CHAPTER - III
MARRIAGE
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"History proves that marriage is essential to well being of human society and that celibacy brings ruins upon states."¹

This view about marriage in human society is quite right, as marriage is an association of two souls. Marriage is a significant institution besides family. It provides a legal right to man and woman relationship and differs human beings from animals. Marriage is one of the important themes in the novels of Indian Writing in English. This theme of marriage has been in the air in the novels written by Anita Desai. The theme of marriage is all in all in her novels, as it has been depicted in a variety of ways. Desai presents marriage as a dissonance between husband and wife, as M.A. Waheed observes:

"The theme of marital dissonance and inharmonious man-woman relations figure mostly in her novels... Maya and Gautama in Cry, the Peacock, Sita and Raman in Where Shall We Go This Summer?, Monisha and Jiban in Voices in the City, Mr. and Mrs. Kaul in Fire on the Mountain, and Sarla and Deven in In Custody are locked up in unhappy wedlocks."²

The subject of marriage appears to be inexhaustible for the novelist, who creates an authentic treatment of marriage theme. Desai explores the problem of man-woman relationship in terms of marriage. Thoroughly acquainted with life and manners of India, the novelist has a unique insight into the traits of Indians, particularly the structure of lives of urban upper and lower middle classes. The changing time and altering social situations have served to bring out its astonishing diversity and endless variety. The novelist favourably reacted to the changed situation like living in a socially dynamic, economically uncertain and psychologically tense milieu.

Many of Indian women novelists focussed the problems of women like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Shashi Deshpande, Attia Hosain, Bharti Mukherjee, Nargis Dalal, Rama Mehta, Shanta Rama Rau, Shobha De, Veena Paintal, Mrinalini Sarabhai, Jai Nimbkar,
Shouri Daniels and Anita Desai. They could make solid contribution to Indian English fiction after independence. These novelists present a creative release of feminine sensibility. They attempted to highlight women's problems in the male-dominated society.

Such novels offer a convincing world in which characters live with maturity. Both Indian English and Anglo-Indian writers dealt the Indian problems and conflicts with reference to marriage and marital dissonance with the help of sentimentalism and mysticism. Anita Desai peeped into the cause of marital dissonance. A different world, till now not represented in literature, gets a vision through the eyes of Anita Desai. Before this, women were treated as second-class citizens. The post independence era gushed forth like a stream in different domestic issues like marital discord. Anita Desai frames causes of marital discord in the disagreement between the dreamy approach and the pragmatist approach. The East-West encounter, cross-cultural tensions, socio-economic and psycho-political issues also contribute very much to the disputes of marital discord. All the novels of Anita Desai, which are based on the theme of marriage, show the impact of education on women. She writes of life as seen by women and life as affecting women.

Marriage is an essential association between husband and wife. The structure of marriage involves three fundamental bonds: the marital, parental and sibling. A.K. Sur defines marriage as:

"Marriage in the biological sense is a sexual relationship entered into with the intention of making it permanent, even apart from whether or not it has sanction of law or the church."³

Marriage is one of the basic needs of life. It is something more serious than the pleasure of two people in each other's company. From the very ancient times, marriage has been an imperative element for maintaining good social relations. It is like a bridge for husband and wife. Marriage is a social recognition of love between two persons. It provides a respected life in society
and with love and support of husband and wife; they can live a happy married life. Marriage is considered as a 'Sanskara' in Hindi tradition.

"According to the Hindu tradition, marriage is regarded as a 'Sanskara' which initially transformed every man into a 'husband' and every woman a 'wife'; thus giving each a social role and finally uniting them into an eternal bond of love, procreation and self realization."^4

Marriage is necessary for the reproduction as well as it provides security to women. It is a social institution, a partnership between husband and wife, the smallest unity in society. It is often controlled by custom. It has been one of the major expressions of human career.

Marriage is essential for the building of the structure of society. Simone De Beauvior views that society offers marriage as the destiny to women. But it is the duty and responsibility of both the husband and wife to maintain their matrimonial bonds harmoniously. Traditionally wife has been considered as a passive kind of person, who had to obey her husband and in-laws. To maintain matrimonial bonds it has been more a responsibility of wife than to husband in Indian context. She had to perform all the sacrifices. In marriage the daughter is handed over to the male partner without considering the delicacy of her mind and feelings. Marriage is a union of souls. Some adjustment must be there from both sides. But it is very well known fact that, the credit for successful marriage in India goes to women. Her grace, love, wisdom, sense of understanding, tolerance and sacrifice lead marriage to its ultimate destination successfully. In the Indian middle class families, the couples generally go through arranged marriages. They do not choose their life partner by themselves. They have to obey their parent's choice. But in the western tradition, the couples choose and marry with the person whom they like. It is also very well known fact that, marriages in every country are ceremonised through religious authority and sometimes by social reformers and legislators. In India social customs and traditions play a considerable role in matrimonial
patterns. There are profound implications for marriage and family life in India. The marital patterns are still controlled by Indian religions.

A different idea of marriage has been given in every society, because defining norms of it are different in every society. In modern terms, marriage can be defined as a social behaviour pattern between individuals. Love and better understanding of husband and wife are compulsory elements for a successful marriage. Marriage has always been a matter of attraction and attention and will continue to fascinate every mind for times to come. The Hindu principles of marriage are nearness and contact while the Christian marriage principles are the elements of beauty, mutual admiration and consent, and in India the component in marriage are Dharma (Duty), Praja (Procreation) and Rati (Enjoyment). The mythological story of Yama and Yami illustrates the Hindu view of marriage as scientific and cosmic evolution. While the Hebrew illustrates the story of Adam and Eve, which is based on creation, India remains disunited in marriage customs and rites, which helps to study the marriage and marriage customs. About the Hindu tradition of marriage, Abha Avasthi opines:

"Marriage in Hindu tradition is not only a ceremonial union of man and woman, more eminently; it is a reproduction of hierarchy. Nor it is a mechanical imitation of the cosmic union of the male and female. Principles of Heaven and Earth; it is essentially a re-enactment of the myth of creation."

Although marriage is an act for getting pleasure for both husband and wife, but in the novels of Anita Desai, the theme of marriage is explored as a dissonance, because in spite of all love, mutual understanding and support, there are some factors, working to shake the stability of matrimonial bonds. Such are the factors that disturb the marital ties. The situation created by such factors is termed as a marital dissonance. In her novels, Anita Desai has brought forward these factors in varied forms. The fundamental bonds of marriage have become weak under the pressure of widespread confusion in
sexual relation, a quest for self, contrary temperaments of husband and wife, political and social debacle and external stresses.

Anita Desai presents the theme of marriage as a disaster. All the marriages in her novels are more or less business transactions. Almost all female protagonists of Anita Desai are the victims of marital discord. She also tries her pen to discuss the various reasons of disintegration of marriages. All these marriages are presented as marriages of convenience. The novelist tries to explore women who have passively accepted their dependent, inferior status within marriage. Anita Desai presents the responsible factors for unsuccessful married life. Such factors lead towards discontent and divorce.

Through literary writings, especially fiction, an attempt is made to plumb the depths of men's consciousness by revealing the mysteries of human psyche. Anita Desai presents the theme of marriage as a dissonance, conditioned by the existing intricate social situations. In the novels of Anita Desai, instead of getting a glimpse of delights and exaltation of marriage, we only meet the agonies because of the marital dissonance. She explores marital dissonance from psychological spectacles.

A woman can understand women's problems better than men and naturally, it is a God gift of Anita Desai. It is women's nature to see, hear and talk more exuberantly than the men. Keen observation, a quick perception, a fine sensibility and an intuitive into life are strong points of women novelists, who have made use of some of these natural gifts in dealing the problems of women.

The dissonance in marriage is attributed to the emotional disappointment. Within their self-enclosed world, the higher security of marriage has reduced women to the status of emotional beggars. This emotional disappointment is associated with psychological depression of the wife because of the husband's pre-occupation with his profession. Marriage is a bond of love between the two. Love is the most significant theme in
Shakespearean comedies and gets fulfillment in a happy marriage. Love is totally absent in Restoration comedies, in which we get only clandestine and amorous relationship between man and woman. In the increasing complexity, happy married life has become complex and countless subterranean forces are at work. Anita Desai is very well cognizant with the theme of marriage, and therefore she fabricated her novels associated with the theme of marriage. She pictures marital dissonance with the portrayal of surface reality and inner whether.

