In this chapter Anita Desai’s four novels written during the early period in her career are undertaken for the study with reference to the portrayal of realism. The novels, *Cry, The Peacock, Voices in the City, Bye-Bye Blackbird, Where Shall We Go This Summer?* were published in 1963, 1965, 1971 and 1975 respectively. The period from 1963 to 1975 in the career of Anita Desai may be regarded as the early period, so that the four novels mentioned above are classified as the Early Novels of Anita Desai. It is observed that Desai is interested in the psychological aspects of women. One of the manifestations is found in the depictions of women characterized by aloneness. Each of these novels is constituted of realism in one or the other way. Hence the task of analysing each of these novels with reference to realism is undertaken in this chapter.

*Cry, the Peacock*

**Introduction:** *Cry, the Peacock* which was published in 1963, took the literary world by storm as it was the first work of its kind on the Indian English firmament. Anita Desai has augmented Indian fiction in English by providing a new dimension to it that is the psychological novel. The study in the present novel explores the psychological realities of fear
psychosis, neurosis, depression, loneliness, alienation, love, marital discord, father-fixation and broken relationships, rebellion, the repercussions of a broken family, excessive protection from father and therefore, a shift from the realities of life and regression.

For Anita Desai, delving deep into the recesses of the characters’ psyche holds significance. R.S.Pathak quotes K.R Srinivas Iyengar that her forte is the exploration of sensibility, that is, the particular kind of modern sensibility that is ill at ease in a sterile environment. Anita Desai, concerns herself with portraying the life of the upper middle classes, especially the women, who are psychologically and spiritually torn apart. Thus they cannot adopt healthily to normal circumstances. She is concerned about the fate of married women. Women feel the need for a kind of life which caters to her innermost longings for true companionship. Anita Desai depicts the reality of sensitive, educated women, without careers, who are married to insensitive men. Marriage, which is the corner-stone of a healthy society, at large, is infested with this hypocrisy and notion that the woman is being provided for and that she is happy. But, the truth or inner reality is far away from the general idea. Anita Desai tries to bring to light the plight of the educated woman in this way. She tries to show that, it is the communication of spirits, that is true marriage and this spiritual companionship gives significance to life. The author persuades the reader to think deeply. Her work involves itself in human nature and human relationships.
Anita Desai’s work evinces life and its tender and sometimes sore reality especially of the suffering women. She unveils the life of the upper middle class woman, the life which she knows very well. She puts forth life as she observes it and it is the inner reality, that she puts forth.

**Plot:** *Cry, The Peacock* is a harrowing tale of a father–fixated young woman, married to an elderly gentleman. The novel portrays the agony which she undergoes with an insensitive husband, (although dutiful), which finally leads to madness, murder and suicide.

Maya, the sensitive heroine is seized by two maladies. One is the albino astrologer’s prophesy of death for either her or her husband before the completion of four years of marriage and other is the meaningless relationship with Gautama, her husband. The prophesy has been told to her during her childhood and this continues to cast its ugly shadow throughout her adulthood. Coupled with her childlessness, her married relationship results in an unfathomable loneliness.

Maya is the pampered daughter of a rich father, Rai Saheb. Her growth has been monitored by this over indulgent, ‘despotic’ father. He is a perfectionist and Maya has learned to submit to him. Her bane lies in her habit of searching for her father in Gautama. Gautama is irritated with her father-obsession. Maya is obsessed with a worry of pleasing her father. She is afraid of his withdrawal of love as she recollects the
treatment meted out to Arjuna, her brother. Arjuna could not force himself to adhere to his father’s principles and he has left home. (The reader becomes aware of Arjuna, only towards the end of the novel, when Maya receives a letter from him, from USA). Therefore, Maya does not want to displease father and she relies more upon him. This kind of relying extends over in married life. She inclines heavily upon Gautama. Usha Bande remarks- “the love of Maya’s father is devitalizing; separating her consciousness from physical reality around and within her, which finally destabilizes her real self.”² The smothering love endowed by her father has driven her far from reality. She herself says: “My childhood was one in which much was excluded, which grew steadily more restricted, unnatural even, and in which I lived as a toy princess in a toy world.”³ There is the absence of a loving and understanding mother. For Maya, her mother and her remembrance is in the form of the lone photograph on her father’s desk.

As Maya is a motherless child, Rai Saheb has showered her with love to the extent of spoiling her. Maya yearns to have that kind of attention and doting from Gautama. Maya admits that only her father can love her and there is none else. Even after marriage she longs for the comforting words of her father. Maya’s was a lop-sided view of life, her world painted in her favourite colours and set moving according to her
tunes. Maya in her moments of stress remarks “No one, no one else, loves me as my father does.” This unreasonably enormous amount of love and affection which she gets from her father has made her move away from reality.

Maya has been a high strung child, as she herself admits. The luxurious upbringing has not prepared her for practical life. As is most of the time, the foundation of her upbringing has been fragile and she cannot face the harsh reality of life. As Gautama says: “Life is a fairytale to you still what have you learnt of the realities? The realities of common existence…. all that constitutes life for the ordinary man…..” Maya has developed neither endurance nor strength of mind. The extent of her shift from reality could be evidenced in the fact that she tries to identify her father in Gautama. When there are no signs of tender love coming forth from Gautama, she tries to re-live her childhood experiences. Gautama fails to give her assurance of safety and security.

In an interview, Anita Desai has opined thus “I think all human relationships are inadequate. I have worked this out. Basically, everyone is solitary. I think involvement in human relationships in this world invariably leads to disaster.”

It is evident that Maya has been in need of female bonding. It is the mother that Maya’s unconscious seeks and is one of the causes for her
psychical conflict. The repression of memory of her dead mother leads to an administration of morphine in her illness. It is also found that without her own mother, Maya seeks solace in her mother–in–law’s arms. But her neurosis mounts unabated. Ultimately, it leads her to murder Gautama and her suicide.

**Analysis:** Anita Desai addresses herself continually to the frailty of the human condition that is under severe psychological and social pressures. Human relationships form the warp and woof of life. Happiness hinges on the success of relationships. Many a time, in the rush of modern life, these relationships suffer and become sterile and one of these relationships is the marital relationship. The institution of marriage has to provide security, protection, companionship to the wife, but it becomes dysfunctional from a point of time. Marriage is the closest and most enduring relationship most adults experience. The study seeks to analyse this realism in *Cry, The Peacock.*

Laura Carstensen and Jeremy Graff assert that marriage in modern times is expected to serve as a principal resource for emotional support. This reality is further strengthened by the following statement: “It has also been found that when there is emotional support from a spouse, the high-risk health behaviors like alcoholism, addictions to drugs or smoking can be abated”
Therefore, emotional rapport or closeness in a marriage can work havoc, if it is unhappy; and if happy, it definitely can promote health and sanity to the spouses.

“Unhappy marriages are also strongly implicated in clinical depression. Among couples who seek marital therapy, half involve a depressed spouse and half of all women who seek treatment for depression report serious marital problems”\(^9\)

On the basis of these statements and findings of psychologists, one can state that Anita Desai has portrayed the consequential realities an ill-adjusted marriage. She presents the actualities of marital disharmony and its macabre effect and the spouses embroiled therein. Therefore, it is a fact that the spouse’s emotional well-being is so clearly linked to one another. Emotionally close social relationships offer many benefits and intimate relationships save individuals from mental and physical health problems.

Personal relationships are actually the foundations of a healthy social structure. Relationships impart a sense of self worth and meaning to life. Sadly, many a time, individuals grope trying to build such meaningful relationships which elude their grasp. The present study examines that Anita Desai explores the inner life, feelings, emotions and
sensations of the protagonist, in order to capture reality. For her “the
cognizance of objective reality as seen by the mind”\textsuperscript{10} is reality. Anita
Desai portrays the sensitive Maya in the clutches of neurosis which is one of the consequences of her ill-matched marriage.

With reference to this kind of a predicament, William Flexner says:

“…. disorder of this type sets in after prolonged struggle
with very adverse circumstances; and in these the prospect of recovery under skillful mental treatment is good, especially the circumstances of the patient that have given rise to his difficulties can be radically altered and the course of life made smooth for him.”\textsuperscript{11}

The study proves that an ill-matched relationship can work to the destruction of the sensitive woman.

Four years of married life and a hankering after love has driven Maya to neurosis. The pampered child-woman, Maya cannot cope with her intense loneliness and hypersensitive nature and the indifference of Gautama. Her barrenness is also a factor, where her mother-impulse remains unsatisfied. Therefore, based on the above statements of psychologists, Maya is heading towards insanity. She tries to voice out her emotional agonies which go unheard. She cannot just be an
appendage to the dominant, dynamic male. Anita Desai brings out the real modern woman/wife as she is, in contemporary life and the study seeks to analyse this element of realism. Anita Desai authentically brings out the agonies of the sensitive female protagonist, who is embroiled in an unhappy marital relationship, with an incompatible spouse. The spouses are temperamentally polarized. Anita Desai unflinchingly presents the reality behind most marital relationships.

In *Cry, The Peacock*, Anita Desai presents the actuality behind husband-wife relationship, especially the one between incompatible couples. Maya and Gautama— their marriage has been one of convenience. Both Gautama and Maya’s father being friends, had maintained a good rapport between them. But with opposing temperaments, Maya and Gautama stray apart. The participation and involvement on the part of Maya and the complete absence of it in Gautama causes disorder between them. Although Gautama has been a dutiful provider, he cannot respond to the real Maya. Poor Maya is bogged down by this unsuccessful marriage resulting in her neurosis. In spite of Gautama being a diligent lawyer, who provides for Maya and from the practical viewpoint, is a caring husband. But, emotionally, he cannot cater to her. Both their attitudes and temperaments are opposed to each other. “Their married life is punctuated all along by ‘matrimonial’ silences.”12
There is a complete lack of communication between them. “Had there been a bond between us, he would have felt its pull… But, of course, there was none…. There was no bond, no love– hardly any love.” He is a “bleak, comfortless figure”. Maya reiterates—“….I am alone.” Gautama remains insensitive towards Maya.

As Maya has been a pampered child, with a luxurious childhood and over protective father, which has removed her far from reality, she has fallen into the blunder of searching her father in Gautama. Whereas, Gautama is impervious to her feelings and at times gets irritated with her father-obsession. One’s heart goes out to Maya because she strives against the forces of marital discord and inevitably ends up destroying both herself and Gautama. She yearned and yearned for his companionship. Maya’s cries for love go unheeded. Gautama could see no value in anything less than the ideas and theories born of human and preferably male brains. Maya struggles with her anxieties of the prophesy as well as her emotional sensibility. But the sedate Gautama does not relate to Maya’s anxieties. Maya visualizes the death of Toto, her per dog as a disaster and a premonition, but Gautama dismisses it off with a cup of tea. (But, of course, Gautama has dutifully seen to the disposal of Toto’s dead body).
This lack of rapport with Gautama heightens Maya’s isolation. In the throes of helplessness she cries out “…. Who is my savior?” Nobody can yield succour. She says, “There was not one of my friends who could act as an anchor anymore...........”

“But those were the times when I admitted to the loneliness of the human soul, and I would keep silent. The things we leave unsaid would fill great volumes.” This points out to the rift. The rift between them is ever- widening.

This is the actual predicament of the wife (most of them), who has to stoically endure the agony inflicted by an insensitive husband. Gautama has always been industrious and preoccupied with his work. The contact and relationship with Gautama would have pacified her ruffled psyche. But Maya and Gautama are incompatible. Maya is tormented by her fear of death and her neurosis; she makes appeals for tender love and understanding from Gautama, but in vain. Even after four years of marriage, there is not a common area where both were equally interested. For the barren Maya, this indifference from Gautama is too much a strain. Maya emerges into a neurotic adult, thanks to the unrealising Gautama and the shackles of marriage! Marital relationships are established with the explicit purpose of providing companionship to each other. However, the element of companionship is sadly missing in
the relationship between Maya and Gautama. The unfortunate fact is that Maya is married to Gautama who provides for her and is quite dutiful, but he has failed in providing her companionship. This contributes to her loneliness and resultant neurosis. Her hypersensitivity also is a contributory factor.

In modern times inter-personal relationships are under constant stress and sometimes they (relationships) degenerate into cumbersome bonds. Marital disharmony is there in yet another aspect, that of Maya’s dissatisfaction and her sexual starvation. She wants to touch him, feel his flesh and hair and hold and tighten her hold on him. She wants to possess him completely. “….. he did not give another thought to me, to either the soft, willing body or the lonely, wanting mind that waited near his bed.”

The agony of this predicament is hard to expose or share with members of the society or even with relatives. Anita Desai, being a woman can well comprehend such conditions. Therefore, in such conditions, fears and anxieties of Maya assume gigantic proportions. Moreover, her Brahmin background and age-old superstitions have compounded her problems. She cannot share her feelings and problems with anybody.

Although incompatible, Maya in continuing to live with Gautama, is an effective testimony of an Indian woman who becomes bound to her husband, at all costs. Even, with no children, to cement their relationship,
she continues to live on. This is an evidence of the Indian female psyche, where most marriages are unhappy, but continue to exist as such. Sometimes one finds life becoming complicated and becomes a maze of confusing emotional responses and reactions; how best to get out of it, unburnt or unscathed - is the question.

L. Douglas De Nike and Norman Tiber in the article “Neurotic Behaviour” opine that neurotic behaviour patterns include anxiety conditions. This condition manifests in tension, physical discomfort, the individual is “ready to react to some unknown danger. He is afraid of everything and nothing all at once”.

