Human mind is unique in its own way– it has its own foibles, own morbidity, own feeling – perhaps the possessor of the mind is not aware of it. Human mind is so strange and unique that it is hard to reckon what makes the mind happy or sad. Sita, the main character of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is such a unique case. Though she is less morbid than Maya after four children but the cause of her morbidity is absolutely different from Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*. Sita’s husband is not indifferent and insensitive to her. There was no place for Maya in the world of Gautama. Neither he understands her nor wishes her to enter his world. Thus his world is totally strange to Maya “on his part, understanding was scant, love was meager”(93).

Maya, a childless woman and having no vocation to pursue, finds herself in utter suffocating loneliness. She always longs to be with her husband. Sita on the other hand is blessed with four children and is proud of them. But her fifth pregnancy and the thought of parturition which follows automatically makes her panicky. She is reluctant to bring forth her new, fragile being into this harsh world, and runs away to a small island which has childhood associations for her “in order to achieve the miracle of not giving birth” (31). It sounds unnatural– she
Sita, living in a congenial atmosphere, devoid of any conflict with her husband, rather happy with him, leads a happy and easeful life. But her fifth pregnancy upsets her and becomes the constant cause of conflict with her husband.

“All through their married life they had preferred to avoid a confrontation. All that they had done, he now saw, was to pile on the fury till now when it exploded. Perhaps, there had been incidents, thoughts during the day he had not known about, would have left undisturbed had he known. It was as though for seven months she had collected inside her all her resentments, her fears, her rages, and now she flung them onward, flung them for her” (33).

Every summer they go to some place or other. That summer they had decided to go to Manori, an island of miracle made by her father: “His legend was still here on this house – in the green tinge of the night shadows, the sudden slam of a wooden shelter, the crepitation of rain on the roof … She had come on a pilgrimage, to beg for the miracle of keeping her baby unborn” (31).
Anita Desai primarily deals with the inner weather and the changing moods, the ebb and flow of emotion, the flux of thought and mysterious working of the human mind. This is reflected in her delineation of the character of Sita, who unlike Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, is a girl child who had been deprived of the love by her father and a conducive, familial environment, which is necessary for the healthy growth of a child. Maya is over-loved, Sita is underloved or unloved. Maya grows under the over-protective attitude of her father. Sita has no one in the family with whom she could share her feelings. She has no feeling of belonging. A sense of belonging is a prerequisite for the healthy growth of the members of the family, particularly the growing children. During the childhood, one should be showered with genuine love. In both conditions, excess of love or lack of love can adversely affect the child and this defect can be revealed later on in the life of the concerned child. A growing child should not be left uncared for at the same time he should not be over loved. Sita is unable to realize this sense of belonging. A critic, S.S. Anant, has remarked that, “belongingness... means a subjective feeling of personal involvement to the extent that one feels himself to be an integral and indispensable part of the system” (1979 : 108).

For the lack of the sense of belonging, Sita feels insecure. She experiences neglect and rejection. Sita’s father has no time for his children. Her father is a public figure. He is loved and feared by the people around him. His children, too, fear to approach him. There is
always an “impossibility of talk between her and her father” (79). He
does not love even his son, Jeevan. He considers Jeevan and Sita as
equal to his psychophant chelas and devotees. But he loves Rekha, the
eldest daughter. Rekha is the adopted daughter. When this fact is
disclosed to Sita, this news drops on her, “like acid felt them burn
wherever. She caught an exchange that heavy-bidded look between
father and daughter, of his arm in its fine white sleeve lie fondly across
her round shoulders” (Ibid). What is noticed here in the relationship
between the father and the adopted daughter is that there are some
grains of incestuousness. As Sita’s father also discriminates between his
two daughters. He showers more love and favour on his youngest
daughter and grants her more privilege in most of the matters. But he
does not love his eldest daughter with the same intensity of feeling.
The youngest daughter is beautiful to look at whereas the eldest is
slightly repulsive, but there is no reference to any incestuousness in
the relationship between Appa and any of his daughters. The eldest
daughter also does not feel hurt and wounded because of this
discrimination.
In case of Sita, the father neglects her to love Rekha, which engenders a feeling of insecurity, deprivation and of course jealousy in the mind of Sita. Sita is totally rendered alone. She is alienated and isolated from her family and surrounding.

The character of Sita stands in contrast with Maya. Maya is overloved, Sita does not receive adequate love from her father. Sita constantly feels that her father has neglected her either unknowingly or deliberately. Her entire childhood is spent in gloom, frustration and loneliness. And for a person “the feeling of being isolated and helpless in a world is conceived as potentially hostile” (Horney : 1965 :18). For Sita, the feeling of isolation and helplessness proves hostile for her growth and healthy living.

Sita deviates from her normal self to become neurotic. Horney classifies neurosis thus:

Most neurosis involved, along with other complex determinants, ungratified wishes for safety, for belongingness and identification for close relationship and for respect and prestige (1965 : 219).

Anita Desai not only presents the societal structure of human behaviour but she indulges in the deep study of the neurotic ‘self’ of
the protagonists in her novels. She condemns the Indian novelists who show their interest in the outer world and external experience of human life. Anita Desai expresses her contention:

My writing is an effort to discover, underline and convey the significance of things. I must seize upon that incomplete and seemingly meaningless mass of reality around me and try and discover its significance by plunging below the surface and plumbing the depths, then illuminating those depths till they become more lucid, brilliant and explicable reflection of the visible world (Quoted in Asnani 1987 : 78).

For the effective and adequate representation of the real ‘self’, Desai claims to have employed the language of interior in her novels. The family background of Sita is to a greater extent causative factor which determines her behavioural pattern. She explains this experience in her own words, “if reality were not to be borne then illusion was the only alternative” (101). The death of the father in the family leads to the disintegration of the family. Only Sita stays on there to marry Raman. Even her brother, Jeevan leaves the place very shortly after the death of his father. The family disintegrates because there has been no sense of belonging. Sita feels that her life has started in the centre of a crowd:
With calm eyes she has watched the surge and flow of such masses, listened to endless speeches on one subject, swaraj, had her chin chucked, collected, discarded garlands and played with the tinsel till she fell asleep against a hostler and was carried away to someone’s house to sleep always a different someone, it scarcely mattered which one. She belonged, if to anyone to this whole society that existed at that particular point in history …..like a lamb does to its flock and saw no reason why she should belong to one family alone (55).

This shows Sita is the victim of alienation and sense of emotional vacancy. Sita has been brought up in an atmosphere which lacks warmth. Sita observed that her father showered on Rekha, his step daughter, more favour and love. This dismayed Sita. She feels alone and isolated. She feels that this was her father’s discrimination. She never dares to approach him to ask about such private and some what secret matter. Incestuous relationship between the two has also been reported. It must be pointed out here that the relation of incest is not very clear. It is only vaguely communicated, between the lines:

But her father – too quite clearly for it was always the big girls heavy shoulders that he fondled, her face that he scanned as she sat singing across the room from him ….“Sisters should be a little alike” …. But you are not sisters. She is only your step sister (78).
Thus, Sita suffers from the sense of loneliness, non-attachment and non-affection. It is true that women have been both culturally and emotionally dependent on man. Any disruption of attachment may lead not only to the loss of relationship but actually to “a total loss of self” (Miller : 1978 : 87). This total loss of self is then seen as neurosis. According to Erich Fromm, attachment and security are psychic needs of an individual. He says:

Man’s existential conflict produces some psychic needs common to all men. He is forced to overcome the horror of separateness of powerlessness, and of lossness and find new forms of relating himself to the world to enable him to feel at home. I have called these psychic needs as existential because they are rooted in the very conditions of human existence. They are shared by all men, and their fulfillment is as necessary for man’s remaining sane as the fulfillment of organic drive is necessary for his remaining alive (1987: 304).