Marriage as a disharmony is rooted in the clash between orthodox traditions of a male dominated Indian society and modernity, between materialism and genuine idealism and the last but not the least, the East-West encounter. Based on the theme of marriage, Desai's novels offer Indian domestic setting engulfed with the dichotomy between materialism and idealism. She presents the Indian tradition, culture civilization, manners, systems, patterns of living and values with utmost care and sympathy. The theme of marriage is associated with the basic problems of survival and existence. The novelist discovers new trends to face the different forms of oppression meted to women in male-dominated society. She deals with the theme of marriage in the light of variation between the eastern and western cultural values and their encounter.

Anita Desai presents the problem of marital disharmony through couples of incompatible temperaments - acutely sensitive wives, dutiful but understanding and insensitive husbands. Almost all the female characters in Anita Desai's novels are emotional and hypersensitive and due to their unsuccessful marriage, their life remains not less than a hell as Vinay Dubey rightly remarks:

"Anita Desai excels in depicting the pathetic pictures of a lovely married Indian woman who aspires to triumph over the chaos and suffering of her rather unusual existence. She writes that the life of women in India is slow and empty but on the other hand, in the West it is hurried,
busy and crowded. Hence in her sense both types of lives in the East and West cannot give full satisfaction to the heart of woman." 

The novelist has projected marriage as an inharmonious relationship. She has explored the realistic picture of married life in Indian context. The concept of marriage, which is related to a delicate union of two different minds, has not been properly realized in most of the Indian male-dominated families. Woman is taken for granted on number of fronts. Anita Desai admits that she is involved in the problems of marital discord and the hypocrisy, the faithlessness and the soul destroying, grinding process of compromise which accompany it. The traumatic experiences of married lives are presented. Each novel, maintaining the basic features of marital dissonance, presents different aspects of the problem.

The novelist pictures a modern search of individual identity. The modern cultural changes are responsible for the marital dissonance. Her novels abound masterly with this major theme. She explores the emotional world of women with a profound understanding of feminine sensibility as well as psychology. She tries to voice the mute miseries of countless married women. She presents them distressed by existential problems and miseries. She is concerned with the individual identity of married women, whose inward dilemmas and conflicts are portrayed. She underlines the trauma of identity in their marital environment. In the novels of Anita Desai, marriage is displayed in the form of inharmonious man-woman relationship.

Marital bonds assume great significance since the familial ties are considered sacred in our country. It is true that man is rigid and woman is abnormal in her behaviour, therefore mutual love and better understanding are required for a successful married life. But because of contrary temperaments of husband and wife, marital dissonance takes place as S. Pothen views:

"In spite of all these dicta and slogans supporting the indissolubility of marriage, there are factors, internal as well as external, working of
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"In spite of all these dicta and slogans supporting the indissolubility of marriage, there are factors, internal as well as external, working of
undermine the stability of marital ties. Such a situation is termed 'marital dissonance' which may be manifested in various forms, divorce being the final.""7

The theme of marriage is presented according to the context of the modern world because in the modern age, the fundamental bonds have become fragile. The causes of this disintegration are the pressures of inbuilt personality traits, a quest for identity, external stresses, and economic and political upheavals. Despite several common qualities, each human being is different in his temperaments and priorities of life. Lack of set routine of work and excessive leisure among women become a main cause of the restlessness and exacting, which tend towards discontent, indiscretion and divorce. Anita Desai writes about the people, who are fallen out of love, remained behind four walls locked in unhappy marriages. The novels of Anita Desai are full of the theme of marriage, which proves to be a disaster for both husband and wife. Marriages follow the jungle law of the survival of the fittest. Being physically stronger man survives.

There are so many problems created in marriage and married life. These problems become the reason of dangerous acts like suicide, divorce etc. Because of marital failures, man and woman are forced to do so. In the novels of Anita Desai, the problem of involvement versus detachment, of surrender versus freedom is variously interpreted. Because of ego and many other causes, it becomes very difficult to unite husband and wife as Vinay Dubey observes:

"Even loving friends, when they fall out, hate each other. Hence, reconciliation between husband and wife is more difficult than a treaty alliance between two warring nations."8

When husband and wife are of contrary temperaments, it leads to a complete failure for both. Anita Desai presents a similar treatment in her novels. It leads to a number of blemishes and weaknesses on personal and social level and because of contrary opinions, likes and dislikes, a mutual
quarrel of trifling nature and all this ends in fiasco. In this reference it is worth to quote the words of Manohar Kelkar:

"In matrimonial disputes, there are only two types of victory. In one case if husband and wife really come out of some misunderstanding and started a fresh life together and in another if they come to a conclusion that for any reason whatever there could be no happy marriage between them and therefore, they agreed on dissolving it. There was a third category of cases where a guilty party was just opposed from breaking the sacred tie of marriage."  

The married couples in the novels of Anita Desai do not understand the causes of their disintegration. According to her, marriage alone does not provide a solution to life's tensions and disorder. A better understanding is required for mental satisfaction and happy married life. A sense of cooperation, helpful nature for each other and psychological adjustment are imperative for a successful marriage. A healthy sense of compromise is also needed for a happy married life as both husband and wife need each other's support, but all the required elements have no place in the novels of Anita Desai.

Anita Desai does not keep art and life separated, and here in lies the importance of the theme of marriage in her novels. Dispute in the lives of married couple is one of the common matters of day-to-day life. Her popularity is not so much due to the themes, such as existentialism, alienation and East-West encounter. She is also appreciated in dealing the miserable plight of women's sufferings under their insensitive and inconsiderable husbands. About the theme of marriage in her novels, Vinay Dubey comments:

"...marriage as a main theme has been taken by Anita Desai. Through the portrayal of Indian characters, she presents her powerful theme and points the picture of love hate relationship between husband and wife."
The theme of marriage is associated with man-woman relationship. It seems of particular interest to Desai in most of her novels. Men are apt to be rational and matter of fact while women are sentimental and emotional. Their interests and their attitudes are different, and due to this, they look at things in different ways and react to the same situations differently. The novelist describes the afflictions of modern women in the male dominated society. She also concentrates on women's disaster at the alter of marriage. According to the novelist, if dissonance takes place in marriage, woman has to suffer more than man. The cause for this predicament is that, most marriages prove to be unions of incompatibility. Not only the man himself different, but his family ways, a new society of changing values and his surroundings, she is expected to adjust herself are fully different. It is worth to quote the words of Neeru Tandon:

"Within the private hell of maladjusted marriages, Desai presents the repressive forces of patriarchal attitudes. In her novels there is a sustained presentation of failed marriages, posing unstated questions regarding the functioning of marriages within the patriarchal structures of the Indian family. In the sophisticated upper middle class ethos generally depicted by Desai, severe economic deprivation of physical brutalization is largely absent, what is fore grounded is the psychological repression created through a male supremacist ideology which consumes any possibility of mutual love and concern, corroding the women's self-esteem and devouring her sense of identity and selfhood. In these fictional representations of reality, marriage becomes an institutionalized form of domination of women by men within the most personal of relationships."

Cry, the Peacock is Anita Desai's first novel deals the theme of marriage. Marriage is presented as a failure between Maya and Gautama. The novelist has depicted marital disharmony between both the husband and wife. The marriage of Maya with Gautama leads to the tragic tone of the novel. In fact, it is a sad tale of a young and hypersensitive girl, Maya. Maya is a spoiled and pampered daughter of a wealthy Brahmin. She is obsessed by a childhood
prophecy of an albino astrologer, who had predicted that, after four years of her marriage, either she or her husband would die. Maya is married to a man, named Gautama, who is her father's friend, much senior to her in age. Gautama is very cold and intellectual while Maya is emotional ridden and hyper sensitive. Both Maya and Gautama have contrary temperaments. Gautama is not able to understand Maya's emotions, because, he is insensitive, pragmatic and a rational advocate while Maya is very sensitive, fragile and introvert.

