a child’s choice of a posy.\textsuperscript{55}

Maya hates this glorified self of herself because it holds no power to captivate Gautama. Gazing over her own image, the two new emotions generate in her; self-hate and a feeling of escape from the absurd reflection. She strikes at the image in the mirror which seems to be a mercurial cage. This is the first instance where her acute self-hate turns into self-destructive tendencies. The faces in the crushed mirror look grotesque and Maya bursts out laughing; it suggests the total loss of control. She alienates from herself and the depersonalization takes place at the cost of loss of identity. “Maya—my very name means nothing but an illusion.”\textsuperscript{56} Maya’s vision of the subjective and objective world becomes blurred, the state of complete mental deterioration.

The state she has been transformed is of schizophrenia, a state of mind in which a schizophrenic lives in the imaginary world. Emotionally detached from the realistic surrounding, schizophrenic shows the tendency of inconsistency between the behaviour and emotion.

The persons suffering from schizophrenia are no longer motivated by real goals or facts, but the whims of shifting fantasies...He expresses reaction to his imaginary
experiences. The schizophrenic is emotionally detached from his environment. He does not care whether or not he communicates with the people around him. He talks not to converse but to express his fantasies.\(^{57}\)

Being an abode of madness, schizophrenia segregates the sufferer from the world of sanity.

The fast deteriorating mental state of Maya is symbolized through the image of moon. It becomes the ruling planet of her psyche. The sinister and ghastly looking moon transforms to the kathakali dancers and later on to the full blossomed woman across the sky:

....a great multfoliate rose, waxen white, virginal, chaste and absolutely white, casting alight that was holy in its purity, a soft suffusing glow of its chastity, casting its reflection upon the night with a vast, tender mother love.\(^{58}\)

As Gautama comes between Maya and her worshipped moon, she chooses to punish him. The fast deteriorating state of Maya’s psychology presented through the imagery of a snake. It is interpreted as the fear of Maya which is collective of Hindu unconsciousness. Under high fever, the dancer, the priest, rats, snakes, all become one, including her father. Horney states that the danger of the self-destructive drive appears in the form of “succinct symbols, such as a homicidal maniac, Dracula, a white whale or ghosts.”\(^{59}\) So the fear of death becomes the maniac force to lead her psychosis.

Taking recourse in psychosis Maya is out of the sphere of moral inhibitions. “Once a human organism is entrusted to psychosis nature takes it own course. The preservation of its physical integrity becomes more important than the protection of the social image. In fact, in
psychotics, the super-ego, the moral agency, becomes completely inactive.” The mental deterioration of Maya completely blinds her to the social and moral consequences of her actions. Being in love with life has the right to live. The survival instinct of her compels for self-preservation. The death of Gautama hurts her neurotic pride; paradoxically she kills the very source of love and safety, security and survival. Torn between the inner conflicts, turmoil, rage, hatred, guilt, and self-hate, Maya drags herself into the complete darkness of the world of insane, destructing completely her “real-self”.

2.5 Maya: A Voice of Marginal Consciousness:-

The novel not only reflects the feminine sensibility on the verge of degeneration but also the marginal consciousness on the patriarchal periphery. The patriarchal attitude towards the discourse ‘woman’ is perceived by the protagonist and refracted wherever she obtains the opportunity. The novel is centred on the inward journey of Maya, the dialogues between the outward events and inner consciousness brings to the front the inner truths of the things.

Mr. and Mrs. Lal’s is a poignant exemplification of the prejudiced Indian mentality. Maya’s visit to their family and delineation of their material prospects and temperaments projects the deep rooted enmity for women. The observation unveils the sense of humiliation at the birth of the daughters and an unwanted burden of their dowries and debts. At Mrs. Lal’s house “the prim lady” beside Maya asks about her children; “You have other children? Sons”, the emphasis has been given on the ward ‘son’ which projects the Indian mindset favouring male children. The answer is unenthusiastic with the assertion of regression “No four daughters”. The desire for more than one son and the increasing
numbers of girls evoke compunction. The birth of the girls transports the “visions of dowries, debts, humiliations to be suffered and the burdens so gross, so painful that the whole family suffered from them.” Since the expression of commiseration by the prim lady towards Mrs. Lal’s four daughters suggest more disaster. The birth and existence of a girl child invites the feeling of subordination, inferiority, loss and social degradation. Though Mrs. Lal has been graced by four daughters and a son, for the sixth time she is expecting, certainly for another son. Maya’s is a truly modern reaction to the conventional observation. She insists on being happy at the birth of a girl child.