Maya “was poised for flight, prepared for escape, and even though no enemy had revealed itself, I still shrank from fear of it.” This statement only illustrates the above said statement. It is also of the intense fear she was experiencing. The death of the pet dog Toto fills Maya with extreme sorrow and despair. She is very perturbed and she views it as a great catastrophe, whereas Gautama, being a practical man, sees to it that the corpse is disposed off and comforts Maya with a cup of tea. But Maya, perceives in the death of Toto, a premonition that something terribly evil was lurking in store for her. This points out to Maya’s childhood encounter with the albino astrologer’s prophecy of the impending death of either of Gautama or herself before the lapse of four years of marriage. This prophesy subjects her to an ever-lasting bondage and an irrevocable and immovable sense of fatality.
Usha Bande quotes Anita Desai herself as stated in an interview: “I agree that the experiences of childhood are the most vivid and lasting ones.” Maya’s childhood experience with the astrologer is wielding its dark influence throughout life. Mays is preoccupied with death, her strength is not adequate enough to triumph over her sense of dejection.

Had she confided in Gautama, perhaps things might have changed. But Maya is unable to communicate. She is unable to handle the sense of horror. Struggling to overcome it, she turns inward. Her intense self absorption takes her away from reality; her incapacity to face reality has its manifestations even in childhood. Maya is racked between the past and present between security and terror.

She turns hysteric over the creeping fear of death: “Am I gone insane? Father, Brother, Husband, who is my survivor? I am in need of one. I am dying and I am dying, God, Let me sleep, again. There is no rest any more – only death and waiting”.

L.Douglas De Nike & Norman Tiber confirm that a neurotic depressive “individual feels listless, lonely and helpless to cope with his problems. He may have difficulty sleeping and eating and weeps at the slightest provocation. Some depressed people contemplate suicide ..... and some actually do kill themselves...”
With reference to this statement made by L. Douglas & Norman Tiber, Maya shows all these signs of neurosis:

“….. I turned in desperation to find someone to help me, but no one came to ward that shadow off, for the first time in my life I was defenseless and utterly alone.”\(^{22}\)

“And then those fierce headaches began, frightening in their intensity…”\(^{23}\)

“I felt my heart rise to mouth and fall to the pit of my stomach again sickeningly…..”\(^{24}\)

She also displays physical discomfort coupled with her tendency of hearing deafening sounds of drum beats –

“….. The drums never ceased”…. “stop them… tell them to stop”.\(^{25}\)

Hallucinations and hearing sounds abound in Maya. The symptoms of fever and discomfort are also seen. Poornima Bhatt says,

“A hallucination is when a person sees, hears, tastes or feels things that do not exist in reality. The most commonly experienced hallucinations in schizophrenia are hearing voices which no one else can hear or seeing things that aren’t there”.\(^{26}\)
Such symptoms are commonly seen in insane people according to the following remark:

“Hallucinatory phenomena consisting of the perception of nonexistent external stimuli are more common in schizophrenia than any other mental disease”……

“Auditory hallucinations in the form of voices vilifying, threatening, or flattering the patient predominate.”

These lines from the novel confirm the manifestations of hallucinations in Maya:

“… I leapt from my chair in terror, overcome by a 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.”

Maya is in constant fear of being smashed by the overwhelming outer reality-one of the albino’s prophesy and the other of the imperviousness of Gautama.

This statement is relevant to Maya’s condition.

“Schizophrenia involves excessive introversion, and it involves severe and prolonged conflict”…..“Again the
delusion and hallucinations of the schizophrenic so commonly concern his body….points to the intense preoccupation with the self.”29

Maya’s hallucinations and frantic tantrums during the day increase. She withdraws furthermore into delusions and shows signs of unapproachability that characterizes victims of schizophrenia. Gautama is at loss to comprehend her behavior. Her madness escalates uninhibited. Her prevarication at Gautama’s inquiry about the details about the horoscope in Arjuna’s letter is a well spring which overburdens her. Gautama tries to reason with her. Gautama feels that the reason for Maya’s neurosis lies in her luxurious upbringing.

William Flexner points out that any serious conflict which is not treated and resolved will lead to insanity. He remarks: “At any rate, there is emotional tension and discomfort or anxiety. There may also be indecision and even paralysis of action”.30 To illustrate this statement the following lines from the novel could be quoted.

“‘you look as though you haven’t moved out of that chair since I left you this morning. And why haven’t you opened the windows yet? It’s quite late.’ With a crackling, spitting sound, the bamboo screen was rolled up. The sudden influx of air and dust made me realize, with a start, that the window had been flung open”.”31
It is evident Maya has been sitting immovable quite oblivious of her surrounds. She shows signs of unapproachability. She has become prone to brooding moods and despair.

“And I bow my head with an unendurable sense of tongue thickening, eye-veiling depression, as I sit on my little chair and stare and at the only cool thing in my vicinity – the floor….”

Maya is losing her mental balance as she sits quietly for a long time without doing nothing. Maya exemplifies women who suffer silently to the extent of breaking down. Maya experiences a sense of imprisonment which has been invited by the demonic prophesy. She is aware that she is on the verge of insanity. Poornima Bhatt, describes depression in the following words:

“A depressive disorder is an illness that involves the body, mood, and thoughts. It affects the way a person eats and sleeps, the way one feels about oneself, and the way one thinks about things. A depressive disorder is not the same as a passing blue mood. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. People with a depressive illness cannot merely ‘pull themselves together’ and get better. Without treatment,
symptoms can last for weeks, months or years. Appropriate
treatment, however, can help most people who suffer from
depression.”

All these qualities and symptoms are evinced in Maya.

Ample research on these lines supported by case studies of
suffering individuals have given an understanding of these diseases and
their symptoms. This is a reality which no one can deny. Apart from all
the above said symptoms, fantasy is also seen in Maya’s behaviour,
fantasy is sometimes referred to as day dreaming- satisfying mental
pictures are created. Freud opines it as an unhealthy symptom as pointed
out by William Flexner. William Flexner says,

“Fantasy becomes abnormal when the person loses himself
completely in it and begins to “identify” himself with the
creations and breaks off from ordinary realities”…..“when
an individual ceases to cope with life altogether and escape
into a fantasy– world, he is in danger of entering the
abnormal stage”.

William Flexner gives an illustration of a person who sits
immovable and passive quite absorbed in the day dream with no
connection with actuality. This is already stated in quotations from novel.
Her physical health has also deteriorated. Gradually Maya withdraws into
her childhood. Maya suffers intensely on these lines.
Frank Johnson states that in conditions of ‘exceptional self-alienation’ included in the ‘diagnosis of schizoid personality’, shows the following symptoms and suffering:

1) Excessive ‘anxiety’ & ‘disquietude’, even in ordinary interactions.
2) Preoccupation with ‘ideas’ and ‘fantasy’.
3) Uncertainty in actions.
4) Retreating and withdrawing
5) Being away from social contact.\textsuperscript{35}

Maya, who has failed to grow out of her childhood, lives in a world of fantasy and fairytale, that is far removed from reality. Maya shows antagonistic behaviour towards Gautama; and assumes self-destructive tendencies. There is a total loss of control. Frank Johnson also points out that the alienated individual suffers intense states of excitement, confusion, anxiety; reduction of social contact or highly selective contact, ‘wholesale and excessive forgetting’ will also be seen. Maya is also prone to ‘obsessional ruminations’, arising from her own tormented, exhausted mind. “The content of the ruminations can be quite bizarre in some instances”.\textsuperscript{36}

Another aspect of realism traced in this novel is that the family has a murky side. This has been proved by plenty of researches,
conducted during the recent years. Ill-treatment of wives is a fact which has been there since times immemorial. But it is in modern times the harassed wife is coming out of her threshold and seeking help. Maya recollects the incident of Mrs. Sapru frustrated over the behaviour of her husband, comes to Rai Saheb (Maya’s father) for assistance in getting a separation from him. The novel reveals the woman with loose, straggling hair who has sunk into one of the wicker chairs, sobs that she must leave him and that she could not bear it any longer. The woman pleads with Rai Saheb for financial assistance to go back to her parental home. This displays recklessness and irresponsibility of the husband where the wife finds it unbearable in a household with all peace and order disintegrated.

The educated woman no longer wants to go on enduring ill-treatment. The above illustration also realistically presents the plight of the woman who doesn’t have vocation. Madhurima opines, “Dependency act as condition forcing these women to continue living in the abusive marital relationship mainly because they lack alternative support system.”

An individual suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but also from inner problems- a conviction of isolation, randomness and meaninglessness in his way of existence. Anita Desai portrays the crisis of the sensitive individual. Man is hunted by a constant awareness
and realization of the meaninglessness of existence and that life is fast running but of his hand. A deep lacuna between the individual’s aspirations and his achievements leave him helpless. Life itself is too boundless and man, at times, is unable to hold it together. Thus, he becomes a victim, disorganized, confused and alienated. Life poses itself as a very colossal problem and he is unable to handle it.

**Conclusion:** Thus the study has sought to analyse the psychological realities of marital incompatibility and its consequences on the sensitive psyche of the woman. The observations in medical literature perfectly match the behavioural patterns of the character depicted in the novel. Thus the reader can witness how realistically the happenings are narrated in the novel.
Voices In The City

Introduction: The novel was published in 1965. It presents a moving portrayal of Monisha, who like Maya suffers emptiness. But unlike Maya, she has taught herself docility. She has learned to suppress her emotions.

The present study seeks to elaborate upon the realities of familial detachment in the urban milieu, the reality of the different forms of detachment and non-involvement of the characters, the destructive effects of parental incompatibility and resentment over the lives of the children. The study grapples with the experiences of lovelessness, companionship and communication in familial relationships, especially in an atmosphere of callousness and selfishness. The researcher outlines the realities of the disgust and revulsion of the woman in an atmosphere of a lack of companionship and sense of belonging. Moreover, the study explores the fact that life can be tolerable only when human beings reach out to one another in mutual care, support and trust and that, complete isolation and detachment spells disaster. The study also seeks to examine the agony of a secluded individual. The one aspect of reality which the author herself voices out is that, although man builds various relationships, man is basically alone. Anita Desai asserts in an interview with Jasbir Jain: “I think all human relationships are incomplete.....Basically everyone is solitary. I think involvement in human relationships in this world
invariably leads to disaster.” Thus the novel is an attempt to embody the different planes of reality. The study seeks to examine all the above mentioned aspects of realism.

**Plot:** The novel is divided into four parts: the three siblings, Nirode, Monisha and Amla and their mother Otima. Nirode’s sister, Monisha is married to Jiban against her wishes. Jiban’s is middle-class stolid family. Monisha-Jiban relationship is characterized by a severe lack of communication and the consequent loneliness. Monisha is childless. The scrutinizing eyes of her in-laws cause her great discomfort. Her individuality seems to be threatened. Jiban is oblivious of her emotional needs. Her in-laws deny her even the privacy of her own room. Eventually, her predicament drives her to commit suicide.

Nirode, the protagonist is a congenital failure. He is engaged in an unequal fight against the social and commercial values of urban life. The values of the contemporary urban life irk his sensitivity. Further, the parental disharmony and his mother’s illicit affair with Major Chadda casts a negative impact on him. He is disgusted with life. He is wary of success.

Amla, Nirode’s unmarried sister, comes to Calcutta in search of job. She is fresh from an art school in Bombay. She wishes to work as a commercial artist, but she is aware of a sense of meaninglessness and hollowness that has entered her life. She falls in love with Dharma, a recluse painter, who is also Nirode’s friend.
The author depicts the dehumanized values of Calcutta city. Such an atmosphere snuffs out the integrity of the individual. It symbolizes the ethos of corrupt commercial life. Disintegration is evident in the city’s callousness towards poverty and misery.

**Analysis:** Suffering is a pervasive reality of life. It is there in one form or the other. Human beings must suffer. Even Nirode’s mother has suffered. She is a polished, educated woman with fine sensibilities. She is a graceful and aristocratic woman, but she abhors her decrepit husband. Her husband is coarse and not a suitable companion. He carries a penchant for malice. This can be a blow to a sophisticated woman. Her illicit relationship with the Major is a means of escape from her unfulfilled relationship with her husband. But she has proved her resilience by an amount of poise and dignity even in suffering. However, Anita Desai depicts the changing reality of a woman’s needs. She is not the self-effacing kind of a traditional woman. One cannot justify her social responsibility for Nirode’s predicament. But one can definitely view the reality of the vicissitudes of feminine needs. It is her helplessness in not being able to pretend devotion to an unfit husband.

The reality behind the adulated image of the mother is explored here. The wanton wife points out to the defiled mother, who indulges in love outside marriage. This is the changing reality of the idea of the woman
and her individual self. But Nirode cannot compromise with her circumstances. Therefore, he must live in penury. However, her selfish desire for fulfilment is the cause for her son’s predicament. But she is conscious of her emotional needs. Otima’s personal needs as a woman clash with her role as a mother; the severity of this conflict and Nirode’s hatred at the name of the Major is portrayed realistically. This aspect of social reality is presented clearly, where both the mother and the son are at a loss. Otima cannot play the role of the mother confidently as seen in the last part of the novel, where she is brought in person at Monisha’s death. She remains untouched even in the face of such a great calamity as Monisha’s suicide.

Suffering produces a kind of purgation of feelings and emotions. It will definitely not leave the individual the same as he was. Suffering also creates in an individual a heart which can understand another’s problems and agony. Nirode who was detached from the members of his family, regains his capacity to feel and sympathize with them in the face of Monisha’s death. He experiences tenderness towards them, which can be witnessed in these lines from the novel: “He pressed them to him with hunger and joy, as he rejoiced in this sensation of touching other flesh, other’s pain, longed to make them mingle with his own....”\textsuperscript{39} He realises that he is not beyond feeling, distress and grief. He
is still humane and he can mourn out of anguish. It is a known reality that blood ties cannot be broken or split easily. The relationship may have been sour due to some reason. But blood ties have the tenacity to become whole again, notwithstanding the fact of bitterness or hatred. Now he feels the craving for the company of his mother and sister.