Women being more sensitive in all matters need deep love and affection to sustain their lives. Attachment is the backbone of their life, and if it is broken, they loose the meaning of life. Simone de Beauvoir has rightly contended:
Woman is always prepared to take an attitude of frustration towards the world because she never accepted it ….it takes only a real trouble to remind woman of the hostility of the universe and the justice of her lot. Then she hastily retires of her surest refuge herself (1960 : 339-40).

Sita in this novel is driven to a nervous breakdown or to a neurotic state of mind because her affiliation and identity with the individual closest to her is broken. It has been argued that the characters of Anita Desai have “a near neurotic quality about them” (Sharma : 2004 : 90).

Describing the difference between the neurotic condition of Desai’s protagonists and that of Margaret Atwood, Sunaina Singh writes:

One significant difference between Atwood’s and Anita Desai’s protagonists is that Atwood’s protagonists go through a phase of neurosis to reach the ultimate scarcity, Anita Desai’s protagonists end up as victims of insanity, mainly because they are unable to adjust to their domestic environs (1994 : 90).

Sita looks to Raman for a kind of psychological prop. Raman is Deedar’s son. He gives Sita the desired security, social as well as psychological. To her, Raman is “a tried manager drawing the curtains together, locking up the empty theatre …it was as though he has been
expressly sent by providence to close the theatrical era of her life, her
strange career and lead her out of the ruined theatre into the thin
sunlight of the ordinary, the everyday, the empty and the
meaningless”(100). Sita poses herself to be good to Raman. She hopes
that others will treat her well. Raman marries her not out of love but;
“Out of pity, out of lust, out of a sudden will for adventure, and
because it was inevitable” (99). Sita expects that Raman will love her
for her good qualities. Initially, she is happy with Raman. She bore
him four children; “With pride, with pleasure sensual, emotional
Freudian, every kind of pleasure” (138).

Sita begins to make neurotic claims. She considers herself as
someone invaluable to Raman. It is true that the neurotics indulge in a
glorified self-image. Sita glorifies herself. She expects Raman to be like
a lover. She does not behave like an ordinary married woman. In
India, the married women enjoy a subordinate position, man is the
‘one’ she is the ‘other’. Sita has constitutional inability to accept the
values and attitudes of the society. Raman, however, does not honour
the claims of Sita. Her dream is never realized. Raman is a practical
man. He shifts his energies to his business to avoid any kind of
interpersonal conflicts. Raman is meticulous. He is sincere to his duties and obligations.

The gap between the two widens because Raman, being a busy man, has no time or even mental readiness so as to respond to the expectation of Sita. She supposes herself extraordinary and so she hopes extra care from Raman.

This leads to widen the gap between the two very soon. They begin to drift apart. “Raman is a perfectionist” (140). He desires that everyone should; “line up to his standards of perfection and despises them for failing to do so” (Horney: 1965: 196). Raman is fair, just and dutiful. He expects Sita to be the same. But Sita, being neurotic, lives within a world of illusions. Their relationship gets strained. Raman is unable to understand her rebellious nature. Sita’s hope of getting love is frustrated. Sita tells him: “I thought I could live with you and travel alone – mentally, emotionally. But after that day, that was not enough. I had to stay whole. I had to” (148). Here the word whole refers to the glorified self of Sita. Raman does not honour, the glorified self of Sita. She complains about the people and the surrounding in order to feel elevated. Horney has pointed out that:
Neurotic claims give rise to tension and he is torn by inner conflicts. In extreme cases, all this may lead to vindictiveness. Which form it takes depends upon individual temperament and the damage done (1965: 197).

In the case of Sita, her neurotic claims make her vindictive. She finds that the majority of members of the society live in a situation which is full of dullness, boredom and deadness. Sita says: “They are animals, nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter” (32). She detests the vegetable existence lived by the women of Raman’s family. She regards their colourless and soulless existence as quite abhorring and even a threat to her own existence. In order to show her superiority and achieve her neurotic triumphs, she starts smoking and begins “to speak in sudden rushes of emotion, as though flinging darts at their smooth unscarred faces”(32). In the family of Raman, no one smoke particularly the females are very averse to smoking. In traditional Indian family, women are not allowed smoking. Sita challenges the accepted pattern of social behaviour; smoking tends to fulfill her pride. She considers herself as superior to
others. She enjoys a sense of superiority, and thus a glorified self-image.

Being a neurotic, Sita is unable to adjust herself to her husband’s family. In order to avoid family discord and tension, her husband moves into a flat. Sita’s in-laws are accommodating and considerate, but she takes perverse delight in teasing them. Sita is worse than Maya. Commenting on the family and familial relationships in the novels of Anita Desai, N.R. Gopal writes:

...We find that family and familial relationships play important part in her fictional world. But what is remarkable is that more often than not the familial relationships are not harmonious. We cannot find a single family in any of the novel, which can be called good, if not perfect. This implies that, she writes realistic novels and though in the world the institution of family continues to exist. Yet we seldom find a harmonious family. One may do well with friends or non-familial relationships. But we are at daggers drawn with our own flesh and blood relationships. But this is the way of the world and none can help it. We have to accept familial relationships whether good or bad (1995 : 45-46).

Women in the novels of Anita Desai normally have a desire to be heard and taken seriously. In this connection, a critic like Sunaina Singh, has aptly remarked:
There is a compelling urge in them for a particular way of living. They want to lead a life full of love, respect and dignity. But it is said that all these three things are denied to them, because they are ignored despite their repeated efforts at being acknowledged, because they are unloved and being taken for granted, that the extreme sensitivities of the protagonists turns into frustration. The Indian situation and their upbringing leaves little scope for either total break up for freedom (1994: 20).

But what is remarkable in the character of the female protagonists, in the fiction of Anita Desai is that they seek for freedom not outside the household. These female protagonists do not cross the thresholds of the house. They are, unlike the characters of Shobha De, who unhesitatingly cross the boundaries and denigrate all the family traditions of which they are a part. In Shobha De’s Socialite Evenings, the married woman Karuna goes abroad with a friend of her husband to overcome the boredom and ennui of the married life. Nothing of this sort of desire can be seen in the character of Sita. Sita wants to pose herself as superior to other females of Raman’s family. So she becomes belligerent. It is her neurotic pride, which is fulfilled through this type of defiant attitude on the part of Sita. Sita finds people unacceptable there. The people like ayahs, the cook and other members tend to threaten her existence: “She took their insularity and
complacence as well as the aggression and violence of others as affronts upon her own living nerves” (33).

The root cause of the gap between the members of Raman’s family and Sita is that she supposes herself superior to all of them in all matters. She wants to assert herself. She sees only negative things in them and is tense. She considers her surrounding as full of boredom:

She herself, looking on it, saw it stretched out so fast, so flat. So deep that she scrabble about it, searching for a few of these moments that proclaimed her still alive, not quite drowned and dead (33-34).

