Chapter- II

Time as a preserver of Family

In her fourth novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, Anita Desai analyses the trauma of a sensitive woman who is unable to accept the dictates and demands of a male-dominated marital life but ultimately comes to terms with it. Written in a lucid prose that is typical of Desai’s work, this novel comes very close to *Cry, the Peacock* in the delineation of a woman’s psyche under pressure, brought about by marital discord. “In *Where Shall We Go this Summer?*, Desai is once again back in her forte of delineating the emotional reactions of sensitive women.” (Choudhury P. 73) In this novel, Anita Desai presents an intense identity crisis of the central character Sita, a sensitive woman in her early forties. Unable to live in the strife-torn present, she is in the throes of identifying herself with the past, represented by her childhood on Manori Island twenty years ago. 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, husband, two children and the urbanized life of Bombay for Manori island where she thinks she would be able to live under a magic spell. She realizes that:

“She saw that island illusion as a refuge, a protection. It would hold her baby safely unborn, magic [for she is in her advance stage of pregnancy]. Then there would be the sea – it would wash the frenzy out of her, drown it. Perhaps the tides would lull the children, too, into smoother, softer beings. The grove of trees would shade them and protect them.”

(WTS P. 91)
Desai returns to the theme of alienation and incommunication in married life. She presents her favourite theme of probing into the consciousness of an introvert and sensitive woman who is bored and frustrated by her commonplace and hum-drum life and tries to escape into purposeless and unproductive loneliness. The central theme in the novel is Sita’s repugnant disgust with the birth of her fifth child. She is an experienced, keen eyed mature mother; she knows the joy of motherhood and is comparatively contented.

But she is emotionally hurt in the recent years; her shock comes from modern town culture, habitat and life way. The strain involved in the child births earlier was not felt, but being hurt in several ways this time she is not prepared for the delivery of the child in her womb. She is afraid of different nurses and doctors will offer in dignity to her person; the process of hospitalization and the details of the procreative procedure are spugnant even in their mental picturing or reverie by Sita.

Therefore, she seeks escape from this predicament. It is a very complex theme very delicately handled by the novelist. 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.

And a deep change takes place in Sita, from a proud mother of four children, “sensual, emotional, Freudian” (WTS P. 29) to a woman of “rage, fear, and revolt”, for “Control…had slipped out of her hold” (WTS P. 29). A close examination of the whole situation, however, will reveal that Sita’s wishes are always unfulfilled in both the social and family life.
Tragically, Sita’s dreams of getting love and affection from her husband end in a nightmare. The point at issue is that her husband ignores her instincts, and she likes him to treat her in a gentle and tender way is what he cannot do. As a result, in the long run the husband – wife relationship is dragged into difficulties that come out in the form of identity crisis, for both Raman and Sita stand for binary oppositions.

Raman is a creature of society, more or less an extrovert, more accommodative, apathetic whereas Sita is hypersensitive, an introverted personality and a pessimist. She not only hates Raman for his lack of feeling but also derides the subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness and the routine manner of her husband’s family. As a reaction against these, when she speaks with rage and anguish, and with “sudden rushes of emotion.” (WTS P. 44)

In order to seek a means of escape she takes to smoking, abuses her children for trifles, and flies into a rage when the servants talk in the kitchen because she thinks they are quarrelling. Finally, she, like Stephen Dedalus in A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man, chooses three things – exile, silence, and cunning.

All this is the ultimate rejection of the values her husband represents, and she has resolved to go to Manori island as a kind of self-exile in her search for identity in silence and in her revival of the past, away from home, and civilization, thus reminding one of Billy Biswas in Arun Joshi’s The Strange Case of Billy Biswas. She has her vision to fulfill on the island as one sees it in the early part of the novel, she reveals,
“She had come here in order not to give birth. Wasn’t this Manori, the island of miracles? Her father had made it an island of magic once, worked miracles of a kind. His legend was still here in this house… and he might work another miracle posthumously. She had come on a pilgrimage to beg for the miracle of keeping her baby unborn.” (WTS P. 28)

The clash of identities between Sita and Raman that takes an unhappy dimension has other interesting points of focus. At the root of the husbandwife conflict there is the theme of tradition versus modernism. By temperament and upbringing Sita’s root is in tradition represented by her father and Manori island. Her sudden encounter with Bombay following a hasty marriage to Raman threatens her very root of existence, for Raman and Bombay stand for modernism.

