

## Chapter – III

### Man-Woman relationship in the Selected Novels of Anita Desai

#### The Novels:

*Cry, The Peacock (1963),*

*Voices in the City (1965),*

*Where Shall We Go This Summer?(1975)*

#### 3.1 Introduction:

Lorna Sage, while introducing Anita Desai in *Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English* (1999) writes:

“Anita Desai is a distinguished novelist and a short-story writer who grew up in a multilingual family with a German mother and an Indian father. Married, with four children she divides her time between England, the United States and India.”<sup>1</sup>

It proves the fact that Anita Desai is a promising novelist, born in Mussorie. She received her early education at Queen Mary's School in Delhi, and later on studied in Miranda College, University of Delhi. Her graduation in English literature was completed from the same college in 1957. Anita Desai as a novelist, evolved from writing short-stories during the period of 1957-1962. About interests and ideas that influenced her, she writes:

“In my twenties, when I first began to work seriously and consciously on my novels, it was D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Wolf, Henry James and Proust that influenced me more strongly”<sup>2</sup>

Apart from literary influences, Anita Desai as a woman writer is moulded by her life experiences. She remained a housewife rearing the four children and writing. Therefore, she had a preoccupation with Indian womanhood. She had the opportunity of sharing the feelings of the women under various circumstances. A character Ila Das is modelled on one of her family friend in real life. Bidulata Chaudhary (1995) observes:

“The condition of the Indian immigrants, especially of the Sikh women is also a record of experience. Many such faces known and forgotten in real life supply the ideas for psychoanalytical study.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Anita Desai emerges as a modern novelist writing along with the Indo-European literary tradition. The combined influence of the great philosophers and novelists of the West and the changing elements in the social structure of India had great impact on Anita Desai. Primarily, she was preoccupied with the agony of human existence which she portrays in her novels in the form of humans, human relations and human situations.

### **3.2.1 Man-Woman Relationship in *Cry, The Peacock* (1963):**

Anita Desai's first novel, *Cry, The Peacock* (1963) chiefly deals with Maya's plight as the female protagonist emerging from her marital relationship and her existence almost from birth to the last moment of her life as depicted. Her life passes through the various phases of her relationship with men such as her father, the astrologer and her husband Gautama, amidst the traditional patriarchal Indian society.

Madhusudhan Prasad (1981) briefly alludes to Maya as a neurotic figure. He comments:

“In *Cry, The Peacock*, Desai explores the turbulent emotional world of the neurotic protagonist Maya who smarts under an acute alienation, stemming from marital discord and verges on a curious insanity”<sup>4</sup>

In relation to Mr. Prasad's judgment, it is worthwhile to investigate into Maya's neurosis resulting from the conditions of her life. It is necessary at this moment to delve at the family of orientation and lay equal emphasis on the conditions of her living at the family of procreation. At both the families, lie the seeds of her destabilization which disintegrate her mind and lead her to growing insanity. In fact, they determine the nature of her relationship with Gautama.

Maya is born in a family in which her mother dies after her birth and her father in her later life avoids providing her any sense of how her mother was. The photograph remains her only memory for Maya. It reflects the repulsive attitude of the father towards the mother, probably a sense of condemning due to some hideous act on the part of the mother. It projects the basic imbalance in the

parental relationship in case of Maya and its impact is realized after the mother's death. It is certain that after her death, the father deserts her psychologically and she no longer becomes a part of his memory to be narrated to Maya. It is found that during her early childhood and all through her later life, Maya is cut off from mother and motherly love. She gets it neither in the form of memory nor in the form of physical presence. The photograph keeps her dissatisfied and excited.

There is no clue as to how and why the mother died and what kind of life she lived. It is upto the imagination of the reader to infer. Thus, the natural bond of love and affection between the mother and the child remains broken. Maya craves for mother and her love, in the deeper part of her psyche. As unfulfilled basic need, she feels lack of security and incompleteness despite the father's showering care and concern. This state of being emotionally crippled is not realized in her physical living. It is almost fused with her unconscious mind. Usha Bande (1988) observes:

*Cry, The Peacock* is a tragedy of a father's child.<sup>5</sup>

It implies three crucial aspects of Maya's person – her life without mother's love, the mother's socialization and support to the daughter amidst the patriarchal Indian society and the overpowering impressions of the father on Maya.

As an ancestral character, the Brahmanical family in which Maya is born, had astrological ideas, horoscopes, fatalistic beliefs and 'more or less idle lives' (p.75) Maya grew amidst it. She has been brought up physically by her father who is romantic, luxuries and fatalistic in nature. He provides her with all the material riches and luxuries at the cost of her freedom. She remains restricted within the four walls of the house. The father proves to be a patriarchal despot. He immensely loves Maya as she obeys him. She puts it:

"I enjoyed princess-like" (p.43).

It is the father who forms in Maya the sensuous, romantic and imaginative traits by providing her with 'the Moghul garden' (p.45), the tours to hill-stations, the stories of Arabian Nights and servants, to help. This overall situation at the family of orientation makes us arrive at the formation of 'real

self' in Maya. Its ultimate structure consists of love, romance, luxury, fatalistic sense, sensitivity and dependence. It is characterized by lack of intellectual trait. She remains without education. The father and his love occupy the central position in her mind. It develops in her an unusual tie and dependence towards him. K.R.S. Iyenger(1973) perceives this nature of relationship as 'father-fixation'<sup>6</sup> But one can observe on the part of the father, a curious admixture of the three shades of feelings – absence of mother, absence of wife and rebellion of the son.

This father-daughter relationship pervades the premarital and the post-marital life of Maya. Thus, the normal course of Maya's life is disturbed by her father in many ways. As a despotic patriarch, he restricts Maya's freedom to the four walls of home, providing her with the overprotective concern, and developing her high dependence towards him. In the father's unconscious execution of his male-dominating powers towards the daughter, she had to lose her education.

It leads to certain severe repercussions which limit Maya's growth. It reduces drastically the activities and capacities of her fundamental faculties such as emotional, physical and intellectual. Jasbir Jain (1987) rightly observes:

"Maya's unhappiness is in part related to the process of her growing up: She has led a protected life and has been brought up on fantasies"<sup>7</sup>

It then follows that Maya is cut off from the real world like a wire rope joining the two points of the valley. It is the world seen and experienced by her brother Arjuna by remaining outside the home all the while as a result of hatred against the father for his extreme partiality and nearness of the daughter, the world with manners and mores of the people, their ideological move, their capacities for the general strife of living life through hardships and adaptation with the adversities. In a way, Maya remains unexposed to the society and lacks social interaction and socialization which make human beings grow in a true sense. Contrary to this, Arjuna exploits his freedom to the fullest and becomes the champion of the world outside the home, getting confidence and courage for living and progress. Thus, the male-dominance in a patriarchal world in relation to woman is found in the father who could be held responsible for her shrunken

growth. His treatment to Maya proves to be a sweet potion which makes Maya swoon in her later life. What is ironic is that he is not aware of this aspect of human growth, as chief of the family. Probably, it is the traditional patriarchal unconscious thought about female life which governs his mind.

During Maya's premarital life, there is another prominent phenomenon which rocks her mind like a stormy sea against a ship. It is the albino astrologer and his prophesy of death. The traditional superstitious scene characterized by a weird sense and awe with the hypnotizing personality of the astrologer, is permanently recorded on her mind during her adolescence, as the inheritance and the environment at the home endowed her with a strong sense of belief in these things.

The central lignum painted in bright vicious red, the oil lamp, the darkness of the room, the temple gate, the morbidity of the albino, his pale and opaque eyes, his bodily movements, his narration of the incomprehensible tales of mythology, the garment slipping about his hips – all these elements of this weird environment of the temple make Maya refer him as 'black and evil shadow' (p.28) which creates awe and fear in her mind. In fact, it culminates in the astrologer's making of Maya's horoscope and the subsequent foretelling of a death in her married life. His foretelling which dislocates Maya's normal sense and disturbs her mind, appears as follows:

"Death," he finally admitted, "in one such moment, to one of you, when you are married – and you shall be married young." "Death – an early one – by unnatural causes," he said (p.30).

Thus, the astrologer seals Maya's fate, as she believes. Anuradha Roy (1999) while studying the repressive forces within the family perceives Maya's father as a benevolent dictator and the astrologer as one who sets the pulse of fright in her mind. The role of these two men in decaying Maya's living has been expressed by her in the following words:

"The disintegration of Maya's mental and emotional balance under the threatening cloud of an ominous childhood and astrological prediction can not be treated simplistically as the inevitable collapse of a naturally neurotic temperament."<sup>8</sup>

It makes us think that Maya's neurosis is not natural, but it is planted by the circumstances created by the two men at the family of orientation. Maya's transplantation from her parental home in Lucknow to the Gautama's household in Delhi is characterized by her 'marriage' as it is done by her father. She ponders over it:

".. .. one might have said that our marriage was grounded upon the friendship of the two men, and the mutual respect in which they held each other rather than anything else."(p.40)

The decision of Maya's father of marrying Maya to Gautama shows some haste which probably originates from the astrologer's prophecy preached in the horoscope, warning her early marriage: 'and you will be married young'(p.30). Thus, Maya's marriage appears as a carelessly worked out affair by her father where the significant age difference is neglected alongwith differences in temperaments and family characteristics. It reflects one of his patriarchal traits which is a traditional fact: "A daughter is a nightmare that keeps parents in anguish – a liability to get rid of as early as possible."<sup>9</sup>

We find in father this thought fused with the another element of patriarchy, referred to as fatalism which is expressed by his word 'accept'. It becomes an escape route for the father from the further responsibilities regarding Maya.

The major problem of Maya as a short of growth is her disability to break off her primary ties and undergo individuation where she could live independently with maturity and social sense. In a way, Maya fails to shift herself from her real self to the actual self required for coping up the situation at the family of procreation. As a wife, there is no ideological transformation in Maya. She views the whole new situation with the binoculars of the past and experiences almost the cultural shock. In fact, Lucknow home and Delhi household appear as two distinct contrary subcultures - fate culture and work culture – within one cultural whole of the Indian society.

In the overall consideration of the temperaments, the two families stand poles apart – one surrounded by the 'Moghul Garden' and the another one by 'Parliamentary discussions.' The two individuals, Maya and Gautama inherit the

characteristics of their respective families. It is, in fact, warmth versus coldness, emotion against intellect. Therefore, Maya holds strongly cynical attitude towards Gautam's family. Maya and Gautama radically differ in their attitudes and ideas about life and love and stand in conflict with each other. Meena Belliappa rightly observes the situation of this relationship:

“The incompatibility of character stands revealed – Gautama who touches without feeling and Maya who feels even without touching.”<sup>10</sup>

In order to analyze the nature of Maya-Gautama relationship, it is necessary at this moment to probe into Maya's mind and behaviour after marriage and her living in Gautama's family. There are two dominant aspects of the past which severely grip her mind. The prophecy of the astrologer about death after marriage is activated almost in the manner the prophecy of Three Witches in Williams Shakespeare's tragedy, *Macbeth*, disturbs Macbeth's mind largely. The another aspect which is more prominent than the earlier one and is really responsible for failure of her marital relationship with Gautama is her obsession with her father who occupies the major part of her unconscious mind in everyday living.

Crisis in love and fear of death, “lover I die” (p.97), is the exact state of Maya which she expresses through the various images. The central image is that of peacocks. For Gautama, love has no meaning. As a middle-aged man, he shows cynical attitude to love and expresses it as “a matter of dealing with the bills that come in, and for the woman, of worrying about them”, (p.21). For Gautama, money and property is a basic requirement of life. As an antithesis to it, Maya thinks of love as passion vitally required for living.

To Gautama, Maya's ideas are a sort of absurdity, “a kind of morbidity and frivolity.”(p.15). He has dictatorial sense of superiority over society and ultimately over Maya. The following piece of conversation brings out their respective positions:

“Why meaningless?” I interrupted him. “You always say things like that. As though, it didn't matter whether people lived or died”. “It doesn't”, he snapped. “Not with the majority of dim-wits and numb-skulls. It doesn't. They are a pack of sheep in any case. It is only the few who lead these animals, the

ones who are capable of logic and analysis, who matter. Their lives are of importance, and the triviality of their end is saddening, I admit”.(p.15)

Apart from the familial pride, it reflects his scanty concern for Maya, she being one of those whom he refers to, as ‘dim-wits and numb-skulls’. The typical combination of husbandship characterized by the patriarchal inclination and the sahib spirit emerging from the profession of lawyership result into extreme subordination of Maya in their marital relationship. In Gautama, a sense of order is evident:

“And Gautama rose immediately, ordering tea to be sent to the study forgetting her woes altogether”(p.7)

Gautama’s dominance formed in this way, creates fear in Maya’s mind. There is no freedom, but restrictions: .. .. “Dared I go in? Beg for comfort? Confess to my loneliness and my terror of loneliness? Useless, Hopeless.”(p.77)

The existential quality of life which Maya lives in Gautama’s family for four years has been rightly projected by Uma Banerjee (1991) in the following words:

“Maya is transformed within four years into a neurotic homicidal maniac. The transformation takes place through the grinding process of the mindless compromise in her marriage which in any case, is doomed to fail.”<sup>11</sup>

Gautama’s family members give Maya a typical patriarchal treatment. She is not considered as the important part of the family, but the most subordinate member lying at the periphery of the family structure. Maya’s expression is clear:

“They spoke to me, the synocete, only when it had to do with babies, meals, shopping, marriage for I was their toy, their indulgence, not to be taken seriously.” (p.68)

However, Maya’s ignorance and disability to participate in their intellectual discussions and standards of living life make Maya move away from the mainstream environment of the household. Thus, the family structure as a whole unconsciously executes dominance against Maya and contributes in rendering her to loneliness.

The prophecy-oriented fear-psychosis of death formed in Maya consumes her sanity and sense required for physical living and takes her in the imaginative world of terror and destruction. It has a vital linkage with Maya's hysterical nature. The another significant event which aggravates Maya's fear-psychosis is the death of their pet dog, Toto.

In the death of the pet dog, she sees a reflection of her own death, an illusory realization of the prophecy. The prominent reason behind Maya's excessive grief over the death of the dog seems to be her attachment with it. Since Maya is childless, she suffers inwardly. Loving the pet dog like a child with the motherly affection is the basic impulse of Maya. In her unconscious mind, two thoughts are dominant: The traditional social thought that a salvation of a woman lies in giving birth to a child and the most natural desire for motherhood. It gives Maya a sense of personal sorrow and hence a sense of alienation. Thus, Maya emerges as a motherless child and a childless mother. To some extent, this fact could resolve the complex of Maya's aspiration in the form of love.

One of the significant reasons of the failure of Maya-Gautama relationship can be traced to the nature of their sexual relationship wherein Maya always longs for bodily union and Gautama is cold, engrossed in his studies. M. Rajeshwar (2000) argues:

“A continuous frustration of the body's sexual needs can be disastrous to somebody live Maya, given her fierce instinctuality. A healthy emotional and sexual life would have given her a sense of security and stopped her psyche from decaying.”<sup>12</sup>

It means that the failure of sexual need is one of the strongest reasons in forming neurosis in Maya. M. Rajeshwar further supports his view with the statement from Freud:

“.. .. experience shows that women who, as being the actual vehicles of the sexual interests of mankind are only endowed in a small measure with the gift of sublimating their instincts and who – when they are subjected to the disillusionment of marriage, fall ill of severe neurosis which permanently darken their lives.”<sup>13</sup>

The probable reasons behind such a sexual failure of the Maya-Gautama relationship can be found in Gautama's advanced age in comparison to Maya's youth and his continuous studies and engrossment in the legal aspects of his daily cases and trials in the court which certainly give him mental and physical tenseness and fatigue. The another reason which profoundly occupies Gautama's mind is his dislike for Maya which mainly springs from her romantic nostalgia of the past centred by her father. The frequent occurrence of the father's memories, in one event or the another by Maya, provokes Gautama to severe nervousness and irritation. His expression is as follows:

"If you knew your Freud, it would all be very straightforward and then appears as merely inevitable to you – taking your childhood and upbringing into consideration. You have a very obvious father obsession." (p.146)

Thus, Gautama establishes himself as lawyer within home by studying Maya's past history and becomes a doubtful husband regarding Maya's relationship with her father. This darkness of the doubtful husband in a patriarchal situation becomes a chief factor which removes his mind away from Maya. As a dire consequence of this, it is found that in Gautama's inner world, there is no acceptance to Maya as a wife. There is no love, and therefore no sex, and as a result, no pregnancy to Maya. Due to breakdown to the genuine marital bond, there forms in Gautama's mind, just a little sympathy for Maya as a family member. It gives rise to strong marital disharmony on the part of him and it throws Maya at the dark corner of their conjugal existence.

As an elite, Gatama has traditional frame of mind. The logic of his ideas seems to be derived from his profession of lawyership. His application of that sense of logic in marital relationship proves him to be a pseudo-intellectual outside his profession. Basically, he has no will power for solving the psychological complex formed in Maya. The most serious objection that could be raised against Gautama is about his understanding of the religious scripture, *Gita*, and his application of that knowledge to the most unsuitable conditions of Maya. In this sense, he is second to the albino-astrologer who adds confusion and chaotic sense in Maya's mind and ultimately pushes her towards insanity.

To the ironic vision of the novelist, the application of metaphysical ideas to the complex of physical existence in the most odd manner by an elite husband like Gautama is one of the dimensions of Maya-Gautama relationship. Instead of bringing her in the main stream of physical living, he renders Maya in the dark corner of metaphysics. Alongwith the perception of the situation as to what it demands and what actually there is, one is reminded of Nissim Ezekiel's poem, *Night of the Scorpion*. At both the places, 'night of the *Gita*' and 'night of the scorpion,' the darkness of metaphysics prevails, and no situation can search out remedy in a true sense.

The following conversation between the husband and the wife reflects Maya's agony due to childlessness, a miserable state of womanhood which Gautama as male can not understand:

"Can't you feel anything except boredom? – you didn't want to weep when you saw that pregnant woman?" (p.64)

Gautama's answer to this is purely male-oriented and male-dominating which highlights the patriarchal spirit of Indian society at large:

"Frankly", he said, "if a man were to react to the sight of pregnancy by bursting into tears, Maya, no court of law would consider him sane or sober"(p.65).

Gautama's knowledge of the *Gita* is artificial and hollow. It is knowledge for knowledge's sake without intuition and experience. Maya's observation of Gautama's knowledge of the *Gita* is significant: "How it suits you to quote these lines of a dry stick – an inhuman dry stick."

While preaching logic and principles of life from *Gita*, Gautama forgets the universal and simple religion of humanity and love which exactly Maya aspires for. Gautama is without any emotional trauma. His life has given him emotional stability. His profession encourages him with money and honour. On the contrary, Maya has nostalgia of the past and the melancholy of the present. This situation settles her gloomy future. Her intense isolation leading to mental disintegration has been studied by S.P. Swain. He comments:

"Hers is an explosive life of incommunication. Her loneliness, her aching heart and the progressive disorientation of self make her an existential character.

The loneliness corroding her heart and lacerating her psyche is existential in nature.”<sup>14</sup>

This state of aloneness in case of Maya is a product of the failed relationship between herself and Gautama. Gautama is least affected by it, but Maya is completely overpowered by the breakdown. She is sandwiched between the two family environments – the one at parental home in memory which she can not forget, and the another one is of the husband which she is not willing to accept. Maya wavers between the two aspects of Time: the romantic past filled with luxury and love and the hard-core patriarchal present full of lovelessness and anxiety.