She begins to behave so abnormally with them that she passes unacceptable remarks on her husband and condemns his business. Raman is totally stunned by her behaviour. The more Raman feels hurt and annoyed, the more Sita feels victorious and triumphant. One more example of Sita’s behaviour which causes anxiety to her husband is that Sita speaks of the hitch-hiker; “She not only thought again and again that wanderer’s mirage like appearance and disappearances but spoke too often and too much of him” (52).
The feeling of kinship with the stranger by Sita stands for Sita’s quest. This shows the hostile – aggressive drive of Sita. Her presumed victory over Raman feeds her neurotic pride. The neurotic condition of Sita’s mind is reflected through different images and symbols in the novel. Her violent and reactionary behaviour is reflected in the symbolic presentation in the incident of the crows attacking an eagle on a Sunday morning. The crowd of crows has wounded the eagle. They have torn the eagle to pieces with their beaks. The situation objectifies Sita’s conflict in her own life. Sita identifies herself with the proud and defiant eagle. Despite all her attempts to protect the eagle, it is killed, signifying the triumph of her husband. Her husband and her son were watching this incident and were exulting over it. What is normal and usual for others is abnormal and unusual for Sita. The playing of her daughter does not make Sita happy. Mere play for Sita represents the excellence and hatred, which she finds all around her in the society. Other day-to-day incidences appear to Sita as abnormal. Her daughter Menka destroys the drawing; she had so carefully made the ayahs fighting like animals represent to her mad and violent society. Thus, Sita is far away removed from the normal pattern of
behaviour. She shows psychic fragmentations. On the one hand, she
poses herself as helpless and a seeker, seeking the love of Raman; on
the other hand, she behaves like a rebel. Sita is incapable to view
herself properly in the context of acceptable normal standard of a
married woman. On the contrary, she acts in contradiction to
everything.

Temperamentally, she stands a clear contrast to Raman. Raman
is presented as a normal, regular, perfect, and a pragmatic person.
Whatever is abnormal and shocking for his wife is normal and natural
to Raman. Raman has developed a sense of acceptance: “To certain
people there comes a day when they must say the great yes or no, he
who has yes ready within him, reveals himself at once, and saying it
crosses over to the path of honour and his own conviction” (101). Sita,
on the other hand, has adopted an attitude of defiance and
noncompliance. She refuses to accept meekly the authority of society.
“One who refuses does not repent. Should he be asked again, he would
say no again. And yet that no ….the right no ….crushes him for the
rest of life” (100).
Sita’s mental equilibrium is disrupted because as a neurotic she loses control over her impulses and feelings. The automatic control system in a neurotic fails to respond. In Sita, the automatic control system has totally failed as a result what is produced are fright responses. Sita has been totally frightened. She has begun to experience illusions. In this connection, Horney has observed that in search for glory, the neurotic starts making neurotic claims on the world whatever grandiose image he has created of himself must be recognized by the world but the neurotic cannot realize that he is harboring an illusion. He lives in the world of fantasies. Sita begins to harbor a terror about the child, which is yet to be born. She thinks that the strategies adopted by her to ensure detachment from the family would be frustrated. Giving birth to a child would mean involvement in life again. Further, her aura of superiority, which she has developed in the family, would be damaged if the child is allowed to be born. People would think that she has not exercised self-control in sexual desires. So she suffers from a sense of self-reproach. She feels denigrated. Her anxiety and rage indicate her neurotic state. Anita Desai writes:
It was a touch for seven months she had collected inside her all her resentments, her fears, her rages, and now she flung them outward, flung them from her (33).

Sita’s mental condition further deteriorates to the extent that she plans to follow an extremely unnatural path by way of not giving birth to a child. This idea itself is shocking and very much funny at the same time. Her desire to keep the child inside her is meant to continue her suffering. She hopes that the birth of her child could be prevented. This is, no doubt, a neurotic claim. Only a neurotic would imagine to control the natural process like the birth of the child. Once conceived the woman has to deliver her child, the child cannot be held inside beyond the prescribed time limit. Any attempt of a man to defy the natural process may prove fatal. It may be possible that Sita wants to continue her suffering and suffering may be a part of her mental make up. Horney calls this as schadenfende i.e., a vindictive satisfaction at the self-inflicted pain. Sita wants to inflict pain upon herself or she wants to undergo sufferings. The fact is that Sita is averse to reality, and thus, she lives in an illusory life. The neurotics take the illusion as reality. Sita goes to Manori where she thinks the birth of the child
could be prevented. She goes to the island at an advanced stage of pregnancy. Sita also lives in the world of fantasy and illusion; she desires to prevent the biological process of delivery. She thinks she could achieve it by going to the island. She has passed her childhood on the island, so the memory of the childhood and the island appear to her miraculous.

She does not want to give birth to the child because she shudders at the very thought of experiencing the delivery pangs. She imagines:

Children …through her mind flowed a white, flatting succession in nappies, vests …that would have to be gathered together. She could see the expressionless faces of the night nurses in the gynae ward …in the greenish night like, regarding her as she come in, ravaged by the first pains …she could see the impassive face of nurses who would stay by her in the theater, now and then glancing at her large, flat watch, bored by yet another, woman’s panic stricken labour (153-154).

Sita’s total behaviour deteriorates and she fails to maintain relational balance with other characters in the novel. She antagonizes even her children which takes her away from them and her children favour their father. Sita’s mind is perverted. Her arrogant behaviour
makes her husband and others unhappy. She fails to give a spontaneous natural love even to her near and dear. This failure results into deep anxiety and pessimism. Burdened by the experience, she plans to go to the island of Manori where she had spent her childhood with her father who had become a legend during his lifetime. It is this island in which memory and desire, romance and reality, the beautiful and the sinister are intricately mixed together.

Sita’s father lived a life of a magic man and he practically hypnotized the people on the island by his mysterious personality. He involved himself in social activities like strike, on such occasion a boy was arrested in connection with this strike but later on it was revealed that the ring leader of the strike was not the boy but Sita’s father:

The ring leader had been father, a boy so quiet, so withdrawn, so ugly and strange that neither the teachers nor the principal had thought him capable of organizing an incident of revolt (66).

Sita’s second visit to the island does not prove fruitful. The old charm of the island had vanished. Even the Moses who is much involved with Sita and her children are no longer young and handsome. The passage of time has ravaged the beauty of the small
island. What Sita expected of the island she could not get. Everything is so changed that the whole island appears opposite to what it was in the past. To her great surprise, she discovers that the island was not really picturesque; it was an attractive place only in her memory. Everything is so changed that tank in the village is overflowing with dirty water. The old-house is full of dust and cobwebs.

Sita comes to the island with a view to liberate her ‘self’ from the burden of anxiety. Her other intention is to prevent the child from being born. This reflects Sita’s waywardness. Her concept of freedom is to escape from reality. This provides her only freedom from conflicts. Her attempt is to forget her ‘real –self’ and to maintain the identity of her ‘glorified self’. In this connection, Erich Fromm has opined that this situation is characterized by its compulsive character generalizing the behaviour of a neurotic, he writes:

The other course open to him is to come in his aloneness by eliminating the gap that has arisen between his individual self and the world...It assuages an unbearable anxiety and makes life possible by avoiding panic; yet it does not solve the underlying problem and is paid for by a kind of life that often consists only of automatic and compulsive activities (1941: 140).
Sita’s husband Raman comes to take her back. She refuses, finally, when Raman comes for the second time; she finds no other way than compromising with the situation. Sita’s compromise is a sure step forward to reorganize reality. The awareness that life is not meant to be shunned but to be experienced. This change in her mind is significant. She is motivated to participate in the act of living. This change enables her to accept responsibility. The decision to go back along with Raman shows her positive attitude. It shows her journey from negative to positive thoughts. Sita undergoes positive mental change. It happens almost like magic in her second visit to Manori island. Her mental condition is clearly reflected in the following passage:

Everything was so clear to him and simple, life must be continued and all its business. Menka’s admission to medical college gained, wife led to hospital, new child safely brought forth, the children reared the factory seen to, a salary earned, a salary spent (127).