The minute observations which are made by the truly enlightened consciousness of Maya, focuses the misogynist Indian temperament. Though she is powerless to change the truth, she regrets over the patriarchal culture which has cultivated the anti-woman trends. She discusses her opinion with Gautama. Mr. Lal becomes “a tyrant” who cultivates the male dominated culture at the same time self-destructive and self-regressive tendencies among women. Mrs Lal and the prim lady work as the agencies to the patriarchal tools of oppression. The regression for self has been originated due to the continuous hammering of the male supremacy. The subordination of women and supremacy of patriarchy is cultural against which Maya abhors.

The exploitation of women at the hands of men peeps through the loopholes of the structure of the novel. The reminiscences of Maya’s father’s friend, Sapru, the injustices meted out to his wife; bring to the light the sense of disgust towards bullying and suppression of Maya’s father. Maya recalls that one day when she was playing battledore-and-shuttlecock, Sapru’s wife came sobbing, complaining her husband’s tyranny and exploitation. She reiterates on leaving him and Maya’s father
assists in her escape. He expresses remorse over the sheer irresponsibility of his friend. The instance enlightens the humanistic approach of Maya’s father. She has indirectly inherited the sense of aversion for suppression and exploitation.

The cabaret dancer’s scene is an embodiment of the materialistic view of the people towards women. Maya’s brooding over this scene displays her as the sanest human being in her insanity, being capable of probing through the distorted value system. The vulgarity of the cabaret dancers’ sexual exhibition is resented as it projects the deterioration of morality and expulsion of self-respect. The portrayal of the lecherous men, feeding their senses on the bare bodies of the cabaret dancers’, exhibits the consumer-trader relationship. The bodies of the cabaret dancer’s are commodities meant to sell and buy, the buyers and users are the male. It may suggest that the women are dominant and holds the control of their bodies through prostitution but their very source of subjectivity has been exchanged into the market. The right over one’s body and respect should be maintained as the body is the manifestation of subjectivity, the source of identity. Being projected them as material to exchange; they lose the sense of self-respect. The men who leer at their bare bodies have “teeth that gleamed discomfort, it revealed in its banal glow such a seething mass of pimps and lechers of touts and prostitutes.” Maya, feeling disgusted, responds by citing, “It was all perverse, it was wrong, but it was a fact, a fact that has been taken for the truth. Values were distorted in that macabre half-light with alternating tints, at an hour when those values would have been all-important.” Deteriorating values of morality and the degrading status of women is the feature of patriarchal culture. Though the other characters take it for
granted, Maya sensitively responds to the situation. The preservation of value systems is at the stake.

Marriage, a patriarchal institution does not offer varied options to set women free to pursue their goals of their lives. Though in ancient India the freedom of choice to choose a partner was given to women through ‘Swayamvaras’, today the culture has lost its authenticity and support from the society. The coercion of the arrange marriage has restricted women to exercise their will power. If the coercion is broken the woman suffers at the hand of tools of patriarchy, i.e. excommunication.

Anita Desai has scrutinized both of the systems of marriage, i.e. love and arrange. Love marriage is a discourse where a woman is supposed to exert her will and select her own partner. While arrange marriage does offer women a lot of choices except to act as the passive receivers of the commands. So the mal-adjustments in arrange marriages paves way to the imbalanced relationships based on the mal-treatment of one of the partners in marriage.

By marrying Gautama, Maya fulfilled the archetypal condition of arrange marriages. Her life has been contrasted to Leila’s, since hers is a love marriage. She is portrayed in the novel as the paradigm who exhibits the guts to revolt against the established power and value system. Tough Maya’s conventional arrange marriage is contrasted to Leila’s love marriage; the ill-fate of both of them brings them to the same conclusion of destruction of self.