Being an extrovert, Gautama never tries to understand her. Gautama follows the philosophy of detachment while Maya believes in a life of total involvement. One of the most responsible factors for this unsuccessful marriage is the incompatible temperament of Maya and Gautama. Both are entirely opposed to each other in their temperaments and emotional responses. This novel is about Maya's cries for love and understanding in her loveless marriage with Gautama. Maya as a wife banks upon her husband Gautama, who is her backbone. Gautama is extremely unromantic while Maya is sentimental, endowed with poetic imagination and romantic sensibility. She requires a love partner, gifted with wide sympathies, imaginative and responsive temperament. Gautama lacks all these, because he is always out and about his work. Gautama is unable to understand Maya's sensitive nature. By unraveling the relationship of Maya and Gautama, the very beginning of the novel highlights the theme of marital dissonance. The fate of Maya and Gautama reminds one of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse. Because of all these, Maya is not able to get emotional accommodation. About their marital dissonance, Vinay Dubey comments:

"In this novel, Maya and Gautama always live a sharp contrast. Maya, the central figure, is alive through all her senses and lives intensely for each moment. Her husband Gautama is remote, detached, intellectual and somewhat bewildered by his wife's hyper sensitiveness. There are moments when one feels that Gautama comes very close to our traditional ideal life, and achieves an inner calm."
Although their marriage has been a complete failure, they continue to live together, leading a mechanical life. Communication gap between husband and wife is felt throughout the novel. When Maya's pet dog Toto dies, she becomes deeply upset. But this event is nothing for Gautama. This suggests that there is lack of possible emotional communication between them. There is no love behind this marriage, because this marriage is nothing but a result of the friendship of Maya's father with Gautama. For Maya, Gautama is nothing but a poor substitute of her father, because before her marriage, she developed father fixation. Gautama proves to be a medium to reach her father in her unconscious mind. That is why, there is little common between them and they simply maintain their matrimonial bonds. Gautama never understands her as she says:

"'You need a cup of tea,' he had said, showing how little he knew of my misery, or of how to comfort me. But then, he knew nothing that concerned me. Giving me an opal ring to wear on my fingers, he did not notice the translucent skin beneath, the blue flashing veins that ran under and out of the bridge of gold and jolted me into smiling with pleasure each time I saw it. Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me, to either the soft, willing body or the lonely, wanting mind that waited near his bed. Aid now, seeing me bereaved, seeing tears on my face and my pet gone, 'you need a cup of tea,' he said."13

The story of Maya and Gautama is that of unreason and sanity where in the end Maya is left alone, suffering from utter loneliness every moment throughout the novel. Her loneliness is the outcome of the incompatibility and apathy between the married couple, where we find that Gautama is a typically apathetic person. In this novel Anita Desai has effectively named the characters 'Maya' is illusion and 'Gautama' is knowledge. This story is symbolically the story of illusion versus reality, attachment versus non-attachment. Maya feels that Gautama neither knows nor understands the feelings of her emotional
heart. Gautama knows Maya only physically and never wants to reach the deep nerves. He never gives any comfort to the lonely and wanting mind. Maya is a lonely soul because she never gets the desired attention, company and consolation from Gautama.

The husband wife alienation, caused by the temperamental incompatibility of Maya and Gautama, forms the very core of the novel. Maya and Gautama disagree with each other even over trifles. The distressing incident of Toto's death fills Maya with an unknown fear, which connects her to the past. Maya is shocked to see the way; Gautama dismisses the death of dog. Gautama gives her a cat thinking that he has done his duty towards his wife. When Toto dies, Maya expects some love, care and consolation from her husband, which she doesn't get. Maya enters a disturbing emotional world of the neurotic, resulting from marital discord. Maya strikes at Gautama's reflection in the mirror and tries to kill him. In this novel the novelist projects marriage as a complete failure, where an ill-matched couple leads a forced life as Neeru Tandon remarks:

"Desai's very first novel, Cry, the Peacock is about Maya, who is unable to relate her emotions to her husband.... Maya and Gautama's marriage is one such case where they both are ill-matched as a couple. There is absolutely no understanding on the intellectual as well as sensual plane. Maya being the more sensitive of the two is unable to bear the strain of the relationship and is driven to insanity by the end of the novel. She craves for 'contact, companionship and communion', which Gautama with his rigid understanding of the Hindu Philosophy is unable to fathom."

Nothing is common between Maya and Gautama - social status, educational background, intellectual training, emotional make-up and religious and moral outlook. This difference agonised Maya's predicament and her childless life heightens her sense of marital dissonance. Marital dissatisfaction is an acute feeling of isolation. An obsessive fear of death aggravates her misery and causes in her a sense of utter marital dissonance, as K.K. Sharma
rightly observes that this novel "highlights the problem of unequal
marriage."\textsuperscript{15}

Gautama is an advocate, a realistic and practical man of reason. He believes in the work, governed by logic and reasoning. He believes in philosophical detachment on the contrary, Maya believes in attachment. He does not enter into the texture of Maya's nature. Whenever Maya wants close contact to Gautama, he does avoid her. She is neither able to get company from him nor physical, or sexual satisfaction. Maya's involvement is opposed to Gautama's philosophy of detachment. Maya believes in a life of total absorption and involvement. Both Maya and Gautama are sharply contrasted and represent the extremities of masculine and feminine principles. Maya continues to lead an explosive life and comments about her unsuccessful married life:

"It was discouraging to reflect on how much in our marriage was based upon nobility forced upon us from outside and therefore, neither true not lasting. It was broken repeatedly and repeatedly, the pieces were picked up and put together again as of a sacred icon, with which out of the pettiest superstition, we could not bear to part."\textsuperscript{16}

This marriage does not gratify Maya's basic need for love and belongingness. Both Maya and Gautama stand poles apart in their attitude to life. The tussle throughout the novel is not only between the temperamental incompatibility of the husband and wife, but it is also between the fairy tale world of Maya and the world of stark realities of Gautama. After getting married, Maya's life turns into a cage. Maya expects emotional and physical satisfactions, which are denied to her as she says:

"Poor man, poor Gautama, my husband. I spoke these words in order to stop staring, to make myself feel something for him. Gautama, my husband, my husband rose and went up to him, beginning to feel as tenderly solicitous towards him as towards a departing guest who might
never be encountered again, and I strolled with him slowly across the lawn, feeling that an unreal ghost stalked beside me-a body without a heart, a heart without a body - what was he? An unfair question, oh, grossly unfair, I chided myself immediately. He was a tired man, worn out by a day's hard, concentrated work. Age surrounded him, weariness steeped his limbs. Grey, grey, all was grey for Gautama, who lived so narrowly, so shallowly.\textsuperscript{17}

The irreconcilable temperaments of Gautama and Maya result in an unsuccessful marriage. The tragic end of Maya's and Gautama's married life is seen in her act of killing her husband and afterwards killing her own self by committing suicide as Shanta Acharya aptly observes:

"Maya and Gautama end up being two sides of the same coin, in each case the exclusiveness of the self makes it unable to accommodate the other."\textsuperscript{18}

Maya's marriage to Gautama is a marriage of convenience. It is a sort of pact between two mature guardians of Maya. Maya and Gautama are very different type of individuals. Maya is all for sensuality. She enjoys nature, loves beauty, loves Gautama and wants to be loved by Gautama. Thus Maya is a sensitive and sentimental female. Gautama, on the other hand is tall, lean man with graying hair with matter of fact and practical approach. It is a miss match between two different temperaments with not even a single link in their physical and mental outlook. In this reference Meena Belliappa rightly remarks:

"The incompatibility of character stands revealed Gautama who touches without feeling and Maya who feels even without touching."\textsuperscript{19}

Voices in the City is the story of Nirode, Monisha, Jiban, Amla and mother. Nirode is a Bohemian brother with his two sisters. All of them are tortured by their meaninglessness and hollow existence. Nirode the protagonist
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mother. Nirode is a Bohemian brother with his two sisters. All of them are
tortured by their meaninglessness and hollow existence. Nirode the protagonist
of the novel decides to remain a bachelor. He has hostile views about the institution of marriage, as he says:

"Marriage, bodies, touches and torture - he shuddered and indeed all that he had to do with marriage, was destructive, negative, decadent. He could waste no time on it..."20

Monisha's father feels that marriage in a middle class, unimaginative family like that of Jiban will cure Monisha of her morbidity. But Monisha is not able to adjust herself in the new environment. She is unable to establish any life giving rapport with her husband. Amla wonders why Monisha has been married to Jiban who is a boring non-entity, a blind moralist Monisha does not get a happy married life. She does not receive proper treatment from her husband. Jiban is unable to provide basic things to her. Their marital life is not different from that of Maya and Gautama. Joint family of Jiban, childlessness of Monisha, and temperamental variations between Monisha and Jiban are the causes of their marital dissonance.