Sita in this way differs from other neurotic women protagonists. Her neurosis has a positive result while the other neurotic characters have their own solutions according to their temperament.
Kamala Markandaya’s *A Silence of Desire* depicts the unconscious desire of Sarojini to protect herself and her identity in the marital relationship. Sarojini protests against the mechanical living to which she is subjected to by her husband. The mechanical life against her desire almost deteriorates her self. She seeks to cure her mental burden through faith which has healing effects. Her husband, Dandekar, is shocked bitterly with the defiant attitude and behaviour of his wife. In fact, Dandekar begins to feel jealous about her self-sought freedom. Sarojini protests against the medical treatment which is imposed by her husband. On the contrary, she shows her distrust in the treatment based on medical science. The choices of husband and wife differ. Thus, she becomes a typical neurotic character. In her neurosis implies a silent protest of the character against the repression of his or her instincts by the society. It is in the neurotic state of mind that the victim finds an expression of his wish to subvert the life-negating values of civilization.

Sarojini’s neurotic state of mind is a result of a rigid religious tutelage, which Sarojini has received; her refusal to seek medical treatment is rooted in her belief that her mother and grandmother have undergone treatment and consequently died because the medical treatment could not alleviate their disease. Therefore, she refuses to recognize the tremendous advance made by the medical science. Another important reason for her disbelief in medical science as well

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as in the advice of her husband is that fifteen years of married life has failed to provide her any pleasure and change. Her life has become so mechanically dry and dreary routine that she performs her routine chores with least interest which her husband is not pleased with. To make her suffering more distinct, the novelist has made use of the tumour symbol which has developed in her womb. It simply symbolizes her repressed anger against her husband who has made her life futile.

To make the matters worse, Dandekar treats Sarojini as a lifeless object. She doesn’t occupy any position of honour or love in the family affairs. For him the Tulsi plant and Sarojini are one and the same. The house where Dandekar and Sarojini live has fixed Tulsi plant in the centre. Sarojini worships the Tulsi plant. For Dandekar, the plant and Sarojini are merely immobile objects. For Dandekar, Tulsi is an ordinary plant, in the same way as Sarojini’s disease is a common one, which could be cured in the hospital. Sarojini is important for Dandekar only in terms of the job she renders in the house. Dandekar has his own concept and vision of a wife. A wife should remain within the four walls of a house. So long as Sarojini remains within the
confines of the house, she pleases Dandekar but the moment she transgresses the limit Dandekar is hurt. He hopes that Sarojini should be as docile as a cow. It is mobility of women, particularly a wife, which enrages Dandekar. Any free action on the part of Sarojini displeases Dandekar. Apart from Tulsi, Sarojini is associated with kitchen, more appropriately with the sounds of a kitchen. A wife is, according to Dandekar, expected to be the kitchen queen.

For Dandekar, as for others a wife’s presence in the house is characterized by her movements in the kitchen. Sounds emanating from kitchen show a normal life to Dandekar. Absence of sounds from the kitchen makes Dandekar realize that something was missing. For him, his wife’s movements, the noise of cooking wares were part of his homecoming. Sarojini’s presence gives warmth to the household. Her absence makes the place “pale and chill like an unlit lamp” (107).

Dandekar’s domineering behaviour in the capacity of a husband virtually ruins the ‘self’ in Sarojini. As a wife, Sarojini must remain subordinate to him. Dandekar has all praise for Indian women, who never flaunt their beauty before men other than their husbands,
“A married woman did not have men friends who were not known to the husband’s family” (34).

The views of Dandekar regarding wives are conditioned by the traditional ideologies. In his opinion, a wife should be submissive, subordinate and non-significant. About the role and character of wife Shastri and Mahadevan hold the respective views. Shastri thinks; “wives are faithful virtuous creatures prepared like their classical sisters to follow their husbands hear into the jungle” (23). Similarly, Mahadevan is of the opinion that, “No marriage was safe unless in her husband’s absence a wife was locked in a chastity girdle” (24).

So Dandekar does not allow Sarojini to move out of the thresholds of the house. Thus, the personal feelings of Sarojini are repressed. Her freedom is curtailed. As a wife, she has to suffer silently. Any type of protest by a wife is not tolerated in the society. In such an atmosphere Sarojini protests unconsciously. In this context, Rajeshwar observes:
Kamala Markandaya’s *A Silence of Desire* depicts the unconscious desire of a housewife, Sarojini, to fight the decay of herself within the marital relationship, she protests unconsciously, but in a manner approved by the society against her husband and by extension against the whole society, for giving her a listless and mechanical life which her psyche perceives quite clearly as being responsible for her fast deteriorating self (1997 : 99).

In a tradition bound society, orthodoxy provides not an inch of freedom to a woman. This lack of freedom automatically creates psychic burden on the mind of the sufferer. The character feels repressed and his self deteriorates fast. Dandekar does not grant Sarojini freedom to go out alone. He advises her to go to a hospital for the removal of the cancerous growth in her body. He opposes Sarojini’s preference for a faith healer because her interaction with a faith healer would be a threat to the virginity of his wife. For Sarojini, it is quite shocking that Dandekar could not understand and appreciate the loyalty of his wife. She is shocked when she knows that her husband spied on her, “so you watched me” (71). Further, she says: “You listened to this office gossip and you spied on me” (72).

Dandekar is suspicious of the fidelity of his wife. Sarojini’s lies and Dandekar’s discovering a stranger’s photograph in her trunk
strengthen his suspicion. Dandekar is so tormented by the thought of Sarojini having a lover. He calls her: “thrifty whore,” (70). and denounces her “shameless affair” (71). He thinks that: “A disloyal woman is no good to anyone not even to her children” (72).

Sarodini reacts sharply when she finds that her fifteen years of loyalty to her husband are being rewarded in the form of reprimand and chastisement. She tells her husband: “The man, whom I worship as God, cannot be degraded as being her lover” (Ibid). Sarojini is compelled to repress her desire to go to a faith healer.

Her married life is spent only in the four walls of the kitchen. Her desire to live for herself, for her own identity is suppressed in the male dominated society and she suddenly becomes aware of it when she is consistently persuaded by her husband to seek medical treatment for her cancerous growth. Sarojini does not want to flout the norms set for a traditional Indian wife. She is a woman of faith representing Indian tradition and culture. Sarojini cannot separate herself from the culture to which she is tethered since birth. In fact, there can be no real separation. Commenting on the impossibility of
complete separation between individual and culture, Lionel Trilling says:

It is not possible to conceive of a person standing, beyond his culture. His culture has brought him into being in every respect except the physical has given him categories and habits of thoughts, his range of feeling, his idiom and tones of speech. No aberration can effect a real separation; even the forms that madness takes ... are controlled by the culture in which it occurs (1955 : 12).

Culture decides one’s personality. It has deeper effects on the overall growth of a man, and therefore, women protagonists in the novels of Indian women writers suffer in their later life due to lacuna during their childhood, some sort of abnormal treatment. Therefore, to act against the wishes of her husband would be impermissible for Sarojini. Sarojini knows this. She decides to go out to the Swami without intimating Dandekar. She begins to abstain from her household duties. When routine is disturbed, Dandekar feels disturbed. About Sarojini’s absence endless questions on the possibilities and probabilities are formed in the mind of Dandekar; “why had Sarojini lied?, Had she?, was she playing some matrimonial games?, was it conceivable? Feasible that she might?” (43).
Dandekar becomes suspicious and asks Sarojini for the key of the trunk in which he accidentally finds the photograph of the Swami and assumes it to be that of Sarojini’s lover. Sarojini is unable to explain. She thinks that her entire effort of finding a faith cure would be spoiled if she disclosed her allegiance to the Swami. Sarojini tells her husband that the discovered photograph is that of her music teacher. Sarojini does not lose control of herself while giving explanations to her husband even though she is upset. This is the most typical example of the neurotic state of Sarojini’s character. Commenting on the situation, Edwin says; “It is a measure of her innate strength, her conviction that her action had been just in the circumstance that explain her dignified controlled replies. While obviously upset, she is composed enough, the next day to carry on with her domestic chores” (151).