All through her married life, Maya keeps the prophecy of death as a kind of secret. As a result, she can not withstand the pressure of growing fear-psychosis and she is ultimately broken into insanity through delirious state of mind realized in her hallucinations. She keeps the prophecy of death away from Gautama, hidden in the inner recesses of her mind. She thinks:

“He must not know, not even guess. Never, never, never. If he guesses, new dangers would arise like sudden fire out of the cracked earth and then, there was no one, not even my father to save me.”(p.151)

After all, it is purely Maya’s subjectivity in thinking. The intellectual trait of Gautama and his family might have removed this fear from her mind, had she spoken in the beginning. However, the fear is fused with self-preservation. Her thought illustrates the fact that she is afraid of Gautama’s getting divorced from her after listening to the prophecy. She calls it ‘a new danger’.

Maya is keen to Nature. Her affinity to Nature could be traced to her parental inheritance formed by heredity and environment. In her relationship with Gautama and his household when she loses a true bond of communion, she takes refuge in Nature. In her thought-process., Nature appears initially with clear sunlight but soon assumes sombre shades and that somberness is converted to evil force threatening her life to death. The journey of Maya’s escape as gauged on the scale of the four years of her married life in relation to the prophecy transcends the human and natural world because both threaten her.

Therefore, she makes a miserable attempt to find solace and security in the abstract philosophy of the *Gita*.

Maya experiences physical aloneness. Her attempt to overcome moral aloneness in terms of her association with her parental past or the truth of metaphysics is constantly attacked by the dominating sense of death, which intrudes her mind and destroys her normal sense. Ultimately, she falls prey to moral aloneness which destroys her mind to the significant extent.

The strong conflicts between Maya and Gautama reflect the rigidity of their attitudes against each other. Both of them lose the sources of marital happiness and harmony. Gautama calls Maya, “a neurotic, a mad spoilt baby”(p.115) Much of Gautama’s anger is directed towards Maya’s father for raising her the way Gautama experiences. Maya abuses him as ‘Traitor’. Her attachment with flower and Gautama’s detachment from its results into the basic dichotomy in the marital relationship which distorts and destroys the conjugal harmony.

In fact, Maya is restless for involvement, involvement that could give her honour, status and pleasure (‘joy of life’) as she thinks. For her, maximum ways of communication have been sealed. The utter lack of communication raises pressure of isolation against her. It is this pressure which intensifies her fear of death and thereby distorts her vision. Her too much involvement with the past makes her unable to cope up with the present.

It is to be noted that most of the studies of *Cry, The Peacock* are devoted to the understanding of Maya. But in order to grasp fully the nature of Maya-Gautama relationship, it is equally important to search into the life and personality of Gautama. He seems to echo T.S. Eliot’s Prufrock who says, “I’m not prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be.” Gautama unconsciously proves that he is not Lord Buddha who, out of selfless concern for people, devoted his life for the discovery of reasons and resources of human misery. Amidst the environment in the novel, Gautama stands selfish and self-centered. He fails to understand and fulfill the needs of his wife due to his professional greatness and male dominating trait.

Gautama's family background appears as an important link for understanding his traits and character. His father, a political activist, involved in Indian freedom struggle, moves in a 'new epoch' after independence. His mother has dispensary for serving the ailing people. Both of the parents are engaged and engrossed in their works so much that there forms a distance between the parents and the children. The distance appears almost as 'communication gap.' The novelist's comment shows it:

"Her children paid her little attention. There were many of them two of them students still, the other journalists, teachers, scientists, Gautama the eldest." (p.40).

It indicates that the children grew amidst themselves without much parental attention, care, concern and affection, which develops a strong fabric of kinship within the family. It proves the early break up of the primary ties between the children and the parents and a growing individuation in each of them. It is this process of individuation which is strongly marked in Gautama. Gautama's purely intellectual nature may be the necessary outcome of it. Being elder, he might have carried the responsibilities of the young ones like Bim in *Clear Light of Day*. It may be one of the reasons of his marriage at middle-age.

In view of the parent-child relationship in both the families of orientation-Maya's and Gauama's – it is found that there is an excess of kinship and love in case of Maya while there is a stark deficit of the same in case of Gautama. This sense of kinship and love is imbalanced at both the places, Lucknow and Delhi, and it has marked the individuals' character and behaviour in terms of emotion and intellect which lead to conflicts, loss of familial harmony and pleasure of conjugal living. R.S. Pathak (1991) holds the judgment about the emergence of this malformation in the relationship. He comments:

"An ever-widening gap in communication between the husband and wife is felt throughout the novel."<sup>15</sup>

Gautama's real self is formed with the ideals of hardwork and success, independence and use of creative energies for development. In his life, he works alongwith his real self and in much wider sense, he is a person of self-

actualization. The gap between real self and actual self is minimum in case of Gautama. His attempt to reach upto his glorified image in terms of power and prestige of his profession makes him socially alienated and to some extent, self-alienated. Within the family, Maya is the first victim of his social alienation.

Towards the end of Part-II. Gautama and Maya are engrossed in their own worlds. Gautama's is the world of his profession, his studies, trials and arguments in the court, and his continuous preoccupation with it, while Maya's is the world of longings and desires, that dangerous sphere of illusions emerging from her involvement with the past events and persons, the struggle of peacocks before death. Gautama is found delirious due to strain and stress emerging from the court trials. His intellectual trait disintegrates. His excellence in the profession of lawyership becomes his statues quo. The possibility of Gautama's defeat by the another lawyer in a case, gives Gautama a neurotic state of mind, that counterpart of the psychic-makeup which prevails largely in Maya's mind. Though the chemistry of the thoughts is different in the two minds, its results are the same: the deep engrossment characterized by a loss of sense and subsequently a loss of vision of the physical surrounding.

In a state of neurosis, Maya holds closest association with the full moon on the terrace as a consequence of the failure of her relationship with Gautama. In fact, she tries to search the imaginative alternative in moon. Gautama becomes a barrier between herself and the moon. She expresses herself:

“In talking, gesturing, moved in front of me, thus coming between me and the worshipped moon, his figure an ugly, crooked, grey shadow that transgressed its sorrowing chastity.”(p.208)

The accumulation of the disgust against Gautama for the four years, rises high alongwith the strong bond of love with the moon where the moon is perceived as radiating light 'with a vast tender mother love' (p.208). These contrasting feelings of hatred and love intermix in Maya's mind. However, it is the impulse of love which is predominant. Maya's act of pushing Gautama down the terrace is a conscious expression, in one sense. Because, behind her action, there is a history of the most logical and concrete reasons. Therefore, the understanding that Maya is insane during the time of calamity, needs to be

dismissed. She is not a sinner, but sinned against. Those who suffocated her with excesses and deficiencies and planted the fear of death in the ignorant mind are the real sinners.

It is to be noted that Maya is not profoundly affected by Gautama's death. In fact, she is not at all affected. It has two reasons – it was a matter of course as the prophecy had said, and secondly, she is released from her bondage with Gautama which rendered her life meaningless. Her disgust for Gautama's two qualities – “A body without a heart, a heart without a body.” (p.196) – is evident.

It could be argued that in Maya-Gautama relationship, the complex of heterogeneity is not at all resolved. On the contrary, it explodes in the form of Maya's accumulated fury and dissatisfaction against Gautama condensed into uncontrolled wildness.

In the overall consideration of Maya-Gautama relationship, it has been found that Maya lacks socialization at the family of orientation while Gautama emerges merely as a product of education and career without deep roots in understanding life, and hence without orientation for the ideology of life and the significance of human relations. Though *Cry, The Peacock* is considered as a story of a pathetic and sensitive girl, it could be reconsidered as a tragedy of modern individualism on the part of Gautama.

In the course of narration, the novelist presents some other relationships which reinforce the failure of Maya-Gautama relationship. May's companion Laila and her relationship with her husband is one of the instances in the novel. The relationship passes through three phases – lover and beloved, husband and wife, and finally nurse and patient. The youthful romantic haste of Laila for falling in love despite her being lecturer, and the strategic male-dominating wisdom of the tubercular young man to marry her alongwith her traditional fatalistic nature, are some of the characteristics of this relationship. As far as the nature of man-woman relationship is concerned, Laila's story illustrates her deception in love by the male-dominating sense of her husband. The novelist, in the expression of Maya, brings out the nature of this relationship in the following words:

“He had been dying of tuberculosis, when she fell in love with him, and she had married the fatality of his disease as much as the charm of his childish personality, or the elegance of his dark hair falling across his white brow.” (p.57)

Gautama’s sister Nila’s life also passes through adversity due to the basic contrasting traits and behaviour in the husband-wife relationship. Nila represents Gautama’s household. She is bold, beautiful and courageous. But her husband is extremely lazy and passive. In her married life, she undergoes all tasks of her every day living. Her strong irritation and dissatisfaction against her husband appears as follows:

“After ten years with that rabbit I married, I’ve learnt to do everything myself.”(p.162)

Her unalterable decision of getting divorced from her husband is a necessary outcome of this relationship.

Thus, man-woman relationship in the novel, *Cry, The Peacock* exists in multiple situations of married life, the chief amongst which is Maya-Gautama relationship. The patriarchal forces from her birth to the moment of her calamity at Gautama’s house – her father, the albino astrologer, the husband Gautama – ruin her life by overpowering her and ultimately rendering her powerless. As a consequence of this sort of relationship, Maya’s life starts anew at the end of the narrative: the life of a widow, to be taken to a lunatic asylum, to be lived with the maximum suffering, without any gain and hope in the patriarchal society but insecurity and threat to life in future. Thus, Maya’s life moves within the vicious circle of patriarchy from where death is the only possible escape, as communicated by the ultimate vision of the novelist.

Maya’s companion Laila remains a victim of her own instinct and the male-dominating deception in love. Her future is sealed with widowhood, a life of severe restrictions and suffering which puts living to meaninglessness. Nila’s boldness and creative progress is a matter of nervousness for her husband. Nila’s divorce and her life as a divorced woman in future is not filled with pleasure and satisfaction of living.

If the novelist presents half the life of these characters dominated by the male-dominating forces, half the life – filled with misery and gloom as a necessary consequence of the relationship of the patriarchal force of the Indian society to the female individuals – is left to the imagination of the reader at the end of the novel. Such a female life is mainly characterized by non-fulfillment of basic needs, failure of the ideological needs leading to the patriarchal emergence of isolation, in communication and disharmony which are soul-killing in nature, as observed by Balzac.<sup>16</sup>

With reference to the nature of man-woman relationship in the novel, *Cry, The Peacock*, it is argued that the theme is constructed and enriched by using the two prominent literary devices:- imagery and narrative technique.

### **3.2.2 The Device of Imagery:**

Qaiser Zoha Alam (1994) studies imagery in Indian English literature formed by the different Indian fiction writers. He classifies the images and interprets them in thematic context. His comment about Anita Desai's use of this device makes us probe into its functional role in portraying the nature of man-woman relationship. He comments:

“There is often a fairly heavy density of images in Anita Desai's works. Her images are generally integrally related to the context, too. She tends to conceive experience and project the same in terms of metaphors and symbols.”<sup>17</sup>

The pleasure song of life, “Sa, re, ga, ma, pa, da, ni, sa.. ..” and the image of ‘Radha-Krishna’ appear as leit-motif which represent the ideal life, where there is, as Maya thinks, ‘joy of life’, expressed in conjugal love and harmony of living. The image refers to T.S. Eliot's technique of using allusions of the past in order to highlight the reality in the present. The juxtaposed contrast between the ideal of the past and the real of the present vivifies the real. The image in an ironic sense, highlights the failure of Maya-Gautama relationship.

The most central metaphor which occupies the core of the thematic structure of the novel is the metaphor of wild frenzied peacocks. The analogy between the state of Maya and that of the peacocks, is the characteristic feature of the novel. This image of peacocks which builds a structure of other

associated images shows the parallel between the agony of May's living and that of the peacocks. It is as follows:

“Living they are aware of death, dying they are in love with life.” (p.96)

The image projects Maya's strong need of sexual union with Gautama before she dies in her subjective vision set by the astrologer.

The image of surgeon (p.20) is suggestive of Gautam's cold and calculating nature. It involves the use of sharp knife which shows verbal violence executed by Gautama against Maya. It projects Gautama's sense of superiority emerging from his male-dominance and lawyership. She being inferior in his view, his sense of superiority dismisses her every word and argument bringing about loss of inspiration and cheerfulness of living. The harmony is broken leading to nervousness and alienation in case of Maya.

The spirit and environment of superstition referred to as astrology, is personified in terms of albino astrologer. Maya's view of the albino is projected in the image of 'sluggish white worm indoors always in his dark room.' (p.28).

This analogy defines the overall existence of the astrologer which expresses a vast intellectual void and a sense of intellectual deception prevailing in the situation. The image throws light on loss of human qualities in the astrologer, especially the loss of his contact with the progressive scientific world existing outside his continuous conservative habitation and the same murky place & his livelihood on the basis of it.

The another ground of comparison associated with the astrologer in the same context is that of 'lizard' (p.32). It reminds one of Nissim Ezekiel's poem *Nigh of the Scorpion*, where the peasants are expressed in the image of 'swarm of flies' (line 08) However, the peasants are considered to be ignorant of scientific ideas in Ezekiel's poem, whereas, the astrologer is portrayed as an intellectual opportunist moving towards ignorant masses for their exploitation. The novelist narrates the situation:

“And he ushered us out flicking the garment that slipped its tongue like a lizard at its petrified victim.” (p.32)

It vivifies the relationship between the astrologer and Maya in the form of 'petrified victim'. The destruction of Maya's life due to psychological

disintegration originating from the astrologer's prophecy of death in Maya's married life, amply illustrates the nature of this relationship between the astrologer and Maya, as communicated by the image.

The lasting impressions of the albino-astrologer on Maya which arrested the movements of her living and thinking on a physical and rational basis have been duly expressed in the following simile:

"I summoned up again the vision of albino who had cast his shadow like a net across me."

Thus, image of a net shows invasion of restrictions on Maya's freedom where the albino and his vision penetrates Maya's mind leading to fear-psychosis from where she could never recover.

The two images 'a silver oak'(p.33) and 'Moghul garden'(p.35) amply illustrate the qualities of Maya's father. The images project him as safeguard to Maya who provides her affection, support and security. The images also reflect delicacies and beauty of life cherished, lived and inherited to Maya by her father. This romantic and luxurious aspect of the father's nature is crystallized by these phrases. The images 'a toy princess' and 'a toy world' (p.43) vivify the romantic nature of Maya's childhood derived from the romantic trait of the father. This world of childhood created by the father is devoid of drastic conditions of human existence, which she fails to cope up after her marriage. All through her life she remains observed with the father for his love and romance as signified by the above images.

Apart from this, the novelist employs a large variety of images which portray Maya's neurotic life which is the result of her relationship with these three elements in the Indian patriarchal society. The imagery mainly moves from her sense of terror emanating from the fear of death, her extremely dwarfed freedom of living and her intense aloneness in Gautama's household in Delhi.

One of the outstanding metaphors in the novel which projects the social conditions of traditional Indian existence in the form of astrology and superstition could be realized in the image of a 'well'(p.185) The image appears in the following narration:

“.. .. till there were none left at all, and darkness was the inevitable, the only physical matter left, thick and black and full of presences, a well of it. The edge of the well as slimy, wet and hideous, but a well must have an edge and he who enters a well must touch the edge.” (p.185)

This metaphor of ‘well’ illustrates the world of astrology where foretelling is as dark as darkness itself. The image communicates the fact that inclination of a person towards it is as dangerous as falling in the well. The ‘edge of the well’ refers to the hypnotizing power of the astrologer and astrology. The three adjectives used to define the edge are ‘slimy’, ‘wet’, and ‘hideous’ which denote a specific set of attributes due to which a person undergoes psychological and physical wretchedness.

Thus, imagery in *Cry, The Peacock* evolves mainly from characterization – the father, the astrologer and the husband Gautama – who influence Maya’s life in the most negative manner and throw her out from harmony and normal sense of living. The damaging impact of these patriarchal forces on Maya’s life has been vividly communicated by the imagery. Many of the images are in simile and a few in metaphors. The general character of imagery in the novel *Cry, The Peacock* in relation to its prevalence in vivifying the nature, resources and consequences of man-woman relationship can be perceived as, “dehumanizing metaphors”<sup>18</sup> where the humans behave below their dignity and humanity and pull the helpless individuals down the scale of their living, almost render them sub-humans or inanimates.

### **3.2.3 The Narrative Techniques:**

The narrative techniques used by the novelist is another important literary device in *Cry, The Peacock* which organizes strategically the whole narrative of man-woman relationship in a specific way as projected from the vision of the novelist.

Meenakshi Mukherji (1971) while studying the evolvement of the Indian fiction writers alongwith themes and techniques, studies the first person narrative as dominant method. She thinks:

“Since the theme of some of the best works is the quest for self, this technique is often the most suitable and has been applied in widely diverse situations by Indo-Anglian novelists.”<sup>19</sup>

In Anita Desai’s novels, there is a quest for self by female protagonists who explore the nature of their relationship with the Indian patriarchal society. The patriarchy operates in different forms of male behaviour which ultimately tends to subordinate and suppress the lives of women, to misery and meaninglessness.

In the novel, Anita Desai follows mixed narrative method in which Part-I and Part-III - extremely small - are narrated in third person narrative, and Part-II which is the major part of narration, is written in first-person narrative. Maya, the female protagonist, remains the centre of consciousness.

Part-I deals with the episode of the death of the pet dog Toto, and Maya and Gautama’s reactions to this death. It appears almost as prologue to the main story, which focuses on the contrast of temperaments and behaviour between Maya and Gautama: emotion versus intellect. It forms a basic principle of contrast between the husband and the wife along which the marital relationship collapses.

The opening sentence of Part-I, “All day the body lay rotting in the sun”(p.05) sets the tone of the overall vision of the novelist. It anticipates violence and death as the inevitable result of the marital relationship emerging from the incompatibility between males and females characterized by anguish and lifelessness on the part of females.

The ending of the novel imparted by Part-III also involves a strategic feature of narration. All the women characters – Maya, Gautama’s mother and Nila - have been brought together. They emerge as the miserable end-products of man-woman relationship in the novel. This part is exclusively devoted for these women and their dark future. It is characterized by the absence of male characters. Here, the novelist focuses on the unsafe and miserable life of these women amidst the patriarchal Indian society as emerging from their severed relationships with their husbands. It projects the novelist’s strong concern with

the suffering women isolated from their male-relations and ultimately showing the need for love and communication in their life.

Maya's frenzy and cries amidst darkness of the night up in Gautam's house have been silenced by Gautama's mother who almost functions as mother to Maya. The last lines of the narration communicate the ultimate vision of the novelist which underlines the ideal of love and communication as the prerequisite for marital harmony between husband and wife:

“They met for an instance, there was silence, and then both disappeared into the dark quiet. All around the dark was quiet then.” (p.218)

The main block of narration is Part-II. The narrative has been arranged with Maya's frequent moving from the present into the past and surging from the past onto the present. However, her disability to cope up with the adversity of the present makes her nostalgic to enter into her romantic, luxurious and loving past. Jayita Sengupta (2000) observes:

“The narrative technique at work is that of stream-of-consciousness where past intermittently exists with the present.”<sup>20</sup>

As a structural principle, dialogue and narration for the present and dialogue and narration for the past occurring with some definite order from the compact mass of narration in Part-II. Maya's consciousness of her married life at the family of procreation and her experience of childhood and adolescence at the family of orientation are at the centre of action, unfolded in the form of memory. The agonizing experience of man-woman relationship is the basis of consciousness on the part of the female protagonist, Maya.