The hard reality of the negative impact of parental marital disharmony on the adult relationships of the children, is analysed in the study. In order to illustrate this reality, there is the case of Monisha’s relationship with Jiban. Monisha loves solitude; and in Jiban’s joint family she is ill at ease and she is stricken by those who surround her. They are all different and she does not have anything in common with them. The women are all absorbed in domestic chores. Although Monisha involves herself in these chores, she prefers to be alone. Monisha does not share a loving relationship with her own mother, or rather with anybody. Even with Jiban as she admits in her diary,

“it is not there in my relationship with Jiban which is filled with loneliness and a desperate urge to succeed, and one plunged me into the most calamitous pleasures and pains, fears and regrets, and never again will it possess me”.

The familial context of Monisha and Jiban is incompatible. She belongs to the upper class milieu with a background of parental conflict.
Whereas, Jiban’s is a middle class sturdy conservative joint family with well defined gender roles. The women of household are like birds in a cage, where the mother-in-law reigns supreme. There is no bond of love and sharing or companionship between Monisha and Jiban. The basic element of trust is also lacking. Monisha is accused of theft, when she has taken money for Nirode’s medical expenses. Jiban in no way supports Monisha. This proves that he discredits her right as wife and daughter-in-law. The conservative code of conduct compels Monisha to be good and accommodative to Jiban’s ego. Her need for solitude and silence is not surprising, since she always gives herself to others. She takes rebukes and accusations in silence. This extreme self-effacement causes depression. Therefore, Monisha is all the more lonely as she is not provided with any moral support. The lack of freedom is fatal to the woman’s psyche. Freedom of expression is very essential. The dearth of it can cause even physical harm. Monisha’s appearance and face looks like a ragged stuffed doll. Therefore, Aunt Lila tells Amla to celebrate her independence. She also echoes the reality of male dominance, when she argues: “Our country belongs to its men”41. She focuses on the reality of the servitude of Bengali women who are confined to centuries of household chores and the moribund condition of traditions and customs: “Lives spent in waiting for nothing, waiting on women self-centred and indifferent and hungry and demanding and critical.....”42. This reflects the miserable condition of
the women. Monisha finds it difficult to adjust in such a mechanical atmosphere. She desires a home privately for herself and her husband. She requires an amount of relaxation and respite away from the crowded atmosphere. It is natural for a woman of sensitivity to yearn for it. It only voices out the reality of the woman’s longings. Her suffering lies in her implicit submission. She is reduced to a woman who writes a diary. She feels that there is a wall of darkness which obstructs any communication with Jiban’s family. She experiences terrible suffocation due to this lack of communication. She remains uninvolved and incapacitated to relate to anything, even to music.

Monisha lacks the competence to adjust in the traditional joint family. As she comes from a modern nuclear family, the constraint of joint family life is too much to bear. The enclosed life of the joint family is too claustrophobic and cluttered for the sensitive Monisha. She wishes to rid herself of the enclosure and boredom of this kind of life which she tries to acquire by means of death. She is unable to take charge of herself; she develops negativity, that of suicide. The incompatibility of her marriage only serves to aggravate the claustrophobic atmosphere of the joint family. Nachiketa Tripathi says: “Privacy is psychological state where a person feels secure and comfortable, and it is said to have a positive therapeutic value”. Therefore, the necessity to preserve privacy
is universal. It means solitude. The person wants to be alone with his own thoughts. Monisha’s sisters-in-law come and meddle in her cupboards. This is not just a matter of manners and etiquette. It portrays the difference between the individualistic nuclear family and a joint family. Their coarse and boorish behaviour irritates Monisha. Trapped in a maze of her traditional domestic role-playing and the claustrophobic environment, Monisha feels enmeshed. Her life is in a state of decadence due to the domination of her in-laws.

In the presence of parental acrimony, the children are likely to be pulled in opposed directions, in the sense of taking sides. Both Monisha and Amla accept their mother as she is and they choose to ignore her affair with Major Chadda. Nirode takes the side of his father. Monisha’s excessive sensitivity and introvert nature can be attributed to parental conflict. The siblings do not have the element of love to bind them and this is the result of parental disharmony. They find it difficult to connect with one another. The natural ties which bind siblings is absent. Instead there is an element of fear which exaggerates the sense of loneliness and non-belonging. This aspect of parental disharmony has disturbed Nirode to the core of his personality. He experiences fear at relating to others and the outer world. Nirode even disdains women. This is also due to his mother’s illicit relationship. Nirode’s sense of propriety is disturbed. The
Indian attitude of deifying the mother is sufficiently subverted. The hostility between the parents, the father’s partiality towards Arun has perturbed him and the consequence is that Nirode is detached from his family. He cherishes a negative attitude towards life and has a natural inclination towards failure. Nirode evidences a sense of shame and indignation at the very mention of the word ‘love’, as he equates it with his mother’s liaison with Major Chadda. Her affair is a matter of mortification and humiliation for the young man. As Nirode experiences difficulty in maintaining loving relationships with his mother, he is unable to relate to anyone. There is a deep void in his emotional and practical life. He is aimless, bitter and full of hatred. Especially his attitude towards marriage is very much perverted. He says: “Marriage......was destructive, negative, decadent. He could waste no time on it”\(^4\) He says this while returning from Jit Nair’s house. He feels repulsive towards Jit’s wife, Sarla.

The feeling of void, uselessness and meaninglessness arises due to an absence of spiritual security and comfort. An absence of spiritual faith can cause negativity and a sense of defeat. Negativity grips Nirode like a chronic sore. He feels that whatever he does, is destined for failure. This is due to his father’s preference given to Arun. Nirode has felt acute pain due to his father’s love towards Arun. Parental partiality and preference
towards a particular child and the rejection of the other, casts a terrible impact on the child’s growing psyche. The self-esteem of the child is at stake. He feels he is not good at anything. Parental encouragement is capable of implanting confidence even in an average child and make him succeed at his career and his adult relationships. But Nirode is at loss from both sides. He suffers from a sense of aimlessness, uncertainty, hesitation and powerlessness. The circumstances in which he has grown up are a catalyst for him to rebel against his mother. Nirode does not have a religious faith to succour him in times of need. Therefore, it is natural for him to drift shiftlessly. He is inconstant, restless and chaotic. His unfavourable comparison with his brother also works on his psyche. He begins as a small time journalist and a clerk in a newspaper office, only to abandon it for editing a literary magazine ‘Voice’. He discards it for creative writing. Then he opens a petty book shop in a dingy locality. Thus he moves from one failure to another. Nirode is obsessed with negativity. He is wary of success and happiness. He is observed with the desire to meet failure after failure in life. This attitude could be observed in the following lines:

“Then I want to see if I have the spirit to start moving again, towards my next failure. I want to move from failure to failure, step by step to rock bottom, I want to explore that depth......I want to descend quickly.”

45
As is true of the fact, that negativity in attitudes percolates to the same in the person’s actions. Parents are pivotal in the building the basic confidence and personality of children. But here, the children have been brought up in an atmosphere of open hostility, squabbles and contempt. The unhappiness and discontent of the parents is reflected in the children’s adult relationships. They are incapacitated to build any fulfilling relationships. All these repercussions are seen in Nirode, Monisha and Amla.

Another aspect of reality which this study aims at analysing is the atmosphere of Calcutta as is the case with any other metropolitan city in India. The struggle for existence is always imminent and the theory of the survival of the fittest holds good here, as is the fact of real life. An incapacitated individual would find the atmosphere overwhelming and he is likely to be snuffed out in this city. The teeming life of this city is described in these lines:

“Beating his way out of the swarming apathy of Howrah Nirode strides down the bridge, dodging the traffic that made the bridge roar and rattle beneath his feet like a tunnel of bones and steel. Trams crashed murderously past him, hand carts rolled recklessly, maniacally by........”46.
Howrah station and the realistic picture of coolies and worn out passengers searching for the right carriage, tea vendors. This description evokes the exact picture of the milieu. The dissipation and dirt of the city, the teeming streets and suburbs; the city that led a subterranean, underlit and stealthy life – all this is not far away from the readers’ cognizance and sensitivity. The overwhelming poverty and despair of the people points out to the conflict and endeavour underlying life. The novel reveals:

“.... they share one face, one expression of tiredness, such overwhelming tiredness that even bitterness is merely passive and hopelessness makes the hand extend only feeble, then drop back without disappointment. Two faces– one rapacious, one weary......”

This is one of the characteristics of life which is realistically portrayed. The vituperative standards of society and living are ushered in due to social change, materialism abundance of money and a lassitude of conscience.

Another significant aspect of realism examined here is the fact that human relationships can have a constructive effect on certain lives. But the same relationships can spell destruction for some. They can stifle their morale. This reality can be evinced in Nirode. Nirode has developed a
sense of insecurity due to the deep-seated sibling rivalry with Arun, his brother. Arun outshines Nirode in studies and has won the prospects of education abroad. Nirode remembers “how he had fallen off the horse and had asserted to his father that he would never again ride a horse or participate in sports”. This assertion had however sealed his future. Another factor which disintegrates him is his abnormal love for his mother and his hatred towards his father. But,

“to think that all through his life he had despised his father and adored his mother; only to turn after his father’s death, to pity for him and loathing of that same, unchanged mother – this moved him now”.

His mother’s illicit relations with Major Chadda haunts him to dissolution. He severs his relationship with his family. He declares “.....I neither inherited nor do I now borrow a single damn thing from my family. May they rot, may they flourish – as long as they leave me alone.” He also rejects his mother’s offers for financial help. He is totally detached from his mother and eventually he has become rootless. He says: “I’m done with signing my name, believing my name, or having a name”. Therefore, instead of love, both Monisha and Nirode nurse a negative feeling of fear. Monisha is aware that they lack the vital element of love, “in place of this love that suffuses the white face of this mystic waif, we possess a darker, fiercer element– fear.”
The decay and degradation of moral values is a reality that is ubiquitous in modern society. The degeneration of human sentiment along with the existence of corruption is a significant reality that cannot be ignored. The anxiety and concern of some sensible men coupled with their need for separateness in such an atmosphere of degenerate values can be imagined. The novel presents the reality of a depraved society. Nothing seems to perturb the men in such a social set-up. One such character is Jit Nair, who is steeped in gambling, drinking and flirting without the least qualms. He can even tolerate his degenerate wife, Sarla.

There is Nirode’s mother, Otima whom Nirode hates due to her illicit relationship with Major Chadda. Nirode feels nauseated with this hypocrisy and promiscuity of the urbane world. Therefore, “the habit of withdrawal........weary of contact” characterises his behaviour. Relationships “aroused in him violent distaste and kept him hovering on the fringe of the world.” In a society where wealth, luxuries and prosperity are extremely significant, Nirode feels out of place and he rejects its tawdry allurements. He even mocks Sonny (his friend) and his father’s ‘glimmer-glamour’ and vulgarity: “God how I hate the physicalness, the loves of that kind of men– heavy bags of gold coins, moist pink flesh and smothering perfume. My father shared it.” He lambasts the money culture. He even rejects the financial help offered to
him by his mother. Nirode shows outright contempt for such a money culture and acquisition of wealth and prosperity. He says that three drinks and a room are sufficient for him to lead a comfortable life. He shows his resistance by courting failure. His venture at editing the magazine *Voice* is his flaunting of his own individuality. He is sensitive enough to realise the depravity of a decadent society which has oriented itself only towards money and prosperity.

The author depicts the perversion of human values in society and the mechanisation of man in such a society. Nirode, Monisha and Amla are detached from one another. But at the same time, there is a common revolt among them to this claustrophobic society. This is the dismal reality of city life. As these characters are sensitive, they cannot yield to the callousness of society. Therefore, they have to detach themselves and remain aloof. So, Nirode and Monisha feel enmeshed and repressed, and their intellectual and emotional life becomes blunted, to the extent of losing sensation of pain or happiness.

The novel presents the realities of marital relationships in the following way: Dharma’s relationship with his wife appears unsatisfactory. He says, “our relationship is not all so straight forward ....... married relationships never are. There is the matter of loyalty, habit, complicity.....” This statement serves to lay bare the reality of many a
marital relationships. Therefore, Nirode is disgusted about marriage, he says: “Marriage, bodies, touch and torture......indeed all that had to do with marriage, was destructive, negative, decadent....” As if to confirm this statement, we find Monisha-Jiban, Jit Nair-Sarla and Nirode’s parents all of them share incompatible relationships that are devoid of real communion.

The novel reflects on the girl’s problem of adjustability to the changing culture. Girls of sensitive natures find it too delicate to cope with the dehumanised urban surrounding and with the callousness of the in-laws. It is a difficult adaptation for these sensitive girls when they come out of the protective shell of the parental family and move to a different family after marriage. The suffering wife or a daughter-in-law is a common figure. The novelist adds a deeper perspective to the problem of adjustment, by adding sensitivity to Monisha’s nature. It becomes a problem of the struggle to belong, the fear of growing which ultimately is suicidal. Monisha has to face the influx of alien surroundings which appear cold, hard and complex. Her sensitive nature and protected childhood make her unable to cope with it. She feels lonely and unhappy. This aspect of realism, the terminating point of the beginning of ordeals and painful effort towards adjustment is found in the society. The extent to which the wife can adapt herself to her environment is a measure of the
strength of her mind. In the impersonal and deindividualised atmosphere of the joint family, one is liable to feel detached and neglected; one can almost be starved for genuine love and affection. Thus the study explores the reality of the dissatisfaction of a sensitive wife with her unsettling sense of individuality. This malaise lies in her individual frustration and problem of adjustment, but not in economic factors. Many a time the harsh watchful eye of the mother-in-law and the use of harsh words drive the daughter-in-law to suicide. Often the mother-in-law is the cause of suicide in young wives. Harsh, humiliating treatment is common. The society is replete with the ill-treatment of the daughters-in-law. Sometimes the mother-in-law perceives her as a competitor for her son’s love. This is the harsh and fearful reality that the daughter-in-law resorts to suicide.