Sarojini suffers a deep sense of conflict. On the one hand, she desires for a secure home life and a husband who is there to support her, and on the other, her personal freedom to prefer faith healing to surgery. But her desire for freedom is being undermined by her
husband’s pressure. That is why, she goes on telling him lies and keeps her visits to Swamiji a secret.

You would have sent me to a hospital instead called me superstitious, a fool, because I have beliefs that you cannot share. You wouldn’t have let me be – oh! You would have reasoned with me until I lost my faith ... (87).

The chief reason of Sarojini’s neurotic behaviour is the clash between rational thought and traditional values including medical science. Dandekar stands for rationality and Sarojini stands for traditional faith and religion because she has been brought up under very strict religious background:

Her ‘religious tutelage’ had been rather more earnest than his own... she often had answers to the conundrums …not of course, that she would supply them, until she had indicted that, perhaps she might (5-6)

That her faith in religion is deep and active as the wall of the dining room is rich with prints of

Gods and goddesses, singly and in groups, tableaux that showed their holding court in their heavens, or warning or being miraculously born of the earth or the sea (11).

As Sarojini’s basic faith upon which her entire self exists is demolished, she alienates herself from her essential duties. Her value system is damaged. She accepts neurotic values, thereby developing
neurotic wants, which are destructive both for her self and for her family.

Contrary to his wife’s firm faith in religion, Dandekar approves of only scientific treatment which alone is appropriate treatment for his wife. Instead of following Dandekar’s way, Sarojini prefers to go to the Swami and thus invites an anxiety on herself. The basic idea is she wants to free herself from the grip of her husband. And she shows this by rejecting his advice. More-over, her moving out from the house proves destructive. She neglects her domestic chores. At the risk of loosing family tranquility she continues visiting the Swami. This frustrates her husband further. Dandekar totally fails to turn her mind to medical science because Sarojini is adamant in following her faith cure through the Swami.

To deviate Sarojini from her way of faith is next to impossible. It is almost destroying her existence. It is her faith alone which provides her mental content and stability. The moment she is burst in the matters of faith, she is isolated and alienated. As an inevitable remedy, she finds rescue in the Swami’s way of life. The Swami exerts
tremendous influence on the psyche of Sarojini so much so that she undergoes a terrific mental change in her personality.

Sarojini’s frequent visits to Swami disturb Dandekar’s mental poise. He desires to bring her back. This attempt on the part of Dandekar enables Sarojini to feel that she belongs to him and that she is sought after by her husband. This feeling relieves her anxiety. Thus, she succeeds to get needed attention of her husband as there is no other way to attract him. Surprisingly enough, Dandekar fails in his attempt to bring Sarojini back. As a result of his failure, he tries to obtain Rajan’s help who is the cousin of Sarojini; but Rajan is equally under the influence of Swami. Rajan goes on to narrate many episodes of the Swami’s success. He says that the Swami has cured her when the doctors have failed in curing her pains. It was her faith in God that cured her. She thinks that even Dandekar’s illness is a result of ‘The Evil Eye’. Even her aunt Seeta who is afflicted by a similar disease is cured by a priest. Rajan proposes to burn camphor everyday in his name until the evil is lifted from him.

To his surprise, Dandekar finds enough evidence of the Swami’s influence:
She was sitting, cross legged, on the man’s (the Swamy’s) right. His hand was on her bowed head and he was murmuring to her, his voice sometimes falling to whisper, a soft stream of indistinguishable words. In a rough circle about them sat a small group of men and women, listening so engrossed that no one turned as he (Dandekar) burst in. No one had even stirred, they were simply unaware of his presence (79-80).

Modern-minded Dandekar does not agree with the view that treatment can be sought in religion. Exactly contrary to this view, Sarojini appears to believe profoundly in the power of religion. Whatever she feels Dandekar rejects, whatever she thinks Dandekar denies and this causes ‘basic anxiety’ resulting further into ‘basic threat’. This has been very appropriately pointed out by Usha Bande:

Basic anxiety produces in a child, what Maslow calls, ‘Basic Threat’. His basic needs are frustrated and he dreads the environment, which is merciless and unfair to him. As a result of this fear, his attitude towards himself and his environment changes. He becomes self-protective and relates himself to others not by his real self but by compulsive drives. His likes, dislikes, wants and wishes, trust and distrust. All are governed by strategic necessities (1988 : 28).

Sarojini, thus, becomes the victim of hostile environment. She becomes self protective and abandons her family and home. As a strategy, she adopts the method of self glorification. Her going to the
Swami is an indication of the glorification of the ‘self’ and the Swami enhances her individuality rather unconsciously. Sarojini feels more protected, retrieved and secured in the company of the Swami.

There are obvious reasons of Sarojini’s feeling protective in Swami’s presence. The basic reason in the novel is that the guru replaces the father. To a great extent, Sarojini’s childhood experiences and memories are actively operative in her present behaviour. In this context, Sudhir Kakar has pointed out that:

The whole transformation process has its roots in, and is a replication of, psychic events in that early period of childhood when the child, in the face of the many narcissistic hurts and disappointments that the ending of infancy brought in its wake, sought to recapture his early feelings of “greatness” through a new route, where he projected his greatness into the idealized image of a parent and then part of it himself by setting up a configuration in the psyche: you are great but I am a part of you (1982: 198).

The guru is idealized and internalized by Sarojini, she is asked to meditate upon the guru’s face. Thus, Sarojini is completely taken in by the Swami. The detailed healing rituals are not described by Kamala Markandaya. Some evidence is, however, offered. Sarojini feels better
under the influence of the Swami. She feels that the pain is there but it
does not touch her in Swami’s presence. She has strong faith in
Swami’s magical powers. What actually Swami does is that he
alleviates the pain her psyche experiences. Sarojini’s psyche
experiences the pain born of a sense of neglect and worthlessness. Her
neurotic need for love and self-importance are greatly attended to by
the Swami. It produces a temporary excitement, which neutralizes the
physical pain for the time being. Sarojini does not know that, the cure,
the Swami would offer is not of a permanent nature. The Swami offers
only a temporary psychic relief. But Sarojini is not mature enough to
distinguish, between the needs of her body and the needs of her
psyche. She falsely believes that “without faith I shall not be healed”
(87).

Instead of digesting the suggestions of her husband regarding
her treatment of the disease, she flatly refuses to believe a word of
Dandekar and thus develops a sense of helplessness in her mind. This
perhaps is the reason that Sarojini does not tell him any thing about
the disease and about the Swami. Dandekar asks, “Why could you not
tell me?” (Ibid)
She replies that her husband is a big fool and that she would lose faith. Dandekar offends the egoistic self of Sarojini, again Dandekar’s reaction takes her to Swami. Dandekar intend to rescue her from the Swami and is very firm in his stand that Sarojini will never be cured by the Swami and Sarojini’s belief in the faith cure is rooted in her memory of the death of her mother and grandmother as a result of surgical operation. Dandekar once again tries to persuade Sarojini to have an operation but she is reluctant to agree because it would mean total demise of her faith. Dandekar again tries to persuade Sarojini to have an operation, but “it is innocent and it’s curable”(107). He said stubbornly, “The doctor said so, she said if you had the operation now…..”

“No”
“Why not ? you must – you must be cured I can’t” –
“I will be cured in my own way.”
“By this – this faith healer ?”
“Yes, I have faith in him and he will cure me” (108).

This is the evidence of Sarojini’s infinite faith in the Swami as the faith healer. But one thing is sure that faith alone cannot treat any disease This fact Sarojini does not realize.
She speaks deliberately, strangling the protesting words that were already forming in her brain. Contrary to the position of Sarojini, Dandekar stands almost helpless, incapable to take any step. He himself confesses that he is trapped: “There’s nothing I can do, he thought, frozen, helpless, I can’t move, I’m trapped” (Ibid).