The application of third-person narration in Part-I and Part-III is significant in the sense that the novelist as authorial voice probes deep into the life of the female characters through their relationships with their husbands, their households and their relationship with the patriarchal society at large. It helps the novelist communicate her concern towards the existential situation in the women's life.

The central part of the novel (Part-II) in first-person narrative communicates the authenticity of the female experience of life in relation to

patriarchy. It is the novelist's attempt to display the documentary features of life with the least use of imagination.

The reference to the religious scripture, *Gita* in relation to Maya-Gautama relationship is one of the narrative strategies where the novelist communicates the sociological feature of Indian life, especially the confusion between physical living and the metaphysics. It is through the *Gita* that Gautama pushes Maya towards abstract philosophy rather than bringing her in the light of physical living filled with 'joy of life'. Therefore, such appearance becomes cynical and never the welcoming one in the present context, as viewed by the novelist.

Thus, Anita Desai employs in *Cry, The Peacock*, mixed-narration method alongwith other strategies such as Initiation and Ending with incorporation of certain aspects of the Indian social practices. The narrative style makes her project her vision of the patriarchal nature of man-women relationship and the ultimate miserable life of women.

Thus, the study of the nature of man-woman relationship made in *Cry, The Peacock*, shows that Maya's relationships with her father, the albino astrologer and her husband Gautama set the currents of her tragedy. The researcher thinks that the complexity of her character and behaviour is formed by her intense nostalgia for the past, the tremendous pressure of the fear of death and her state in the present without love, sex and communication. On the scale of Time, the acceleration of this complex forms neurosis in her. Her real self is damaged and actual self is not completely formed. The gulf between the real self and the actual self widens to a large extent and at last meets a doom in terms of Gautama's death. Her adoption at the family of procreation remains highly dynamic.

Maya's journey for freedom has instinctive sense because her lower needs are not fulfilled. On the contrary, Gautama is a self-actualized person who continues his life according to his real self with the strong formation of individuation in him. The most serious mistake of Gautama is the utter neglect of Maya's needs in conjugal life. His attempt to reach upto his glorified image in his profession of lawyership makes him neurotic towards the end.

The two contrary worlds, like two uncontrolled satellites, collide against each other: one is destroyed and the another, damaged for ever.

The true nature of Maya-Gautama relationship can not alone be searched in incompatibility, but it goes beyond that and enters in the realm of patriarchy. Anuradha Roy(1999) rightly points out:

“To reduce and limit the Maya-Gautama relationship to one of incompatibility takes away from the author’s awareness of the unequal systems operating in the power-structure in society.”<sup>21</sup>

This patriarchal power-structure in the form of male supremacy and subordination and suppression of women prevails in the Maya-Gautama relationship and serves as the root cause of the failure of the relationship. The relationship assumes the colours of the relationship of the Duke and the Duchess, as found in Robert Browning’s dramatic monologue, *My Last Duchess*.<sup>22</sup> where Gautama has male-supremacist power of the Duke, and Maya has the docility and innocence of the Duchess, where dominance of the Duke terminates the Duchess from life while here, the dominance of Gautama boomerangs against him in the form of Maya’s wildness and rage. Ironically, Gautama falls the victim of his own supremacy. The probable reason in the deviation of the result of patriarchy may lie in Gautama’s highly intellectual profession which consumes his brain and body.

The albino emerges has the meanest of mankind prevailing in the milieu of the novel. As a godfather of patriarchy, he creates a sense of botheration of death in Maya’s mind and develops in her, fear-psychosis, leading to disintegration of her mind. The father’s despotic discipline and benevolence victimizes Maya indirectly by restricting her freedom and ultimately her social growth.

Lalia’s relationship with her husband, Nila’s hard work against her idle husband, Gautama’s mother’s whole life devoted for the birth and growth of many children show familial exploitation of these women done under the patriarchal rule of male dominance.

Anita Desai uses in the novel, two prominent devices – imagery and narrative technique – in order to focus on and vivify this nature of man-woman

relationship. The Imagery takes its roots in characterization and the inter-relationship of the characters forming the complex of Maya's thoughts and behaviour, and the distorted vision of Maya rising from fear of death. The mixed narrative method along with initiation and ending strategies of narration communicate this aspect of man-woman relationship with high seriousness, where the lives and the relationships waver between life and death and the women emerge as miserable beings searching the meaning of their life in aloneness amidst the patriarchal environment of Indian society during the modern times of the Indian nation.

### 3.3.1 Man-Woman Relationship in *Voices in the City* (1965):

*Voices in the City* (1965) is Anita Desai's second novel in which Calcutta city emerges as a large and dangerous 'power-station' characterized by the multiple aspects of human power chiefly formulated in terms of material fever, and hence constantly connecting and disconnecting the wires of human relationship.

Calcutta has been portrayed as the city where there is an absolute loss of soul, loss of human values and humanity. To the ironic vision of the novelist, it projects a stance leading to decay, destruction and death of the weak and the poor, based on the capitalist values such as self-growth, honour, money, exploitation and violence. All of them are strategic in nature. The destroying value of the city against the minor, struggling individual, appears in the novel as follows:

"On all sides, the city pressed down, alight, aglow, and stirring with its own marsh-bred monster life, that like an ogre kept one eye open through sleep and waking."(p.41)

Therefore, it gains immense significance to study the nature of man-woman relationship in the situation characterized by the pessimistic sense evolving from the failure, anguish, decay and destruction of the fragile individuals who come to the city for the dreams to be crystallized. In relation to this, it is found that the four members of the Ray family of Bengal – Nirode, Manisha, Amla and the Mother – who give the novel a narrative structure in terms of four parts, occupy the centre of action which is mainly psychological, emerging as a result of their hard struggle against the circumstances in their living, which almost initiate from their childhood.

The most significant marital relationship appears in the Manisha-Jiban relationship. K.R.S. Iyengar (1973) views this relationship as follows:

"The Maya-Gautama tragedy is re-enacted in the Manisha-Jiban marriage, for Manisha commits suicide, unable to stand the strain of living in her husband's house."<sup>22</sup>

Thus, Iyengar shows break-down to Manisha-Jiban relationship which culminates into Manisha's suicide. It brings us to the point of basic disharmony

between the husband and the wife. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the nature of conditions in which the individuals – Manisha and Jiban - live before and after their marriage. To begin with Manisha, we have to trace back to the family of orientation in which she is born and brought up.

In fact, Manisha is born in Ray family wherein there has been found a strong imbalance of parental relationship. The father and the mother have their own complex of being superior, which causes disharmony in their co-life. Manisha's mother belonged to extremely rich parental family. She was Nepali and she had inherited a 'bourgeois tradesman's family' (p.205). They owned property in Calcutta and around Kalimpong. Manisha's mother inherited not only the property but also the beauty of her mother. These two aspects of the inheritance form superiority – complex in Manisha's mother.

The Mother's 'high colouring and cheekbones' (p.205) are inherited by Manisha and Amla. It endows the mother with a trait of superiority and an attitude of inferiority about others alongwith her highly materialistic frame of mind and body. She appears as a devotee of her body and bodily pleasures. It is observed that her narcissistic temperament is accompanied with her overpowering traits of epicurean spirit. Her marriage with Manisha's father proves to be a marriage far below her dignity and superiority. Thus, it causes breakdown to her youthful dreams of marriage and husband and the reality makes her accept the man whom she is never willing to accept in the inner world of her mind.

Manisha's father had a rich family background, but by the time of marriage, the estate was sold. He belonged to 'quarrelsome and uncooperative lot' (p.205). In fact, he had married her for estate and property which he could own after marriage. However, it is the frustration in his sense of achieving ownership over her estate and beauty, that renders him highly alcoholic and idle. The dominance of the mother is not tolerated by his patriarchal unconscious which emerges in the form of male-dominating superiority and restricting her freedom within the domestic activities with expectation of absolute surrender before his patriarchal power.

The father's behaviour in his married life has been pointed out by Amla in her talk with Dharma:

“My father always got on her nerves by simply never doing anything. I always see him lying back indolently, like an overfed house cat, against mother's embroidered, Tibetan cushions, toying with a cheroot or glass of whisky or both.” (p.206).

The mother's aspirations regarding her husband remain suppressed, but not totally nullified. Her extreme frankness and freedom with young and handsome males around her in her married life, as inherited from her father's home, is doubted and utterly disliked by the father. The gap between dream and reality which gives rise to her inclination towards other males, causes a psychological destabilization in her mind. It is identified by the father and converted into his spiteful smile towards her. His behaviour towards the mother becomes, as stated by Amla, 'imperiously unfair' (p.206). His general bent of mind is that of hatred and disgust against his wife. Consequently, he does not display open rebel in the form of physical violence, but it is transformed into extreme passivity, the wine addiction and idleness.

Thus, the active dominance of the mother leads to the removal of the father from his active life and drives him in the cozy corner of idleness with the suppressed fury and disgust against her. Thus, there remains an unresolved, permanent heterogeneity formed between the husband and the wife which affects the overall aspects of the growth of their children.

His emotion becomes 'very violent' (p.207). His irritation is mainly expressed in showing her mother the moving butterfly from one flower to another in a garden of Kalimpong (p.207). It is suggestive of his suspicion of her relationship with other men, which ruins the relationship in a true sense. However, the trait of indiscipline and idle life, to some extent, has been inherited by the father from his forefathers and it is probably the main cause of the dissolution of the whole estate. The prestige and power of the mother evolving from individual beauty and property is rated highest in her judgment of life where even the family and the family welfare becomes dwarf.

The fact of Manisha's failure in school, her slowness in learning and clumsiness in performing makes her lose her confidence of living, and hence her harmony with the environment in the school. It makes her introvert and she feels alienated from the situation. The anxiety thus generated in the childhood causes formation of morbidity in her nature. She attains almost a depressed state of mind during her adolescence which is not at all identified, understood and sufficiently treated by the parents towards positivity as they remained engrossed in their own conflicts, their own interests and nervousness. It is the family that shows not only lack of harmony between the husband and the wife, but between the parents and the children. Usha Bande rightly observes:

“The isolation and hostility of their apparently happy home work towards emotional imbalance of the three siblings.”<sup>23</sup>

The another prominent factor which forms morbidity in Manisha is lack of genuine love from her parents during her childhood and adolescence. It develops in her mind insecurity and fear of the environment. Manisha narrates her experience as follows:

“And I discover that it is the absence of it that makes us, brother and sister, such abject rebels, such craven tragedians. In place of this love that suffuses the white face of this mystic waif, we possess a darker, fiercer element – fear” (p.135)

Now, it is possible to argue that Manisha's morbidity, which plays significant role in her later life, is not her inborn character-trait, but it is created and cultivated in the conditions of living during her childhood and adolescence. Thus, Manisha's morbidity is the result of parental failure in bringing up the children, especially the mother, who remains in her power and prestige without genuine concern and love and responsibilities for her own blood ties.

Abraham Maslow (1970) observes that given favourable environment, warmth of affection, inner security and inner freedom, the child learns to live according to his real self. In this sense, Manisha as a child forsakes her real self and begins to waver between the real self and the actual self. She fails to overcome anxiety and fear, the two forces in her mind which make her gloomy and disintegrate her active self leading to passivity.

Manisha's beautiful physical features and her sensitivity towards humiliation and insult, are inherited from her mother. In addition, she has liking for reading books and knowledge. It endows her with a sense of pride and superiority in comparison to others. At the family of orientation, however, the mother remains highly subjective in her performance of living, devoid of the traditional features of Indian womanhood and she fails to create those in the family environment. Therefore, the values of traditional woman's life are not inculcated on Manisha's mind as well as in her living as a woman. Even the father's decision of Manisha's marriage is not sound. It is rightly stated by Aunt Lila in her talk with Amla:

“That they were a respectable, middle class Congress family, completely unsuitable to Manisha's tastes and inclinations. So your father decided he was the right man, that it was the right family.” (p.199)

It then follows that the father preferred government service, material riches and the social prestige of the family over the family background and Manisha's personal traits along which she grew. Manisha's transplantation from the family of orientation to the family of procreation is not carefully worked out. In fact, her traits and personality which is derived from her parental family, prove to be contrary to Jiban's household which is politically active, traditional and conservative, though materially opulent.

The father's selection of the family for marrying Manisha utterly fails as he fails to recognize the true needs and behavioural characteristics of his daughter. It shows not only his negligence but also his ignorance. His selection of material opulence as security to life is partly rational, but he fails to understand the fact that the human climate at the two families radically differ from each other. In the family of orientation, the children grew with their shortcomings and weaknesses without parental attention in their development, without socialization. While in the family of procreation, there is a high silence of the imperial power derived partly from politics and partly from the traditional thought and practice of living life which is necessary for gaining mass favour. It is a joint family with strategic and calculated life, a people with extra consciousness for honour and status in the society.

Jasbir Jain (1987) studies the nature of human relationships in the novel. Her perception of Manisha's father as an irresponsible chief of the family, appears in Amla's view:

“In Amla's view, their father has also acted meanly where Manisha was concerned. She wonders how her sister could have been married to such a non-entity as Jiban.”<sup>24</sup>

Manisha's long time suffering and her suicide at the family of procreation needs to be understood in the light of her relationship with the patriarchal structure of the household wherein the man-woman relationship emerges alongwith its characteristic existence in the form of joint family structure with the mother as a female patriarch controlling the whole family by forcing it through the traditional unconscious patriarchal features, one of the significant marks of which is the loss of freedom in case of the young individuals and their merging in the mainstream patriarchal environment with the loss of their identity and personal traits of living where the conformation becomes the law

The traditional household of Jiban referred to as 'Bow Bazaar house' (p.109) is located at the centre of the Calcutta city. It is visualized with the reception of Jiban-Manisha marriage. The 'surreptitious push from Jiban' (p.109) for touching the women's feet as experienced by Manisha renders her restless. It indicates two contrary aspects of Manisha-Jiban relationship: Jiban's traditional nature and Manisha's acute sensitivity and unwillingness to traditions. It makes her lose self-respect and dignity. She thinks:

“How they all honour their own feet, More – I lose count – but many more. Feet before faces here.” (p.109)

The most significant aspect of Jiban's traditional house which intimidates Manisha is 'the thick iron bars' (p.109) which symbolizes the strict patriarchal order and ultimately the utter loss of freedom on the part of women who remain enclosed inside almost like prisoners wherein the whole of their life is merged in order, burden and difficulties. Manisha's perception of the sound in such a huge house expresses awe and fear for her. It is as follows:

“A black, bitter terrifying sound that repeats and repeats itself like the modif of a nightmare.”(p.110)

It anticipates the nature of her future in the house which she slowly experiences. Her boredom and abhorrence for school examinations is clearly seen in Nikhil’s efforts for studying for examinations. The depressing impact of school examinations is found on Manisha. She says:

“You are not preparing for an exam. You are preparing for the devil – a black, dead devil.”

It is the examinations during the school days in the past which have slowly destroyed Manisha’s active mind and have rendered her depressed, causing loss of her grip over practical aspects of living life. The logical sharpness and the ideological tactics of human behavior are at low. It can be perceived as the result of morbidity of thinking about her failure in school and the stigma of being dull, as it remains in her mind. Jiban’s own sense of superiority and his attitude of inferiority towards Manisha has been expressed by her as memory of her wedding:

“While I sat beside Jiban in front of the fire and the priest, and when I caught his eye, he smiled at me mockingly and winked with sympathy.” (p.110)

Jiban’s superiority is derived mainly from his pride of the family background, his education, his government service and he being male-dominating in the patriarchal family environment. While Manisha’s inferiority is mainly caused by her academic failure, her disordered family background, her morbidity and she being a woman in the patriarchal society. This particular frame of mind gives Jiban a sort of coldness and dominance against Manisha due to which both of them can not communicate to each other freely. In fact, no feelings of love are formed between the husband and the wife.

In Manisha-Jiban relationship, the significant portion of Manisha’s concentration is occupied by her strong concern with Nirode, her brother, who had been as dull as herself and had constantly failed. K.R.S. Iyenger (1973) calls her ‘his soul-sister.’ It defines the nature of the relationship between the sister and the brother. Both of them are governed by the similar circumstances and traits and hence the feverish conditions of mind and body. Therefore the unity of

the minds and sentiments is also found between them. It is to be noted that it is the only relationship in the Ray family where there is originality of kinship and observance of a sense of blood tie. As Manisha's concern for Nirode is fully realized in terms of her financial arrangement as medical help to him, this relationship, generates the most serious phase of Manisha's married life where psychological torture knows no bounds.

She compares the males of Jiban's family. She knows them as solid, rounded with prosperity, and holding government services, while Nirode appears as, 'a shrunken shell' (p.110) whose energy is exhausted due to frustration and hardwork, and whose body has gone extremely weak and pale due to addition of wine and cigar. Since Manisha and Nirode suffered in the past with the same sense of failure and depression, they are united in their feelings of inferiority, and therefore, they show their feelings like two disabled children who are cut off from the main current of the world.

Though Jiban sits with them in the hall, his intellectual sense and superiority keeps him psychologically away from them. Their feelings and emotions full of pity for each other, are observed by Jiban with 'curious glance' (p.111) without any emotional involvement, without understanding, without a sense of co-operation and sympathy. Certainly, it disappoints Manisha to a large extent. The questions the uncles ask him about his 'post, salary, accommodation, prospects' (p.111) for which his answers are almost empty, proves for Manisha, the humiliating experience. She realizes the humiliation of her brother also.

Manisha's life in Jiban's family carried forward with sheer domestic hardwork, as executed by the family chief, is purely patriarchal in nature, where the significance of male life is underlined with the negligence of woman's life. Manisha expresses her experience:

"My black wardrobe, my family, my duties of serving fresh chappatis to the uncles as they eat, of listening to my mother-in-law, as she tells me the remarkably many ways of cooking fish, of being Jiban's wife." (p.111)

The significance of the line 'Kafka a scene for you' (p.112) lies in the existential situation of Manisha's life. In a way, the novelist projects the vision

that Manisha's life becomes a part of Kafka's fiction which mainly deals with misery of human life.

Nikhil's recitation of 'shlokas' appears in the novel as symbolic presentation of the unconscious patriarchal culture which takes its roots in the Religion. The shlokas appear with Manisa's response of deciphering "no meaning in this long dully warbling, rolled out quite flat into such monotony as only the insane could tolerate"(p.112)

This reference to shlokas appear as a critiques of Orthodox Hindu way of life. The strong patriarchal undercurrents are found in Sankritic studies. Regarding his Sanskritic studies, the boy Nikhil is operated by the strong will of his father indicated by his 'whip'. The boy is forced through the patriarchal dictates for sanskrit which he does not like. But he has neither will nor freedom to choose his subject of education. Manisha clearly observes his interest in the new fields of career. Even Nikhil's mother has patriarchal unconscious in her mind to follow the dictates of her husband irrespective of Nikhil's bent of mind and her own thought.

Amidst such a situation, it is quite obvious to see that Jiban's household poses a sort of botheration emerging from loss of freedom and imposition of patriarchal dominance on Manisha. This patriarchal situation complicates Manisha's neurotic state of mind. It is well established that Manisha has not grown in a patriarchal environment at the family of orientation. Therefore, Manisha undergoes alienation amidst the elements of the family of procreation. The emotional nature of her alienation has been detected by S.P. Swain (2000). His comment is as follows:

"Alienation in Desai is neither moral nor spiritual, it is intellectual and emotional."<sup>25</sup>

The most significant fact which collapses Manisha's relationship with Jiban and the entire joint family is her childlessness. In fact, this condition in Manisha's married life, like termite, gnaws her mind constantly and like a weakened tree, she collapses in her later life. The failure of the physiological condition of Manisha with regards to procreation has been brought about by her

in terms of conversation done by the female members in the family. It has a strong cynical view:

“No, no, the doctor has said it is not the womb. It is these tubes what d’you call them Fallopian and Pallopan. What is it – they are blocked.” (p.113)

Manisha’s sensitivity fails to tolerate such bitter comments about the cause of her childlessness. It becomes a strong torturing experience for her. As a result of it, her spontaneity and harmony to communicate with others is drastically reduced. She perceives these discussions about her body organs as extremely humiliating, as it makes her lose self-respect. The process of self-alienation which starts soon after her arrival in Jiban’s household now starts aggravating.