The traditional Indian woman accepted the framework of the family, she was docile, loving and self-sacrificing. Later, with education she became bold, independent and nonconformist. However, with the advent of Gandhi on the Indian political scene, women began to join the non-violent movement for freedom. This unqualified and devoted involvement of women in the freedom struggle developed in them an amount of courage and confidence. It made them cast off the old taboos of tradition and blind beliefs. They plunged wholeheartedly in education.
Such a kind of lady is the aunt in *Voices In The City*. She is an emancipated and awakened woman. She no longer is ignorant and under torpor, but a healthy influence on Amla. She has moved from orthodoxy and has become one with the prevailing, contemporary movement. During the freedom struggle, the women overcame their inhibitions and fears. They had to train themselves to face police atrocities and participate in the non-violent struggle. They underwent great ordeals as they, at times, lost their material possessions. But they learnt unity and shed fear in the face of danger. The novel depicts the reality of emancipated womanhood in the aunt. For her, participation in freedom struggle has brought in great transformation.

The tradition bound society has seen several changes over the years. Industrialisation and urbanisation have ushered in changes in the life-styles and attitudes. The emancipation of women is one such transformation. It is a known fact that women from middle and upper classes have entered into professions on par with men. The status and outlook of women has also seen a lot of transformation. Thus it has affected their attitude towards marriage too. One illustration in the novel is Amla. Amla is an emancipated woman. She learns to live in a man’s world. She develops acquaintances and explores new dimensions of her personality. She leaves her parental home in search of a career. She rebels
against the tradition oriented institution of marriage and she illustrates the new standard elicited by the modern woman, that of trying to break free from the family frame. Her involvement with the married artist Dharma, however creates frustration and disillusionment. She faces all the facts of the modern civilisation, its inability and indifference to understand an artistic temperament. Amla attends the party where she confronts the incompleteness of life and the oppression, its ugliness. It presents the picture of the perversity of urban life, the degenerate standards of the men and their moral values. All these aspects demonstrate the reality of the urban, sophisticated circles. The novelist has portrayed a realistic picture of the depraved life of Calcutta, which is true of every contemporary metropolitan city.

The issue of the childless woman and her plight in society or the joint family is alike anywhere. Financial affluence does not mitigate her plight. It is the same irrespective of caste, culture, religion or economic status. Childlessness among women is associated with a large number of psychological problems. “Childlessness is perceived as a problem across virtually all cultures and societies and affects an estimated 10-15 % of couples of reproductive age.” The stigma of childlessness has varied consequences, such as anger, depression, anxiety, marital problems, social isolation and a sense of loss. Indian or the Hindu way of thinking appreciates the desire to possess sons. Therefore, the woman’s main
occupation is said to be one of procreation and it is a predominant reality that a barren woman is treated with contempt. Monisha is humiliated as her in-laws comment upon her feminity, her uterus, and other organs. She has failed in the most precious and valuable objective of a woman’s life, her ability to reproduce. She is therefore, stigmatized. Motherhood is a personal fulfilment. Although, motherhood was, once upon a time, considered an essentiality for survival, in modern days, with the changing pattern of marriage, it is looked upon as a personal fulfilment.

**Conclusion:** Each individual is in one way or the other engaged in a wretched struggle for existence. The fact is that every person is himself responsible for his own suffering. If the person fails to escape the throes of suffering, it is invariably due to the fact that he is preoccupied with the object that has caused his suffering. Nirode and Monisha suffer because they are continually fighting against their selves. Both suffer from immense detachment or a lack of involvement with their surroundings. The study has analysed the stark reality of life, despair and suffering which are the intrinsic truths underlying life. Monisha, Amla and Nirode—all these characters encounter the reality of frustration, loneliness and meaninglessness of life. The novel also presents a vision of the society that is steeped in hypocrisy. The reality of the proverbial harassed daughter-in-law is presented.
Amla is a realistic creation. She is a modern, assertive and an emancipated woman unlike Monisha. She is a professional artist and works on par with men. She is portrayed as the new woman who has no qualms about her attraction towards the married Dharma. Amla is autonomous and she is free from any restriction of society. She is not bound by the traditional roles of the woman. Thus the study has explored the different facets of realism in this novel.
**Bye Bye Blackbird**

**Introduction:** This novel was published in 1971. Here, the researcher explores the sufferings of the Indian immigrant in England. It involves the issues of alienation and the lack of identity which confront the immigrant in a white man’s land. There is perpetual confrontation between the white locale and the immigrant. The novel presents Sarah, an English girl, who suffers a split personality and a loss of identity as a result of her marriage to Adit, an Indian immigrant. The present study explores the critical experiences of immigrants in adapting to their new land. They experience a kind of love-hate relationship towards the nation of their adoption and this is manifested in the lives of the protagonists. The fact that they should endure a sense of marginality and inferiority, and the consequent awareness of the impossibility of their being accepted by the adopted country, creates tumult in them. They speculate about how to subsist in a foreign society.

This study probes into the reality of the situation of immigrants and envisages both the social and psychological aspects of their experiences. The affliction and oppression of the immigrants’ experiences, both in the rural and urban milieu in an alien country is vividly examined. The study aims at portraying the stark reality of the conditions of loneliness, conflict, detachment and alienation among the immigrants. Dev, Adit and
Sarah are the three characters whose conflicts and struggles provide the reality of immigrants’ predicament. The story revolves round these three characters. The researcher explores the stark reality of the conditions of the detachment, conflict and loneliness of immigrants. It grapples with the inter-racial marriage of Adit and Sarah, as pointed out above, and its impact on Sarah’s psyche.

**Plot:** The structure of the novel is divided into three parts—‘Arrival’, ‘Self-discovery’ and ‘Departure’. Adit marries Sarah and settles in England; he loves everything that is English. Dev arrives from India to England with the aspiration of studying in the London School of Economics. Dev bears an intrinsic appetite for English literature. But he is highly critical of everything that is English; he feels scandalized by the racial prejudices in England. But soon, Dev encounters the reality of the English situation. The attitudes of Dev and Adit suddenly change after their visit to Hampshire, where Sarah’s parents live. Adit, who had been a true English man in spirit, to begin with, gradually realises his disillusionment with English life and decides to return to India with his wife Sarah. Whereas Dev decides to stay on in England.

Sarah submits to a life of double identity with her marriage to Adit. Her predicament is more delicate, in that, she suffers two-fold. She works as secretary to the headmistress in an English school. She is at loss to
comprehend her own legitimate self. Who is the real Sarah?– an Indian wife or an English lady? This turmoil between the two selves is inexorable in a land of racial animosity. The English imperialistic attitude and aversion is severe towards the Indians. The imperialistic disposition does not facilitate a loving and understanding relationship between Adit and Sarah. The husband-wife relationship loses its significance and substance in such an atmosphere of discord. Sarah has been deprived of her genuine self through her marriage with Adit. This reflects the dominant patriarchal stance in marriage where the wife assumes the surname of the husband. But in a marriage where the individuals bear two opposed cultures, the predicament of the wife can well be perceived. Sarah is an exemplary of the reality of the sacrifice of her intrinsic identity and the consequent suffering, coupled with confusion, the fact entails. Sarah makes a sincere effort to be a good wife. She pays the exorbitant price of merging her own identity with Adit’s.

Adit believes in the moral superiority of the English and a combination of both cultures, until a certain point in the novel. He is portrayed as an anglophile, who blindly adores the English culture and is embarrassed of the Indian culture. Whereas, initially Dev is an individual who tries to retain his inherent original Indian culture. Dev encounters the reality of the English situation. The expletive of ‘wog’ directed at them
outrages him. The sight of the lavatories—Ladies, Gents and Asiatics angers him. He feels he would not live in a country where he is insulted and unwanted. This is his disgust at the racial discrimination he experiences. The novel reveals that Dev experiences the uncertainty and ambiguity towards England. If he remains enthralled by the view of the Battersea power station, he is disgusted about is environment. He shows his dissatisfaction at the indoor lives of Laurel Lane. At each stage Dev compares and contrasts the scene with its Indian version. In Dev one traces his endeavour to claim back his cultural identity. He tends to grapple with his peripheral status in an English society. He abandons his earlier plan of studying at the London School of Economics and begins to look for a suitable job and ultimately acquires one, as a salesman in Foley book shop.

With their visit to Hampshire where Sarah’s parents, the Roscommon-James live, there is a change in Dev. The visit invigorates and refreshes him and he determines to live on in England. But with Adit it is the other way round. The visit to the Roscommon-James is blighted by indiscretion, misunderstandings and disharmony. Therefore, Adit grows apprehensive and depressed. He is aware of his mother-in-law’s hatred towards him, and a sudden yearning for his motherland steals into him. He is disillusioned of English life and feels smothered of his status
as an immigrant. He cries in desperation: “I can’t stand it Sarah.....I’ve had enough. It’s all got to end now....I’ve made up my mind.....I’ve done with England now..... I’m going back”

**Analysis:** Asha Susan Jacob says, “Political, cultural, social, economical and geographical dislocations have made each man an exile. Cultural alienation has become a universal phenomenon”. Cultural alienation impacts the individual’s psyche to a great extent. She further quotes Viney Kirpal’s statement that it is not merely a physical journey from one land to another, but it involves severing of “spiritual and symbiotic ties with his mother country.”

The truth about life is that it consists of a gamut of experiences, accommodations and alterations. One environment is not similar to the other. Adaption to a foreign culture should be made in order to grapple with and withstand the alien culture. A transition from one society to another, or from one culture to another requires some form of adaption and adjustment. For this the individual requires to learn new acquisition skills, language or even information. He has to achieve new skills in responding to the new society and even sometimes unlearn his older ones. The immigrant’s situation, thus, is seen as an exacting one; because he has to efficaciously settle and prosper here. He has to communicate efficiently, effectively, learn the new lingo and signals.
The breadth of the differences between the two cultures is also a significant aspect in the coping of the individuals. The breach between Indian and English cultures is too huge, being one of the ruled and the ruler. Therefore, the adjustability or accommodating of immigrants can be quite staggering. The change might impact upon the individual’s ego. An immigrant who has high need for autonomy would find it more difficult to adapt to a culture which denies him space of free movement. Even regarding the other important aspects of his life, such as his food habits or how to eat, may require great amount of adjustment and reconciliation. The age at which an individual is introduced to the alien nation is significant. For children, adjusting to a new environment can be less demanding. In such cases there tends to be a culture shock and there exists a feeling of depression and utter frustration that overwhelms a person when he first begins to comprehend the tremendous difference between the way of life he is used to and the way of life in his new setting.

“The interplay of two cultures is like the contraction of two live electric wires which resultantly spark of a powerful current of creative tension. The tension may either end in a disastrous explosion or exquisite fusion”, says Shakuntala Singla.
The individual’s attitude and approach towards the change can affect his adaptability. A flexible and a liberal attitude would encourage a healthy assimilation. An Indian immigrant would find assimilation to the English, an arduous task because he has been fed on the attitude that the permanence of traditions and customs is honourable. Further, alienation also plays a significant role to encourage assimilation. If it displays a magnanimity of outlook, then the immigrant will be more comfortable. But in the present context, where Britain had once been the colonizer, the natives still despise Indian immigrants. Therefore, the immigrants try to immerse themselves in the groups which embrace their own cultural practices. Adit and Sarah are on very friendly terms with their owner Emma Moffit because she is like-minded. The like-mindedness and love for the Orient in Emma Moffit attracts the Indian immigrants to her.

The basic condition of associating with the members of society, such as etiquettes, give and take respect, dialogue, obligation etc., is however, learned in the motherland. The child learns such good behaviour right from its childhood days. But a totally alien culture may practise different processes of association. The Indian and English cultures are totally contrary to each other. Such a situation requires a new learning of the methods of socialization, dialogue, behavioural patterns, conversation, responses, values etc. The process of change from the old learned social values to the new ones can be gradual. The complete
transformation in terms of behavioural patterns, values, language, accent, attitudes can best be experienced only in children, as they directly get oriented into the new culture.

The Indian culture trains individuals in respect of habits, values, the way one looks at the world, at elders, expectations and attributes, rules and regulations for appropriate behaviour, particular roles and its attitudes etc., verbal and even non-verbal communication systems. But a foreign culture requires him to learn in all these areas. An immigrant has to comprehend the expectations of a particular role he holds in the new country and also the signals he sends forward through his verbal or non-verbal behavioural patterns. Usually social behavioural patterns are learned by social role models, which are hardly available in the mother country.

If a particular culture should be understood perfectly well, then the immigrants should be in a position to identify with it and sympathize with it. Adapting to new environment and a new culture is an onerous task. It is a fact that an immigrant cannot adapt immediately to all the new system. He has to be very observant and cautious. Naturally, those who have fraternized with different peoples know the amount of strain and pain it takes to adjust to new mannerisms, language, culture and society.
A deep sense of loss is experienced by these immigrants. The deprivation of near and dear ones, family, language, ethos, culture, food, is very agonizing. Even the people who have left their motherland voluntarily, for the purpose of vocation, education or status enhancement do face this pain of being deprived. Intense emotional yearning creates homesickness. Feelings of nostalgia rack their psyche. It is realistic that Indian immigrants face a dilemma of adjustment because they are accustomed to a caste society, which is dominated more by various castes and sub-castes. The identity of an individual is more often ascribed by his community rather than by his individual personality.