Where shall we Go this Summer? is primarily the story of Sita, the daughter of a freedom fighter, an extraordinary man who during his lifetime was considered a saint by a few and branded a charlatan by a few others. After Indian Independence, Sita’s father decides to retire from active public life to settle down in a calm and serene village to experiment his social theories.

One of his admirers, Dalwala, a Parsi millionaire, has given him his island property as a token of his respect. On this lonely island of Manori, he brings up his daughter Sita among the natives, loved, respected and even feared by them. He practices black magic and miracle-cure and becomes a legend among the natives. But he fails to provide a happy life to his children, as his wife elopes with her lover, and he develops an affair with another woman. The atmosphere of a broken home makes Sita an introvert.
Nonetheless, the pleasures of the island life more than compensate the absence of filial care and affection. After the death of her father, Raman, a son of her father’s friend, takes her to Bombay and admits her in a hostel. Attracted by Sita’s beauty he marries her. But Raman fails to provide Sita with ideal companionship. Once in the city and in the company of her indifferent husband and the other members of his family, she feels alienated and retreats into a shell. She takes to smoking and is given to frequent fits of violent temper.

Nevertheless, conjugal life saddles her with four children and she reaches the breaking point when she is expecting her fifth baby, and it is from here the narrative actually begins. Sita is replied by the idea of giving birth to a baby in the suffocating atmosphere of the congested city and a sickening household. She decides to leave the city for good and arrives at the island of Manori, her childhood paradise.

When she reaches Manori with two of her children, nearly after twenty years of life in the city, she feels relieved. On the island, she is haunted by stories and memories of her dead father. She believes that her father might work another miracle posthumously. She subjects herself to the rigours and pleasures of the island life with gay abandon.

This brief escape from the humdrum routine of Bombay life imbibes in her a new awareness about life itself. But her new life fails to offer her the emotional satisfaction she longs for. Finally, when Raman comes to take them back to Bombay, she returns with him a mature, resigned, composed, confident and resurrected woman. In the beginning of the novel, Anita Desai indicates that Sita has become a victim of her marriage to Raman, though it is not stated explicitly by the omniscient author.
The observations made by Moses, the caretaker of Sita’s island home, amply demonstrate this. On her return to the island, Moses is shocked to see Sita as she alights from the car. Having once known her as a spirited and cheerful girl, Moses is hardly able to superimpose the present appearance of Sita on the one that still lingers in his mind.

Is it the same Sita, he wonders, shocked by her, “empty, vacant, stumbling” appearance (WTS P. 14). “The extraordinary brilliance” that was once her face has now become dry, (and) worn.” (WTS P. 17) Raman arranges for her education and later drawn by her beauty, marries her.

“Even though Sita has four children from him „with pride, pleasure-sensual, emotional, Freudian, every kind of pleasure- with all the placid serenity and supposedly goes with pregnancy and parturition.” (WTS P. 29)

She remains restless and dissatisfied with her settled and dull domestic life. Bored with her drab life she often sits alone smoking gas if waiting for someone.


One of the aims of Anita Desai in her novels is to display how this characteristic spirit of the age has loosened the bond of husband-wife relationship. It will be interesting to account for the obsessive preoccupation of the novelist with this theme of broken family when she lightly touches upon the relationship of Sita’s father and mother. Their relationship was one of estrangement, for her mother deserted her father before she had headed for Benares from where she did not return.
Even her father, who had been a saint to his chelas (disciples), a charleton to his critics and a wizard to the villagers, led a strange life so far as his relationship with women was concerned. He had an affair with a mistress and his relationship with Rekha, Sita’s step-sister, seemed to have been coloured by Electra Complex. Sita’s escape to the island is an unfailing echo of the earlier husband – desertion motif in her identification with her mother, a “ghost in white” (WTS P. 79) which cannot be exorcized by her. But this side of the story has other interesting points to note.