But the reality is that Sarojini is no better than the Tulsi plant. So she leads a disillusioned life. She has been living a mechanical life. Her recourse to the Swami provides a kind of relief to her from her mechanical, disillusioned routine life. As a neurotic Sarojini desires or wants to stand by her own vision of life. So she rejects quite indifferently her husband’s advice to undergo an operation. The psychologist, Horney, observes that a neurotic person strives to maintain a subjective feeling of superiority. There are three types of neurotics. (1) the narcissistic, (2) the perfectionist and (3) the arrogant vindictive. Sarojini comes under the third category i.e., arrogant vindictive. Distinguishing among the three types, Usha Bande observes:
The narcissistic wants to master life by ‘self-admiration’ and exercise of charm. The perfectionist seeks to attain the highest perfection and excellence in everything he undertakes and the arrogant vindictive has a compulsive need for vindictive triumph (1988 : 31).

“Despite their differences” (137), Sarojini strives to retain the domestic harmony for the sake of growth of their children. Dandekar prevents their daughter Ramabai from going to the milk bar upon which Ramabai talks defiantly. Dandekar’s worries begin to appear endless. His problems continue to multiply. He is short of money. He rejects the offer of loan from Shastri. He goes to the courtyard and talks to Tulsi, “If you were god, you tell me what to do, show me the way, some reasonable way out” (145).

Dandekar is caught up in financial crisis, to the extent that to meet out the Deepawali expenses he has to sell his watch. The silvery ash-tray presented to Dandekar by Wilson is given to the Swami by Sarojini. A few weeks later, he discovers that his son’s gold chain has been given to the Swami. Dandekar goes to the Swami and asks him desperately: “But you take …. Sarojini, gives and gives and you do not stop her”(155). This exhibits the outrageous mood of Dandekar. But he is equally helpless to do anything else. Most surprisingly, Dandekar
himself donates a five-rupee note to the Swami. “I did not know,” said Dandekar gently “I did not realize” (158). Now, Dandekar understands what Sarojini meant when she said that in the Swami’s presence nothing material or physical mattered but Dandekar remains firm in his decision to detach Sarojini from the Swami’s influence.

Sarojini’s erratic behaviour troubles Dandekar so much that he comes down with shingles. The doctor suggests that he has been worrying a lot and that his body is fed up and making its protest. Dandekar lies in the dark room with “arms and leg sprawled wide on the bed with the sweat crawling down each limb” (182).

Sarojini continues to minister him but quite indifferently. Now, she caters to his needs. She does not allow his illness to interrupt her visits to the Swami:

...Quite suddenly in the strange clarity of his racked state he knew that she was not really seeing him, that often, as now, he no longer existed for her, although some mechanical process made it possible for her to face and converse with him rationally and even to accord him some gentleness (183).

She serves him with a feeling of detachment. This behaviour of Sarojini is “in fact a flight from responsibilities and is far from the
healthy non-attachment” (Bande : 1988 : 31). She is sleeping Sarojini with “Aching tenderness” (191).

Dandekar recovers himself from the attack after fourteen days. He attains a new maturity. It was Sarojini’s compromising attitude that makes her serve her ailing husband and that made her return to her responsibilities. Finally, she returns to her duties at home. She does not rebel against Dandekar or hurt him any longer. She serves him during his illness. Furthermore, with the departure of the Swami, she accepts the scientific spirit of the age. She embraces the philosophy of acceptance though she might have learnt it from the Swami. She agrees to undergo an operation. Her submission to the surgical treatment is one of best examples of how a neurotic can arrive at a scientific view point. Sarojini’s neurotic behaviour gets deviated from negative to positive attitude and actions. Her compromising attitude makes her develop the sense of breaking attachments. Swami in this novel teaches that freedom is to remain free through the total activity of the self. This freedom corresponds to the ideal of positive freedom of Fromm’s concept “where the total, integrated personality should function effectively through love and work as creation” (1960: 25).
Though the Swami left suddenly but he created indelible impressions on the psyche of Sarojini. After his departure she remembers his words and says, “If the Swami chose to go it was his decision” (217). Thus, Sarojini returns back in a compromising, accommodative mood to her family and home and resume her domestic duties in the usual responsible role of an Indian wife. She is, therefore, restored- body and soul to Dandekar.

Shashi Deshpande possesses a deep psychological insight. Rajeshwar points out that she “is perhaps ideally suited to tread the labyrinthine tracts of human psyche and creditably represent it in fiction”(2001:59). Her novels deal with the psyche of people who undergo traumatic experiences.

In That Long Silence, Jaya seeks shelter in neurosis because she has developed a wrong perspective towards the realities around her. Her suffering enables her to discover her true self. Initially, she was uncompromising and could not fathom the oppressive nature of patriarchal world. At last, she decides to compromise with life’s problems. Jaya Kulkarni has a loveless married life. She marries Mohan and has been blessed with two children Rahul and Rati. Mohan has
crushed both the woman and the writer in Jaya as he neither loved her nor encouraged her. Jaya has every reason to be bitter with him, for he has been responsible for her misery. Jaya discloses that her relationship with her husband is quite mechanical. She and her husband are yet to live as wife and husband even after seventeen years of married life. Nothing can be more frustrating and depressing than this. The married couple are like “A pair of bullocks yoked together” (11). And the husband is said to be like a “sheltering tree” (Ibid).

This disgust of living with a man who does not love his wife, causes great loss to Sarojini in *A Silence of Desire*. She has been compelled to suppress herself and her feelings. This suppression gets reflected in the form of neurosis. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* experiences dissatisfaction regarding sex and emotion in her married life. Similarly, Jaya has to suppress her instinctual urges because her husband is so cold and non-caring. Almost every night at home she deliberately arouses desire in Mohan and makes fierce love to him in an apparent displacement. Here the novelist focuses on the reasons of failure of relations between the married couples. And yet the married couple is compelled to maintain dry and loveless married life. The
pretence has to be maintained. Perhaps, it is the same realization, which makes her behave callously on the death of Kamat:

That night, while having dinner, I had thought, someone I know is dead, I saw him dead. And I had been detached from that woman who had seen him, remote from that experience (157).

Mohan has always wanted to marry an educated girl who could speak English. So he approved Jaya’s proposal despite her dark complexion and Jaya had agreed because her brother had been in Mohan’s favour on account of his good fair looks, professional qualifications and a good steady government job. However, the waiting period for girls does not end with their marriage. Instead of waiting for some boy to propose now they wait for their husbands to return home, however, late they may be.

Mohan has clearly defined views about what a wife should do or should not do. He has wanted his wife; to be ‘Suhasini’ and not ‘Jaya’, so Jaya tried to fit her into that Suhasini image. It gave her at least freedom from guilt, if not happiness. She tried to cut off those bits of Jaya which did not fit into Suhasini image. At her father’s home Jaya had never restrained herself, instead she had let herself go as their
quibbles had always exploded into laughter in which everybody including her father had joined. But Mohan feels so much hurt by her laughter that she dared not laugh in his presence. She gradually learns that his mood is best met with silence. She would say only that which she knew, Mohan and his family expect her to say, never daring to speak her mind honestly. In due course, she learns that if Mohan’s sisters offered to mend any lapse they noticed in the upkeep of the house, it was meant to reflect on her inefficiency. Jaya has always been a bold and fearless person. But she tries to behave like Suhasini, a nervous incompetent woman needing male support all the time.