Monisha expects love and care from Jiban. She expects her husband to be considerate, understanding, showing the tender feelings of love. But Monisha's thirst for love remains unfulfilled. In Jiban's joint family, Monisha longs for privacy and freedom, which she never gets in her life. She feels that the joint family system in her husband's house is a great threat to her. Monisha often feels that her efforts to seek her identity are threatened by her husband and in-laws. Monisha feels herself not less than a servant, as she speaks:

"Look at me, my equipment, appurtenances. My black wardrobe, my family, my duties of serving fresh chapatis to the uncles as they eat, of listening to my mother-in-law as she tells me remarkably many ways of cooking fish of being Jiban's wife. If all these were to blow away, what would be left would be very small, too transparent and vulnerable yet, it would be lighter to bear."21
Temperamental incompatibility is again the reason of the disharmony between Monisha and Jiban. Their married life is devoid of happiness and satisfaction. Monisha is totally different from Jiban. She is endowed with an intellectual bent of mind while Jiban is a practical, down to the earthman. In this reference M.A. Waheed rightly remarks:

"Monisha feels completely alienated from him. Her inability to bear a child, lack of intimacy with Jiban, suspicion of her in-laws in money matters and lacks of privacy drive her to commit suicide. Jiban behaves like a bureaucrat with his wife. In fact, the failure of their marital life is ultimately responsible for Monisha's suicide. While Maya's husband Gautama tries at least occasionally to communicate with Maya, Jiban has neither the will nor the capability to enter and appreciate the world of Monisha."22

Monisha's married life is empty and miserable, which is married to an elderly man. Monisha's father arranged this marriage to cure her morbidity. Jiban's family has many members who are all self-centered and self-complacent. Monisha opines about Jiban that he is the prisoner of a conventional culture in which woman's most important lores are child bearing, cooking, cutting vegetables, serving food and brushing small children's hair. Monisha's mother-in-law is very stern in a many-headed family. It seems that her married life has been the life of discontentment, life of mal-adjustment. For Monisha it is impossible to live in the traditional bindings of her in-laws. Like Maya-Gautama relationship, Monisha's relationship with Jiban also suffers from communication gap and lack of understanding. Monisha wants the love, which is free of rules, obligations and complexity but Jiban is unable to provide such love. Monisha's relationship with Jiban is filled only by loneliness and a desperate urge to succeed.

Monisha feels that she has failed to win either the affection of her mother-in-law or the love and companionship of her husband. Her face remains a mask of sadness due to mal-adjustment between her and Jiban. Monisha's
married life is projected as empty within and without. Because of Jiban's
carelessness, Monisha's married life is marked only by loneliness. The novelist
restarts to the technique of the diary, which adds pathos to the miserable hollow
married life of Monisha. The absence of love in her life makes her shriek in
agony.

Monisha tries her level best to appease the in-laws, but she fails to get
any sympathy, love and understanding from them. She is insulted and feels
humiliated. Her in-laws accuse her in vain. She is not able to decide that
whether to accept the meaningless and aimless life or revolt against it. She is
commented badly due to her childlessness, as her in-laws comment that:

"The womb may be in the wrong position, and then also an
operation is required. But it is the tubes, they are blocked."^{23}

Monisha is another variation of Maya, highly sensitive and lonely lady.
Jiban, totally contrary to Monisha, does not try to understand the real meaning
of their relationship. Due to joint family of Jiban, Monisha does not get
privacy. Neeru Tandon rightly comments about the dissatisfaction of Monisha's
married life:

"Monisha in *Voices in the City* is totally dissatisfied with her life
after marriage. Like Maya, she is also a miserable misfit among her in-
laws. So she weaves a web of her own and remains imprisoned in its
privacy. She feels lonely even in the company of Jiban. Monisha and
Jiban's marriage is the most pathetic illustration of maladjustment in
marriage.... The joint family household hinders their relationship and they
fail to reach out to each other. Their marriage is rendered meaningless as
it is merely based on role playing to cater to the codes of the larger family
they belong to."^{24}

There is no happiness or contentment in Monisha's married life. In a fit
of uncontrollable emotional turmoil, she pours kerosene over her clothes, sets
herself ablaze and dies. Her infertility, lack of intimacy with Jiban, lack of
privacy and charge of theft prove too much for her. Thus she tries to give meaning to her death since her married life has had none. Jiban's heart was dry and unconscious at Monisha's craving for love.

In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, the theme of marriage is projected in a social milieu characterised by racial discrimination. Similarly like the first two novels, Marriage is explored as a discord in the present novel. In this reference it is worth to quote the words of Krishnamoorthy Aithal:

"Anita Desai's novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* deals with the theme of East-West encounter. The novel covers numerous aspects of this encounter between the British and the Asiatic immigrants in England, including the most intimate and demanding encounter, marriage."  

Sarah and Adit are the two poles of this theme. Adit is an Indian, married to an English girl Sarah, settled down in England. Their marital dissonance occurs when Adit feels homesickness for India. Sarah lost her identity after getting an Indian husband. After this marriage, Sarah tries to find her identity. She is alienated both socially and psychologically. She is fixed between the East and West. Marrying an Indian husband becomes a matter of shame for Sarah. Although she tries her level best to adjust herself with Adit.

Sarah feels alienated and suffers a lot. Her marriage to an Indian obliges her to keep the loneliest path. She feels sad. Adit is unable to understand Sarah's anguish, loneliness and sat back and sat silent. Her marriage is also proved to be a failure. This marriage becomes a dissonance between Sarah and Adit. This discord results in social and psychological alienation to Sarah as Usha Bande rightly comments:

"Sarah in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is a case of both social and psychological alienation. The social factor stems from her marriage to an Indian settled in England; her psychological trouble emanates from her pride system."

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The marriage of Adit and Sarah is not a successful one. They are not able to lead a happy married life. Being an English girl, married to an Indian man, Sarah suffers from cultural alienation. Racial distinction is the root cause of this failed marriage. Sarah tries to accept Indian attitude, then also a difference in habits and ways of life supplement the marital discord. Adit forces Sarah to put on Indian garments and ornaments, in which she feels like a Christmas tree.

Because of marrying an Indian immigrant, Sarah feels shy and shamed among white women. She does not go to buy household goods from the shops, which are very near to her house. She goes to far situated shops so that unknown people cannot look her surprisingly. Sarah is very well aware of her miserable married life:

"It was though she has chosen to be cast out of her home, her background, and would not be drawn back to it, not even by her husband... she listened to the stream rush and an owl cry and felt herself cut loose from her mornings and began to drift round and round heavily and giddily, as though caught in a slow whirlpool of dark, deep water."27

Sarah, who is completely alienated, works in a school. She avoids conversation with her colleagues; who often discuss her married life. They all surprise to see Sarah's adjustment with an Indian husband. She feels herself frustrated and nameless. She feels her life as a journey from nowhere to nowhere. Sarah lives the life of a cultural exile in her own country. She feels displaced by marrying an Indian immigrant. Due to her unsuccessful marriage with Adit, Sarah is worried about the loss of identity in her own society. When people discuss about India, she deliberately avoids the discussion. She is disturbed by an anguish of shedding her own name and identity.

Being an English lady, Sarah is fond of pets. She does not mind eating rice nosed by the cat, but Adit refuses to. She is treated like other by Adit, who is a typical male – chauvinist. She feels as an outsider in her own country.
Mostly all the decisions are taken by Adit without consulting Sarah. He cares neither for her wife nor for her sentiments. When Adit feels nostalgia, he decides to go to India. At the time of leaving England, Sarah gets promotion and when she tells this good news to Adit, he gets angry. Adit accuses her not willing to leave England. Sarah's portrayal seems to be more an Indian typical wife than an English woman. In this treatment of marital disharmony, Anita Desai catches our attention to the annihilation of self that marriage involves for a female. Like a typical Indian husband, Adit taunts Sarah:

"The English wives are quite manageable really, you know. Not as fierce as they look very quite and hard-working as long as you treat them right and roar at them regularly once or twice a week."  

The intercultural marriage of Sarah and Adit does not offer anything grand and fabulous. Sarah's reluctance to discuss her Indian husband Adit before her colleagues shows her identity crisis and bewilderment. Sarah had aspired to lead a rich and wonderful married life with her Indian husband but she is shocked to find her husband's strange attitude. All her desires to know India are shattered. In this novel, Anita Desai explores the aspect of Indian marriage as well as western marriage. In Indian marriage, there is a union between husband and wife, where wife tries to adjust her with her husband as much as possible. The wife has to bear the unbearable tortures till she is broken.