Going back to history will reveal some facts about Sita’s enigmatic and mysterious nature as having been a symptom of her want of care and sympathy of a mother or a real sister - a healthy ground for lack of confidence in her later life. In her moments of joy and sorrow she has none to share, hence she keeps herself to herself. That becomes her character trait quite unpalatable to others, and it has its origin in her childhood life and experience. The seeing of her father’s unusual tenderness towards her step-sister Rekha confuses her with internal questions which never become articulate and are kept repressed. Usha Bande rightly comments:

“This experience breeds feelings of worthlessness, and its consequent strategy is rebelliousness. Sita cannot corroborate her father’s dubious ways. It seeps down her psyche as a bad human experience. (P. 107)

Thus Raman fails to understand Sita and her predicament has been subtly hinted at and explicitly stated in several places in the novel. In incident after incident, Anita Desai brings out the bruised consciousness of Sita. In this regard Bidulata Choudhury opines,
“…the entwining dirt and deteriorating love of standards, clash of desires, of justification of fantasy are open for introspection. Sita, the heroine, pessimistic and whimsical, is a victim of situation.” (P. 73)

When Sita decides to escape into the island Manori, Raman instead of trying to comfort her or convince her, very casually remarks: “So you’re running away like the bored runaway wife in – in a film” (WTS P. 36) Raman knows well the mystery about Sita’s mother, who left her children behind. This rankles for a solution in Sita’s subconscious mind. In addition, her father has robbed her of all mutual faith and trust that is essential to establish a normal relationship with any other man.

Raman fails to realize her dire need of psychotherapy to make her see the relevance of her bond with him. The structure of the novel is identical to that of Virginia Wolf’s To the Lighthouse. It is divided into three parts. The first part entitled “Monsoon 67” projects Sita as a rebel and portrays her departure to the island of Manori. It deals with the present and immediate past of Sita’s life. The second part, “Winter 45” depicts Sita’s recollections of her life with her father.

This section enables the reader to understand her present conflict in the right perspective. The third section, “Monsoon 67” is a continuation of part one where Sita’s resigned and aggressive trends dominate the proceeding. It also deals with her husband Raman’s visit to the island and her reconciliation with him. Hence Mrs. Desai focuses on Sita’s father and his way of life. In the third and final part of the novel Desai returns to the Monsoon 67 and takes up the remaining thread of the story. To convey the tumult in Sita’s mind she adopts the pattern of monsoon winds. Atma Ram has expressed:
“I wanted the book to follow the pattern of the monsoon together darkly and threateningly... to pour down widely and passionately, then withdraw quietly and calmly.” (PP. 79, 98)

Throughout the novel, Desai makes an attempt to go deeper in to the extraordinary inner life of its protagonist, Sita. She is living in her flat, feels bored as members of her family follow their own ways of life. She is a daughter of political celebrity, a well-known freedom fighter, whom many of his disciples consider “the second Gandhi” (WTS 78).

As her father is mostly in jail and she has no mother to look after, she is denied the regular life of a normal child. Sita has „lived a strange life, an unusual life, “After independence her father comes to settle in beautiful natural surroundings of Manori island accompanied by his disciples and his family. He calls this house Jeevan Ashram, “the Home of the Soul”, and tries to put on the island his social theories about simple life untouched by the comforts of machine age. Having no opportunities for schooling, Sita lives in the island sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of her brother Jivan with clay and mud.