She does not like these changes but considering them to be inconsequential; she does not mind them much. But what really upsets her is the fact that in order not to damage her marriage, she does things, which she would otherwise be ashamed of doing. She has acted as sparrow who keeps the crow waiting outside in the rain. Her baby sparrow is sleeping and ‘crows’ entry would cause disturbance. The crow gets completely drenched in rain outside. Jaya lastly allows the crow to enter and in order that he may dry himself, she makes him sit
on the hot oven. The crow is burnt to death. And all this is done to avoid off disturbances so that her baby may sleep undisturbed.

Jaya’s married life has been lived almost on the same lines as the sparrows. “She has built an edifice of security around her husband and children believing it to be a burrow into which she can crawl, reptile like, and feel safe” (148). Attending to the needs of the husband, tending, and caring for the children become her full-time occupation. She states “in unequivocal terms that Mohan is her profession, career and means of livelihood” (75), and as Kamat points out, she desires a strange satisfaction in making him dependent on her. Like Sita, who followed her husband into exile, she follows, Mohan into “concrete jungle that is Bombay” (11).

Once the couple reaches Bombay, Jaya begins to behave like a faithful wife. She takes to wearing huge dark glasses, gets her eyebrows shaped and hair cut short to look exactly like the wife of an executive. In the process, she becomes dwarfed and annihilated as an individual but it all goes unnoticed even by her. Her protest, largely unconscious, remains wrapped in an uneasy wordlessness finding its
occasional expression in such acts as her adamant patronage of Kusum, whose feeble-mindedness she seems to borrow for a while.

Her absorption into the family fold is so total that from a fiercely independent girl she gradually deteriorates into the “stereotype of a woman: nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support” (76). The thoughts of the collapse of marriage, particularly those relating to the possibility of Mohan’s death, keep constantly haunting her. Even an imaginary fear of Mohan’s death shudder her. This feeling of death-threat has been most powerfully expressed:

I had lived in constant panic that he would die. I had clung to him at night, feeling with relief the warmth of his body, stroking his chest, letting my palms move with his even deep breaths. The thought of living without him had twisted my insides. His death had seemed to me the final catastrophe. The very idea of his dying had made me feel so bereft that tears had flowed effortlessly down my cheeks. If he had been a little late coming home, I had been sure he was dead. By the time he returned, I had, in my imagination, shaped my life to a desolate widowhood (96-97).

The fear of death and disaster is deeply rooted in her subconscious. This is an indication of Jaya’s disturbed and burdened mental equilibrium. She quite often wonders why it is that “wars
always took place in other countries, tidal waves and earthquakes occurred in far-off, unknown places, that murder, adultery and heroism had their places in other people’s lives, never in ours?” (4). And the disaster does take place in her life in the shape of a serious threat to her much prized and carefully built marriage and its temple, home.

Mohan gets involved in a shady deal and consequently faces enquiry into charges of corruption. If the enquiry is carried on, he will stand every possibility of losing his well-paid job, which will mean terrible insecurity. Jaya is at once reminded by her husband regarding wives of army officers. Mohan has told her that their wives were reduced to destitution on the removal of their husbands and were thrown out of jobs and later on arrested. In the Indian context, it is instructive to understand why Mohan has resorted to corrupt means of making money. Sudhir Kakar views that super-ego, the moral agency, is weakly differentiated and insufficiently idealized among Indians, whereas in the West an individual’s behaviour is constantly regulated by the proscriptions of the super-ego, in a Hindu it is regulated by
what he calls “communal conscience”(1981:135). He explains that communal conscience which comprises family and jati norms

is a social rather than an individual formation it is not ‘inside’ the psyche? In other words, instead of having one internal sentinel an Indian relies on many external ‘watchmen’ to patrol his activities and especially his relationships in all the social hierarchies (Ibid).

This creates a satiation in which clandestine infringement of moral and social norms is a thing not to be much worried about. In this light “dishonesty, nepotism and corruption as they are understood in the West are merely absurd concepts” (Ibid : 125), for an Indian. It is the primacy of relationships that pervades through the life of an average Indian rather than primacy of healthy social values. Grip of morality and ethical values are only taken for granted by Indians, including big officers.

Mohan is by no means an exception. He has been a dutiful son and a dutiful husband. He regularly sends money to his family, makes it a point to attend the death anniversary of his father every year, and even bears the entire expenditure of it. While working at Lohanagar as a small time engineer he makes himself a scapegoat in the corrupt
deals of the CE for securing spacious living quarters for his family. And after moving to Bombay, encouraged by his colleague Agarwal, he accepts illegal gratification again so that his family might live in comfort and his children might attend good schools. He says: “It was for you and the children that I did this. I wanted you to have a good life, I wanted the children to have all those things I never had” (9).

They move from their posh Churchgate house to the small flat in Dadar to evade the enquiry. Mohan takes the misfortune in his stride. At the most, in an apparent case of “projection, he accuses Jaya of being indifferent” (116), and storms out of the house. To Jaya, the experience turns out to be traumatic. The insecurity caused by the possibility of Mohan’s losing his job, his subsequent disappearance comes as a terrifying shock to her. The carefully built sparrow-house appears to be cracked and the insides cruelly exposed. It was like a house collapsed during the monsoon:

There was something desolating about the ease with which that had seemed so substantial fell away, almost contemptuously leaving behind an embarrassing nakedness (174).
She considers, “like a rational individual, several options for
dealing with the crisis such as suicide” (11), and “plain confession of
the crime” (31), and dismisses them all as impracticable and ultimately
lets her psyche take its own measures to manage the crisis. She lives
several days in a traumatic state. Her thoughts go back and forth in
time triggered by the slightest provocation but constantly return to the
traumatic event. Traumatic neurosis is usually a result of an emotional
shock wherein the subject feels his life threatened. Sometimes, it acts
as a precipitating factor and reveals an already existing neurotic
structure.

Jaya does not possess in half tolerance so as to absorb traumatic
shocks. The emotional disturbance and her mental disequilibria are the
result of two such shocks, a great threat to the service and survival of
Mohan and equally traumatic shock of her father Appa’s death. These
two experiences shatter her mental poise. Appa’s death, which was
unexpected and sudden, had deepened in her psyche. Moreover, he
was very dear and near to her. He was an extraordinary pillar for her
emotional support and all this has happened at a very crucial time in
her life when she was writing her school final examinations.
Moreover, death of her father rendered Jaya’s family homeless and made her life empty of meanings. During her serious sickness her elder brother’s support saved her from further psychic crisis. Now Jaya is left with no support from any side and there is no one whom she can turn to, not even Kamat. Now she has to fight this emotional battle all alone and survive. From this single handed battle against the life problem that Jaya emerges triumphant and she develops a vision towards life with a new understanding of herself and the world around her.

Jaya’s present shattered position, her inner strength and her readiness to survive with her courage these things have been most adequately revealed in the following observation by Freud:

Ill-luck—that is, external frustration—go greatly enhances the power of the conscience in the super-ego. As long as things go well with a man, his conscience is lenient and lets the ego do all sorts of things; but when misfortune befalls him, he searches his soul, acknowledges his sinfulness, heightens the demands of his conscience, imposes abstinences on himself and punishes himself with penances (1985:318).

Indeed, Jaya pours out during her neurotic spell, her innermost thoughts and makes an unqualified confession of her ‘sinful’ acts,
which she never revealed to Mohan for fear of jeopardizing marital security and harmony. She feels terribly guilty about her clandestine fictional endeavours:

I had written even after that confrontation with him (145).

It hadn’t been Mohan’s fault at all. And it had been just a coincidence, though it had helped, that just then Mohan had propelled me into that other kind of writing [middles] (148).

With the help of her brother, she happens to secretly terminate her third pregnancy. She now comes to think about it as her “great act of treachery against Mohan”(130). As she probes deep into this significant event of her life, the guilty feelings assume greater sharpness and poignancy:

But now, as if it had been waiting for its cue all these years, a shadowy figure in the wings, guilt sprang out at me. I thought of the unborn child with dread and a piercing sorrow. I invested her – yes, it would have been a girl – with all the qualities, and I missed in Rahul and Rati (131).