Kalpana Wandrekar observes:

“For an immigrant, confrontation with another society starts the process of destructuring and restructuring the self. He or she is faced with two heterogeneous sensibilities, both of which are conditioned by the intrinsic value systems of their cultures.”

She further points out that the accommodation of Indian immigrants is very difficult. The culture and philosophy held by India and the west is so precipitous and keen that Indian immigrants do not encounter it without an amount of resistance. The following statement is relevant here.
“When an individual finds himself in an unfamiliar cultural environment where his previous learning is inadequate for coping, he may suffer some degree of emotional disturbance, a condition often referred to as culture shock.”

Dev, notices a radical change in the mannerisms and responses of the people. The fact that England is a nation which emphasizes individual consciousness, but not group or community consciousness, exasperates Dev. In this context Kalpana Wandrekar quotes a relevant statement: “People from such a background find it difficult to have any meaningful communication with a stereotyped personality of the west who is the very picture of impersonality.”

Dev goes to England to ameliorate his career; but with his arrival in England, he dissevers his natural ties with India. Coupled with this is the tremendous homesickness and the sense of detachment and alienation in England. The biased treatment meted out to the Indians, the anomaly of discrimination regarding the lavatories, the abuses hurled at them in buses, the repugnant glances of the English natives are facts which drive him to indignation. Dev takes note of the differences and lethargy of the English natives. The city wears a deserted look and Dev encounters only buildings and not the people. Therefore he observes:
“If I lived on a road like this in Calcutta, I would be aware– as aware as can be– of everyone around me. But not here. Here everyone is a stranger and lives in hiding. They live silently and invisibly. It could happen nowhere in India.”67

The utter indifference of people makes Dev feel very insignificant about himself.

Adit is a different type of immigrant, unlike Dev. Adit gets happily and willingly engaged in English life. He develops flexibility and adapts himself to his new surroundings in a healthy way. He does not rigidly hold on to the past, as Dev does. He acknowledges his presence in the English environment. He also concedes to the fact that his identity and self undergoes a change. While Dev demonstrates his complaints against England, Adit exults in his presence in England. But it is evident that, he has not totally denied his Indian past. When he asserts that his son will be born only in India, it shows that his basic imagination and spirit was to the core Indian. Initially, he had appeared that he had very efficaciously been incorporated into English life. But he progressively becomes lonely and isolated.

Adit is in England for quite sometime. He has accustomed himself with the English ways and even when the abuse ‘wog’ is projected at him,
he overlooks it. If Dev cannot withstand the abuse, Adit pretends to disregard it. Adit has immigrated to England out of his own discretion, and he has comprehended the need to live with the humiliating treatment. However, assimilation is a laborious and demanding process. Adit still remains an oddity in the English land as these lines point out: “His sleek crumpled face looked incongruous with this brilliant outfit and was rather like a paper bag mask stuck on top of a gorgeously, dressed and opulently stuffed crow.”

68 Although his marriage to Sarah ensures happiness, he realizes it is tenuous and fleeting. The responses of the English natives, are far from acceptable. The Millers and the Roscommon-James treat him as castaway and look at him with distrust. Adit’s stamp of Indianness in his colour, language and accent cannot promote oneness with the English society. India and England being poles apart in customs, traditions, culture, ethos cannot be in unison together in Adit. Thus Adit feels hampered and senses a deep feeling of discomfiture and frustration. As a consequence, he is filled with nostalgia for his own motherland and contemplates a retreat to India, the land of traditions. From now, everything in England is measured from the Indian point of view. So he decides to pack all his cares and woes. Distance indeed makes hearts grow fonder. This reality of life cannot be better accented. He appreciates the fact that only India can assure him a sense of security, love and respect.
After his return from the Roscommon-James’ place, to his Clapham residence, Adit has “a look of disbelief that invalids have when the disease is still new, their pains still unaccustomed.” The crisis mounts and Adit loses his sense of belonging. The questions, “who am I? Where am I?”—agonizingly pose themselves before him. The label of an immigrant is very stifling and the fact of being aware of who one is and where one is, is equally stifling. Adit feels he cannot withstand the British face that is devoid of any expressions. He feels the urgency to belong. The very bounty of England that once had appealed to him now repulses him. He finds himself on the threshold of an emotional dissolution. Adit’s sense of rootlessness is clearly portrayed. His deep longing for a steady home and identity is a reality of the immigrant’s agony. His decision—“All our records and lamb curries and sing-songs, it’s all so unreal, whatever it is, it will be Indian, it will be my natural condition, my true circumstance.” Thus a sense of isolation enhances with his loneliness. Isolation can be the consequence of conflict. It can be a conflict with others and conflict within oneself.

“When immigrants do not assimilate or integrate, but adopt only few aspects of culture of the host society they develop double identity and their culture becomes a ‘sandwich culture’,” asserts Abha Pandey based on the studies of Coughlin and Atal. Initially, Adit is presented as a well
assimilated immigrant. Yet he longs for food cooked by his mother—wrapped in banana leaves, hilsa fish, sound of the sitar and shehnai etc. Apparently, Adit is a well assimilated Indian immigrant. But his predicament undergoes a change, after he spends a week with Sarah’s parents at Hampshire. He becomes nostalgic about India. The news of the India-Pak war, ushers in the concrete decision to go back. He says, “I can’t stand it Sarah......It’s all got to end now.....I’ve made up my mind.”

Suffering and humiliation develop discretion and foresight in an individual. Therefore, Adit comes to terms with life. He comes down to practicality. But he is self-centred and has not been able to understand Sarah properly. Sarah is the worst sufferer. The dilemma is more pronounced in her. Sarah is in a strange predicament. Now, she has to imbibe and adopt to the Indian culture, traditions, customs, language, in-laws and relatives. She should do it efficiently. But her enigma is that, she is unable to naturally cling to her English culture and people. She has assimilated to some extent. She cooks Indian food; she understands Adit very well and is submissive. She has the makings of an Indian wife. With minimal adaption she will be comfortable in India. But in England, at present, she faces a dilemma. She encounters her quandary by resorting to withdrawal from English society. She labours under extreme pressure and
conflict due to the absence of a concrete identity. This is due to the fact that her English colleagues, tend to disrespect her for her ‘un-English’ marriage. Sarah, therefore, lacks the sense of belonging in the English society. She experiences perplexity about the various roles she has to play. Her plight is that of her indecision and confusion as to who she is. This kind of bewilderment causes her depression.

John P. Hewitt opines that identity refers to the person’s location in social life. He quotes a statement of Gregory P. Stone thus, “when a person has identity, he is situated, that is, cast in the shape of a social object by the acknowledgement of his participation or membership in social relations”. John Hewitt further asserts that one makes an announcement of one’s identity through what one does or says, and also by means of one’s appearance. Further the colour of the skin announces a racial identity regardless of whether the individual wants to announce it.” Therefore, for a contented life a person needs both social identity and a personal identity.

The study shows that the above statements are relevant to Sarah’s predicament too. Sarah suffers cultural detachment and a loss of her self and identity. In her struggle to be a loving wife, she loses her real self. She discovers that there are two different selves in her, which work simultaneously— the Sarah who prepares spicy curries for Adit, which she
hardly eats; and at school, the Headmistress’ Secretary who receives cheques and sends the bills and maintains discipline at school–

“They were roles – and when she was not playing them, she was nobody. Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume......She wondered whether Sarah had any existence at all.”76

There is a heartfelt yearning in her to step off the stage, leave the theatre and partake of the real world, English or Indian, in all truth and sincerity. Her conflict is not the same as Adit’s or Dev’s. Her conflict is that, she feels homeless in her own homeland, due to the rejection of her own fellow-people. “.....She had become nameless, she had shed her name as she had shed her ancestry and identity and sat there staring as though she watched them disappear”.77 Beneath the facade of a cool exterior, Sarah is suffering intensely: “where was Sarah? Staring out of the window at the chimney pots and the clouds, she wondered if Sarah had any existence at all, and then she wondered, with great sadness,.....”78

She is entangled in the agony of a severe identity crisis, arising from her marriage. She faces great difficulty in avoiding her colleagues’ questions about her family life and her Indian husband.
“But to display her letters from India, to discuss her Indian husband, would have forced her to parade like an imposter, to make claims to a life, an identity that she did not herself feel to be her own.”79

Therefore, she found it convenient to allow her colleagues to talk about themselves, rather than tell them about herself. Sarah’s childhood was a happy one.

In spite of this, she does not want to be reminded of her childhood. These are the repercussions of her cross-cultural marriage. Adit sends her a message of his decision of returning to India when she is at school. It is a totally independent decision, without heeding the position of Sarah, as a wife. We become aware that Sarah is over sensitive of Adit’s temper tantrums. Her sacrificial nature is evident, in that, she prefers to be quiet and submissive to evade any angry outbursts. Her principal consideration is to maintain a peaceful home, and in the act, it may cause her the excruciating pain.

“The fact was that too much demanded her attention at the same time, too many unwieldy shapes arose and heaved about her. Formerly, the problem had been the emptiness of her life. She had jettisoned most things out of it when she had married – childhood, family friends all the normal ordinary things with which an ordinary person, of no talent, must fill and adorn his life.”80
But now she felt, “herself as nothing more than a chipped cup that was not worth the trouble of picking up….“

Yet she harbours the positive hope of adjusting to India and life there. She is aware of the fact that she has to choose between her own motherland and Adit. She chooses the latter and is prepared for any sacrifice – even the sacrifice of a well paid job, which had defined for her, her space. Her Indian marriage has served in alienating her not only from the memories of her childhood (past), but also her from present interactions. Sarah lacks the control over the changes which are being induced into her life. She has neither control nor the ability to change Adit’s decision. Now, her identity has to take on the shape which he chooses for her. She suffers intense turmoil. She cannot determine her future herself. In terms of both the Indian and English culture, she realises that her identity is at stake, along with her self-esteem. Even while in London, she is haunted by recurrent questions regarding her identity and who she is. It is not that she is economically dependent on Adit. It is because she nurtures a very strong attitude to cherish peace in her household. She is emotionally dependent on Adit. She generally does not oppose him, because she knows that it will engender bitterness. She endures the trauma of her identity, of namelessness, of anonymity, of mental oppression, sacrifice of her self-respect, but still persists. Sarah
would have possessed a fulfilling life in her profession, beyond her marriage. She is even selected for a higher post in a better English school. But for her, life is being duty-bound to her family and marriage. However the need to treasure her marriage is dominant in her and she endures Adit’s oscillating moods and irritability. It is with a feeling of intense loss of her English self that she resolves to go to India with Adit. She grapples with all the tensions and challenges of nurturing a home and job simultaneously.

But she boldly sticks to her marriage, although she suffers an amount of emotional disturbance, because her previous experience and learning is however, not adequate in coping with the Indian cultural environment. The following lines in the novel point out to the fact: “Sarah was seen to close her eyes slowly. She did not hear their laughter or understand their language. She seemed to hear nervousness and shame and sadness...”82 This is the effect of their parties and dinners on Sarah. It is true that the presence of friends provides for an adequate support system for individuals who have immigrated. A sudden change from one culture to an alien culture will enervate the individual’s capacity for adjustment. Even in a gradual change or a pre-meditated shift from one’s homeland to an alien culture, the change can be staggering. Adit and Dev have built up their support systems in England. But for Sarah the same
company proves to be unfriendly. Emma Moffit, due to her intense love of the Orient, hosts the Clapham club and invites Indian musicians for a concert and a swami to teach them yoga. Some of the natives and Indian immigrants avail membership of the club. It becomes a means of providing the immigrants spiritual and artistic delight. But Sarah feels like a fish out of water in their company.

The study explores the complexities that evolve with an inter-racial marriage. A cross-cultural marriage is bound to create perplexity and frustration. Dr. A.H.Tak quotes Toffler’s epithet ‘cultural shock’ as being the predicament of such a person caught in the throes of a cross-cultural marriage: “immersion as a strange culture causes a breakdown in communication, a misreading of reality, an inability to cope”.

Regulation and adjustment has to be arrived at on all levels. The harmonization of family life comes with coordination at the domestic plane, emotional as well as the social plane. Sarah is the worst sufferer, at the same time, she understands how to balance both her domestic and social life. She undergoes tremendous stress at work place, because she is perpetually over-sensitive about her Indian husband. She dreads their embarrassing comments.

“She was still breathing hard at having so narrowly escaped having to answer personal questions. It would
have wrecked her for the whole day to have to discuss Adit with Julia, with Miss Pimm,.....She was willing to listen for hours to Miss Pimm’s diagnosis of her aches and pains......But to display her letters from India, to discuss her Indian husband, would have forced her to parade like an imposter, to make claims to a life, an identity that she did not herself feel to be her own, .........”

This kind of harrowing experience is an everyday affair. Not only this, she endures humiliation at the hands of the English children as well. This illustrates the reality and the extent of the hyper-sensitivity of her marriage. She is tired of putting on masks. The loss of identity propels her into an obdurate predicament.