With the passage of time, she finds her farther turning a veritable legend on the island and its simple villagers and fisher folk respect and admire him for his miracles – “magic cures” – providing them sweet water of the well do drink, teaching them how to grow rich crop. Monisha, her daughter, wants to be a scientist, her sons are often quarrelling among themselves and her husband Raman, a factory-owner, is a matter-of-fact person. He fails to understand his wife. Sita had lived with some satisfaction with her father at Manori to escape from the hypocrisy and tedium of her middle class existence.
But at Manori too she is unhappy and restless. Although she tries to hide her
disappointment, she is like one on the island. At last Raman visits her and they return to
Bombay to face the realities of this world. To Sita, her father remains an enigma. Not
being able to communicate with him, she forms uncertain impression about him. She
doubts if he cures by magic and not by medicines and faith. She also discovers that her
father’s “daylight practical charisma” has “its underlit night-time aspect.” (WTS P. 69)

Once secretly in the dead of night she climbs in his attic, the prayer room, she
finds him collecting pearls and gold to be distributed to villagers with their medicines.
Later she learns from Jivan that this Jewellery belonged to their mother, her father’s
second wife, who had left him perhaps because he had a mistress and gone to live in
Benares. Sita is also suspicious of her father’s relations with her stepsister Rekha.

All these experiences make Sita lose her faith on life and develop in her mind
uncertain and unrealistic attitude towards life. After the death of her father, Sita is taken
to Bombay by Raman, her husband and the son of her father’s old friend Deedar. She
leaves Manori with relief “longing for the same, the routine ridden mainland as for a
rest Sanatorium.” (WTS P. 90) When Sita in her forties, conceives for the fifth time and
is in an advanced stage of pregnancy of Seven months, she is haunted by a strange idea:

“By giving birth to the child now so safely contained, would she
be performing an act of creation, or by releasing it in a violent,
paint wrecked blood-path, would she only be destroying what
was, at the moment, safely contained and perfect.” (WTS P. 50)
Therefore she tells her husband that she does not want to keep the child. To see her abnormal desire her husband calls her a mad child. Without giving attention at the rational advice of her husband, she ultimately takes her daughter Menaka and younger son Karan with her and leaves for Manori, the island of miracles. Since Sita has not experienced the tender love of her mother or of even her father for that matter, she longs for such love from her husband. Instead of showering love on her, he is indifferent and callous.

On another occasion, Sita chances to see from her balcony an eagle being attacked by a few crows. Moved by the plight of the eagle Sita tries her best to save it from its predators using her son’s pop gun in vain. Knowing fully well her sensitive nature and how the misadventure of the eagle had disturbed her mind, the next day Raman comes out with his morning cup of tea and heartlessly draws her attention to the gruesome sight of a mutilated dead eagle and mock: “They (the crows) have made a good job of her eagle.” (WTS P. 37)

It is not flattering to Sita to be laughed at like this by one whom she had expected to share her feelings for the ill-fated eagle. Not only Raman but also her sons and daughter offend her sensibility by ignoring her. She feels terribly upset when she comes upon her sons who, strongly influenced by the cinemas, “hurled their bodies at each other as if they were made for attack and combat” (WTS P. 40)

They are even censorious when she cries for stopping the game. She feels deeply sad that her children are strongly overpowered by the desire to destroy. Sita is not able to bear the sight of the destruction of “new buds on the potted plant she had been laboring to grow on the balcony” (WTS P. 41)
By her daughter Menaka who does it unconsciously, and the “lustful joy of throwing” (WTS P. 41) the tower of blocks with a great clatter by her smallest son Karan. Again, Sita cannot be blind to what goes on around her, particularly when it involves her servants and her own children. This is not appreciated by Raman. Once she reacts very strongly to a quarrel between Rosie, her servant maid, and other servants.

The vociferous quarrel of the servants racks her being and chokes her, When Raman learns of this, he disapproves of her reaction and accuses her of being melodramatic. When she tries to justify her concern as such incidents may harm their children, he simply dismisses it asking her not to make much of it. This chilly response wounds her sensibility and “the wound remained open” (WTS P. 43)

The very next sentence, “More small incidents” (WTS P. 44) indicates that many more incidents of his unkindness are repeated in her life alienating her from him. This seems to be the lot of many Indian wives. Still a niggling thought pushes her:

“Had not her married years, her dulled years been the false life, the life of pretence and performance, and only the escape back to the past, to the island, been the one sincere and truthful act of her life, the only one not false and staged?” (WTS P. 47)

This makes her happily react to the unexpected arrival of Raman without any reservations. Though she is a trifle shocked to learn that Raman has come to the island at the behest of his daughter. She soon recovers from it as she realizes that he has acted only in the interest of the family. She learns the necessary perception of recognizing other” sensibilities in her stay on the island.
She seems to have realized the fact that each individual is an island and despite this fact people will have to get along without rupture and make the best of a bad bargain. Like the forest of Aden of Shakespeare’s As You like It which has therapeutic influence on everyone who enters it, the island of Manori has curative effect on the traumatic psyche of Sita and enables her to emerge unscathed to face life with a new fortitude.