When Sarah wants to do some service, Adit discards but being an English lady, she laughs because she is unable to understand Indians feelings and emotions. Before starting the job, Sarah cooks wonderful pies and stews, but now after getting job Sarah does not devote proper time to household works. Now her adjustment is totally changed. Adit does not like it and forces Sarah to give up her job because being a married lady, it does not look nice. Through her unsuccessful marriage, Sarah is presented as a lonely and helpless person. Her marriage to a wog obliges her to walk drawing across her face a mask of secrecy. Sarah is puzzled by Adit's bewilderment. She begins to have a
clear idea of her miserable married life. The novelist always makes an effort of love and happiness in the married life of Adit and Sarah. This novel deals at great length with the countless adjustments the married couple is compelled to make or has failed to make. Adit cannot stand British broths and makes Sarah cook Indian food straight away after marriage. Sarah and Adit face difficulty in adjusting to each other's concepts of cleanliness. Sarah does not protect food from the cat sniffing. Adit's Bengali music is also dissonance to her ears. They are unable to understand each other's religious rites. Sarah becomes a victim of loneliness. The following passage is a perfect evidence of Sarah's deserted married life:

"Who was she – Mrs. Sen who had been married in a red and gold Benares brocade sari one burning, bronzed day in September, or Mrs. Sen, the head's secretary, who sent out the bills and took in the cheques kept order in the school and was known for her efficiency? Both these creatures were frauds; each had a large, shadowed element of charade about it... She had so little command over these two charades she played each day, one in morning at school and one in the evening at home, that she could not even tell with how much sincerity, she played one role or the other. They were roles, and when she was not playing then, she was nobody. Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume. Where was Sarah? Staring out of the window at the chimneypots and the clouds, she wondered if Sarah had any existence at all, and then she wondered with great sadness, if she would ever be allowed to step off the stage, leave the theatre and enter the real world-whether English or Indian, she did not care, she wanted only its sincerity, its truth."  

In Where Shall We Go This Summer?, the novelist explores the theme of marriage. In this novel also marriage does not provide any satisfaction to husband or wife. Sita's alienation even cannot be explained. Temperamental difference one more time becomes the cause of the marital discord in this novel. The inadequacy and dissatisfaction of their mutual love relationship are
presented. This dissatisfaction increases tension between them. Their level of understanding is unequal. Sita's husband Raman is a rational, pragmatic, extrovert and outspoken while Sita is an introvert and very sensitive. The story revolves around the husband wife disharmony, which results a failure in marriage. Raman never cares for Sita and is always busy in money making as Shashi Khanna puts:

"Sita's married life has been one of utter failures because her husband was a middling kind of man; in fact, he was dedicated unconsciously to the middle way. The company which her husband (Raman) keeps is that of those men who have nothing to recommend themselves except the gift of making money. In spite of her husband's pleading to her that she should get used to his friends."30

Sita's married life becomes not less than a hell, portrayed with a remarkable poignancy. Due to misunderstanding, the natural flow of affection between Sita and Raman is blocked. Raman is a worldly husband, having a practical view of life. Sita is hyper sensitive, keen-eyed, poetic and imaginative. Sita is a mother of four children, pregnant for the fifth time. This time she does not want the child to be born, nor does she like to abort it. Raman can never understand it. He is the son of her father's friend. When Sita's father died, Raman took her from the island, and married her. This marriage was not based on love, but it was just the result of the circumstances of that time. Raman made her life empty and meaningless. She derives no satisfaction from her married life. When Sita wants to go to Manori and Raman opposes, she cries in exasperation:

"What I'm doing is trying to escape from the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to be sane again."31

Raman is busy with his vocational affairs and spares little time for Sita. He considers his work more satisfying than his relations with his wife. Sita realizes that genuine happiness is not possible in her matrimonial context.
husband and children are alien to her nature and needs. Sita chooses her own exile from her husband and her frequented domestic world.

There is nothing in Sita's husband, which can make her satisfied. Though she is married to a prosperous businessman, yet she has aged abnormally her face assuming the aged stillness. Her marriage is loveless, which becomes an obsession for her. She is obsessed with a bizarre though about the impending disaster. She suffers the pangs of an incoherent and fragmented matrimonial relation. Angered at the callous immunity of her husband, she decides to slap on him her convoluted revenge, which is neither to abort nor to deliver the baby she carries. Both Raman and Sita belong different worlds because when Raman knows about her boredom and unhappiness, he finds no reason of it. Raman is unable to understand how or why Sita feels bored:

"... she her self looking on it saw it stretched out so vast, so flat, so deep, that in fright scrambled about it, searching for a few of these moments that proclaimed her still alive, not quite drowned and dead."

Raman thinks only of the immediate present, but Sita is foresighted. Sita does not have any control over her married life, because Raman shows his full authority over her. Their responses and reactions of life are different. Sita finds her life dull, ordinary, uninteresting and monotonous. She expects a loving and caring husband, who would value her precious; but Sita's dream remains a dream only and never realized because Raman does not honour the claims of her bargain. The incident of the crows attacking a helpless eagle in Sita's sight is very painful and tragic but for Raman, it is just a trifling matter:

"They have made a good job of your eagle', said her husband, coming out with his morning cup of tea, 'Look at the feathers sticking out of that crow's beak."

Raman has his own standards and modes of life, different from Sita. The distance between both always increases and the gulf between the personalities
and tastes of both becomes fathomless. The visit of guests pleases Raman, but is painful to Sita. Overall marriage proves to be a disaster for both. Through Sita, Anita Desai presents a crystal clear view about married women, who are neglected, unwanted and unloved. In Raman's house, Sita finds herself in a disgusting surrounding. She suffers from the anguish of failure in communication with her husband Raman. The lack of understanding on the part of her husband increases her agony. Raman always remains engrossed in his business. Their children grow independent and Sita is left alone in the abyss of boredom. Raman never tries to understand or realize her condition. Sita's husband thinks that everything goes well. He is surprised to hear that Sita is bored.

The demerits of the urban milieu of Bombay are also responsible for the marital dissonance of Sita and Raman. In her in-law's house, Sita starts smoking instead of eating. The vegetarian complacence and solidity of the people, who interfere and intrude upon her privacy, infuriate her. Raman's family members do not have any finer sensibility. Only food, sex and money matter to them. Sita is unable to understand whether her married years that she had spent were real or illusionary. Like the previous three novels, in this novel also marriage is explored as a discord. The theme of this novel is marriage as a dissonance, originating from the tensions caused by the two dramatically contrary opinions. In this reference, B. Ramachandra Rao rightly observes:

"Sita and Raman represent the external opposition between the passion and the prose of life. Raman, the husband, says the 'great yes' and follows the path of honour and social success. Sita says 'No', and although she is not destroyed by life. She is compelled to arrive at some kind of a compromise with life."34

Atma Ram opines:

"The novel dramatizes two kinds of courage, a struggle between the positive 'No' and a potent 'Yes'."35
In *Fire on the Mountain* also, Anita Desai shows the picture of the negative side of marriage. In this novel marriage as a disharmony is presented between Nanda Kaul and her husband Mr. Kaul. Nanda Kaul's daughter, Tara's marriage with Rakesh is also proved to be a disaster for their child Raka. The theme of marriage is explored as a dissonance. But marital disharmony in this novel does not take place like earlier novels, but due to Mr. Kaul's extra marital affair with a lecturer of Mathematics, named Ms. David. Rakesh falls in bad habits and makes Tara's life a hell. Nanda Kaul and Raka are the victims of marital dissonance - Nanda Kaul due to her husband and Raka, due to her father Rakesh, Nanda Kaul suffers from matrimonial alienation and after her husband's death, and she comes to Carignano. Raka becomes abnormal due to her childhood experiences of her father's harsh treatment with her mother.