Pain and suffering are absolute and unavoidable facts of life. They may acquire any configuration. For Sarah, it occurs on account of her marriage. One can discern that marriage between two individuals, belonging to the same culture, entails abundant coordination and adjustment. How much more an inter-racial marriage? The massive balance and coordination succeeds only with Sarah’s affectionate and wise ways. She makes the sacrifice of her own identity and home. She suffers mutely as does an Indian wife. Moreover, she encounters difficulties of assimilating and adapting to Indian ways of life. These lines from the novel depict her maladjustment:
“After clearing the table, she went straight to bed with Kipling’s plain tales from the hills and fell half asleep listening to the rumble of talk and laughter in the next room, followed by the profuse strumming of sitars and pounding of drums on the spinning records. The music sounded all dissonance to her ears as did the voices, and she fell asleep from the fatigue of trying to place them,.......To her closed eyes the darkness moved in a tumult of black shapes that would not settle. Her dreams too were in pieces, tormented, like the night, slit and torn by long blades of rain.”

Sarah faces a continual oppression and emotional stress. On the one hand, she strives to adapt to Adit, and on the other, her English society. In the process she is afflicted with loneliness and desolation. She cannot easily detach herself from her English past, nor can she harmoniously adapt to her position of an Indian wife in an English imperialistic society. The sense of being an outsider in her own motherland torments her. This kind of alienation and search of her own true self cannot be avoided in her circumstances. She is also exposed to enormous cultural and social denigration. She feels lost in the welter of her own culture and Adit’s, nor can she be forged into an Indian personality. She has cultivated a practice
of not confronting people, even her colleagues, but of avoiding them, so that, she will not have to answer personal questions. It is like withdrawing into a shell. It appears as though she has cast away her English relations, but she carries the quintessence of the English within. Sarah is the product of a traditional English home with its set rules, rigid norms and discipline. But she cannot cultivate her social life outside home.

Sarah cooks Indian food. Adit says: “These English wives are....not so fierce as they look– very quiet and hard working as long as you treat them right and roar at them regularly once or twice a week.” Adit’s chauvinistic attitude is evident. On the other hand, Sarah is a submissive wife. She professes to be content and happy with Adit. When questioned about her cooking, she tells her mother that Adit still does most of the cooking. Sarah absolutely adapts herself to Adit and his food habits; she loves India, but in the bargain, she loses herself, her identity, her individual self. “....She was nobody. Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume...” But the reality is, her marriage serves in thoroughly alienating Sarah from her social environment. She constantly tries to refrain herself from her colleagues at school.

Seema Jena asserts: “Anita Desai draws our attention to the annihilation of self that marriage involves, for a female”. Even the decision of relocating to India, is made by Adit. Sarah is not consulted.
He decides where his son should be born. Sarah is the obedient sufferer. She will not sacrifice their marriage or their marital happiness at any cost. She sacrifices her job. Sarah’s quandary and perplexity is immense. An English lady accommodating to the Indian culture, customs, traditions and relatives, is definitely an arduous and exacting task, as the present novel shows. Marriage necessitates Sarah to forsake her budding career, in order to emigrate to India. For her, marriage has implied sacrifice in every respect. As is universally seen in life, it is the woman who makes the most sacrifice. “....She is a silent volcano, not dead. Yet not bursting” 89— says Hari Mohan Prasad. Sarah’s attitude is the typical Indian woman’s consideration of domestic bliss. Her predicament embodies her submission, flexibility and adaptability.

A woman attaches enormous significance to relationships. It is necessary to impose extraordinary emphasis on the person’s responsibility to consider the needs of others and endeavour to meet these requirements. The welfare of the family, society, relationships depend to a large extent on the gestures of kindness, empathy, sympathy and consideration shown. The study shows that Anita Desai exhibits the reality of the restrictions enforced on women in a male dominated society. For an Indian, marriage holds sanctity and marriage is sacred at all costs, even if the wife suffers emotional agony. This is reflected in Adit’s decisions and attitudes. Marriage is the cardinal institution where
the attitudes, beliefs, culture, language of individuals undergo drastic changes. This reality is reflected in Sarah’s love for India. The effect of Indian culture, ethos, language and attitudes impact upon her psyche. The embedded English cultural patterns are rooted out and she relinquishes her own cultural heritage and assimilates herself into the Indian ethos, to the extent of losing her English identity.

Abha Pandey asserts:

“.........efforts are made by the outsiders to become insiders so as to merge their identity and gain certain degree of acceptance by the host society. Some such apertures are inter-marriage, adopting names of the host society,.....”

This statement is pertinent to Sarah. She is family-minded, she believes in marriage and family. For her, it provides security and stability. Family leads her to so many sacrifices. In modern society, where there is the disintegration of family and the marriage, Sarah displays a traditional Indian outlook, where she would like to do things for the sustenance of her marriage. One knows that the sacrosanctness of marriage is a reality cherished in India.

Sarah is the epitome of the typical Indian woman, who sacrifices and suffers consequently, for the happiness of her husband. She foresees the fact that a contented and happy family life is one which is secure internally and externally. Mutual adjustment, consideration and care are
pre-requisites for it. She recognizes Adit’s yearning for his motherland. The researcher feels that Anita Desai upholds this disposition of egalitarianism, empathy, love, patience which alone build a healthy family and the resultant healthy society. She emphasizes the fact that an ideal society, should be based on equality, an absence of religious and gender biases. Anita Desai certifies that family is the spearhead of durable and stable relationships.

Adit and Sarah exemplify the reality that unity in marriage can go a long way in establishing a healthy relationship. Even though it is a cross-cultural marriage, with endurance and love on both sides, the couple is able to hold on to each other in trying situations. Sarah is extremely tolerant and forbearing when Adit makes the decision of going back to India.

The study explores the realism of imperialism and racism that are represented in this novel. It is a common fact that due to the sense of inferiority instilled in the natives by the colonizers, the natives tend to look at everything concerning the colonizer as superior and best. Even with independence, the overwhelming rate of unemployment, population and poverty have always goaded the natives to look at the west for succour regarding and employment. The principles of imperialism and racism which thrive on the English soil is an obvious reality depicted in
this novel. The acknowledgement of the injunctions laid down by the imperialist English society is a blatant reality experienced by the Indian immigrants. The agony and suppression born out of this oppression is very real. These individuals have to compromise with the surrounding conditions–this is a pre-requisite for livelihood. The immigrant experience, the disgraceful and dehumanizing conditions which slavery begets, the feelings of humiliation and inferiority which such oppressive treatment spawns is too much to overcome. Dev is very much disgruntled with the Londoners’ insolence. He says:

“you should go mad........when even schoolboys can call you names on the streets, when you find that the London docks have three kinds of lavatories– Ladies, Gents and Asiatics....”91

One can understand the sense of degradation which the individuals have to endure. Such unequal conditions are breeding ground for alienation and loneliness. The dislike and hatred, sense of rejection generated among the natives for the immigrants is severe cause for hardship, which the immigrant has to encounter. The situation can be empathetically realised, when the immigrant has to quietly tolerate and still get through to the natives. Adit experiences this predicament. Dev is scandalized at the casual way in which he bears the insults hurled at him.
But the fact is that, Adit mutely undergoes terrible strain and agony and yet has determined to live there permanently. It is apparent that Adit has learned to disregard and overlook his own struggle. Sarah has been brought up in a perfectionist and over scrupulous household. Her father, once a vivacious doctor, has turned into a taciturn old man. He resents Sarah’s Indian acquaintances. Sarah’s mother makes no efforts to disguise her hatred towards Indians. Therefore, Sarah prefers to stay away from her parents. Adit assures Dev that he overlooks England’s shortcomings, but admires its beauty: “I like the freedom a man has here: Economic freedom! Social freedom!” Dev is shocked at Adit’s non-assertion of his rights.

The immigrants achieve a high standard of living in England which they might not have procured in their native countries. At the same time the host country feels threatened by the perennial flow in of immigrants. They feel that the immigrants deprive them of employment opportunities. Therefore, their intolerance of the immigrants wreaks a havoc on the immigrants’ psyche. They naturally experience rootlessness, nostalgia and alienation. The confusion of whether to stay in the host country or go back irks them.

Rootlessness reigns supreme. Healthy growth and rootlessness are not companionable. This yields insecurity. Suffering in this way makes
Adit grow to the decision that his son should be born only in India. The wisdom which grows out of the suffering points out that India is his real home, where he can obtain security. Thus imperialism and racism are the pervasive realities in the English society.

The study looks into the predicament of immigration. The extensive immigration of people to United States, Britain, Australia has led to racial tensions. This conflict is authentically portrayed through immigrant experiences owing to their distinct nationalities and also the common racial prejudices among the inhabitants of the host country. The following statement is right. Surendran says that this novel deals with the migration of Indians to England and the disillusionment that follows it. Migration does involve an amount of disillusionment. Moreover, this disillusionment is complicated by inter-racial marriage. Human relationships are doomed by such racial conflicts.

Due to the phenomenal, qualitative growth in technology, communication and media, the recent years have witnessed the moving in and out of vast number of peoples. Various people move to England and America in search of better life, education, assurance of prosperity and the like. It is natural that they nostalgically reminiscence about their home. Home is sturdy in their memory. Especially, with the gathering of friends, they retreat into the memories of their homes. They suffer the trauma of leaving their homes and dear ones behind. The memory of their
homeland agonizes them. The racial discrimination and the rejection of the citizens of the adopted country is painful. Therefore, they constitute their own associations and groups, where they can speak their own language. The upsurge of new growth of communication networks promote the enhancement of prospects of forming a brotherhood coming from one’s own country and moreover, who speak the same language. This may, in one way, help to alleviate loneliness and alienation.

This study explores the crucial experiences of immigrants in adapting to their new land. They experience a kind of love-hate relationship towards the nation of their adoption and this is manifested in the lives of Dev and Adit. The fact that they should endure a sense of marginality and inferiority, and the consequent awareness of the impossibility of their being accepted by the adopted country, creates a tumult in them. They speculate about how to subsist in a foreign society.

Dev, a new Indian immigrant has come to England to study in the London School of Economics. The prime difficulties in adapting to the English life and people is laborious. People in London live very private lives. Dev’s nostalgia for India mounts when he observes that the English ways are crippling. The novel reveals it like this:

“Another thing to which Dev cannot grow accustomed in all his walks and bus rides through the city is silence and emptiness of it - .......all, to his eyes and ears, dead,
unalive, revealing so little of the lives that go on, .......The English habit of keeping all doors and windows tightly shut........., of guarding their privacy as they guarded their tongues from speaking....“94

He finds the streets of London saturated with silence. He feels as though he has entered into an area of obscurity. Further the illtreatment and the abusive words meted out by the natives embitters him. Dev resists assimilation. Dev presumes that his own motherland is culturally and morally superior to England and therefore, declines to acknowledge the identity given to him by England. It is as though he builds an ivory tower around himself to ward off the rejection and hostility of the English.

The deep emotional and mental harassment Dev encounters in England, yields disintegration. He suffers intensely and struggles to find his new individuality in England. The sense of belongingness is absent. However, Dev metamorphoses his attitude towards England. Dev has immigrated to England for a realistic purpose, that of enhancing his educational qualification. So his residence in London is expedient; and his adaption to English society can be limited. His assimilation to the English society and culture would be just incidental. Moreover, he has his own homogeneous group of Indians, for relevant purposes. Dev’s contact with the native English people is also just minimal. He finds the
undemocratic treatment rendered to Asian immigrants a very disgusting fact. He finds the three types of toilets, a degrading aspect, but it is a fact which Adit has learned to put up with. The feelings of nostalgia, homesickness and worry in Dev are very real and serious.

Dev, who has not settled down with a job, realises the afflictions entailed in finding a job and a house to live in. He abandons the idea of education and endeavours to find a good job. He tries to affiliate, but his experience is like this, “like Alice falling, falling down the rabbit hole like a Kafka stranger wandering through the dark labyrinth of a prison.”

The feeling that the other part is something he cannot explain, even to himself, for it is only a tumult inside him, a growing bewilderment, that hurts him. Dev’s nostalgia increases manifold and there is a desire for a secure habitat. The sense of meaninglessness which is true of life, afflicts him and he asks himself as to why he is here to waste his father’s money. He flounders under the enormous burden of indecision and misgiving. His dissociation from his motherland creates confusion in him and he is unable to understand his own experiences. But at the Roscommon-James’ place in Hampshire, Dev finds himself and a sense of belonging to the world of nature that is around him. But one cannot predict an acceptance into the English society.
An immigrant, if fortunate could possess a good native friend, who supervises his accent, language, behaviour patterns and his do’s and dont’s. This kind of help would promote a faster and better adjustment. But for Dev, there is Adit, who has lived in England for quite some time and who knows the intricacies involved.

However, one feels that, tolerance is Adit’s forte; because without tolerance, it would be arduous to continue life for an Indian immigrant, especially in England. He takes little notice of the insults inflicted on him by a few whites. The novel reveals the reality of rejection in the following way. While they were buying bus tickets, Adit had felt certain that he saw a glint of scorn in the conductor’s eye. But, the abrupt way in which the conductor handed him his ticket and then kept him waiting for his change. He wondered if the old lady beside whom he sat did not clutch her hand-bag and lean away from him as though she suspected a smell. But he told himself, that, it didn’t matter. Assimilation of immigrants is in reality a two-way process– the individual and the land to which he has immigrated. Often, the natives may be unkind, as they might view immigrants as threats to their own prosperity and cultural purity.

One definitely realises that, strong bonding is very much a reality in India. This is true especially in the case of immigrants in any western country. The get-togethers reinforce their need to belong. It is apparent
that the immigrants experience the need to preserve their culture and thereby their identity through these get-togethers. This becomes an urgent need when they are in a western country. Festivals and musical soirees signify intermingling of families and friends. Such meetings which emphasize bonding and sharing; and these are strongholds during hard times. Such parties are seen in the present novel. Therefore one has to understand the potency of relationships, an essential element in life. As Anita Desai herself has had the privilege of an amalgamation of sensibilities and cultures, she can very well comprehend the values and traditions of both the Indian and western culture. The researcher feels that, she expresses a very positive hope through this novel, that an understanding and agreement can be arrived at.