Erich Fromm (1960) studies the various aspects of ‘dynamic adaptation.’ He comments:

“Every neurosis is an example of this dynamic adaptation; it is essentially an adaptation to such external conditions (particularly those of early childhood) as are in themselves irrational, and generally speaking, unfavourable to the growth and development of the child.”<sup>26</sup>

From Fromm’s discussion of adaptation, it follows that Manisha’s adaptation to the Jiban’s family environment after her marriage is of dynamic type where her psychological conditions seriously change towards growing phase of neurosis while coping up with the patriarchal environment, at the family of procreation. It is equally significant to note that there is no proper formation of actual self in Manisha and there is no development of it in the course of time.

The key element which operates the entire patriarchal human environment in the family, is Jiban’s mother. To put it profoundly, she is Manisha’s Mother-in-law. She moves in the family as the central patriarchal power and perhaps the pangs of childlessness are more to the mother-in-law, because her son has been referred to as a childless man in the relatives and in the community at large. This indirect sense of humiliation and disrespect of the son is not tolerated by the mother.

The dishonour and disgrace thus brought to the name and life of Jiban in the society create its responsibility towards Manisha, as viewed by the mother-in-law. However, this has been the tormenting experience for Jiban himself. This situation unconsciously renews the mother-son blood tie wherein the mother and the son constantly think over the situation. Thus, Manisha's physiological problem causes rift in the marital relationship between Manisha and Jiban where the mother and the son are united. The possessive power of the mother over the son is renewed.

However, the loveless nature of Manisha's life is continued in her relationship with Jiban in her married life. Jiban's cold and ideological mind with his sense of superiority and Manisha's incapacity to bear child determine his hateful attitude towards her which he inwardly cherishes within him. Manisha's perception of love goes beyond bondage and she thinks of freedom as crucial element of it. Her expression is as follows:

“If only love existed that is not binding, that is free of rules, obligations, complicity and all stirrings of mind or conscience, then – but there is no such love.” (p.135)

Manisha's sense of love as unconditional hand of affection and attachment is found not even in her relationship with her mother. Therefore, Manisha suffers from isolation and Jiban is possessed by a strong sense of success in his life. The contrary situations of their minds and life never unite them in a true sense and they stand poles apart, with Manisha's longing for love, and Jiban never responding to it.

Jiban emerges as a person of self-actualization who grew from his childhood, with love, security, care and concern, especially provided by the mother. His education and government service show his career. He is interested in his progress on these lines. Manisha's disability to conceive and bear child and its socio-psychological impact on Jiban makes him desert his sexual relationship with her. Therefore, it creates his psychological separation from Manisha. The long-lasting patriarchal effect of this condition in co-life renders him cold and loveless regarding Manisha. Jiban's suffering as a childless man is crucially significant from patriarchal point of view where the ideas and

attitudes of the people harass him psychologically and he feels a void in his life. There is a possibility of his coldness being converted into rage and fury in his mind which is not given a direct vent, but waiting, to be arranged in the most polished and sophisticated manner. Therefore, most serious consequence of Manisha's childlessness is the loss of her acceptance of Jiban's household, especially his Mother and himself.

Shanta Acharya (1991) in her studies, traces the reasons of Manisha's isolation. She observes:

“Her husband's inability to fathom her need, as well the general hard-heartedness of his family members contribute to her isolation.”<sup>27</sup>

Below the apparent hard-heartedness of the family, there lies the unwillingness of the family to continue Manisha as Jiban's wife. In the sociological sense, it has its basis in the patriarchal ideology which germinates in the soil of Religion. The essence of this ideology is that there can be no salvation to man if he has no children and especially the male child. There is no doubt that this ideology is a part of collective unconsciousness of Indian society which is unquestionably found in the minds of the mother and the son. Therefore, the deep currents of their minds determine the separation of Manisha from the family, almost by moving her to her parental home.

As a political family, the significant fact is that the things are not worked out directly in a straightforward manner, but there is a systematic arrangement of torture by stopping communication and dominating Manisha with the curse of loneliness which consumes her mind and body. The expectation from this strategy is that Manisha should leave the home on her own, because, asking her to leave the home may cause social issue of driving her out, and they being prestigious family, would not like to follow this practice.

Probably, it is Manisha's childlessness that creates in Jiban's household nervousness and a sense of protest against the entire Ray family. Therefore, they show no concern for Nirode's failing health and hospitalization. On the contrary, the mother accuses Manisha of 'theft.' She now exploits the opportunity of driving Manisha out from the house after her possession of Jiban's money and its use for Nirode's hospitalization. It emerges as the peak

point of politics against Manisha arranged by the mother-in-law and crucially supported by her husband, Jiban. She receives a tremendous shock to see the extremely tense human situation of the house. She narrates:

“Coming home I found the big house shrunken down together like a boil about to burst – so dense was their suspicion, their fear.”(p.137)

The mother’s wrath which is an accumulation over the years and now displayed with high intensity is naturally and purposely arranged in order to dominate Manisha. Her rage appears in the following lines:

“Money has been stolen, you know, Jiban’s money – of course, the servants will be dismissed, all of them. I will not have a thief in my house. Who is to tell who this thief is? After all, you were the only person who was in the room all day.”(p.137)

The mother-in-law’s attack against Manisha serves its purpose in terms of Manisha’s high dismay and discouragement. If there is some psychological energy remained, it is destroyed by Jiban’s expression, communicated by Manisha:

“He did not say ‘Why did you not tell them at once?’ He said, ‘Why didn’t you tell me before you took it?’”(p.138)

Jiban’s intellectual silence in addition to a sentence with his dominance against Manisha in the entire incident shows his strongly negative attitude to Manisha, a psychological condition identical with his mother.

The possessive power of the mother over the son is indicated in the following sentence:

“My son is always careful of his things.”(p.137)

It could be argued that Manisha-Jiban relationship could be better understood by perceiving Jiban-Mother relationship. The dictatorial power of the mother and her ideological rigours reduce Manisha to a petty thing without human dignity and freedom, and yet she had to serve her. It is a torturing experience for Manisha to massage the mother-in-law’s legs. It almost defines Manisha’s status as a slave. The most sorrowful situation is that Jiban is not at all affected by this condition of Manisha as his wife. As a husband, he never bothered about her self-respect, dignity and freedom. It is found that the

sanctity of matrimony and the consequent sense of marital relationship alongwith the duties of the husband towards wife, is not adequately rooted in Jiban's mind. The probable reason for this is his psychological involvement with the mother due to her overpowering impressions on him. The situation that prevails here resembles, to some extent, the mother-son relationship in D.H. Lawrence's novel, *Sons and Lovers*, where the mother is in possession of the son and she takes off his freedom of married life. Hence, there is no formation of the bonds of mutual love and feeling.

If Manisha has no freedom from patriarchal environment, ideas and work, Jiban has no freedom from the mother herself. He is bound to her psychologically and fail to hold independent position in order to govern his married life, its problems and pleasure. Thus, the mother becomes a major barrier between Jiban and Manisha's marital relationship. The maternal attachment can not form complete individualization in Jiban. Therefore, he is not empowered for solving the problem in his married life, independently.

Dr. P. F. Patil, while studying the nature of marital disharmony in the novels of Anita Desai, comments:

“Manisha and Jiban have married having nothing in common in each other's personality. It is the most pathetic illustration of maladjustment in marriage.”<sup>28</sup>

It is to be noted that Jiban's mother chiefly contributes to the maladjustment in the marital relationship between Manisha and Jiban. The despotic power of the mother where there is affection and attachment for the son and repulsion and rage for the daughter-in-law, widens the gap of communication and love between Manisha and Jiban. This complexity in the domestic sphere of the family worsens the Manisha-Jiban relationship. Thus, if Manisha directly suffers from the dominance of the mother-in-law, Jiban unconsciously suffers from the dominance of the mother. In consequence, both remain poles apart, each in its restricted psychological cell to be operated by the mother only.

Jiban remains proud and engrossed as the homogeneous part of the dignity and greatness of his family. As Manisha's family can not equal his

family, he renders Manisha and her family much inferior to him. This particular sense of Jiban can not form familial sense in him and, as a consequence of this, Manisha remains outsider. She is not whole-heartedly accepted by Jiban and his family. Therefore, there is no development of a concrete sense of marriage and family in Jiban's mind. Its presence would have individualized him from his parental family and probably he would have considered Manisha as his life partner. But the impact of the family and the family prestige centered by the mother does not allow formation of any genuine bond of love from Jiban to Manisha. Thus, Manisha Jiban relationship in its marital situation remains a relationship which is not isolated from the larger family of orientation and hence, its transformation into family of procreation in a true sense is not observed.

The most adverse consequences of the failure of Manisha-Jiban relationship are found in the neurotic and depressed condition of Manisha. Manisha's sensitivity is derived partly from her sense of superiority and her attempts to preserve her self-respect emerging from her sense of her beauty, and her reading of the books of modern writers and philosophers. In fact, her sense of superiority is damaged with her emerging humiliation in Jiban's family. Her consciousness of life is intensified by the reading of Kafka's novels, which imprint on her mind the most agonizing human experiences. Manisha identifies herself with these experiences and instead of applying her energies to her physical living, she prefers loneliness and ponders over her existential condition. This is one of the reasons as to why Manisha can not cope up with the reality. Much of her energy is consumed by her neurotic power which makes her more and more nostalgic and imaginative and isolated, drifting away from the actual living in the household.

It is found that there has been extreme arrest of Manisha's movements after she is charged of theft by her mother-in-law. The severity of its shock reduces Manisha to highly agonized and neurotic individuals. The word 'thief' (p.137) used regarding Manisha by her mother-in-law has been perceived by her as 'white hot brand' at her back and she feels her skin burn. From this moment, Manisha's psychological disintegration starts. She runs away from

human beings and prefers loneliness. The emerging loneliness proves 'exile' to her. Her consequent physical condition is described by her:

"I grow smaller everyday, shrink and lose more and more of my weight, my appurtenances, the symbols of my existence – I will be invisible yet."(p.139)

It shows that Manisha has completely lost her grip over life. Her life is reduced to mere existence and the existence itself has started its journey towards ending the life. The darkness of the night appeals her (p.138). The splendour of stars and solitude fills her mind with a little comfort and satisfaction. Her tormented state during the day-time characterized by the human faces and human talks and human attitudes which humiliate and destroy her spirit of living, is calmed only by the darkness of the night. The silence without human voices soothe her head and heart.

From this condition of human abhorrence, arises Manisha's love for Nature. It makes her nostalgic of reviving the past when she used to live in the bosom of Nature of Kalimpong with Jiban. She had enjoyed social freedom also. In the present, she is engrossed only with the Nature during night:

"Now leave me, leave me to the sky. Leave me to gather the stars, frosty and distant and cool."(p.138)

Sandhyarani Dash rightly observes:

"Manisha's dull existence in the house and the lack of any communication with others drive her towards an inner garden, a garden of her own creation."<sup>29</sup>

Manisha's suicide is the result of her ever growing anguish emanating from humiliation and the subsequent depression which initiated during her childhood and adolescence and attains a full growth during the period of her married life. Her never ending condition of childlessness and her consequent suffering due to it amidst the patriarchal family and society at large makes her frenzied and excited. As the meanness of life is everlasting, she searches no meaning in her life and she is entirely hopeless about future. Manisha's own vision of her life is as follows:

“.. .. a life dedicated to nothing – that this husk is a protection from death. Ah yes, yes, then it is a choice between death and mean existence, and that, surely is not a difficult choice.”(p.122)

This overwhelming pessimistic sense overpowers her being, and the state of frenzy gained out of it, makes her commit suicide. It remains nothing but an attempt to escape from the stark reality chasing her married life all through its years and bound to chase the future years. Jasbir Jain (1987) views Manisha’s suicide as an attempt to rebel against this meaningless death-like isolation. She identifies Manisha’s understanding of her life, and her wish to get release from it. Her comment is as follows:

“Her suicide is preceded by self-knowledge and it asserts her freedom: it is an exercise of her choice.”<sup>30</sup>

Manisha’s choice of death is no less than that of Tithonous. Though they live under different circumstances, their souls suffer from trouble. Both of them want release from the earthly life.

Nirode’s relationship with his Mother is mainly governed by her parental attitude to him, the subsequent treatment given to him, her beauty, her nature with loose morals causing extra-marital relationships and her dominance in the home. In his childhood and adolescence, Nirode does not get the mother’s love. He remains devoid of that genuine bond of love with which the mother cultivates her children, by filling in them confidence and courage to face life. On the contrary, it is the discrimination between the bright and the dull children, between Nirode and Manisha on one side and Amla and Arun on another side, that is depressing for Nirode. As failing children she had a different image of Nirode and Manisha which render them inferior in comparison to others.

Nirode’s sexual attraction for his Mother is probably the result of her utter failure in her performance as Mother. It is almost the ridiculous dis-functioning of the motherly ideals, characterized mainly by her sexual interest in other males. Her affair with Major Chaddha and the gross negligence of Nirode as a blood tie are the two bitter facts which develop Nirode’s utter dislike and hatred against her. His image of motherhood as embodiment of love, sacrifice, hard-work and morality, is shattered to pieces. The contrast between the ideal

and the reality occupies the significant part of his mind. It develops in him a sort of compulsive drive regarding the most negative image of the mother without any possibility of resolving it towards positivity. Consequently, the son-mother relationship no longer survives in Nirode's mind. In fact, he deserts his relationship with her as his mother and by getting beyond, he views her only as a woman, a characterless beautiful woman, a woman without familial tie.

In the light of the above facts and the subsequent discussion, it could be argued that Nirode's relationship with his mother is neither Hamletian nor Lawrentian, but it is unique, with its own characteristic features.

Amla's dominating power of career in terms of her education and job as a commercial artist hurts Nirode. In fact, a sense of it becomes a whip against his failing life, which makes him feel a sense of superior and inferior. Amla as a talented and beautiful daughter is loved by her mother, but Nirode as a failure is disliked by her. Nirode has unconsciously recorded these things in his mind. He realizes Amla's dominance over his pitiable condition. He says, "You are Mama's daughter" (p.132) His cynical view about Amla and the mother are evident here.

Even Amla's speech with imperative shows her sense of superiority against his being inferior. This sense of treatment, full of discrimination in the family, is prevalent at this situation even after years. Amla's speech shows her characteristic superiority before Nirode: "Don't be silly", she exploited,(p.`51)

In view of the ideals of family, it is quite ironic to see that the family relations set by the parents during the early times still determine the nature of discourse almost as dominating and dominated.

While defining the ultimate nature of man-woman relationship and the family welfare amidst it, the researcher thinks that Amla's mother emerges as a woman with strong individualization, who is not at all merged and dissolved into family relations, but whose sensibility towards her own kins and kiths has been corrupted and corroded by her frustration regarding the low qualities of her husband, her subsequent desire for other superior males, her pride of beauty, and the great maternal family and its ancestry. The family and the family welfare

remain dwarf before the giant shadow of personal desire regarding material indulgence of living, in case of the Mother.

Her aeroplane journey and her unfeeling state after Manisha's death at Jiban's house in Calcutta, indicate her extremely poor concern for Manisha. In the Mother's view, her feelings for Manisha have been diminished by her childlessness and the consequent social disgrace brought out on the Ray family and her incapacity to adjust with Jiban's family. Instead of feeling for her, there is an intellectual understanding of Manisha's failed life. It seems to be humiliation to the Mother. She perceives it as an element of inferiority that would bring her status down. The frustration in married life and the frustration in the development of the second generation moves into one sphere which renders her numb and dumb and she undergo a stunning experience. The family welfare is required by her, but not at the cost of personal indulgence. Thus, the fragmentation of the family relations and its kinship become the characteristic feature of the Ray family centred by the Mother. It could be argued that the mother as a character in the novel is fascinating and challenging as far as psycho-analytic study is concerned. It dominates the entire novel with all its possible relationships.

Usha Bande (1988) studies Nirode's state of mind as dislocation of his psyche. She argues:

“His difficulties do not arise out of sexual urges in the Freudian sense.”<sup>31</sup>

However, Nirode attains a psychological state where libidinal sense becomes evident. He perceives the mother in the image of a whore.

Amla emerges from the novel as a young artist interested in career and individual progress. But, she is frustrated, and unconsciously she becomes a part of Calcutta environment, a corporate culture. She is overwhelmingly affected by the nature of man-woman relationship as it emerges from her own experience in the city. To her horror, Amla finds the people drowned in drinks and sexual desires with less of working efficiencies. The romantic and glamorous world of advertising makes her introvert.

Amla's vision of man-woman relationship without ultimate conversion into sexual relation is almost idealistic, which she tries to locate in her

relationship with Dharma. However, Dharma's motives – though not directly prompted towards sex relationship – show some ambiguity. The most traditional nature of his family and the social disgrace formed of his daughter's elopement with her cousin, which he had been experiencing, brings real control over his desire in general and his possession of Amla in particular. It is not the result of either religious or philosophic attitude towards adultery, that is observed in case of Dharma.

Amla's moral sense in maintaining morality in man-woman relationship is derived mainly from her experience in the past, especially her mother's extra-marital relations and her socially deteriorated life which assigned her a sort of loneliness in later life though it is filled with pleasure. The another aspect of this moral sense is her fear of losing career. Amla has a firm faith and strong commitment to her career. In order to develop herself, she undergoes higher education in art in Bombay. There is urban sophistication, but there is ability to identify the sexual interests of males which may prove threatening to her career and development, as she perceives.

Amla's extreme beauty and youth gather a number of males in the Calcutta city. They are prompted mainly by their strong sexual desire for her. She realizes Mr. Basu's advances during the party. His sweet talk and sophistication in conversation tries to win her favour for him. In fact, Amla is career conscious and therefore she is afraid of parties as she had an experience of her mother's arranging parties as her husband's business friends and her slow drifting from her marital relation. Therefore, Amla withdraws herself from the advertising firm which gives her the first job after her arrival in the city.

Jit's relationship with Amla is another instance. His talent in literature, frustration in dreams, his aspirations and hardships as unemployed struggling young man form a way for his friendship with Amla. But his drinking in the wine shop alongwith Amla is disliked by her. It gives her restlessness and excitement for release from Jit. In fact, Jit's sense of friendship moves forward in the direction of love and sex. His expression appears as follows:

“I've something better for her here,” Jit said, and poured out some sherry with exaggerated pride and courtesy.”(p.132)

Later on, Jit's company brings in nothing but uneasiness and uncomfortable feelings in Amla. She feels insecure. So she moves away from Jit by expressing doubt over his ultimate motives. Amla's thoughts about libidinal male tendencies towards female, in the Calcutta city, are significant:

".. .. why is pleasure the most rotten sensation of all in this city? When, where is it to be found clear, fresh, unadulterated? Not here..."(p.169)

Amla's relationship with Dharma is the most crucial aspect of her relationship with the male world. He is deeply influenced by her beauty. With her arrival in his studio, his depression is largely reduced and he is inspired for painting. During the initial period of their nearness as painter and model, Dharma establishes himself as a committed artist with his own principles, and influences Amla alongwith her perception of morality in man-woman relationship. It is the passage of time which proves his dubiousness in the relationship.