Nanda Kaul carries a life long frustration caused by an unhappy marriage. Being a grandmother also, she is not able to overcome the afflictions caused to her by her husband. Although she endures all the sufferings in her married life patiently. She feels alienated caused by her husband as well as children. When she thinks about her married life, she finds that, her husband did not love or cherish her. He did not treat her like a queen, although he had only done enough to keep her quite. Even her children were all alien to her nature. Neeru Tandon rightly comments on the disillusioned matrimonial bonds of Nanda Kaul:

"Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain*, is a great grandmother, completely disillusioned with all matrimonial bonds. Her husband was the Vice Chancellor of Punjab University. But he treated her simply as some useful object in the house. He carried an affair with the Maths teacher Miss David. Nanda just played the role of wife in his life. She is deceived and betrayed in her marriage."\(^{36}\)

This novel brings out problems of marital disharmony as a basic ingredient for disintegrating family life. Nanda Kaul accepts the loveless married life, after undergoing consistent mental torturing and bitter experiences
of her fate. The life long faithlessness of her husband and the hypo-situation force Nanda to accept seclusion. Her marriage is not based on love, affection and sacrifice. It is based only on physical lust and circumstantial convenience for the man. Outwardly the Kauls were an ideal couple to university community, but from inside it was all-empty. Due to her husband's cowardice and selfishness, Nanda Kaul had to suffer. Her married life is full of betrayal and lamentation. She becomes a mother of many unwanted and unloved children. She remains always busy in household works like arranging the dinner table as a hard-working hostess. After her husband's betrayal also, she performs all her responsibilities of wife, mother and daughter-in-law. She looks after the family, her children, shutting the doors, supervising cooks and servants, putting the visitors at ease and waiting, always waiting with a singular, burning, soul-destroying hatred for her husband and to stop all these permanently, she desires a blessed widowhood. She longs for solitude without her husband and children around. About the miserable life of Nanda Kaul, Usha Bande rightly comments:

"All her life, Nanda lives in pretences. They are, by far, too many – she is the mistress of a happy family, she is always in the hub of a busy social whirl, she is the queen of the Vice-Chancellor's house. These pretests continue and stretch into her old age. She lives in make-believe world to compensate for the cruel reality."  

A spiritual vacuum is created for Nanda Kaul, caused by her husband's unfaithfulness and her children's betrayal. She submits herself mutely of the demands and commands of her husband. She is busily engaged in household activities like providing too many types of tea to her husband and in-laws. She feels alone in her husband's crowded life also:

"The old house, the full house, of that period of her life when she was the Vice-Chancellor's wife and at the hub of a small but intense and busy world, had not pleased her. Its crowding had stifled her."
Right from the beginning of the novel, Nanda Kaul is deeply disillusioned with all her emotional bonds whether matrimonial or filial. When she stays at Carignano, she recalls how her husband had ignored her. Mr. Kaul keeps his beloved Miss Davidson lovingly in her teaching staff. He invites her for badminton parties, drops her back at night and comes back secretly to his separate bedroom. Then also Nanda Kaul keeps the frozen smile on her face.

There are no emotional bonds in Nanda Kaul's marital life. Her relationship with Mr. Kaul was beyond the duties and obligations they had for each other. Her matrimonial bonds with her husband are ungratifying. She yields to her husband's hedonistic attitude. The death of her husband is not a matter of lamentation. It brings her the long-laboured freedom from the condemned cell of spiritual annihilation. She feels free with his death as her husband was like a jailor all through. Till her husband's death, like a submissive and subservient, Nanda Kaul tolerates her destined fate. As a result of all this Nanda Kaul feels herself alienated. She suffers from meaningless, rootlessness, and identity crisis. About her afflicted condition due to unsuccessful marriage Neeru Tandon opines:

"Nanda's bonds with her husband did not involve her 'self'. She could not overcome the trauma of her married life. The infidelity of her husband caused such a deep anguish in her heart that she has lost her faith in the sanctity of human relationships, she distrusts all attachments."39

Another marriage in the novel is of Nanda Kaul's granddaughter Tara, whose matrimonial life with Rakesh does not remain happy. Tara suffers from harsh marital dissatisfaction. Rakesh's ill treatment becomes very big problem for Tara. He has extra-marital affairs with other girls. He returns to home drunk, beats Tara severely. All this reduces Tara to a helpless jelly. Raka, their child becomes the victim of their unhappy married life. Due to this marital dissonance between her parents, Raka becomes alienated. She does not get interest in playing with children or enjoying child stories. On the contrary, she loves solitude.
Tara suffers a terrible fate of a chronic nervous breakdown as a result of her marital discord. The marital dissonance between Tara and Rakesh brings nightmarish experiences of childhood. For Raka, Tara suffers due to bad habits of Rakesh, who regularly visits clubs and entertainments. His conduct with Tara is very harsh. He beats Tara with hammers severely and abuses. This results in Raka's hatred towards the world that spoiled her father. This marital disharmony plays a significant role in making Raka unsocial. Neeru Tandon remarks about Raka's remembering her parents’ marital disharmony:

"Raka remembers the unsatisfactory married life of her parents. She thinks of her father beating her mother with fists and her mother crying helplessly. Then again the news of her mother's serious illness reminds Raka of her father's cruelty to her."\(^{40}\)

Nanda Kaul, Raka and Tara are the victims of marital discords in this novel. Nanda Kaul being a happy wife, felt like an animal, put into a cage very skillfully trained to dance. Her husband is like her ringmaster, whom she could not defy. It is worth to quote the words of Shyam Asnani:

".... Nanda Kaul is one of those intelligent, unsentimental Indian women with a built-in-streak of sardonic feminism who do not love their matriarchal role. Whereas she had previously tended to her children with pleasure and pride, entertained her husband's colleagues and students....."\(^{41}\)

The marital discord of Nanda is not the result of emotional breakdown but that of planned and programmed breakdown. This is the reason that Nanda Kaul does not commit suicide like Monisha. The theme of marriage as a dissonance is projected with a deep sense. The question of male-domination plays a significant role in disturbing the marital life.

Clear Light of the Day is replete with different facets of marriage. For Das children, Tara, Bim, Raja and Baba, their parents’ marriage proves to be a catastrophe because both their mother and father were busy in enjoying cards
and other camel pleasures. They never cared for their children. After their death, Tara is married to Bakul, with whom; she leads a happy married life. Raja marries Hyder Ali's daughter Benzir for her property and money. For this purpose he leaves his kith and kins in contrary circumstances. Bim decides not to marry, because she wants to bear the responsibility of her mentally retarded brother, Baba. Mira masi is a distance relative of Das', who suffers from the afflictions of marital dissonance. Misra sisters also become the victims of their husband’s cruelty.

Most of the time their parents spent time in playing bridge. In fact, all the Das children were lonely and disappointed, because of their uncaring parents. Their father had stopped visiting the children's room. Their mother used to spend long hours at a dressing table before a mirror among jars and bottles that smelt sweet. About the relation of Das children with their parents, Neeru Tandon rightly remarks:

"They are growing up with their rather indifferent parents - a diabetic mother and a father who is nothing more for the children but a master of entrance and exit."\(^{42}\)

Their parents’ marriage was a complete disaster for Das children. The parents had no time to think about the hopes and aspirations of their young daughters. When Bim's mother missed an evening out at the club for the first time, she fell sick and admitted to the hospital, where she murmured the names of familiar cards rather than the names of her children.

Their parents never considered the future of their children, never made provisions for it. A successful marriage is associated with cure and affection with the children of husband and wife, but in this case, the marriage of Das children's parents, was a complete failure. The children live like orphans in an oppressive atmosphere ruled by shadows and silences. The mother dies and father too, which made no indifference to the children, as the novelist writes ironically:
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ironically:
"...all that disturbed the children was the continuous presence of the car in the garage."[43]

Tara is married to Bakul, whose life becomes better after this association. About the marital relations of Tara and Bakul, no details are given. Tara realized that every moment of her life that with Bakul she lived in a disinfected land. She lived with its set of rules and regulations, its neatness and orderliness. She felt that her husband's life was devoid of human sentiments. In this reference it is worth to quote the words of Shashi Khanna:

"However, by means of small details, the novelist has brought out the unpleasant fact that tantrums are often caused between husband and wife. Bakul wants Tara should go along with him meeting his friends and relations, but Tara is too engrossed in the affairs of her brothers and sisters that she finds it difficult to move out."[44]

Sometimes Bakul dominates Tara and slight dissonance takes place in their marital life. Although Tara is happy to be dominated and governed by her husband, there is another aspect of her marital life, in which Bakul, her husband brought about a great change in Tara's life as Bakul:

"...trained her and made her into an active, organised woman who looked up her engagement book every morning, made plans and progress for the day ahead and then walked her way through them to retire, to her room at night."[45]

Marriage to Bakul affords Tara a means of escape. Tara seems to have lost her identity in marriage, but she gets her identity in terms of family and motherhood. She gets the identity of a mother.