One can understand the biased and intolerant relationship that has been built between Indians and the English, where the Indians bear the brunt of the Englishman’s hatred. They do not meet on equal pedestal. The Indians feel down-trodden and forced to servility. This ugly reality is experienced in *Byebye Blackbird*. The novel ends on a positive note, where Sarah and Adit, hand in hand, look forward to their departure to India. The relationship is based on love and understanding; Sarah makes the customary sacrifice that a wife makes.

The superiority presumed by the British led to the development of inferiority among Indians. Based on this reality, there were a different set of rules and regulations accompanied with privileges for the English and
the lack of it for the Indians. Naturally this kind of treatment among human beings causes a racial tension. Therefore, an aura of unhappiness and dissatisfaction prevails among Indians in England. Whereas Sarah’s contact with India nourishes her and she never feels overwhelmed. She belongs to a rational, practical and a materialistic culture, and now she has to adapt to the traditional Indian culture. But there is a positive hope that she will adapt. Sarah is temperamentally an adjustable person and she struggles towards the happiness of her marital life. This aspect would naturally wreck the racial and cultural barriers between her and in-laws.

In Adit and Sarah’s family, one sees that there is compromise especially on Sarah’s part; her love for Adit ushers in the solutions for all their problems. She quietly understands Adit’s nature and adapts to him. She can reach out to him even in his difficult times. Thus her marriage is successful. Although she is an English lady, she is not rigid. One can understand that an east-west encounter in marriage is marked with differences, which are skin-deep, usually regarding food. The incompatibility of two individual minds is the fact which makes the marriage defunct. But Sarah is endowed with a catholic and tolerant mind; she is not self-centred. She evaluates her priorities and realises that her marriage is above everything else. It is to Sarah’s credit that she adjusts to Adit extremely well, inspite of her own problems of identity. She understands the reality that sacrifice is intrinsic to being married, and that, as a wife she should accommodate.
Adit rediscovers his own country and his own self after his confrontation with England. His awareness of the English culture intensifies his concern with his own identity. The dilemma of the search for his identity as it is torn between the traditional Indian values and the new values of England. He resolves the dilemma with his definite will to return to India.

The neighbouring Punjabi family exudes a genuine togetherness, exhibiting the truth of the Indian joint family. The women are semi-educated. Sarah gets a peep into this family and gets a touch of their organic unity, genuine love and sharing.

**Conclusion:** Thus the study analyses the realities of immigration, interracial marriage, imperialism and lack of culture-identity portrayed in *ByeBye Blackbird* and its consequences on Indian immigrants. The study proves that the intermingling of the Indians on the English soil is more difficult due to the low degree of adjustment between Indians and the English. All these aspects of realism are studied through the lives of Adit and Deven.
**Where Shall We Go This Summer?**

**Introduction:** The novel was published in 1975. The author depicts the upper middle-class milieu in this novel. The protagonist, Sita is a hypersensitive, extremely emotional and middle-aged woman. She remains perturbed by the violence and cruelty that she witnesses around her. She suffers from an inherent inability to adapt to her social milieu.

The researcher analyses the following aspects of realism in this novel: compromise as an essential condition of life; the effect of childhood experiences on adult personality; parental rift and estrangement; the effect of homelessness in childhood and the resultant insecurity, escapism, retrogression to childhood, delusion, loneliness and boredom of city life; communication gap between spouses, temperamental incompatibilities and violence in life.

**Plot:** The novel is divided into three parts, Monsoon’67, winter’47 and the concluding part Monsoon’67. Monsoon’67, commences in the present and deals with the middle-aged protagonist Sita’s delusions of procreation. The second part– Winter ’47, deals with the childhood and youth of the protagonist at Manori island. The third part, Monsoon’67, gets back to the present.
Sita is the mother of four children and she is expecting her fifth child. She wants to escape to Manori island as she presumes that it might be possible to be sane again. She resents the pregnancy and in order not to give birth, she goes to Manori, under the impression that the magical atmosphere of the island may prevent her child from being born. She is assailed by a sense of boredom and ennui. But on the island of Manori, she becomes conscious of the reality of life and eventually compromises with prosaic existence. However, the very fact of her desire to hold back the infant from being born, by resorting to magic, points to her neurosis. Her incomprehensible demands and quarrelsome behaviour depict her sick psyche. But her ultimate realisation that life is based on a sense of reconciliation, saves her from utter mental chaos and destruction.

Part I: Monsoon’67: The novel opens on a summer evening in Manori, where Sita arrives with her children, Menaka and Karan. She wants to live on the island of Manori, her father’s island, where she feels that she may keep her infant from being born. She ruminates that Manori had once been an island of miracles. She is indignant and disgruntled by the disregard of her husband, Raman and her children. She is desperate to achieve the ‘miracle’ of not giving birth. Moses and Miriam, the first citizens of the island, are the caretakers of the house. Sita is overwhelmed by depression as the house is almost unliveable. She has to constantly bear the accusing looks of Menaka and Karan for bringing them to the island.
Part II: Winter’47: The novel moves twenty years backwards to depict the childhood and youth of Sita. Her father was a freedom-fighter, popular as ‘second Gandhi’. After independence, they settle on Manori island, which was a gift to Sita’s father by one of his rich disciples. He renames the house as ‘Jeevan Ashram’. His magnetic personality wins him many followers and he grows into a heroic personality. The naive villagers resort to him for miraculous cures for their diseases and bring them gifts out of gratitude. Sita also becomes aware that her father is more attentive and affectionate to the eldest daughter, Rekha, who sings bhajans. Sita’s brother Jivan tells her that Rekha is their half-sister. During this time, Jivan acquaints Sita with another bitter truth, that their mother is not dead, but has run away to Benares. Sita also senses the illicit relationship of her father with Phoolmaya.

Part III: Monsoon’67: Sita discovers that the island no longer possesses the old magic. One morning Raman arrives; he has come to take back the children to Bombay, as Menaka has to be admitted in the medical college. Sita feels betrayed, because she knows that Raman has not come for her. But ultimately she decides to compromise and go back to Bombay.

Analysis: The study explores the effect of Sita’s deprived childhood on her adult relationships. Her unusual childhood experiences throw enormous light on the type of person she has developed into. Her intense
aggressive behaviour and erratic thinking point out backwards to her childhood and youthful days. Her father, who was glorified and idolized by the people of Manori. But he is a derelict and negligent father. He is a social figure. But it is impossible for Sita to approach this awesome figure of a father and there is no fatherly affection forth-coming from him. It is also evident that the father loves Rekha, the eldest daughter. This environment of partiality and disregard from the father has had its impact on the young mind of Sita. The fact that Rekha is not her real sister comes as a shock to her. The feeling of unwelcomeness, unwantedness and repudiation generates a sense of emptiness and inferiority in Sita. Consequently it breeds a rebellion in her. Therefore, she displays it by means of withdrawal.

The absence of a loving mother in Sita’s life aggravates the sense of emptiness. The novel reveals that Sita’s mother had gone away to Benares leaving behind her husband and children to take care of themselves. This awareness of her mother’s desertion has its destructive influence on Sita’s personality. Sita’s relationship with Raman is unconsciously influenced by the relationship of her own father and mother. Her very act of escaping or running away to Manori can be traced behind to this circumstance. Sita has tried to escape from her duties and responsibilities and from the order and routine life of Bombay.
The self-seeking and selfish nature of patriarchal role models is brought out in unflinching terms in the character of Sita’s father and even Jivan. After independence, they settle in Manori. Here, Sita’s father’s social importance and interests enlarge even to spiritual concerns. He extends medical treatment to villagers. He has a team of ‘chelas’ following him. The village women place implicit faith in him and regard him as a miracle man. But the fact is that, he can fraternize with his chelas and with the village women folk, but not with his children, Sita and Jivan. He holds a rapport only with the eldest daughter, Rekha. He holds public meetings and private prayers. But as a father he is an utter failure and cannot relate meaningfully to his children. Sita wonders the reason behind her mother’s desertion, as her father is hailed as the ‘second Gandhi’. But his own wife could not live with him. He is a negative role-model, as he does not have any involvement in family issues. He also fails in virtually holding the children and his family together. Jivan, the son leaves even before the father’s death and Rekha is mentally prepared for it. She leaves soon after his death. Sita waits for the funeral. It is evident that the sense of unity, fellowship and involvement is absent in this family. The togetherness which is engendered by the unity and love of both parents, is absent. Therefore, there is no sense of involvement and unity among the children. There is no motivation towards supporting and comforting one another at the father’s death. Each one takes to his own way and follows his own plans for life. Raman, Deedar’s son (Sita’s father’s friend) marries her out of sympathy.
Therefore, the lack of parental support and love drives the children to their own separate destinies and even afterwards they have no contact with one another, let alone a loving relationship. Jivan, the sole male member fails in his responsibilities towards his sister.

The study examines the well-known reality that happy and successful parents provide a sense of security and a strong basis for the healthy growth of the children. The children feel loved and accepted. Such parents are also instrumental in developing a strong sense of self-confidence and independence in children. Sita’s father is an indifferent parent and he is inattentive to the children’s needs. The novel does not reveal any such instance where he displays warmth or affection either to Sita or to Jivan. His public life is so stressful that he does not invest any interest in his children’s welfare. This kind of family life can naturally have a bad effect on the children. A close knit family atmosphere supplies companionship to the child. Family relationships are crucial in developing the child’s attitude towards socializing. It can severely affect the person’s adaptability in adult life. The feeling of rejection and insecurity are natural results. The child carries the unhappiness of his family into his adult life. Therefore, Sita faces problems in adaptability. The novel reveals that
“she never got used to anyone. When they lived in the first years of their married lives, with his family.....She had vibrated and throbbed in revolt against their almost subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness. The more stolid and still and calm they were, the more she thrummed as though frantic with fear that their sub humanity might swamp her.”

Sita is unable to adapt to her in-laws. She finds their company repugnant and insufferable. Theirs is a life of boredom, dullness and stillness. She tries to disintegrate their calmness and sluggishness by scandalizing them. She takes to smoking. She discovers that she is stranger in her own home.

The absence of mother in Sita’s childhood experiences, is a fundamental reason for the void in her life. The emotional involvement and affection which only a mother can provide, being absent, Sita lacks the reassurance, security and love which lays the foundation for a healthy personality. Mother has more opportunities to influence her children’s growth. There is a tendency, therefore, for the children to approach the mother when they are in any personal or social difficulties. Especially in the upbringing of girls the presence of the mother is extremely essential.
Sita was not aware of a mother, till she stealthily saw the pearls and rubies being ground by her father to provide medicine to the village folk. Her brother Jivan, informs her that their mother was not dead, but had run away. This piece of information devastates her. The novel reveals, “........Sita stood clutching her hair about her ears and feet sinking rapidly into the sand........” The fact that her mother had deserted them, depicts the truth that she may not have been a good mother. This overwhelms her. She feels like a wanderer in search of a ghost, with a question who she was always agonizing her.

The study of this novel reveals that the mother’s presence during youth generates a sense of comfort. Especially the daughter receives reassurance during the crucial teenage stage of life. This is lacking in Sita’s life. Therefore, “Sita’s condition is representative of the loneliness of a woman, a wife, a mother – a loneliness conditioned by family and society”, says P.F.Patil. It is a known fact that, a very strong bond exists between mother and daughter. The impact of the mother directly and indirectly affects the daughter. The lack of maternal affection and the charismatic father, who paid little attention to his fatherly duties, have annihilated any tenderness and softness in Sita. She cannot succeed at her duty of motherhood. A woman is very intimately bound to her mother; she does not fence any boundaries between herself and her mother. The
mother usually sees the daughter as an embodiment of her own self; and the daughter looks at herself as an extension of her own mother. Usually the daughter considers the mother as a role-model and she fashions her attitudes and behaviour on the basis of her mother. Therefore, as mother is the role-model for the daughter, Sita resorts to an escape to the Manori island under a pretext. Her attitude is strongly coloured and influenced by that of her mother’s. Therefore, one cannot deny the impact of Sita’s early life on her present relationships. Therefore Sita nourishes eccentric assumptions that she can retain the baby in her womb. However, maternity can impart happiness to a woman only if she is contented in life. But with Sita, it is entirely different. She declines to exult in the fact of her mothering four children and therefore, she fails in motherhood. Her detachment and non-involvement with her children depict her emotional barrenness; this can be attributed to the absence of her mother in her early life. She is unable to accept her own maternal stature.

The sibling rivalry that has been aggravated by her father’s predilection towards the elder daughter, Rekha, has established the negative feelings of loneliness, worthlessness and unwantedness. Therefore, she does not share a loving relationship with Rekha. A sharing and caring relationship that is normally present between sisters, is absent with them. When the truth of her mother’s desertion dawns on her, she
staggers under the strong yearning for a mother-figure. All these sour experiences naturally curtail the growth of a full-fledged, mature and healthy personality. She cannot continue normal life in the city. Sita’s lack of relationship with her mother cripples her relationship with her daughter Menaka.

Simone de Beauvoir explains that the mother-daughter relationship is like this:

“In her daughter the mother does not hail a member of the superior caste; in her she seeks a double. She projects upon her daughter all the ambiguity of her relation with herself; and when the otherness of this alter ego manifests itself, the mother feels betrayed”.