Jaya is almost convinced at a point that the misfortune that had suddenly engulfed her family is “entirely of her making-of her failure
as a wife and mother” (185). Thus, after deep thought Jaya blames herself fully for her unsuccessful role in the family of Mohan and his wife and as the mother of their children.

Rumination on the traumatic event, insomnia and recurrent nightmares and dreams, feelings of detachment and disorientation, adverse somatic reaction and relative lack of control over one’s actions are the readily available tools of the psychic apparatus, which are pressed into service in Jaya’s case. Every defense strategy that Jaya resorts to emanates from, is structured around and finally returns to the single traumatic event of the sudden disintegration of her conjugal life.

Jaya turns to Kamat when her husband Mohan does not care for her. It is Kamat who provided her emotional solace and much needed encouragement and support. Jaya looks for a ‘fatherly’ figure in Kamat. Her body responds to his gentle look, voice and touch. Her ego and id clash as she narrates her experience:

There had been nothing but an overwhelming urge to respond to him with my body, the equally overwhelming certainty of my mind that I could not do so. Later, there had been confusion (157).
Jaya has alienated herself from everything that could pose threat to her home. A relative lack of self control over one’s actions can be the cause of neurotic suffering and in Jaya’s case it proves true because she does involuntary actions intemperately. Doing such actions once again is related to her past affliction. The shocking disintegration of her home and absence of security in her life have made her life unstable. To intensify her tension and great mental disturbance Mohan, her husband disappears suddenly. During the moment of her suffering Jaya experiences a quivering in her abdomen, which has always been for her prelude to panic.

Shashi Deshpande uses dreams to depict the reality of Jaya’s life. Rajeshwar points out that “the partial relaxation of the ego’s control during sleep enables the dream-work to symbolically present the unconscious motivations of the dreamer” (2001:67). Jaya’s helplessness is revealed through her nightmares and dreams. Her first nightmare which occurs in her neurotic state shows many conflicting tendencies within her. In her dream, she sees Mohan and herself walking together. But she is left behind. She enters a house and finds herself
alone. She fears that she will not be able to find Mohan. She is taken to a room where many girls are present but nobody helps her. She feels helpless and lies down like a corpse. The girls discuss her predicament. Just then Mohan appears and asks her to get into a taxi. But she realizes, that it is too late anyway, we will never be able to make it, we will never be able to get away, it is all my fault, all my fault ... (86).

Thus Jaya’s dream is suggestive of Freudian dream-mechanism; it exemplifies condensation and displacement. It is symbolic of Jaya’s marital experience, her predicament and unconscious desires. The house she enters is the marital bond. She is led into it by society which is symbolized by a group of girls in a dream. When she enters marital alliance, there is no escape. Nobody helps her. When Mohan faces the charges of corruption, the society turns hostile. Her status is laid bare. She wishes to escape from this suffering. In an hour of crisis, wife seeks the help of husband. Consequently, Mohan arrives with a taxi. But she thinks that “it is very late, the escape route is closed” (Rajeshwar 2001:68). She regards herself responsible for Mohan’s problems. Thus her first dream is actually wish-fulfillment.
Jaya’s second dream shows her frustration. Mohan has deserted her and hence she bears psychic wounds. Her maid – servant Nayana directly refers to her plight which hurts her. It is then she recalls her dream:

I was looking for a toilet, I was desperate, I had to find one, I’d disgrace myself if I didn’t find one at once. And yes, there it was—the immense relief, and then the overpowering shame as I realized I was in a public place surrounded by people staring at me steadily and silently (161).

Jaya and Mohan wanted to escape public glare by moving to the Dadar flat. However, Jaya’s dream suggests that escape was not possible. She unconsciously perceives most of their acquaintances and it is reflected in the dream.

During her moments of utter suffering she has neither Kamat nor any even distant relative to assure her of her significance and sanity. As a result, her “sense of confusion turmoil meet her with brutal force” (125). Acute feelings of pain, sorrow, and confusion can be felt:
I could feel myself gasping, drowning in the darkness, the wild, flailing, panic-stricken movements that I was making taking me lower and lower into the vertex [...]. Take your pain between your teeth, bite on it, don’t let it escape... I came floundering out of the depths, thinking – am I going crazy like Kusum? (Ibid).

Her state of mind becomes unstable and neurotic when she witnesses a cruel scene at the bus-stop which relates to an intolerable sight. She looks around and finds a beautiful young girl smoking. When she finds that two men roughly reading her small breasts, this sight disturbs, Jaya limitlessly, and when she implores to stop this indecent action her request only evokes a hearty laughter from the men. This made her restless. She felt humiliated and helpless. In the background of the scene it was raining heavily. The memory of Jaya identifies the girl at the bus-stop with her daughter Rati and imagines the same condition of her daughter in future. This drives her crazy. Somehow Jaya manages to return home, and when she reaches her home, she is so disturbed that she goes on ringing the bell of her apartment and then bangs on the door. Finally, Mukta takes the key from her bag and opens the door. Jaya for a pretty longer time continues to be in a delirium even the next day.
The impact of this specific incident, along with some other incidents, is so deep on her psyche that it reaches to the level of her body reactions and under pressure she reacts adversely on several such occasions. Jaya behaves in the same way.

Thus, her mental condition reaches to the level of total disintegration and against this she develops a defense mechanism in the form of dreams. She rediscovers and finds a medium of fulfillment through recognizing her potentialities as a woman, and as a writer.

Writing comes to her rescue but Jaya soon comes to realize herself as a failed writer because many of her stories had been rejected for a lack of genuine feelings. She also felt that she had kept away the clamoring voices of women with an urge to express them. Jaya does this with a fear because she is afraid that these voices may ruffle her domestic life. She comes to accept herself as a failed writer.

Jaya’s creative urge and artistic zeal frees her from her cramped and dubbed domestic and societal roles. It releases her from emotional turmoil. At length she resolves to break that long silence by putting
down on paper all that she had suppressed in her seventeen years silence, that long silence which has reduced her ‘self’ to fragments:

I am not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I am Mohan’s wife, I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan’s wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible. The child, hands in pocket, has been with me through the years. She is with me still (191).

The above lines clearly indicate compromising mental preparedness to except life as it is and to come to terms with practical reality.

Such confessional statements like this manifestly show that the novel is a feminist critique disguised in the form of a novel. Through the image of a woman crawling into a hole, Deshpande describes the woeful plight of Jaya, unprotected and unshelled. Jaya says: “Distance from real life. Scare of writing. Scare of failing. Oh God, I had thought, I cannot take any more. Even a worm has hole it can crawl into. I had mine - as Mohan’s wife, as Rahul’s and Rati’s mother” (148).

Towards the end of the novel, Jaya consciously acknowledges her writing as a kind of fiction and quotes Defoe’s description of
fiction as a kind of ‘lying’, which may make ‘a great hope in the heart.’ Hence she decides to ‘plug that hole’ as said earlier by speaking and listening and erasing the silence between her and Mohan. It is this erasing of the silence that symbolizes the assertion of her feminine voice, a voice with hope and promise, and a voice that articulates her thoughts. The novel doesn’t depict Jaya’s life as a totally dismal and hopeless struggle. It suggests ‘hope’ and ‘change’ for the better. “We don’t change overnight. It’s possible that we may not change even over long periods of time. But we can always hope. Without that, life would be impossible”(193). Such an ending, suggests a new beginning for Jaya and Mohan. In a similar vein with Sita, and Sarojini, Jaya too experiences the sobering effects of neurosis and compromises with her life with Mohan.