Amla becomes habituated with his company, his talk, his painting. There forms a complete bond of friendship between Amla and Dharma, friendship as Amla perceives on idealistic plane. Therefore, it forms a psychological dependence of Amla on Dharma. A part of Amla's psyche seems to be merged in Dharma's personality. But it can not be called 'love' as romantically perceived.

Dharma's interest sometimes undergo deviation, wherein the sexual motivation can be marked. His expression appears as follows:

"Talk to me, Amla. Nothing will distract me today. Tell me about your hand, what it does?"(p.204)

It clearly shows Dharma's interest getting beyond his painting work, and initiates his desire for her. Amla realizes this male inclination towards her and she is shocked. The phrases 'dry lips'. 'tongue-tied' (p.204) show Amla's dismaying sense and shocking experience of Dharma's behaviour.

Amla's understanding of Dharma in a true sense occurs on the basis of his past. It is narrated as follows:

“Gitadevi appeared now to Amla as the base of all Dharma’s actions, the spread lotus that bore the weight of the god absorbed in his meditation and the spinning out of his karma.”(p.231)

It is now amply evident that Dharma’s gross mindset and his subsequent behaviour is controlled and fixed by the social disgrace brought about by the elopement of his daughter in the past and its severe depressing effect on his wife. The impact of the elopement as social disgrace is observed differently in case of Dharma and Gitadevi. In fact, it severally affects the relationship between Dharma and Gitadevi. The humiliation and dishonour experienced through the social interactions bring in the depressing condition in Gitadevi. The recovery of the grief and gloom is very slow and there is an extreme nervousness which makes Dharma worry about her. Dharma’s co-life is thus endangered before Amla’s arrival. Gitadevi’s agonized self emerges from her collective unconscious of female purity before marriage, as determined by the patriarchal norms.

Dharma also suffers from this social disgrace. But the degree of suffering is less as compared to Gitadevi. There is an intellectual dimension to his suffering where he becomes introvert and alters his entire mindset after Amla’s arrival. Thus, the novelist projects the impact of a patriarchal social disgrace on traditional male and female in which woman is highly depressed and the man remains normal. It communicates the ultimate power of patriarchy against women.

In the ultimate evaluation, it has been found that Dharma-Gitadevi relationship in the past is an important link to understand Dharma-Amla relationship. However, the relationship stops as a result of Dharma’s renewed vision of relations amidst patriarchal social structure, his fear of further social disgrace and his money-oriented survival of life through his profession. Amla remains a simpleton in the arena of living life; and therefore, when the cord of communication is broken, she is shocked and depressed. In short, the differences between Dharma’s needs and that of Amla’s could not continue the relationship further.

Amla's real self is well developed till she arrives in the Calcutta city. But the value system of the city proves highly agonizing in adaptation. Therefore, her adaptation becomes dynamic and she remains on the verge of getting into actual self. At present, her self-actualization is hampered to a large extent. In the mirage of desire and sex in a male world of the Calcutta city, her youth and beauty prove to be her demerit in her career development. Therefore, her career recedes back. Madhusudan Prasad (1979) rightly observes:

“In no way is she immune from the existentialist feeling of hollowness and futility in her life.”<sup>32</sup>

The chief reason of her hollowness is her experience of the male world characterized mainly by selfishness, dominance and libidinous attitude which renders her restless and destroy her spirit of career and progress by standing contrary to her cherished ideals of life. In short, the value-system of the city operated by material fever brings her down on the scale of her career.

The material fever of the city as its culture, operates in innumerable ways. If its spirit enters Nirode's mother's mind, the another victim of this spirit is Jit's wife, Sarla, who is born and brought up in Bombay. It determines the distorted nature of Jit Sarla relationship and as a family, its value comes to null-and-void.

In fact, Jit and Sarla are made up of two different substances. The former is the product of intellectual hardwork and talent that emerged from the academic while the latter is a synthesis of high materiality yielding to sensual pleasure and luxurious life. The relationship emerges as the product of hasty marriage crystallized through material love evolving mainly from physical attraction without serious concern for other aspects required for marrying.

This inter-caste marriage, which does not show involvement of Jit's parents nor that of Sarla's, proves to be a farce wherein Sarla exploits limitless freedom for sensual pleasure outside her marital relationship, without hardwork and integrity, and breaks to pieces the family system and its values by eloping with one of her wealthy and fair lovers. The emerging misery of Jit as a married man of hard struggle, then forces Amla for his company, especially for drinking and desire. She therefore constantly declines Jit's invitation over telephone. Her

expression is as follows: “Thank you so much, but I’m afraid.” (p.220) In a way, Jit’s devastated married life endangers Amla’s unmarried condition of living when she joins him after her frustration in her relationship with Dharma. It is the inevitability of communication which takes her to Jit.

Through Manisha’s consciousness, the novelist focuses on the most deplorable condition of Bengali women deeply rooted in the patriarchal social order continued down the centuries. The lives of the women have been perceived in relation to their relationship with their husbands where women’s lives are rendered highly insignificant and the men are worshipped as carriers of generations born for honour and power. Manisha expresses her vision as follows:

“Lives spent in waiting for nothing, waiting on men self-centered and indifferent and hungry and demanding and critical, waiting for death and dying misunderstood, always behind bars.. ..” (p.120)

What is ironic for Manisha is the fact that women live with unconscious mind, without awareness, without feeling revolt and need for change, but continued traditionally. This collective unconscious of patriarchal spirit operates where misery is not realized as misery, but a sense to merge the self in the husband’s person with values such as sacrifice and surrender, and get satisfaction and pride from its glorification.

Thus, the novelist communicates her strong protest of the traditional nature of man-woman relationship which is based on dominance and exploitation of women. She reinforces her vision of freedom and progress of women through individuality and joy of living which is physical in nature, free from every sort of metaphysics imagined by the traditions, and according to the new era of Indian democratic nation.

### **3.3.2 The Device of Imagery:**

The device of imagery has been employed by the novelist in order to communicate the ultimate nature of man-woman relationship in the novel. *Voices in the City*, in order to depict the traits of the characters, the specific features of their psycho-physicality, and the emerging conditions of human

existence which appear as a result of the relationship. S. Indira (1994) rightly observes:

“By means of imagery, Anita Desai brings abstract, indefinable situations and elusive character trails down to the level of tangible reality.”<sup>33</sup>

The patriarchal structure of Jiban’s household where Manisha newly arrives, has been characterized by ‘a black bitter terrifying sound.’ (p.110). The three adjectives ‘black’, ‘bitter’ and ‘terrifying’ are suggestive of destructive human situation behind the sound. Its analogy with the ‘motif of a nightmare’ is significant. It projects the menacing aspects of the traditional and ideological values in addition to the political power held by the family. It is certain that this image within the image anticipates Manisha’s forthcoming sorrowful life characterized mainly by psychological violence and its culmination into death through suicide. The image as such defines not only Manisha’s relationship with Jiban but with the human world of physicality and ideology prevailing in the family.

Nikhil’s recitation of ‘shlokas’ (p.112) in the house has symbolic value which underlines the orthodox Hindu philosophy of life, as followed by the family. Manisha’s expression which is fully of agonizing experience and the subsequent awareness emerging from her state of childlessness, is expressed in the following narration:

“like a burst of wild feathers, released full in my face, comes the realization that they are talking of me, my organs, the reasons I can not have a child.” (p.113)

The above image of the burst of wild feathers in case of a bird, is indicative of her excitement and restlessness centered by the strong projection of anger. The image of the fowl thus formed shows Manisha’s awareness strongly coloured by her anger and excitement emanating from the mean discussions about her childlessness.

The image of ‘caged bleeding doves’ (p.131) is an elaborate metaphor which comprehensively expresses the fate of Bengali women, the cruelty of male-dominating orthodoxy executed against women and their resultant miserable life which is no more than the life of slaves. However, the three words

in the above phrase signify the three different characteristics of women in relation to the patriarchal social structure amidst which they live.

The adjective 'caged' displays their condition of restrictions and extreme loss of freedom from where there is no escape. The adjective 'bleeding' signifies their suffering emerging from male violence against them, and the noun 'doves' indicates their angelic qualities and more specifically it communicates their isolated condition from the actual correspondence of life operated by the male ideology. The image projects the vision that they are no longer humans, without with human dignity and human calibre.

Nirode's mother's letters and his memory of her past life is an important source of her relationship with her husband. One of the letters to Nirode has been expressed in the following image:

"That was the letter like a warm enveloping succubus in the shape of a bright-winged butterfly." (p.37)

The image is not meant for the letter, but for the mother's character and behaviour. The image, in the form of simile, has two-fold structure. The first part depicts the mother's character and spirit while the second image portrays her hypocrisy as a woman with innocence, gentility and uprightness of mind. In the first part, there appears an image of 'succubus', a noun which, according to Oxford Dictionary, refers to a female demon said to have sexual intercourse with sleeping males. The image thus signifies the bad character of the mother and her subsequent liking of male company which could probably lead to her demonic sexual urge to be fulfilled by males. The second image of butterfly refers to her inconstancy in her relationship with males. Thus, the images of succubus and butterfly not only focus on the mother's bad character and behaviour, but also throw light on her subsequent distorted relationship with her husband.

There is another significant image which is used to depict the specific trait of her character. It appears as follows:

"My son", she said her voice was like the thick fur of a winter beast."(p.27)

The parallelism between the mother's voice and the fur of a beast indicates the mother's brutality of her unwillingness to accept Nirode's father as husband and her preference for the company of young males which project her animal character as instinct surpasses culture. Here and in some of the images, referred to earlier, marital relationship becomes a farce with the mother's extra-marital relations.

Amina Amin (1991) studies the nature of imagery as apparent in the present novel. Her comment is as follows:

"Similarly, in *Voices in the City*, Anita Desai projects the claustrophobic influence the city of Calcutta exerts on Nirode, Amla and Manisha. Through the motif of darkness associated with scenes, characters and experiences, she tries to fuse the texture of life in Calcutta and the inner world of the three characters."<sup>34</sup>

The description about Sarla defines the nature of the relationship between herself and Jit. The sensuous nature of her body and mind which later on elopes with the lover, leaving the husband Jit to suffer, is evident from the following description:

"Leading him up to his wife who lay on the divan, a voluptuous porpoise of ebony flesh, encashed in green silk." (p.34)

The phrase 'a voluptuous porpoise of ebony flesh' is a metaphor employed by the novelist to depict the physical features of Sarla and her sexuality emerging from it. In the above image, the adjective 'voluptuous' implies a woman having full and sexually desirable figure, and the noun 'porpoise' means a sea mammal with a blunt rounded snout similar to dolphin or small whale. Thus, the metaphor communicates Sarla's animal character in the form of her sexual nature. The friends around her and her sexual life amidst them amply illustrate her extra-marital relationship and hence the nature of her degraded life with formation of tenseness and agony on the part of her husband, Jit.

The most of the images in the novel show the individual condition as a result of a severe breakdown to man-woman relationship. The images used to depict the misery of Manisha, Nirode and Amla are of this kind.

When Manisha's relationship with her husband, her patriarchal family environment and the society at large almost stops due to the basic issue of her childlessness, her isolation and anguish, which is going to be forever, knows no bounds. Her pessimistic view of life emerges in the following image of conundrum:

“Is this what life is then, my life? Only a conundrum that I shall brood over forever with passion and pain never to arrive at a solution?” (p.125)

The image of conundrum which means a puzzling problem, truly states the riddlesome nature of Manisha's life of which she has lost hope and therefore remains excited and frenzied.

Nirode's anger against his mother due to her disloyalty with his father with formation of extra-marital relations and her unwillingness to accept him as husband, is characterized by his sorrow for his father's wretched life caused mainly due to her. The admixture of his fury, his sorrow emerging from the parental relationship appears as follows:

“Ask her about the love that made her swallow father whole like a cobra swallows a fat, petrified rat, then spews him out in one flabby yellow mess.”(p.190)

The above image perfectly manifests the relationship of cobra and its victim, a fat rat identical to this situation; the traits and character of Nirode's father and mother have been communicated. The parallelism between cobra and the mother shows her cruelty, dominance and destructive value towards the father. The analogy between 'a petrified rat' and the father can be traced to the belittled financial status of the father – his idle nature, timidity and drinking habits and the impact of Nirode's mother's dominance over him. Thus, the image highlights the contrast in the formation of their mental make-up, tendencies and traits set in different conditions and situations, which give them identity of their own. It projects Nirode's argument that the sexually wicked nature of the mother terminated his father from living life.

Nirode's existential life, caused mainly by his relationship with his mother and father and his constant failure in the tasks of his life, results into isolation and neurosis causing dark sphere of anguish in his mind and the heavy

addiction of wine in habit yielding to extreme fatigue and physical weakness. The poetic force of imagery fountains almost in depicting this condition of Nirode's survival as the protagonist of the novel.

His restlessness is shown in the images such as 'a lost unhappy bat' (p.17) 'a wandering caterpillar' (p.51), and an epicurean rabbit' (p.193). His helplessness and vulnerability is projected in the image of 'an unshelled snail (p.127) His state of lifelessness and a sense of defeat is signified by the two images --- 'a statue of gun metal' and 'a battle-worn soldier' (p.40). The image 'an outlawed hermit crab' (p.190) illustrates two facts of his life --- his isolation from the main stream of society and his confusion of ideas regarding loss of faith in human life.

One of the significant images which focuses on the overpowering gloom that grips Nirode's life and characterizes his existence with high degree of weariness and uncertainty of thought and act, appears in the following piece of narration:

"He was wearied by his own unsureness in which he swept back and forth like a long weed undulating under water, a weed that could live only in aqueous gloom, would never rise and sprout into clear day light." (p.63)

The image of 'weed' suggests Nirode's meaningless survival almost without human identity, surrounded by the utmost degree of the darkness of pessimism which gathers from various resources of his failure and frustration. The image of 'clear daylight' communicates a mass of progressive and refined society that have a basic vitality of intellectual energy and prosperity, which Nirode could never attain. Thus, the essence of Nirode's existential condition of life is appropriately reflected by the image of 'weed'.

The nature of monstrous city life which functions as the most significant background that affects the lives of these characters and subsequently make the non-human images evolve, is grossly summarized in the image of 'an ogre'. It appears in the following lines:

"On all sides, the city pressed down, alight, aglow, and stirring with its own marsh-bred monster life that, like an ogre, kept one eye open through sleep and waking. Calcutta, Calcutta --- like the rattle of a reckless train." (p.41)

The image of 'ogre' illustrates the suffocating and destroying impact on the fragile individuals. The word 'ogre' signifies a cruel and frightening giant who eats people. It refers to legends and fairy stories. The identical features of the city and the ogre are, both of them consume humans. If the former consumes the spirit and energy of the humans, the latter consumes human body. Both communicate human destruction. The second image which adds to the sense of destruction is, 'the rattle of a reckless train' which represents the destructive power of the Calcutta city, as viewed by the novelist.

The overall study of imagery in relation to the ultimate status of man-woman relationship in the present novel shows that the traits, other features and the conditions of human life get below the human qualities. The images move mainly from the world of savage animals, domestic animals, plant world, inanimate objects, reptiles and insects which be token the exact loss of human life in the sense that the humans no longer remain humans but they appear as subhumans and inanimate fixed under different conditions which are formed due to multiple reasons. Thus, the vision of fallen life is communicated by the imagery in the present novel.

### **3.3.3 The Narrative Techniques:**

The narrative techniques have been perceived as another significant literary devices used by the novelist for depicting the vision of man-woman relationship amidst the Indian family structure of the post independence modern democratic society. The entire narration of the novel, *Voices in the City*, has been divided into four parts, each of which is entitled in the name of the family members of the Ray family: Part I :Nirode, Part II :Manisha, Part III :Amla and Part IV: Mother.

Part I - which focuses on Nirode's life in relation to multiple associations, and his past, present and future aspects of life - occupies the largest portion of the narrative. Part I, III and IV have been narrated in third-person point of view while part II appears in first-person point of view. The narration shows the devastated conditions of the lives of the four individuals, their inter-related family ties, crushed by the monstrous city life and city values of life. The novelist's critical vision of the family and its life - in terms of the

individuals in the diverse circumstances fusing to form the organic structure of nervousness, gloom and pessimism in the individual life - has been found in the novel.

Regarding the beginning of narration in a work of fiction, it could be argued that there has to be some proposition or postulation of human life which serves almost as seeds of theme from which the later development of the novel takes place. Sudhakar Marathe (1986) rightly observes:

“The beginning actually presents a philosophical problem of definition”.<sup>35</sup>

The definition of life is communicated differently in different human situations. The initiation of the narrative of the present novel, is significant from thematic point of view which is mainly dispersed through the nature of man-woman relationship under the envisioned conditions. The opening paragraph of the novel as a narrative strategy communicates the core aspect of the theme of violence, anguish and pessimism of life:

“The train began to pant, as though in preparation for a battle, sending jets of white steam violently into the night sky, and on the platform people loitered in various attitudes of nervousness, impatience, and regret, turning now and then to the lights at the head of the platform waiting for them to change.”  
(p.5)

This railway-station situation functions allegorically in communicating the hardships of human life that is to follow from this moment. The words such as ‘pant’, ‘battle’, ‘violently’, ‘night sky’ ‘loitered’, ‘nervousness’, ‘impatience’, ‘regret’, ‘lights’ and ‘change’ carry the load of thematic sense wherein life is projected as a characteristic process which is formed of the conditions leading to ennui, frustration, hopelessness, humiliation, anguish, and a distillation of all these - pessimism and loss of faith in living.

‘Letter’; is an important narrative feature emerging from the novel which functions as the significant means of connecting the individuals by transferring the information of their lives and letting the receiving individuals respond to it. The two letters of the mother to Nirode addressed, ‘My son Nitrode’ (p.35-37) and ‘My golden son’ (p.60) communicate her higher degree of hypocrisy which shows her artificial verbal concern for Nirode without any genuine

commitment for his betterment of living and beneath it her luxurious and sensual life accompanied by a strongly liked male company, which is her dire need of living. It generates in Nirode's mind, rage and protest against the Mother.

Thus, the two letters as a narrative strategy, throw light on the mother's luxurious mind and life in terms of her extra-marital relationship and the consequent damaging impact of her character and behaviour on her son, Nirode.

Manisha's letter to Nirode (p.108) becomes an important link in connecting part I and part II. However, Part I ends with Nirode's receiving of Manisha's letter giving message of her arrival in the Calcutta city where the symbolic significance of the cemetery is associated with Manisha's later suffering and death through her relationship with her husband and the patriarchal society at large.

There are references to some other letters also. Part II and Part III are once again connected by a letter --- a letter of Amla to Manisha announcing her arrival in the Calcutta city (p.139) where Manisha expresses her extremely positive sense of Amla and compares her inferiority with Amla's superiority. Her isolation and the subsequent inferiority realized as 'a woman who keeps a diary', leading to non-existence which is 'Traceless, meaningless, uninvolved'.(p.140) The novelist refers to Manisha's letters written to her mother indicating her suffocating condition at Jiban's household.

Further, it is necessary to mention the mother's letter to Amla (p.200-202) as a reply to her 'forlorn letter' based on the shocking experiences of the Calcutta city. In fact, the letter becomes a means of psycho-analysis of the mother where her frustration of life is found. The last lines of the letter essentially put on her realization: "But it seems my instincts have all been wrong, my paradise is a fool's abode and I have lost touch with my closest ones..."(p.202)

However, it must be noted that the ultimate value of her expression even of this stage is no more than hypocrisy, as it coincides with her hard-heartedness after Manisha's death. The another aspect of the narrative method is found in

providing the information of the family backgrounds of Amla and Dharma through their conversation at Dharma's studio.