Therefore, she appropriately opines that the conflicts between mother and daughter take an aggravated form. The novel says that Menaka “.......had had enough of her mother’s disorder and nonsense – she would escape it wholly.” Menaka looks up to her father; she is averse to art and painting which is her mother’s passion. She would like to pursue a career in medicine. Sita’s obscure view of life and what she thought and said never had interested Menaka.
Parental dereliction and negligence has not fostered any mission in Sita’s life. She cannot involve herself in the city life of orderliness. Her trust and confidence has been disturbed by her parents; this generates in her the inability to nourish her relationship with her husband and children. The author reveals Sita’s detachment in these lines:

“Sita was left on the bed, smoking, rubbing her toes in the ash, feeling them draw away from her into other regions.....shutting themselves in with the barbed wire of prudence, caution, routine and order, leaving her in her disorderly region...... and an instinctive rejection of her wild values and wild searches, leaving her.”\(^{102}\)

Her incompatible relations with Raman also affects her attitude towards her children.

Simone de Beauvoir opines that if the woman sincerely desires the pregnancy, she will be delighted with it and she will also possess the courage to go through all the process.\(^{103}\) This fact is true. In Sita’s case, she is not happy with her fifth pregnancy and therefore, she also lacks the courage to go through it, the reasons might be varied. Beauvoir says: “....she will gladly devote herself to her new-born only if a man devotes himself to her. The more childish and timid the wife, the greater is this need.”\(^{104}\) Sita and Raman, as noted, are temperamentally incompatible.
This incompatibility is naturally reflected in Sita’s unhappiness to bring forth the baby. She cries out helplessly that she cannot tolerate it anymore.

A satisfied and contented woman would want to impart the same to her children. The prospects and opportunities which she has had as a child or those which she has lacked, she extends to her own children, without making much demands from the children, in return. There is always a repository of unconditional love to be handed over. But, as one notices in the text, Sita is thoroughly embittered in her marital relationship and has confronted the futility and meaninglessness of life. Motherhood is a position of great importance, provided it is desired. It also calls for physical and emotional harmony to withstand the endeavour of motherhood. Sita’s psyche is deeply scarred by her early home life and her approach to her children is not a normal one, but it registers her frustrations. The woman who has had a satisfactory individual life would have the best to impart to her children. Sita’s early parental family life is one of conflict and her adult personality is not built normally. So her misery is a vicious circle. Psychologists have opined that,

“an individual’s adult attachment style was found to be predicted by the quality of their relationships with their parents, further supporting the theory that people form models of these early relationships that influence later attachments”. 105
The present study explores the realism of marital disharmony in this novel. The fact that the mere physical union between a man and a woman is not exalted and radiant, except it be the union of soul and mind is clear through this novel. The pivot of a successful marriage is the emotional bond shared between the partners, but not caste or class or even racial considerations. The strength and tenacity of love is such that, it helps man to find the significance of life. Sita shares an automated, mechanical relationship with Raman. He is a man of “subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness.” He cannot comprehend the emotional and psychological pangs of Sita. He is a man of the world; and he is at a loss to understand the nature of her problem or even her boredom.

It is a fact that the very foundation of a harmonious marital relationship is that of understanding, emotional togetherness and communion. Mutual caring and concern are indispensable elements in a contented family environment. Otherwise, it is inevitable that the lack of understanding breeds indifference and aloofness in the relationship. Sita is disgusted with her family environment. She is high-strung and very emotional; her needs for intimacy and love from Raman, being thwarted by his pragmatic attitude, makes her depressed and pessimistic. Therefore, their relationship is characterised by a severe inability to
communicate. Marriage, a fundamental institution which procreates and thereby builds the society, tends to crumble if not based on love and trust. A sense of comradeship and companionship is very essential. Reconciliation and compromise firms the very backbone of a strong relationship. Raman is unaware of Sita’s needs. She yearns for tenderness. He is not aware that she is pained with the boredom and ennui of life.

Raman extricates her from the island, marries her and brings her to Bombay. Sita realises the ennui of city life. Her life would have been liveable, had Raman been emotionally inclined towards her. She would have overcome her loneliness, had Raman fathomed out her very essence or nature. But Raman, being a hard-working man with a practical bent of mind, cannot appreciate her ideas. He cannot conceive the fact that she is suffering, despite a comfortable livelihood which he has provided for her. She turns irritable, frightened and rebellious. She scolds her children over trivialities and eventually decides to escape to Manori. The text says that she wishes “........to escape the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to be sane again”.

The years of male-chauvinism that have been ingrained in Raman, does not allow him an empathetic understanding of Sita. A full-fledged loving relationship entails a sacrificial attitude between the partners. The
novel gives a realistic portrayal of the sensitive woman who struggles to procure some kind of an emotional understanding and rapport from her dear ones, but fails miserably. The portrayal is extremely credible. Sita is so sensitive that she is aware of the keenness of dissimilarity between her and those around her. The human desire for love and understanding is not gratified. She reaches her tether of tolerance. The repeated rejection and humiliation is difficult to be endured. Human relationships, at times, become an eddy of painful experiences. The situation becomes so difficult that agonizing relationships, cannot be brushed aside, nor can they be tolerated, nor can they be done away with. This is the inevitable truth of human existence. Such emotional problems which a woman encounters daily in human interactions are ubiquitous. This happens when the woman is of a sensitive type, and those around her are the insensible, practical, hard and unemotional type of individuals. Struggle and overworked relationships are pervasive in the course of life.

Sita experiences a severe need for tender care and nurturing love, which is not forthcoming from Raman or the children. The consequence is boredom, depression and frustration. She is also drained of all the optimism. She cannot take it any longer. Therefore, she steers her movement towards the island. Love is the central issue of human existence and it imparts meaning to life. The person who is struggling for
a sense of value in life is naturally overwhelmed with the denial of love and understanding, which further leads to anxiety. Sita is a person with an unusual childhood deprived of love and familial involvement. Love is the most important gift which parents can give to their children, which Sita has missed. However, in her adult life, she craves for an intense love from Raman, of which she is deprived. Life keeps its pace, but does not impart value or meaning to her. Therefore, she becomes neurotic.

It is a well established fact that people with emotional problems take to smoking and such other habits. Therefore, Sita who has a problem in emotional stability has taken to smoking. She is prone to aggression, depression and anxiety for trivial matters. Smoking gives her an invigorating experience.

Another aspect of realism that is explored here is that of homelessness. Sita’s childhood was an insecure one. Ranu Uniyal opines that, “Sita’s childhood had verged on separation and seclusion”. The novel reveals it in these words:

“........Sita could tell from her own experience, their lives had been lived inside jails, in crowded assemblies, in mobs, in slums, in tenements, and in villages where life was not picturesque or calm, but harsh and barbaric. They had known all the tensions of political life, although only
on the brink of it and its cruelties. There had been long separations, dark seclusions. There had been austerity and fear. It was always made clear to Sita that this was no age for games or sweets but one for prayer and sacrifice.”

This is not a normal childhood. The present study explores that there is a gnawing deprivation at Sita’s existence that can be traced from her childhood—homelessness, lack of a sense of belonging and involvement in the family, lack of parental love, attention and care. Therefore, she has developed introversion. This causes a disability in adjustment and adaptability. It is difficult for Sita to conform and adjust with Raman’s family. Her relationship with Menaka is charged with conflict and resentment, as Menaka resembles her father in her pragmatic attitudes. Sita is given to a dreamy temperament, which is revealed in her fantasizing about keeping back the unborn infant. Her attitude and thought processes are distorted by this abnormal desire to keep back the unborn infant in her womb. Her mind is severely split and fragmented she questions: “....... which half of her life was real and which unreal? Which of her selves was true, which false?” This fragmented mind is naturally the result of the deep deprivation she has experienced since early years. Therefore, Sita cannot possess an independent and self-sufficient personality; she cannot be normally aware of her responsibilities. This
disability is caused due to the bitter and abnormal life of her childhood. She cannot render moral support to her husband as an able wife.

A. Clement rightly opines that:

“Sita’s refusal to bring forth her fifth child to birth for fear that the outer reality will crush them out of existence is indicative of her profound loss of inner identity which precludes her from all meaningful relationality. Troubled or neglected childhood is often one of the causes of such disorientation in Anita Desai.”

Sita’s childhood life is governed by irregularity and a sense of homelessness. The novel shows it like this:

“With calm eyes she had watched the surge and flow of such masses, listened to endless speeches..... played with the tinsel till she fell asleep against a bolster and was carried away to someone’s house to sleep–always a different someone, it scarcely mattered which one. She belonged....... to this whole society..... and saw no reason why she should belong to one family alone.”

This experience of homelessness and lack of familial belonging has engendered a deep-seated insecurity which casts its shadow on her adult
personality. Home is the place where an individual learns mutual trust and interdependence. The human need for association and intimacy is gratified and the responsibility of one’s life is shared in a family.

Psychologist George Thompson relates the case study conducted by a psycho-analyst and physician, Spitz. Thompson reports that detrimental effects of maternal deprivation were observed. In that particular study, the infants were given contact with several different adults in any one day; giving of care was the primary responsibility of no one person. It was found that these conditions of intermittent mothering by a changing group of attendants proved to be calamitous for the psychological growth and the general mental-physical health of the infants. They showed a marked slow-down of motor-perceptual development, became socially withdrawn and depressed, and failed to make normal progress in physical growth. The child needs a meaningful relationship for his healthy development and he cannot establish such a relationship with a variety of adults. Thompson further reports certain studies with research evidence that among pre-school children who have been separated from their mothers show hostile behaviour and that this kind of hostility generated by the stresses of separation may extend into later life as a typical pattern of responding to others. ¹¹³
Sudhir Kakar opines:

“......infancy is the foundation for all later psychological experience. Moreover, the nature of an individual’s first relationship—with his mother profoundly influences the quality and ‘dynamics’ of social relations throughout life”.

The study proves that Sudhir Kakar’s statement is relevant.

The novel reveals that after the Indian independence, Sita and her family, along with her father’s chelas shift to ‘Jeevan Ashram’, that is Manori island. The house here gives her a secure existence, but she realises the equivocacy of life. The glorified image of her father crumbles and she perceives that, “her father’s daylight, practical charisma had its underlit night-time aspect........” Her inability to develop a rapport with her father and her perception of her father’s equivocal love for Rekha, the eldest daughter, fill her with disgust.

Further, Sita confronts the fact of her mother’s desertion. Earlier, the absence of father and mother was presumed, as father was imprisoned for long periods during the freedom struggle. The mother was assumed to be dead. But the truth of the absconding mother comes as a rude shock to her. The reasons behind her desertion are an enigma to her. The impact of
the collapse of both the father and mother figures is disastrous. The fact that Sita discovers the presence of a mistress in the life of her freedom-fighter father troubles her. His chelas call him ‘second Gandhi’. She also witnesses her father pounding jewels and gems for treating people’s ailments. The jewels belong to her mother. The reality dawns on her that her mother has broken loose of her father’s clutches and has escaped to Benares. She cannot idolize and revere her father anymore. Although he is the ‘second Gandhi’ and saviour to the Manori folk, for her, he remains a hypocrite. She has also witnessed the fact of the pearls and rubies which belonged to her mother, being put to use by her father for medicinal purposes. It is clear to her that her father is not worth glorifying and that, he is an imposter, who is blasphemously using the faith of the innocent people. The father-figure is lost. The father fails to register as a loving, authentic and powerful figure. This aspect creates a void in Sita’s mind. Hence Sita has a sense that the world is hostile, as the deprivation in her life has fostered this attitude. Both the parents have proved themselves fraudulent. She cannot trust anybody.

Maternal love is always regarded as the loftiest of human emotions and nothing else can substitute it. The love of the mother shapes, kindles and builds the daughter. She plays the most decisive role in the growth of the daughter. A mother is the repertory of love and care; she determines
and effects upon the attitudes and responses of the daughter. She shapes
the welfare of the daughter; she is the moulding force behind the
daughter’s adult personality. Mother provides for the physical needs and
also grants solace and encouragement. She also serves the child’s need
for protection and nurturing. Therefore, the study reveals that the absence
of the mother-figure leaves the girl in confusion. Thus, Sita has failed to
absorb the values and attitudes of adult womanhood. This is due to the
fact of the negative impression of the mother. Sita has failed to learn the
requirements of socialization in the husband’s family. All this can be
traced, not only to the absence of a mother, but also to the disgrace of an
absconding, vagrant mother. Sita faces puzzlement and is at loss to
comprehend what is required of a mother and wife. Sita also does not
possess a confidante. Usually, the mother is the girl’s confidante or a
counsellor. Sita lacks a mother and even a loving relationship with her
elder sister, Rekha. She lacks the company of friends. The lack of such
emotional sharing experiences has proved detrimental to Sita’s adult roles
and personality. The mother is the girl’s close associate, especially at the
time of puberty. The girl is on the threshold of womanhood. She needs
advice and guidance about her growing body, her code of behaviour and
etiquette. As Sita has lacked all this, she is ill-prepared for adult roles and
remains childish.
Conclusion: Sita lacks the experience of caring for her mother, in times of need or sickness. She does not share any relationship with her father, either. The caring and tending, which is omnipresent in familial experiences is lacking. Therefore, Sita is unable to give the same to her own family. The researcher would like to affirm that, a well-ordered home helps to make well-ordered children. Sita has lacked this well-ordered home experience. A home which is intelligently and efficiently managed by a mother makes a daughter do the same in her own household. Where there is no home atmosphere at all, let alone a mother; and the person who has grown up in an environment of disorder and confusion cannot absorb the skill of running a home or children. The study evinces that Sita is incapable due to the lack of relevant experiences.
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5. Desai, 115


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20. Desai, 35

21. Nike & Tiber, 345

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34. Flexner, 19-20


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