Raja's marriage with Hyder Ali's daughter Benzir snatches him from the hands of Bim. Raja leaves his relatives and goes to Hyderabad. After Hyder Ali's death, Raja inherits their property, but when in a tone of a landlord, he assures Bim that she can live in the house as long as she needs, and he would
never increase the rent or ask her to vacate the house. About Raja's intention of marriage, Neeru Tandon remarks:

"For Raja, marriage is a means to become rich and fat by marrying the one time landlord's only daughter."

Raja relinquishes his Byronic longings in marriage, but experiences a new kind of freedom and a new kind of awareness linked with his marital and conjugal life.

For Bim, marriage seems to be a disaster, as the failure marriage of her parents. She has no interest in marriage. According to Bim, education is more important in one's life than marriage. The Misra sisters did not go to college. Instead, they awaited marriages to be arranged for them. It was on their engagement day that Bim felt:

"...they are not educated yet ...they might find marriage is not enough to lose them whole of their lives."

It was in that ceremony that Bim takes a decision not to marry so remains unmarried and independent. Bim is not dependent on marriage, shows herself in the form of Anita Desai's new woman as Neeru Tandon puts:

"Beem seems to have lost love, marriage and domesticity. She plays the foster mother to her brothers and sisters. In fact Bim reflects Desai's vision of the identity of the new Indian woman, who is not dependent on the institution of marriage, for her survival. Unlike most Indian girls, she opts out of marriage for the life of a spinster. She is reluctant to play the conventional role of a sex-object and a yoked wife."

Mira masi, a distant aunt of Das children, becomes the victim of her unsuccessful marriage. Her marriage proves to be a complete failure. She was married at the age of twelve and widowed at fifteen. She was badly exploited by her in-laws. She presents the picture of an Indian widow. Her marriage made her life not less than a hell:
“She had been twelve years old when she married and was a virgin when she was widowed her in-laws blamed her bitterly for his (husband’s) death: it was her unfortunate horoscope that had brought it about they said. She should be made to pay for her guilt.”

Other victims of an unsuccessful marriage are the Mishra daughters, Sarla and Jaya. Who after their marriage, are thrown away like old pieces of comfortless furniture. Their husbands have abandoned them.

Marriage in In Custody is also explored as a disharmony. The causes of this marital disintegration between Deven Sharma and his wife Sarla are his (Deven's) helplessness, suffering, and lack of social and financial status. Deven Sharma is a temporary lecturer in Hindi in Lala Ram Lal College, Mirpore. Being a temporary low salaried lecturer, Deven is not able to keep his matrimonial boll rolling. Marriage does not prove to be a source of pleasure. As the novelist Anita Desai knows the ins and outs of matrimonial relationships, here she depicts an unhappy married life. Both Sarla and Deven are disappointed in their own ways. They are not able to lead a happy married life. Deven has his own separate world of art alongwith his attachment with other women, as Neeru Tandon observes:

"In Custody analyses the problem of Deven Sharma an impoverished college lecturer. After his marriage with a sullen and dull wife, Deven sees a way to escape from the meanness and hopelessness of daily life. His extreme devotion to art leads him to indifference to his wife rather he has cultivated an aversion to and dislike for his wife. ...Here Desai deals with a purely marital problem of this materialistic world of glittering civilization in a city like Delhi, where the relationship between husband and wife is always under problems- husband in extra activities and his attachment with other women."
whom he is unable to look after properly. Deven's life is trapped in his ill-paid profession. Sarla never gets marital satisfaction from Deven. In fact Sarla was not Deven's choice. The authoress writes:

"Deven had been more a poet than a professor when he married Sarla - he had only been taken on as a temporary lecturer and still had confidence in his verse - and for the wife of a poet she seemed too prosaic. Of course she had not been his choice but that of his mother and aunt's crafty and cautious women: she was the daughter of a friend of an aunt's, she lived on the same street as that family. They had observed her for years and found her suitable in every way: plain, penny-pinching and congenitally pessimistic."51

It is said that marriages are made in the heaven, but for both Deven and Sarla, their marriage makes their life hellish. Sarla observes that Deven feels like a trapped animal. They both feel as tight corners in this unhappy marital life. Being a low salaried temporary lecturer, Deven is economically hard pressed. He is not able to fulfill the demands of his wife and child. Once, Sarla had a nightmare of robbers attacking her family in sleep. The following conversation between them displays their miserable condition:

"What can robbers find in our house?" She hissed, "To them college teachers are big men, important men; how can they know that we starve?" ...he recalled the time he had refused to buy the child toffees when they were out for shopping and she had said, through pinched lips, "For your own son you have no money, only for going to Delhi to enjoy yourself there is money."52

The marital life of Deven and Sarla is disturbed and marred by indifference and impassivity, caused by Deven's stupidity. Deven is not financially sound to provide basic requirements to his wife and son. His love of Urdu poetry and his obsession with name and fame make him neglect his wife. The lack of togetherness between them and Deven's frustration at the domestic
front are another causes of their marital disharmony. In the reference of their mutual disharmony Neeru Tandon opines:

"Deven thinks that Sarla does not care for him and his feelings, while Sarla thinks that he neglects her all the time and is engaged with some other girl. Both feel insulted and humiliated living in one room ... In the common problems of post marital life; he came to understand her predicament also. But there is another aspect of this loveless marital relationship. Deven wants money but that too for Sarla, to buy gold jewellery for her."\(^{53}\)

Sarla is puzzled by the dreams of Deven as she can not become satisfied with a husband who thinks of others, loves others but maintains a distance from his wife and son. Sarla needs love and affection more than money. Her heart is filled with agony, but being a noble one, she never complains seriously as J.P. Tripathi comments:

"Sarla is the typical Hindu wife, simple, timid, obscure, domineered, undemanding and co-operative."\(^{54}\)

Sometimes Deven behaves badly with Sarla, like getting furious with her, flinging dishes, tearing shirts etc. Although Deven understands Sarla's problems but he can not sort them out. Sarla is a victim of her husband's weakness and helplessness. She had romantic dreams of marriage:

"Sarla dreamt the magazine dream of marriage, herself, stepping out of a car with a plastic shopping bag full of groceries.... was ringing up her friends to invite them to see a picture show with her and her husband who was beaming at her from behind a flowered curtain."\(^{55}\)

Sarla faces terrible experiences of married life. She opts to be in Deven's custody. She never realises her aspirations. By marrying Deven, her romantic dreams of marriage are shattered:
"The thwarting of her aspirations had cut dark furrows from the corners of her nostrils to the corners of her mouth... They made her look forbidding and perhaps that was why her husband looked so perpetually forbidden, even if he understood their cause."56

Both Deven and Sarla never tried to build up their marital relationship on the basis of love, companionship and equality. Deven feels himself in a prison. He considers his marriage as an obstacle in the way of his art. Sarla's condition is more pathetic because Deven breathes for art, but Sarla breathes for Deven as the novelist writes:

"At least Deven had his poetry, she had nothing, and so there was an added accusation and bitterness in her look."57

Marriage in Journey to Ithaca is associated with a spiritual quest. Matteo, an Italian married man comes to India for spiritual enlightenment. Matteo has a deep attraction for Indian spiritualism. His wife Sophie, being a journalist comes to India following her husband without any spiritual quest. Temperamentally both are different. Sophie intends to follow her husband to the ends of the earth. Matteo seeks spiritual enlightenment, but for Sophie enlightenment lies in earthly love. The marital life of both is replete with topsy-turvy twists. There are fundamental variations between Matteo and Sophie, like Matteo has long hair while Sophie has short cut. Matteo is arrested by spiritualism, while Sophie is a hedonist. In the reference of their temperamental difference, O.P. Bundholia rightly puts:

"Sophie as a journalist solely depends on reasoning, while Matteo as a seeker comes to India only for developing the traits of his faith which he has learnt from Hesse’s book The Journey to the East."58

Sophie for the sake of her husband wanders ashram to ashram. She suffers and remains in Mother's ashram just for the sake of her husband. In this ashram, she is not able to keep her body and soul together, where her identity crumbles and her children suffer.
Sophie

Marriage remains an enigma.

Her husband seeks spiritual enlightenment but for Sophie enlightenment lies in earthly love.

Temperamentally both Sophie and her husband are different.

Her husband seeks for spiritualism while Sophie is a hedonist.