The Ending of the narrative is communicated by the last section of Part IV, where Nirode, the protagonist, the epicenter of psychological action in the novel, resurges during the crisis of Manisha's death at Jiban's household in Calcutta, in the presence of Amla and the Mother. The volcanic eruption of his fury against the mother in his mind for her grace and coldness over Manisha's death and her general apathy for her dying son and suffering daughter, authentically expressed through her body language, forms in him a severe dislocation of his collective unconscious about the mother as goddess and the Goddess Kali as mother. In his experience of life, all its cultural determinants are destroyed, and thereafter, there dawns upon his mind the only destructive power which is appeared with violence, bloodshed and death. Therefore, it establishes atheistic values in his mind. His expression is as follows:

“She is Kali,’he cried, ‘Amla, I know her now, she is Kali, the goddess and the demon are one.” (p.255)

The highest degree of pessimism is found in his equation of the mother to the goddess Kali and the Calcutta city --- none of which becomes his saviour, but moves on, to destroy his life rendering him highly existential in his survival.

The ultimate vision of man-woman relationship amidst the post-independence modern Indian society, as promoted by the narrative strategy towards the end, is forced through the distortion of the materialistic values of life personified in the character and behaviour of the mother, and its repercussions in the ultimate desolation of the life of her son Nirode and her daughters Manisha and Amla.

The general narrative scheme involves the organic presentation of the life and background of Nirode's friends and associates other than his family members. Like Shakespeare's subplots, they enrich the main theme of frustration and pessimism expressed through the adverse conditions of survival.

### 3.4.1 Man-Woman Relationship in the novel: *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*:

Man-woman relationship: in the novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* can be critically understood as a modern epic of the suffering of Indian womanhood as a result of the gross negligence forwarded with lack of recognition and acknowledgement from the family members centered by the chief of the family though the woman passes through the horror of giving birth to children, rearing them and undergoing domestic hardwork with utmost care and affection. The novel can be perceived as a tragedy of traditional Indian womanhood against the patriarchal social environment, the highest manifestation of which is found in the life experience of Nanda Kaul in the novel, *Fire on the Mountain*.

The narrative of the novel has been set with Sita-Raman relationship at the centre. The suffering of Sita as a result of her relationship with Raman and more crucially, with his collective unconsciousness of patriarchal forces in his mind, form the texture of the narrative. M.K. Naik (1982) comments:

“*Where Shall We Go This Summer?* marks a return to the autonomous world of inner reality. Sita, the main character here, appears to be a less morbid Maya after four children.”<sup>36</sup>

However, one can not dismiss Sita’s character and her consequent relationship with Raman by simply perceiving her either as morbid or autonomous. It needs a detailed investigation into the conditions which went on making Sita as she is, almost from her birth. With this view, S.P. Swain and P.M. Naik (1994) study Sita’s plight. They observe:

“Anita Desai’s *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975) dwells on the theme of incertitude, alienation and incommunication in married life. It is the alienation of a woman, a wife and a mother, the alienation conditioned by society and family.”<sup>37</sup>

Swain and Naik, exactly detect the conditions of Sita’s life. Then, the most crucial task at this critical moment is to study the reasons and resources which form Sita’s mind and behaviour contrary to that of Raman. In this context, it is equally important to explore the mindset of Raman in order to

study the nature of their relationship. The family of orientation in which they are born and brought up can serve as a significant link to understand their temperaments, ideas and behavioural characteristics in their married life. A family of procreation, where the centrifugal force thus generated makes them leave off the centre of their relationship and they drift away from each other. They are not truly united with minds and souls together.

The family in which Sita is born is characterized by its own breakdown. The most severe damage unto the family emerges from the mother-father relationship. The father, a farmer turned Gandhian leader, is devoted to the Indian freedom struggle. His commitment is social rather than familial. The impact of Gandhian philosophy of life and the Gandhian spirit of the struggle for freedom forms in him the ideas and activities which take him outside the home and away from the family, amidst crowds and processions, oratory and interactions where the family and the family welfare is completely forgotten.

Still the family holds its structure. Sita's mother had to bear the responsibilities and undergo hardwork for earning and maintenance of the children. She bears the stress and strain of hardwork, and tolerates his absence from home. But when the father had a mistress, her agony knows no bounds. For her, the fact emerges as a bolt from the blue. The excitement rage and agony give rise to extreme irritation and hatred against the father.

The sturdy stroke of the father's extra-marital relationship boomerangs against him with the mother's decision to desert her relationship with the father and ultimately leave off the family and move on to Banaras for getting united with the traditional establishment of god at the place. The mother's reaction against the father's action with the backdrop of his patriarchal betrayal and her hardwork for the survival of the family shows her loss of faith in human life, which is full of betrayal, cruelty and inhumanity as experienced by her. The life gives her nothing but pain and agony. In a larger context, the mother deserts her relationship not only with the father and the family, but with the entire human race. As the suffering overpowers and the agonized mind is benumbed, she transcends even the bond of blood ties. Instead of preferring nature, she prefers

god and follows the most traditional aspect of patriarchy from her collective unconsciousness.

In his relationship with the mother, the father emerges as a hypocrite rather than a true Gandhian leader. It is debatable whether he joined the freedom struggle with the highest ideals of humanity or he did prefer it over his occupation of farming. Whatever it may be, his joining the freedom struggle certainly does not affect his wife. What is heartbreaking for her is his mistress and his relationship with her. It proves him to be an irresponsible family chief.

In the freedom struggle, he is completely engrossed in his own person --- the honour, the followers, the cheers and the applauses --- where the wife and the children take the most distant place in his mind. The patriarchal mind of the father easily ignores his wife and her hardwork, easily becomes disloyal to her devotion and commitment for their own children by holding relationship with a woman till she becomes his mistress. Thus, the mother's sacrifice and hardwork for the family is maltreated by the father, where there is no serve of recognition and appreciation but the most inhuman ungratefulness. It projects the father's patriarchal perception of wife. It is quite ironic to the Gandhian leadership and profoundly ironic to the wife's dedication for the family. The values of conjugal life such as love and loyalty are no more in the father's relationship with the mother.

Thus, the family structure is broken: The father involved in the freedom movement, the mother merged in Benares and the children left to the winds. The disintegration of the family leads to the collapse of home and the father had to undergo the ultimate responsibility of the children; Rekha, Jivan and Sita. However, the father utterly fails to carry out the parental duties in a true sense. He remains surrounded by his followers and crowds of people constantly engaged in his tasks. The children, quite alien to his routine, remain at the periphery of his activities, getting receptive of it.

Sita's relationship with her parents and the nature of the environment around her is one of the significant areas of exploration which determines her mindset and the consequent behaviour afterwards.

Sita's premarital life can be perceived in two distinct phases. The first phase consists of her infancy and childhood on the main land and the another phase which is much longer than the earlier one, comprises her adolescence and adulthood amidst her habitation on the Manori island. Both the phases are characterized by the presence of the father and the absence of the mother. Sita does not have even the faintest memory of her mother. It shows Sita's early detachment from her. From this moment, Sita becomes a loveless and insecure child with the severe breakdown to the blood-tie. Usha Bande (1988) studies Sita's childhood conditions. She perceives lack of belongingness as a root cause of Sita's unstable mind and holds the father responsible for it. She comments:

“Belongingness is a subjective feeling in which an individual experiences personal involvement. The most damaging situation for Sita is complete lack of parental matrix. Hypocrisy and partiality apart, her father cannot provide her a home. Her life starts “in the centre of a crowd.”<sup>38</sup>

As a child, Sita perceives life not in the form of family environment with the father and the mother as loving and caring parents, teaching her the lessons of life amidst the other neighboring families. .

Sita lacks the interaction with the social environment based on the traditions and customs of living, the ideology of life expressed through the living, where she could enjoy living with the brother and the sister and the neighbouring children. Instead, she has to sit nearby the dias, confused and muddled and yet receptive of the environment. Thus, she unconsciously acquires a form of life which is characterized by open space, freedom of moving, rage, revolt and rebellion against injustice.

It then follows that the core structure of Sita's mindset is derived from the ideas, spirit and experience of the freedom movement where she had been ‘one of those flower children of the independence movement’ (p.61) amidst the freedom fighters, during the initial period of her childhood. During the post-marital period, it affects her married life almost as a challenge to the family life. Sita's interaction as a child, to the movement is vividly described in the narrative as follows.

“With calm eyes, she had watched the surge and flow of such masses, listened to endless speeches on one subject ‘Swaraj’ ”(p.61)

In this context, it could be argued that Sita’s struggle as a married woman at the age of forty, against the patriarchal values personified in Raman, can be allegorically perceived as a freedom struggle that existed during her childhood.

Thus, Sita’s childhood is characterized with, rather marred by the utter lack of mother’s love and the gross negligence of the father. As a child, she is not endowed with a parental tie. Karen Homey (1951) studies neurosis and human growth. He considers ‘real self’ of a child as the foundation of personality, which comprises mainly of clarity and depth in thought and feeling, the strength of willpower, its own capacities and resources etc. The significance of ‘real self’ is communicated in his following comment:

“All this will in time enable him to find his set of values and his aims him life.”<sup>39</sup>

Horney’s discussion highlights the fact that parental love and care is a vital force that builds the psychological and physical strength of a child. Exactly opposite to this, Sita remains without parental tie of such a sort. Hence, her real self is damaged. In consequence, it initiates her neurosis and herein morbidity touches her person which attains its full growth during her island years in the second phase of her premarital life.

The conditions – human and non-human --- those prevailed on the island and the psychological interaction she underwent with them renders her experience a sort of strangeness which aliens her from the environment when in fact, her self-alienation had already started with the frustration of her basic need. Her damped psychological situation has been brought about by the novelist as follows:

“On this island, strange experiences and strange sensations made her think and grow too large for the chrysalis of childhood and so she slowly, unwillingly emerged. She felt this strangeness, in the atmosphere not altogether comfortable....”(p.55)

The first and the most significant element on the island which affects Sita’s already deviant psychological mould is her father, whose routine as

Gandhian leader had two-fold work: 'daylight practical charisma' and its underlit night-time aspect' (p.55)

Sita's life during the independence movement is perceived as a strange and unusual life (p.46) which does not carry the actual sense of living in the family. Except for inculcating a streak of idealistic spirit in Sita's mind which is done by her father also, this movement and its spirit is not at all related to contribute to the socio-psychological growth of Sita which is possible in the well established family and the community around it. This loss of Sita's growth continues for a long period of time and the father never gets into its understanding and realization. The novelist's comment is significant.

"She was not really a child at that time --- in another environment she might have already been regarded as a young woman." (p.46)

On her arrival on the island, she is like the followers of her father, relieved from the tenseness and anxiety experienced in the earlier phase. The deep influence of the island on her mind is at two levels --- the sea shore and the natural beauty of the island, and the second, more crucial, the person and the activities of the father as a saint. Both the levels fuse together in her mind to form the island as a magic place, a place blessed by her father.

On the island, Fiona is changed to Jeevan Ashram, but it is not transformed into the Home of soul in a true sense. It remains the father's failed attempt to glorify himself as a saint. He applies his so called serenity to Sita during the days of freedom struggle:

"It was always made clear to her that this was no age for games or sweets, but one for prayer and sacrifice. Having no true alternative she accepted it." (p.46)

But on the island, the routine remained only formality losing its vitality and strength 'like a cloud that disintegrates and disappears.' (p.46) The impact of Sita's father on her mind is multi-dimensional. His character-traits, behavior and activities slowly seep into her mind and get fused with her unconscious mind.

The most serious situation with which her life on the island especially her living in the Jeevan Ashram, begins is the loss of harmony and the alienation of

her already alienated self. In fact, the father shows hiatus between profession and practice. It is seen that the values which he proclaims in the public are found corrupted in his private life. In many ways, the father becomes her obsession, but not father-fixation. His saintly character becomes dubious and he constantly forms puzzle, excitement and anxiety in Sita's mind.

The father's relationship with the elder daughter, Rekha is one of the depressing experiences of Sita on the island. The remarkable partiality that the father undergoes in treating the two daughters - his own blood ties - significantly affects Sita's mind. The father's continuous favour, communion and contact with Rekha in his routine activities and the gross negligence of Sita by him without any communication and involvement provoke her to nervousness and boredom. It is ironic enough to see that Sita is rendered alone in the Jeevan Ashram. It is this aloneness which destroys her capacities and creative energies. She is thrown off from the main-stream of life of the Ashram; where her brother Jeevan remains her only companion. Thus, the father owes the responsibility of dense isolation on the part of Sita and its subsequent damage to her growing self.

Rekha's singing talent and skill becomes a major concern of the father for his prayers and activities. Therefore Rekha occupies a significant place in the daily routine of the father as she sings prayers and bhajans and sets the environment of the Ashram into activity. This service of Rekha is recognized by the father. But Sita is always, side-lined by him. Usha Bande (1988) in her study of the novel rightly observes:

“The atmosphere in which Sita grows is that of neglect, hypocrisy and partiality.”<sup>40</sup>

Rekha's gift of singing devotional songs deeply affects Sita. The nature of affectation appears in the narrative as follows:

“Day and night she was reminded of this one glory her sister possessed”  
(p.56)

With the continuous passage of Time, this fact becomes a major preoccupation with Sita: It renders her feel inferior before Rekha's pomp and

glory of performance. This sense of inferiority is further intensified by the distance between the father and Sita.

The fact that Rekha is her 'step-sister' (p.57) is another blow to her mind. She suffers from this reality emerging from father's married life. The father, almost from the freedom movement, creates a large void in Sita's mind about his aspects of private life. Her feelings remain pent-up and she can not give vent to it since the father is always surrounded by his chelas or accompanied by Rekha. Thus, the stress generated over the years, renders her form neurosis. Her strong will to talk to the father about his past is constantly paralysed by his in communication Sita's mother had left her so early that she did not have even the faintest memory of her. Therefore, she appears in her life almost as 'ghost' (p.57). The most cynical presentation of the father in relation to Sita and her mother appears in the narrative as follows:

"It was one more relationship that had to remain shrouded, a ghost in her life, because of the impossibility of talk between her and her father. There he was --- so gentle, thoughtful, barefoot, dressed in homespun, fetching water from the well, a figure she respected admired and adored, was told by all to respect, admire and adore." (p.57)

The description reveals the father as a hypocrite who has left his wife and daughter to suffer, and by doing so, showed his irresponsibility towards the family and now pretending to be a saint. It is the most selfish motive of his life where there is a largeness of social-deception and self-deception.

The name 'Jeevan Ashram' as perceived by the father has two-fold meaning. It reflects a way of life to be followed by others and secondly it is in the name of his son, Jeevan which seems to be more true and valid than the earlier one. It reflects the father as a perpetrator of patriarchal values in terms of his pride of the son and the extreme neglect of the daughter Sita. Rekha is considered because she directly contributes through her singing talent. The relationship between the father and Rekha is observed by Sita. It brings in nothing but jealousy in her mind. The impact of the jealousy on her mind is viewed by the novelist as follows:

“-----perhaps, it was no unusual prick of jealousy that chilled Sita.”  
(p.55)

The sense of chilling refers to her depression, the arrest of her active mind and the passivity it gains. However, the relationship between the father and Rekha could be viewed on the ground of the possibility of formation of incest almost from the father's mind. His constant contact with Rekha probably makes it form. The description of the relationship is worth noting:

“But her father, she saw, seemed to see the relationship between the two quite clearly for it was always the big girl's heavy shoulders that he fondled, her face that he scanned as she sat singing across the room for him.” (p.56)

Despite the shortcomings and weaknesses in the cherishing of the idealist philosophy, the father regards himself as a great man, a great Gandhian leader and a saint and simply dismisses Sita's living as worthless one without any talent or skill. This specific attitude of the father to Sita as a clumsy and dull daughter makes her distant from him. In the glory of himself, the father psychologically goes far away, to the extent of forgetting the life of his own daughter, neither loving her, nor caring, nor holding whole-hearted dialogue with her, which is her dire need. The sense of family and family chief is dissolved in the midst of chelas, the philosophy and the glory thus gained.

The void of lack of mother's love, the father-mother relationship, the gross negligence of the father and the search of the lost mother occupy the central portion of Sita's thought content and determine the nature of further relationships in her life.

There is another aspect of Sita that is to be found in her relationship with the father. It is the deepest influence of his all - pervasive glory on the island, as a saint, a miracle person. This greatness of the father, his so called miracles, magic and secrets, as fused with the environment, are fused with her mind. It becomes a part of her collective unconsciousness which she carries with her in her later life.

Thus, the Jeevan – Ashram operated by the father fails to assimilate Sita in its activities and she stands alien at its corner watching the whole of its activities, expressing awe, doubt, disappointment, curiosity – all ridden by

anxiety. The father fails not only as father, but as a saint and proves himself to be charlatan who, in the attempt of self-glorification, undergoes social deception, family deception and self-deception.

The father would have looked into the family after independence. But the halo created by the oratory during the freedom movement gathers a large number of chelas, even the great businessmen like Deedar and Mr. Dalwala. It generates in him a fascination for self-glorification that takes him to the Manori island where the religious experience no longer remains religious in a true sense, but it is converted into irrationality and superstition on the part of the original inhabitants of the island, stamped with miracles and blessings. It becomes a lesson of falsely using the Gandhian philosophy for one's glorification where the father is completely oblivious of the most fundamental message of life: 'Charity begins at home'. According to Oxford Dictionary it means a person's first duty is to help and care for his own family.

At the island where the father becomes Babaji, the metaphysics of his philosophy and the superstitions of the illiterate villagers coincide to form a social fabric on the island which fails to dawn the island with scientific ideas of life, but pushes it back into the darkness of the distant past. Sita proves to be its victim when she decides and arrives on the island after twenty years of her married life in order to use the miraculous power of the island gained through the magic and blessings of her father for her release from the fifth delivery of a child at the age of forty. The novelist narrates it as follows:

"The island had been buried beneath her consciousness deliberately, for years. Its black magic, its subtle glamour had grown too large, had engulfed her at a time when she was still very young and quite alone." (p.39)

Thus, while studying Sita's premarital life, it could be argued that her life is formed by the multiple factors and circumstances across the course of time, the chief amongst which is her father. Predominantly, it is devoid of family life, holding the characteristics such as parental care, concern and love, the social environment of traditions and customs, and the community ways and conditions of living. Her life is lived in an entirely different environment all through the twenty years of her premarital life. The route of her childhood and

adolescence which should transform her as woman with socio-psychological awareness, is completely changed to the extent of forming her mindset deviant from the traditional woman's mind. The observations and values recorded permanently on her unconscious mind as given by the freedom movement and the island habitation, both amidst the father, render her completely alien to her married life situation in a joint family of merchants incorporate Indian society.

It is quite interesting to observe that the father's three children - Rekha, Jeevan and Sita - should get the vocation and profession outside the four walls of the home as it is vital to their growth. Along with this logic, it is found that Rekha and Jeevan succeed, as Rekha becomes an All India Radio singer and Jeevan becomes a fierce 'trade-union leader' (p.71) They are led to undertake such jobs as mass communication outside the domestic system of home. Similar performance is expected from Sita. But Sita's continuous depression and alienation caused mainly by the father had brought her to the point of muddle-head where she loses a sense of life, a sense of her future. The novelist narrates her condition:

"She herself would have stayed on, in the deserted house for she had not planned anything, not understood the need to plan or plot or prepare and was quite destitute.. She contemplated, numbly, staying on alone into old age out of not knowing what else could be done with one's long life, too long life." (p.71) Before her marriage, Sita emerges as a helpless young woman alone in the world after her father's death, living on the island in the Jeevan Ashram, totally thrown off from the ideology of life.