Straying from the conventional path of arrange marriage, Leila marries against the wishes of her parents. Declining in health, dying by tuberculosis, her husband completely depends upon her earnings. His
manly body is on the verge of disintegration but his masculine ego does not die. He teases and humiliates, “...about her parents, who had not seen her, written to her or in any way communicated to her since the day of elopement.”66 The pronouncement transpires the predicament of a woman who opts for herself. Hers is an illustration of the projection of social standpoint towards rebels of women. They lose on both of the battlegrounds, parental security and freedom to exercise will power. Maya tries to find out alternative choice in Leila’s life and decision making ability. Instead of acquiring sense of independence, love marriage has provided Leila the realization of defeat, humiliation, excommunication and silent suffering which is the same fate of Maya. However may be the form of marriage, the discourse defends the male authority. Exploitation of women labour, degradation in social status by excommunication, psychic abnormalities due to depressed psychology and guaranteed defeat in the battle against patriarchy are the due consequences of exercise of women’s will power. The decision of marriage, voluntary or involuntary, leads journey of life to the submission of self to the authority of power structure. Living within it produces neurotics like Maya and breaking it, creates outcastes like Leila.

The portrayal of Pom too has the shades of the submissive personality. Though she does not believe, “Family, tradition, custom,”67 such things simply “did not step over her bright enamelled horizon of her painted world,”68 under her encouraging mask, there is a submissive soul. Though educated, she submits to her mother-in-laws superstitious beliefs. After conceiving, she visits Birala Mandir to have son. Her mother-in-law subdues her to have a boy child.

Only two women are portrayed in constructive way, Gautama’s mother and his sister, Nila. The patriarchal world fully devoid of love,
care and protection is contrasted to the secure world of mother lap, matriarchy. Gautama’s mother is living and energetic woman. Maya, a motherless child, feels comfortable and for a while forgets the worries of her life. The moments she lives with Nila and Gautama’s mother are sanest moment she has ever lived, she confesses. It is the life where the shadow of the albino astrologer never hovers at the same time the thought of being alone and devoid of love. These two women are contrasted to the patriarchal company of her father who has neglected her completely after marriage, and her husband who never acknowledges her feminine sensitivity. Though they are the non-believer of astrology as Gautama, but are not devoid of love and passion for life. Gautama’s mother is so tender and loving that Maya longs to embrace her. For Maya she is, “—a pillar of life and living, an anchor, much more so than her son, and the only one I had now. Oh to live in her world, to be of her kind! What safety, what peace…” The transition from the oppressive patriarchal denominations to the matriarchal world of genuine love where self has been given the assurance to living and growth, is much more safety and peaceful. The basic anxieties of the protagonist are alleviated and the upward growth of the self is guaranteed. Hence this is the only time in Maya’s life which is full of sanity.

Maya’s state of mind craves for love and communication and self-actualization. Her father and Gautama, neglecting her right to self-realization and growing to adult drives, expel her to the rotten state of psychology.

Maya wonders at the bold and independent nature of Nila. She thinks her ten years married life as useless. She is capable of taking responsibility of herself and her children, and finds alone a lawyer for her divorce. In contrast to Maya, Nila is a very firm woman who knows to
break the unnecessary ties of unwanted relationships. Nila’s strength of mind amuses Maya. Nila could easily find the way out without any hesitation. Maya admires her decision, “pressing her hand in wonder”\textsuperscript{70} by appreciating the courage she has exhibited.

Nila and her mother’s arrival fill Maya’s life with positive impulses. For the first time she understands the meaning of life, forgetting horrors and nightmares. The warmth of Gautama’s mother heals her neurosis. When they decide to leave her, she tries to pursue them because;

They were the sane people, sane, sane, and yet so much more human than my husband. God, to be alone with him again, my unknowing, unsuspecting and steel-hard adversary in this oneiric battle, all night, all day, for how many more nights, how many more days? God, to have to start counting them again, in utter loneliness? ‘No,’…\textsuperscript{71}

The extent to which Maya has been captured in the patriarchal suppression of her husband’s masculine philosophy where she is just a passive bearer of his philosophies. He does not emerge as a sane person for her since mere rationality is not the criteria for sanity.

Maya’s reflection on the orientation of patriarchal social structures and the mindsets is a representative of feminine view and a voice of resistance. The seemingly disintegrated and disabled thoughts in a truly feminine language are the confessions of the protagonist. Through the confessional discourse the unjust and unreal demands of the society towards women are brought to the front to bring to the limelight the oppressive strategies of the power structure which are responsible for the annihilation of the lives of women.
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14) *loc. Cit.*


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