At last she leaves her husband
When Matteo is thoroughly impressed by Mother, being a feminine one, she feels jealous of her. About her afflictions in the Mother's *ashram*, Neeru Tandon remarks:

"As a young wife she has desires to fulfill herself but this is not possible in the stuffy and unruly environment of the *ashrams*. She is upset and baffled to see the unequal living of different devotees there. She feels neglected and outcast among the pilgrims. She smokes with a mixed feeling of guilt and gratefulness. Matteo is at peace and feels fully adjusted to the filthy environment because his sole purpose in life seems to reach the truth. This difference of opinion and attitude create a gap between the couple."\(^{59}\)

Matteo is always disturbed by the restlessness of Sophie and he tries to avoid her. In an *ashram* in Bihar, they were served meals on the verandas, she refused to eat. When Matteo keeps himself busy in the company of his teachers, Sophie misses Matteo's presence and feels nervous and insecure. When she was found pregnant, she longed for her country. She asks Matteo:

"*Couldn't we stay in our own country? To die there?*"\(^{60}\)

Matteo's marriage is quickened by the prospects of this journey, which brings bitterness, frustration and trauma in her marital life. Matteo even does not care to remember his responsibility towards his wife and children. Sophie did not come India to seek truth, but just for another adventure. She had never shared Matteo's dreams about India. In Mother's *ashram* where Matteo finally finds his peace, Sophie had nothing but hostility and unacceptance. Matteo utters:

"*Sophie, please do not mind! If you don't live it here, please remember I have to stay in order to study. Can't you behave?*"\(^{61}\)

Sophie does not believe Mother, while Matteo becomes a firm disciple of her. Matteo feels without Mother's company, he wasted time. Sophie becomes jealous of Matteo's affinity to the Mother. She rebukes her husband:
"Would you work like this for your father if he asked you to join his business? No, you wouldn't, you'd refuse outright. So why do you do this for her?"62

Matteo is not bothered for their children, while Sophie cares for them and her tension increases as a mother. She is also worried with Matteo's increasing attachment for the Mother, as she shouts Matteo:

"Oh, the Mother, once again, the Mother. Not a stone, not the shrine, Matteo it is a woman who keeps you here, call her what you like - the cosmic, the absolute - but it is woman."63

Both of them are now desperate to protect what they believed to be right. The bitterest quarrel between them takes place when Sophie wants their son to go to a school in Europe while Matteo wants him to be educated at the ashram school. In the reference of fathomless gulf between Matteo and Sophie, O.P. Budholia comments:

"Matteo represents all that comes from the heart, while Sophie represents all that comes from the mind."64

Sophie feels herself isolated and bored and finds herself in a cage. As a young wife she always waits for her husband in the room, but in order to listen Swami, Matteo comes very late, as she complains:

"Sometimes, if she feels strong enough, she struck at him and fought him but this made him more violent. Then he would leave her to go and sit against the wall, his face twisted with revulsion... and flung out of the room to go and sleep on the veranda."65

Sophie is even not able to understand the native variety of English. Both of them grew indifference to each other with one seeking for soul and the other for body. Sophie finds no remedy to convert Matteo's mind. When Matteo explains same meanings of the path of joy and the path of pleasure, Sophie says:
"I can’t understand what you mean, the path of pleasure, and the path of joy. To me, they are the same, they are not separate."66

At last Sophie leaves Matteo and comes to Italy, but when she comes to know about Matteo’s hospitalization, she hastily returns to India, but Matteo left the ashram. Over all marriage remains an enigma for Sophie.

In Fasting, Feasting, the concept of marriage is analysed through different characters. The marriage of MamaPapa is an example of Indian traditional marriages. Uma and Anamika's marriages become a failure. Aruna's marriage is only the successful one. Right from the beginning of Mama's marriage with Papa, like all Indian traditional wives, she obeys her husband. She feels that Papa would be always right. She lives in background and her opinions are never considered. It is only in the matter of a vegetable for lunch, she can opine. This marriage proves Mama as the typical Indian wife, the passive one.

MamaPapa have two daughters, Uma and Aruna, and a son Arun. Aruna is younger sister, but more charming, beautiful and talented than Uma. MamaPapa having one and only ambition for Uma an early marriage sets out with all their acumen to arrange a wedding for Uma. The first attempt ends in an embarrassment, as Mr. Syal, the prospective groom prefers Aruna. The second endeavor brings the Goyal family into focus, who dupes them of the dowry before the wedding. The third and final attempt sees Uma, actually married to Harish, a travelling salesman. But unfortunately Uma realizes that Harish is much married with four children. He had agreed to have a social marriage, as his sick pharmaceutical company needed finance. Uma leaves her in-laws amidst a traumatic setting. In case of marriage, Uma is proved to be ill-fated. Frustrated due to spending much for Uma, Papa shouts:

"...made me spend and spend, on her dowry and her wedding. Oh, yes, spend till I’m ruined, till I am a pauper."67
Advertisements in matrimonial columns demand for accomplished beauties and replies come for Uma to this effect:

"We are looking for someone taller/fairer/more educated, for Sanju/Pinku/Dimpu."

Before leaving Harish's home, Uma suffers a lot. When Harish left for Meerut where his wife and children live, none gave Uma the slightest attention, but said:

"Change your clothes and come—we have to prepare the food now."

Marriage deserted Uma, and even after returning home, she never knows, whether she was married or not.

Uma's cousin, Anamika becomes another victim of marital disharmony. Her husband and in-laws desert her beauty and talent. Her husband was a victim of Oedipus complex. Before her marriage, Anamika won a scholarship to Oxford, but she could not be sent abroad, just because, she was of an age to marry. Her husband was much older than herself. He married Anamika only to win social status. Joint family becomes a curse for Anamika. Her mother-in-law beats regularly in front of her husband, who even does not object. Anamika spends her entire time in kitchen. She has a miscarriage after being beaten. She was never allowed to leave the house and had never been out with her husband. She feels herself in hot water, because of her husband's tacit support to his mother. Her Mama, like a typical Indian woman feels:

"How can she be happy, if she is sent home? What will people say? What will they think?"

Anamika has to eat the remains in the pots before scouring them. Many times, she has to rubb and clean vessels again, if her mother-in-law throws on the ground. She has to massage lady's feet. She dies in a fire accident. According to the verdict given by her in-laws, she rose at four in the morning, wrapped in a nylon sari and poured kerosene all over herself before setting
herself on fire. Her charged body was found on the verandah. Some of the neighbours gave the verdict that probably the son and mother in collusion had plotted and executed this gory crime. Anita Desai pictures Anamika's miserable condition:

"The fate of Uma's cousin, Anamika, who was beautiful, intelligent and had won a scholarship to Oxford, is no better. Anamika suffers interminably at the hands of her in-laws. When she is treated like a servant, not given proper food, suffers miscarriage and ultimately burns herself to death after twenty painful long years of married life. Anamika was not allowed to visit her parental home. Lila aunty, Anamika's mother puts a veil on the suffering of her daughter by her comment if only Anamika could be here, but that family just wants her with them all the time."\(^71\)

The novel flashes light on the misery that follows a marriage too hastily arranged. It also throws light on the lot of women in a typical joint family, where a new bride is considered as a slave to the mother-in-law. This novel also exposes the demerits of dowry system in India. The marriage of Uma and Anamika are not proved successful.

Aruna is the younger sister of Uma. She is a young, lovely and coquettish girl. Her marriage seems to take her on prolonged feasting spree. She has a splendid marriage ceremony;

"The wedding was a splendid one-not like Uma's drab, cut-rate affair. At Aruna's insistence, the reception was held in the lobby of the Carlton Hotel. Instead of a brass band from the bazaar, she had tiny lopeze band play."\(^72\)

Aruna leads a happy married life with Arvind in Bombay. She gives birth to a daughter Aisha and a son Dinesh. After having problem in her eye, Aruna starved of parental love and affection. In her, the so-called modern
culture is replete with artificiality and mannerism. All these made her dominate everybody including her husband.

The theme of marriage is proved to be a disaster in almost all the novels of Anita Desai. All her heroines and heroes disassociate the factor of love from the concept of marriage. The characters struggle with their hard destinies in the shape of maladjustment in married life. It is the existentialism that forms the main basis for maladjustment in marital relationships in her novels. The existential problem of alienation of the emancipated; modern woman through maladjustment in marital relations, is projected. In her novels marriage is not presented as a source of pleasure, but a rainbow- coloured dream. In marriage, adjustment for a woman means deleting her individuality and inner self.

Anita Desai has explored the chilling encounters of the hellish experiences of married lives. The novelist makes it clear that either one should remain unmarried, unfettered and unaccepted by the society, or marry and be damned to an everlasting private hell.
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