Thus, the family of orientation proves entirely useless for bringing up Sita in the main-stream of life due to lack of mother's presence all through, and much has been posed adversely by the father which affects her mind significantly.

Before moving towards the conditions of the family of procreation, one must perceive Sita's marriage as to how it has been worked out. Deedar the father's great follower, an industrialist is the major force that connects Sita with the society through marriage with his son, Raman. She is brought to the mainland after her father's death.

However, the marriage of Sita with Raman does not prove to be a “marriage of true minds”<sup>41</sup>. In the marriage, the two contrary temperaments come together not to form a homogeneous mass of co-life as family but an identifiable heterogeneity marks its formation. Dr. P.F. Patil studies marital disharmony in the novels of Anita Desai. He rightly comments:

“Sita’s marriage to Raman was not settled through proper understanding and love between them.”<sup>42</sup>

It is then clear that Sita and Raman’s marriage is not an arranged marriage in a true sense, nor is it a love marriage. But it is a marriage as a result of the contact of youth and passion. There exists a relationship between Sita and Raman before marriage, on the island and on the mainland. They knew each other, not by temperaments but by passions. The novelist describes the premarital situation of Raman as follows.

“.....out of pity, out of lust, out of a sudden will for adventure, and because it was inevitable .... Married her.” (p.71)

The sense of pity inherited from the father Deedar, and lust, his own instinctive faculty, Raman marries Sita without any other criterion which he realizes in the form of disappointment in his later life after the loss of the romantic colours of beauty and youth and the initiation of the din and clatter of the routine domestic work.

Thus, the married life started in Bombay settles Raman’s attitude towards Sita. It is the attitude which governs the nature of the relationship. In order to determine Raman’s attitude to Sita, one must consider Raman’s traits and character, his mindset in general.

Contrary to Sita’s father, who made a mistake of carrying his children with him during the freedom struggle and afterwards, Deedar, Raman’s father was wise enough to maintain his children by sending them to a calm and sociable place where they were brought up properly. The novelist narrates it:

“But Deedar, a politician by logic and not by instinct, had wisely sent his children away to be brought up by some calm suburban grandmother or devoted aunt while he lived the mad life of a freedom fighter.” (p.70)

The above piece of narration amply illustrates the fact that Raman is brought up in the socialized conditions and after independence, he came under the influence of his father who continued his business and made involvement of Raman in it. It endowed Raman with development of his capabilities making him a responsible and mature young man living in the social structure of city life.

Then, it could be argued that Raman is brought up according to his real self, and he reaches up to self-actualization. There is no forsaking of real self. As there is fulfillment of all the basic needs. The harmony, love, and security make Raman grow into a healthy human being while Sita is exactly deprived of these aspects of growth. According to Maslow, basic anxiety produces in a child, basic threat which makes the child dread the environment. Sita falls victim to anxiety while Raman remains untouched of it. These characteristics of childhood in case of Sita and Raman form the two distinct mindsets. One alien to the environment while another harmonized. It determine the course of their later life.

As a self-actualized young man, Raman carries with him a sense of superiority, that he belongs to a rich family held by his father who is a reputed merchant. It gives him a sense of higher social class, prestige, honor and power to be maintained. Under the guidance of the father, he becomes capable of independently handling responsibilities of business transactions. It makes him thoroughly intellectual and calculating. At the same time, the traditional values of patriarchal life are also unconsciously imbued in his mind. His mind unconsciously grasps the family and the social environment around him.

Thus, Raman is cultivated with intellectual trait and materialistic frame of mind centered by the fusion of traditional sense of life and the capitalist sense of his status. Raman emerges as a traditionally modern capitalist interested in higher financial status where the wife, Sita takes much marginal position. He has not yet shed off the patriarchal values of life where men have ideological superiority and women are rendered inferior and peripheral. His attitude to Sita is mainly governed by this traditional social unconsciousness.

Moreover, Raman has a sense of comparison between himself and Sita on personal grounds. His parental family background, higher social class, his individual pride of being a capitalist, a provider to the lower individuals - all these shape him into an empowered modern man, and Sita is perceived as a woman living with his condescending, grace. She remains a woman lonely in the world without parents and active family support. Thus, the relationship between Sita and Raman as it is formed, carries a sense of inferiority and superiority.

It is to be noted that Raman shows ignorance and negligence of Sita's domestic life and her life in general. In fact, he is engaged in his world of business and his responsibilities towards the children. To him, his business is significant by all means and her domestic work and life is nothing before it. Raman's mindset is that of a traditional capitalist in relation to his wife. According to his vision, material provision in the family is everything, and patriarchally the wife can be neglected in her psychological and physical welfare along the domestic hard work.

Thus, it is the collective unconsciousness of patriarchal spirit that governs his relationship with Sita, apart from providing material riches. However, it cannot be denied that Raman is a liberal patriarch to live with Sita – her eccentricity, restlessness and hysterical behaviour characterized by rage and rashness -- and to give her life by maintaining his father's loyalty to Sita's father.

Kamal Awasthi (1991) studies male characters in Anita Desai's novels. She refers to Sita's father as 'charlatan' and her husband Raman as 'sedate' based on illusion and reality, as the contrary traits. The aspect of reality about Raman has been viewed by her through Sita's idea of her husband as follows.

"This reality is objectified in Raman who according to her is not an introvert, nor an extrovert – a middling kind of man."<sup>43</sup>

She further argues that it is frightening for Sita because his world is inhabited by the materialistic goblins. S.P. Swain and P.M. Naik (1994) study Sita's incarcerated self and trace the opposition in temperaments of the husband and the wife as root cause of Sita's suffering. They comment:

“Desai dramatizes the conflict between two irreconcilable temperaments and two diametrically opposed attitudes to life.”<sup>44</sup>

Swain and Naik define Raman and Sita not only in terms of contrast of temperaments but also in the form of their opposed attitudes to life itself. These attitudes are particularly, traditional male attitude and feminine attitude of a suffering woman making attempts for the release from domestic bondage.

Sita's arrival in Raman's house in Bombay after marriage makes her undergo cultural shocks as she moves from one subculture to another subculture within one cultural whole. Within Indian culture, she moves from the island life to the Bombayite corporate life where adaptation to the situation becomes difficult for her.

During the initial period of Sita's married life, her adaptation no longer remains 'static', but it becomes 'dynamic'<sup>45</sup> where change in the form of agitation, irritation, nervousness and protest is formed in her mind without its physical expression. But the mind starts disintegrating slowly. Basically, Sita fails to grasp and assimilate psychologically the environment within the joint family, outside it and the anthropological horror of the city at large in the form of garbage heaps, dirt and squalor.

The experiences and values of life acquired so far from the freedom struggle movement and the island life stand in contrast with the present environment of the city life. The idealistic and romantic streak of the past which almost becomes a part of her unconscious mind is converted into a stark reality of the present characterized with materiality, bondage and violence. In a way, there is a serious damage to Sita's roots of life done by the value-system of the new corporate life. However, at both the places, Sita's search for love and harmony continues. Its absence gives her self-alienation.

The 'age-rotten flat' off Queen's Road, the 'subhuman placidity' and the 'sluggishness' (p.32) of the family members within one large family affect Sita's mind. Her behaviour slowly becomes provocative. The kitchen brings to her mind extreme nausea, where she expresses awe and irritation over the large quantities of vegetable chopped and processed for the whole day. She cynically perceives the people in the house as 'elephants' (p.32)

Her psychological and physical suffocation is released only through her smoking habit where she could get relief. The smoking of cigarette is observed by her once in case of Miriam, Moses's wife, while living at the island. It is now inherited by her as a need for psychological survival. There is a remarkable emotional change observed in the form of psychological disturbance leading to rush and rage in expressions. The realization of the striking contrast between the past and the present does not make her accept the present. The present unconsciously mixes with the past and its very unmixable quality makes her reject it.

Sita's cigarette smoking appears as the most serious breakdown to the taboo system established by the ethos of the patriarchal Indian society. It significantly alters the attitude of the family members towards Sita. The novelist narrates the unusual sense of female smoking in the traditional Indian family:

“---It was there that she started smoking, a thing that had never been done in this household by any woman and even by men only in secret.” (p 32)

Her smoking does not necessarily make her modern as some critics think, but it emerges as her survival strategy. It proves that there is a lost consciousness about the traditional ideology of female life on the part of Sita. In fact, it could be argued that there is no such formation in the past and that becomes a real failure, chiefly of her parents rather than that of herself. Sita's married life- whether she was happy- had all necessary and ideologically fulfilling conditions. The novelist narrates:

“She had had four children with pride with pleasure – sensual, emotional, Freudian, every kind of pleasure – with all the placid serenity that supposedly goes with pregnancy and parturition”.(p 20).

However, the major problem in Sita-Raman relationship emerges mainly from their contrasting perception of life. Raman is cultivated by the patriarchal attitude to life. The traditional unconsciousness about female life governs his mind and motivates it to thought and action. The most significant difference occurs in Raman's thinking of Sita's fifth delivery at the age of forty, her domestic hardwork, tension and violence occurred in her earlier life as 'small incidents' (p 24) This specific attitude of the male-dominating world of men as

expressed by Raman towards his wife Sita is a representative of a large mass of society where in the significant degree of woman's trouble, suffering and difficulties causing anxiety and violence, is simply dismissed as 'small incidents'. This attitude and the subsequent treatment given to women occupies the major part of the novelist's vision about man-woman relationship as it prevails in the novel. The protest is expressed through irony and cynicism where the small incident is actually perceived as significant and serious incident which consumes woman's mind and body. There is no dignity and honour for such kind of domestic drudgery, as Sita experiences.

Mani Meitei (2000) undergoes psychoanalytical study of Sita. He focuses on Sita-Raman relationship through their character-traits. He comments:

"Sita's problem seems to be due to maladjustment with her husband the home life and surrounding atmosphere nauseating her. She is fed up with her husband, a businessman, whose complete lack of feeling brings her to the verge of insanity."<sup>46</sup>

In her relationship with Raman, Sita is outwardly happy, but her inner world is made of suffering. Her suffering mainly evolves from anxiety, tension, torture and violence, and Raman has no consciousness of it. In fact, Sita's suffering is outside the sphere of his traditional unconscious thought. He views Sita traditionally as happy woman and hence, fails to grasp and understand her real state of mind.

The fact of birth, as glorified by the patriarchal tradition of Indian society as the supreme act of woman's life and celebrated as her motherhood, is actually appalling for Sita in her later deliveries. She perceives it personally as 'blood bath' and views it as life-and-death incident, which is a stark reality neglected by the patriarchal male ideology. Therefore, Raman thinks of it as 'small incident' (p. 24)

Sita gets beyond the maternal sense of giving birth because each time, she had to suffer from the horror of pains and the subsequent weakness evolving from blood loss. The novelist narrates her experience:

“More and more, she lost all feminine, all maternal belief in childbirth, all faith in it, and began to fear it as yet one more act of violence and murder --- in a world that more of them in it than she could take” (p 38)

Thus, Sita views her delivery as violent and murderous for her life. Therefore, she thinks it quite unsafe for her. Raman’s ignorance of the knowledge of female physiology with reference to his wife Sita has been ironically posed by the novelist. His lack of realization of her physiological and domestic hardships in the course of twenty years of their married life make Raman a patriarchal husband in a true sense. What is crucially significant is his lack of awareness of family planning which renders him almost with primitive sense of life, based on so called religious attitude lacking a sense of sophistication as businessman. The novelist narrates his ignorance and sense of irresponsibility about family planning:

“He had not read the Vedas, or the Mahabharata, nothing more than scattered verses from the Bhagvad Gita --- Still, he was born a Hindu. Family planning was all very well, but not ---- ([.22)

One of the significant causes of Sita’s familial suffering is more number of children. Her continuous engrossment in the domestic hard work leads to physical weakness and mental fatigue. Thus, Raman’s intellectual character shows lack of scientific knowledge about female physiology and the significance of family planning. The most crucial question that the novelist poses is about the responsibility of taking decision of the family size, about the number of children not only born but brought up and converted to healthy, responsible, educated and self-reliant youth. Here, Raman holds Sita responsible for her fifth conception and pregnancy at the age of forty. The ultimate argument of the novelist is that it is man’s responsibility to take care of the family size and maintain the psychological and physical health of all the members of the family, which probably emerges as a significant failure on the part of Raman.

The emotional crisis that emerges during her fifth pregnancy at the age of forty and its ultimate conversion into her quarrel with Raman (p.21-23) illustrates the fact of two different spheres of ideas held by the husband and the

wife, entirely different and contrary to each other. Sita's loss of control over her anger, her verbal and physical violence almost in a hysterical manner becomes a characteristic feature of her pent up rage against the situation over the years. The hardwork and fatigue gathered during the twenty years of her married life bring her to the point of revolt and make her pronounce her 'great No'.(p 24)

Prominently, there appears fear of death in her expression as she expresses the scientific truth of female body at the age of forty, it being stiff due to reduced levels of blood and calcium, but Raman perceives it unscientifically as his traditional sense dictates. The dialogues between them appears as follows:

"I am not pleased, I am frightened," she hissed through her teeth. "Frightened" "Why? Why?" he spoke gently. "Everything will go well. I thought it grows easier and easier."

"It's not easier. It's harder – harder. It's unbearable, she wept." (p.21)

It is the fear-psychosis thus formed during the fifth delivery, especially a significant threat to her life, which pushes her psychologically in the realm of irrationality. The belief about the miracles of the island as done by the father in the past rise up in her mind. Not only this, but there is even a thought of deserting her husband as the relationship becomes an unending chain of suffering and anguish. P. Bhatnagar (1991) rightly observes:

"Sita's desire to achieve miracle of not giving birth to a child in a world not fit to receive it, could also symbolize her desire not to continue the bond that existed between her and Raman."<sup>47</sup>

Sita's decision of going to the island by leaving off the husband at the mainland has multiple reasons. It is the memory of the distant past which operates her present which is full of suffering. M. Mani Melbei (2000) observes:

"The past becomes a psychic residue in her personal unconscious, the backdrop of her life, and her obsessive preoccupation with it gives her the strength to leave her home."<sup>48</sup>

The possibility of death in the fifth delivery at the age of forty as perceived by Sita, emerges as the most prominent cause of her leaving the husband and the family. Sita's love for the unborn child shows her sense of

motherhood and a specific feminine quality of kindness. Raman's practical nature and his masculinity is recognized with his sense of abortion as the most insignificant one while its pronouncement from Raman causes great deal of rage on Sita's face. This bluntness of the sensitivity of Raman is one of the causes of Sita's nervousness and suffering. Sita wavers between the two positions of her mind – instinctive motherly love for the unborn child and the strong negation for giving birth to it. The twenty years of her hardwork and suffering culminate into her decision.

The impact of this embarrassing and difficult situation on Sita and Raman's mind is observed differently. Sita undergoes gross seriousness while Raman has a very casual sense of it. The novelist narrates:

“-----She fighting the other laughing, What did he mean? What did she mean?”(p.22)

This stark reality of the patriarchal family structure as shown by the husband-wife relationship communicates the male dominance posed mainly by the gains of economic productivity on the part of Raman which is not had by Sita as she is a housewife. Therefore, Raman has no seriousness of her living. It reflects his egotistical nature, a self-conceited image of himself which is quite contrary to his accommodative nature. In a larger context, Sita's attempt for the release of herself from the bondage of patriarchal family life in search of freedom and pleasure indicates the horrors of patriarchal family system which lacks the understanding of the hardships of woman's living and willingness of giving her due accommodation in the family. Jasbir Jain (1987) views Sita's return to Manori as madness. Her comment is as follows:

“Sita's return to Manori is in itself an act of madness, lured as she is by the fantasy of her childhood.”<sup>49</sup>

However, this comment is likely to pervert the reality as it emerges from the study of the conditions of Sita's living, especially at the family of procreation. It seems to be completely ignored by the critic.

Raman, as a representative of the patriarchal ideology, has been attacked by the novelist by describing cynically the scenes, situations and Sita and Raman's interactions with it. In fact, they occupy the significant position in her

life. The narration, “She had had so many children”--- (p. 103) indicates the novelist’s protest of Raman as family chief showing his irresponsibility and hence, Sita’s domestic suffering due to increased family size. The crows forming ‘shadow civilization’ (p.25) near their small flat at the seashore can be allegorically understood as representation of human life full of ‘murder, infanticide, incest, theft and robbery’. It is this sight of violence which renders Sita restless and tense. Raman is unaffected over this situation. On the contrary, his view is that of laughter and casual sense.

When the eagle is put to death by the crows in their fight, Sita gets extremely nervous. Raman’s comment is purely masculine: “They’ve made a good job of your eagle.” (p.27). Sita’s struggle for the survival of the eagle from the violent attack of the crows, her use of toy-gun against them shows her humanity. Her sense of life and attacking the cruelty is significant from humanity point of view. Raman shows cynicism and laughter towards her and her view point.

The another incident describing children’s fights full of violence (p 27-28) project their contrary views about violence. Sita’s fear of violence emerging from the quarrels of ayahs and the fights of her children render her dismayed. It causes tenseness to her mind. It is narrated in her talk with Raman:

“It is like living in the wilds”, she said to her husband at night. “One may be attacked, one’s children may be attacked in the streets.” (p.29)

Raman remains cold. He says:

“don’t make too much of it – you will upset Karan.” (p.29)

Sita’s overwhelming sense of narrating the event is nullified by his ease and coldness which affects Sita’s mind. The destructive tendencies of her children with the family (p.29-31) causes a great deal of tenseness and fatigue to her mind and body. The violence is narrated.

“Like the waves incessantly, tirelessly crushing into each other, her sons hurled their bodies at each other as if they were made for attack and combat.” (p. 30)

Sita fails to withstand it and her ‘screams’ can not stop it. The children destructive living and its impact on Sita appears in the following narration.

“Destruction came so naturally, that was the horror.” (p.30)

Thus, the rearing of the children reduces Sita to fear and dismay in terms of violence and destruction they form. The fear and dismay formed in her mind is transformed into physical and psychological weakness which moves Sita’s mind towards withdrawal.

In the ultimate consideration of the situations, it could be argued that the ideas and actual performance of violence in all incidents is protested by Sita with fear and shocks while the same is defended by Raman. It illustrates the basic difference between the husband and the wife regarding violence and the tendencies behind it. The sense of difference governs the disintegrated nature of the relationship between Sita and Raman. Probably, Raman’s defense of violence is derived from his capitalistic power whereas Sita’s attitude is that of humanity, peace and love. His capitalistic power is meant for ruling, and ruling can not be possible without cruelty and violence, the demonstration of which he might have in the factory.

The burden of the materiality of city life in terms of its ideological and practical bearings upon her mind leads to disintegration of her mind and soul. One of the aspects which frightens Sita in Raman’s family is, his ‘guests’ (p.31). The guests are strongly disliked by her. Their overflowing materiality is disgusted. Her view of them is expressed as follows: “They are nothing --- nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter, animals.” (p.32) Her pet animals in the forest have been perceived better than them.

On the contrary, Raman is proud of his guests, the Indian merchant class to which he belongs. Sita’s disgust of materiality in terms of food, sex and money is mainly derived from her idealistic trait emerging from the unconscious mind containing the freedom movement and the saint like father in the past.

Sita’s waiting in the family of procreation is mainly caused by her nostalgic habit of getting into the past life. The present family life set by the corporate values of selfishness is disliked by her. Her psycho-physical condition is narrated as follows.

“Physically so resigned, she could not inwardly accept that this was all there was to life, that life would continue thus, inside this small enclosed area” (p.36)

Thus, Sita remains puzzled with her perception of life. Her present experience of life is quite contrary to that of the past which she renders as real life. The nostalgic habit grows and Sita is constantly found at the balcony, smoking there and waiting. The novelist calls her ‘a living monument to Waiting’ (p.37). It clearly indicates Sita’s lack of interest in the family life. Sita’s waiting probably evolves from her longing for love. Therefore, the waiting seems to be for the departed mother who, as she thinks, could come back and love her or it might be for Moses – once young and handsome man, appearing at the Jeevan Ashram, who had tied a rope to the fig tree in the form of loop and swung Sita on it (p.38) Moses had created attraction for her.

The close observation of the situation shows that Sita’s innermost desire to be loved, to be loved selflessly, almost from her childhood to the latest moment at her husband’s house, remains unfulfilled. The void created in the depth of her mind sets her to certain compulsive drives. Boredom and restlessness prominently emerge from this void. Ironically, Raman as husband fails to reach upto this psychological breakdown in Sita’s mind. The material set up established around her does not provide her real joy and comfort which lies in love, care and concern, for which she aspires. Therefore, the sight at the Hanging Gardens (p.105) of the husband and wife almost in the lovely trance appeals to her despite the bitter reality existing behind the physicality of the couple - he being old and she being tubercularly pale in her beauty and youth.

It is the acute interaction between the lovelorn condition and the accretion of domestic hardwork that renders Sita hysterical. Thus, the psychological need for love all through the life forms handships which convert Sita’s mind to hysterical condition where a sense of rational and irrational is entirely wiped out and there is formation of the utmost desire to move to the island for miraculous treatment of not having the child, under the dark shadow of the late father’s blessings at the island, as she had perceived in the past. Raman as husband remains unaware of the inner action that forms in Sita’s

mind. He is lost in his patriarchal world and therefore he does not even feel that Sita suffers. R. K. Srivastava (1984) rightly observes:

“Raman in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* fails to understand the problems of Sita.”<sup>50</sup>

However, the prominent reason behind Raman's failure is, his lack of genuine love for Sita, and a condition of coldness towards her. In the overall analysis of man-woman relationship in the novel, it would not be inappropriate to allocate some space for considering Raman's state of mind regarding Sita, wherein one could explore some reasons of the marital disharmony.

At the outset, it must be accepted that Raman has hardly accepted Sita as his wife. It is his youthful attraction for her beauty, his father's concern towards her father and a sense of pity he felt towards her, that makes him marry her. Besides, Sita's responses, reactions and behavioural patterns formed for the last twenty years are entirely out of tune with Raman's thoughts and lifestyle. The bitterness of her comments and oddities of behaviour are humiliating and insulting not only to him as a capitalist but also to his family. It chiefly contributes to significant reduction in Raman's warmth and love towards Sita. Her adverse attitude against the very values of urban life and materiality, of which he is an inseparable part, makes him nervous. Sita's behaviour, always contrary to the city life, creates coldness in Raman's mind because most of the times, it hurts his feelings. Further, it must be noted that Sita has no sufficient sense and knowledge to understand and appreciate Raman's courage, talent and hardwork for running the factory and proving himself as a leading merchant with profit. This lack of appreciation from Sita is also one of the reasons as to why Raman remains cold in the relationship. Her moving to the island from the home and the subsequent suffering of the family, at the mainland makes Raman restless and excited showing inward protest and rage against Sita. In her absence at home, Raman had to suffer, his children had to suffer, physically as well as ideologically. It creates in his mind utter dislike for Sita without any sense of love and concern. On personal ground, he deserts her psychologically.

In addition, Raman's dictatorial power gained through his capitalistic spirit and through the patriarchal unconsciousness makes him a sole owner of

his house and estate without any involvement of Sita in it. It attains a condition of inequality in which love never grows Raman's expression is narrated by the novelist.

“Any woman --- any one would think you inhuman. You have four children, you have lived comfortably always, in my house. You've not worries. Yet your happiest memory is not of your children or your home, but of strangers “. (p.107)

Raman's condescending approach to Sita thus established, views her either as a wife or mother with ideological fulfillment. But he never thinks of her as Sita, as an individual apart from the family tie, having her own joys and sorrows. It shows his patriarchal perception of happy woman where Sita is not happy. This fact makes Raman extremely nervous. His expression “perhaps, one should be grateful if life is only a matter of disappointment, not disaster.” (p.104) shows his purely patriarchal significance as a protector lord of Sita's life where, moved away from the home, she would feel insecurity and hazards amidst society. In his unconscious mind, there is a patriarchal threat to Sita – the threat to leave her insecured outside the home. Therefore, in his view, Sita must remain grateful to him and follow his ideas in co-life.

The hardships on the island as faced by Sita and her two children destroy her hysteria and the subsequent sense of illusion and brings her down on the surface of reality. She regains an order of life where there dawns upon her mind a realization that life is better than death, comfort is better than irritation, lovelessness is better than alienation and above all, husband is better than lover. This dawn of understanding becomes Sita's first lesson of socialization gained out of her own-experience at the age of forty reflecting a sense of compromise between the subjective self and the objective reality. She realizes that the subjective self can not change the objective reality and for survival, there is no option without it..

It is further seen that one of the significant drives in Sita's mind is that of “pleasure-principle”. Her fascination for the foreigner, her attraction for Moses at the island, her freedom and joy at the seashore and her languishing without it, clearly testify it. M. Mani Meitei (2000) rightly observes:

“All together the subtle irrational working of Sita’s mind at such moments is governed by ‘pleasure-principle’ by lessening or extinguishing the amount of stimulation that resides in her mental apparatus in the form of excitement, hunger, drives etc.”<sup>51</sup>

As an inevitable psychological phenomenon existing as a result of the imbalance of man-woman relationship, Sita’s alienation at the family of orientation and the family of procreation is balanced by some other factors existing in the respective environments. In her pre-marital life, the alienation generated is partly treated or nullified by the natural scenery of the island, Sita’s interest in it and her interactions and playing with her brother- her only companion - Jeevan. In the family of procreation, she is saved from absolute alienation by the four children she has. In a way Sita does not undergo “moral aloneness”<sup>52</sup> which gives the individual almost a death-pale experience and suffocation where all associations remain cut off, as the conditions of Manisha in *Voices In the City* and Maya in *Cry, The Peacock* show.

In *voices in the city* and *Maya in Cry, the Peacock* Sita attains an earlier phase and she is protected by the harmony at both the parts of her life. Therefore, its impact on her mind is not as damaging as that of Maya and Manisha.

R.S. Pathak (1991) studies alienation of the female protagonists of Anita Desai’s novels. He refers to the plight of modern man as discussed by Melvin Seeman under a set of five inter-related operational conditions, viz powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. It is undoubtedly true that Sita’s life is forced through all these forms of alienation. During her childhood and adolescence, she remains alienated in her relationship with her father. After marriage, the alienation increases in quantum. The husband and the culture form a net of alienation around her. She is alienated even from her own children as they prefer the intellectual and material aspect of the father over the dullness of the mother. The mother loses her lustre and power before the sunshine of the father, as the children perceive. It is worthwhile to note the impact of such alienation on Sita. The destructive values of alienation at different phases of life make Sita’s psyche lose her faith

in all human relationships. This psychological condition of Sita is the worst outcome of man-woman relationship in the novel. Her experience is narrated:

“Watching it, she saw again that point of time when she had realized what a farce marriage was, all human relationships were.” (p. 105)

Sita’s experience of life renders her soul troubled and tortured with formation of anguish. Madhusudhan Prasad’s (1981) truly observes:

“*Where Shall We Go This Summer* is Desai’s shortest existential novel.”<sup>53</sup>

It must, now, be accepted that Sita’s life experience moving through different human relationships brings her to the point of its existential character. However, she does not lose faith in life. The sense of life makes her embrace the principle of ‘only connect’ (p.63). Sita’s wisdom lies in choosing life rather than facing death-pale alienation, misery and death. The novelist narrates her psychological position:

“Only connect, they say. So she had spent twenty years connecting, link by link, this chain. And what is one to do with a chain? It can only throttle, choke and enslave” (p.63)

Now, Sita consciously accepts the bondage. ‘The heifer’, ‘the grain’, ‘the slumberous egg’ from D. H. Lawrence verse (p.109) which she cherishes with her, becomes her ideals in the face of the adversity of life. She continues life on the mainland not with full spontaneity and gaiety but with unwillingness and nervousness. Raman takes Sita back to the mainland not with personal interest and happiness, but for the ideological maintenance of the family, for the future of the children, for carrying out the responsibilities.

The incidental harmony created by the circumstance towards the end of the narrative may not lead to mutual understanding and love in the lasting relationship. However, it is certain that Sita is socialized enough to be a woman to undergo domestic duties without any value of rebellion, but surrender and acceptance.

Thus, Sita’s idealistic past devoid of socialization and tinged with alienation along the post-marital domestic hardships appear as her unconscious mind while Raman’s corporate practical present which becomes his racial

memory, set the husband and wife poles apart, never to get united in a true sense, but to be in the family, with the ideology, without genuine pleasure of marital living.

### 3.4.2 The Device of Imagery:

The device of imagery used by the novelist in the present novel profoundly projects the conditions of Sita and Raman's life. Madhusudan Prasad (1984) studies imagery in Anita Desai's novels. He comments:

"In Anita Desai's novels, imagery lends a poetic lyrical colouring to the problems of the estranged self and project reality through artistic parallels more powerful and eloquent than common collocation of words."<sup>54</sup>

Prasad projects the two functions of such imagery --- endowing poetic characters and highlighting the thematic features. The imagery prevailing in the present novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, shows these traits.

Raman's emergence as male-dominating husband grown amidst the patriarchal environment and his perception of Sita's revolt as a dangerous primitive attack over the crisis of the fifth pregnancy is exactly communicated by the image of the stolid man, the image of 'soundly locked gate' and the image of the primitive weapons of a defending civilization. The imagery, in the united effect of the images, appears as follows:

"His face usually as stolid as soundly locked gate, receded half an inch in shock. It was not only the brutality and murder-ousness of this statement that seemed to attack him with the clubs and spheres of a bestial civilization."(p.22)

Raman's temperament and traits, specifying patriarchal values of co-life in husband-wife relationship in his sense of incommunication and lack of warmth in relation to Sita is duly vivified by the image of 'soundly locked gate' The transformation of his face into an inanimate object shows lack of human quality and humanity in him. The image evolves from the cynical vision of the novelist towards Raman's patriarchal character.

The another aspect of his personality is his perception of woman according to the patriarchal ideology where woman is submissive despite her hardwork and sacrifice, and no revolt touches her. This perception as unconscious thought, is fused with his mind. Therefore, Sita's revolt from her

'great No' is experienced by him as a shock, almost a savage attack as communicated by the images of 'clubs and spheres' of primitive people. Ironically, Raman's sense of modernity strongly confuses the values of primitive and sophisticated civilizations . perhaps, this is the central image in the novel which displays the nature of man-woman relationship in the patriarchal context as prevails in the modern Indian society.

Sita's sense of horror and tension with Raman's utterance of the word 'abortion' is realized in terms of her gasping. Her falling breath is compared with a dropping stone (p.22). The image of a 'dropping stone' shows her sense of restlessness, the pressure exerted by the circumstances and Raman's casual approach towards the situation. With the memory of Cavafy's poem which encourages her for revolt, rage and freedom, Sita makes the most subjective effort of receiving protection from the forthcoming situation of danger. Therefore, the image of 'amulet' (p.24) which stands for warding off evil and destructive power, has been employed by the novelist for the supposed protective power of the poem to Sita.

The phrase 'dull metal of her mind' shows combination of abstract with concrete in order to vivify the abstract sense. The image signifies a whirl of insecurity formed in her mind where the poem can give her energy, courage and comfort to face the circumstances.

The image of 'an insect' (p.36) which has characteristics of its own breed, but changes ('camouflage') according to the environment strategically, throws light on Sita's innate trait of boldness against her feigned shyness in the wedding ceremony. The passage of time in her life as she counts from wedding to the present times is characterized by the 'layers' of experiences of boredom, melancholy and agony. Her face showing the sense of past in relation to her father and her husband is realized in the image of 'grey sand' (p.36) where she loses all features of humanly harmony and joy and she is converted to the age-old dryness. The state of her mind and body thus formed as a product of her relationship with the patriarchal forces at large, is expressed in the image of 'grey sand'.

The phrase 'chameleon existence' (p.53) has been cynically used by the novelist in order to portray the character of the father and his living. The adjective 'chameleon' refers to a trait of politician in Sita's father who undergoes mass deception of men and women as activist and saint on the mainland and the island. Through the image of chameleon, the novelist raises a doubt about his so called greatness as a Gandhian leader, which could be traced to the dubiousness of his trait. The image proves him to be a politician rather than a true Gandhian leader.

There appears another image which evokes a sense of misplacement of Sita on the island, from ideological point of view. The description appears as follows:

"She felt this strangeness in the atmosphere not altogether comfortable, as a moth that has emerged from its cocoon not into sunlight, but into a grey non-light that does not warm the damp wings or give them strength for flight."

The image of 'moth' used for Sita shows striking resemblance between the realms of their existence. The image brings out the fundamental social requirement for Sita's sound life and contrarily expresses the failure of its provision. It significantly highlights the lack of socialization and social interaction ('sunlight') required for the growth of Sita's mind. On the contrary, she is subjected to the conditions of Nature and the philosophical 'Jeevan Ashram' ('a grey non-light') which is not at all useful for her social development, in the ideological sense. There is a presentiment in the image which communicates the failure of the environment of the island in preparing herself for facing hardships of life on the mainland ('strength for flight').

The whole attempt of Sita's father to perform his Gandhian ideas in the Manori village through the habitation of the Jeevan Ashram, has been viewed by the novelist as a farce, almost a falsity, away from the truth of day-to-day life. After the father's death, Raman has been sent on the island in order to dislodge the things and bring Sita back to the mainland. The novelist perceives Raman in the image of 'a stage manager' (p.71) where the Jeevan Ashram becomes 'the empty theatre with its cigarette stubs and stale odours and dust.' The cynicism and the protest of the father through this image is mainly caused by the father's

irresponsibility towards the daughter, negligence of his duty of her care, concern and socialization and his vain attempted at getting into self glorification by creating illusions.

Raman is governed by the ideological aspects of life. According to him, children, money, luxury, home make the woman the happiest in the world. He has gained the things with hardwork. But Sita craves for love, even the children cannot appeal to her. Raman is heavily frustrated with Sita's mental make up. In the advanced stage when his body greys, his nervousness about Sita, knows no bounds. The novelist portrays his psycho-sphycial condition with the image of 'a large grey bird in despair' (p.107) The image signifies Raman's subhuman status as businessman with graying age and despair about his wife. Sita's existence in the patriarchal family environment and the society at large as she perceives subjectively, is worked out with the image of 'jellyfish'. Sita, expresses her agonized self, as follows:

"Perhaps, I never ran away at all. Perhaps I am only like the jellyfish washed up by the waves, stranded there on the sand-bar" (p.108)

For the last twenty years, Sita has been hit by the 'waves' of the patriarchal ideology perpetrated by her husband, Raman. It has taken off the essence of her life --- her emotion and joy which fountain from her heart --- and now almost in a depraved condition, she lies in the family ('sand-bar') in a meaningless way where her real self is entirely destroyed and the adopted self failed to cope up with the domestic circumstances.

Thus, the imagery depicting the nature of man-woman relationship in the novel primarily deals with the character traits of the persons, especially Sita, her father and Raman, the situations and conditions of their life. Most of the images are in the form of simile. The images basically evolve from the inanimates, insects and subhuman world showing the degraded status of human beings, either possessed by themselves or brought to the point by circumstances. One can conclude in the words of S. Indira (1994):

"Anita Desai's use of images serves a variety of ends such as development of theme, evocation of the tone or atmosphere and growth of character." <sup>55</sup>

### 3.4.3 The Narrative Techniques:

The narrative technique used in the novel is primarily of third person point of view, in which the multiple folds of Sita's life have been presented according to the time scale exploited by the novelist. The entire narration is divided into three parts: "Monsoon 67", "Winter 47" and "Monsoon 67". In Part –I "Monsoon 67", the novelist narrates Sita's arrival and living on the island full of hardships after twenty years of her married life caused mainly by the crisis of life and death over her fifth pregnancy and her boredom for the twenty years. Part II, "Winter 47", narrates Sita's past life almost from her childhood to the moment of her marriage, a period of twenty years dominated by her Gandhian father showing the gross negligence of his daughter, Sita. Part III "Monsoon 67", emerges as the continuation of part I where, at the end, Sita leaves for the main-land.

All through the three parts of the novel, Sita's relationship with her father and her husband has been effectively projected. The failure of her relationship at both the places renders her alien and pushes in the dark corner of getting existential. The authorial voice emerging from third person point of view is clearly audible especially in the form of critical judgments emerging from the novelist's vision about the characters' thoughts and behaviour and the way of life lived by them

Jayita Sengupta (2000) studies Time as a narrative device in the novels of Anita Desai. She comments:

"The novels where the narrative shifts blocks of time are *Baumgartner's Bombay*, *Clear Light of Day* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* The use of flash back and montage in these novels not only act as a narrative device to unravel the past and explore consciousness but also contribute to the narrative pattern in the novels."<sup>56</sup>

Thus, time gains significant dimension in the ultimate impact of the narrative scheme. As a narrative strategy, the main story of the life of the female protagonist, Sita, is wrapped in the rural life of the islanders – Moses and Miniam, Jamila and her husband and a host of other women who had been on the island for years together. Their traditional unconscious mind to deily Sita's

father, to underrate Sita and to struggle for making both ends meet, are the few features through which the main story enters and comes out. The narrative opens and closes with the thoughts of these people about Sita and her father and their general buzz of living, almost contrary to that of Sita-Raman's life which is materially rich and yet unhappy.

The opening sentence of the narrative is significant from thematic point of view.

"Moses waited. Waiting was what he did most of his time. It was not only his prime but also his legitimate occupation." (p.3)

Moses's waiting and its ultimate conversion into boredom is the basic fact of Sita's life almost from her childhood to the later period of her married life. It remains a consequence of her failed relationship with her father and her husband who give her alienation due to their incommunion. Sita's waiting is mainly for love either from the deprived mother or young handsome Moses.

Thus, the void caused in her mind forms boredom which cannot be overcome by any provision in terms of materiality. It could be perceived as the root cause of the failure of Sita's relationship with Raman which is with everything, but without love and care. The sense of waiting and consequent boredom thus initiates from Moses and slowly enters in the main story. Therefore, Moses becomes a link in order to initiate the main block of the narration.

The chronological sequence of time that begins almost from 1927 and continues upto 1967, has been perceived in terms of the time periods of Sita's life. Their occurrence has been set by the novelist according to the thematic vision and the artistic requirement of the modern novel.

The ending of the narrative has a strategic sense. The main story of Sita and Raman's family life ends with Sita's realization that life can not be lived subjectively. She is aware that domestic hardwork and suffering is inevitable and it must be accepted for survival. If the opening of the narrative poses a problem, the ending provides a solution through the bitter experiences of Sita.

Thus, the narrative technique employed by the novelist in *Where Shall Go This Summer?* Appropriately communicates the novelist's vision of

woman's life in the context of patriarchal situation in the modern Indian society.

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