What is remarkable about Sita’s character is that she emerges whole after her brief sojourn at Manori. No doubt. The scars that had been left behind by twenty years of a dry and unromantic married life do remain in her psyche. But they have not splintered her consciousness as in the case of Maya. Who becomes a hapless victim of her own sentiments. Towards the close of the novel, Sita becomes aware of the stark realities of life.

The sudden change in the behaviour of her children on seeking their father again after a brief separation makes her conscious of the fact that whether she likes it or not, she has to put up with certain things at least for the sake of her family if not for her own sake. It is this realization that makes her feel a sudden warmth towards Raman. She even feels reassured in his company.

“When he asked her gently, “How are you?” She stood back so that he could enter. As he did, she felt comfort, security.”

(WTS P. 120)

This new found sense of warmth and confidence towards Raman is the natural denouement of the crisis she had faced in her twenty years of married life. A close examination of Sita’s consciousness reveals that she is a round character who ends up an entirely different person from what she is at the beginning of the novel.
If Maya’s father in *Cry, the Peacock* is over protective, Sita’s father is careless and negligent about his children. Sita’s life in her childhood was full of uncertainties because of the mysterious life lead by her father. There has never been a unifying force in Sita’s family. Involving himself in the freedom struggle, her father had been completely forgetful of Sita’s growing up.

“Her traumatic relationship with her father blasts all chances of a satisfying emotional bond with any other man in her life.”

(P. 32)

Physical togetherness among the members of the family has been a rarity in this island as her father loved to be surrounded by flatterers. She is also puzzled by the hints given by her brother Jivan at the existence of a mistress to her father, perhaps a second wife and the desertion by their own mother. These incidents and the environment are not conducive to the development of a balanced personality. The communication gap between Sita and her father creates a vacuum between them.

So Sita harbours a deep distrust of the male in her unconscious mind which affects her relation with Raman. She feels that her husband also, like her father, deliberately neglects her and this compels her to opt for a life of loneliness. The absence of her mother causes an emotional emptiness in her life. Sita being a motherless child, is not able to internalize womanhood.

As psychologists say, mother is indispensable. So also the company of the girls of the same age group is essential and of great importance for developing a sense of identity. As Sita is devoid of both, she grows unprepared to shoulder the responsibility of a wife and a mother. The unwholesome personality of Sita makes her fail to understand her own children.
Raman like Gautama in *Cry, the Peacock* is practical, busy and nonchalant to his wife. He represents the prose of life; while Sita the poetry of life. Prasad expresses:

“A middling kind of man, he represents sanity, rationality and conformity to the established norms of the society and fails to comprehend her violent or passionate reaction against every incident.” (P. 66)

Being a real person, Raman is more involved in providing a stable and comfortable home for his family than in trying to comprehend the writings of the troubled mind of Sita. Raman has his own compulsions to deal with. He marries Sita out of pity, as discussed earlier. When this initial stage of pity and lust wears off, Raman finds his mundane activities more fascinating. Heresents those who depend too much on him because he fears that such persons may try to have control over him.

He shifts his concentration to his business so that he can escape from interpersonal conflicts. He has set his own standards and meticulously tries to fulfill his obligations. “Everything was clear to him, and simple: life must be continued and all its business” (WTS P. 127). Therefore he cannot tolerate lack of control exhibited by Sita. Raman”s inability to honour her claims of love hurts her deeply. Usha Bande opines:

“He is not able to understand Sita’s rebelliousness.” (P. 111)

Just as the wives in Desai’s novels are passionate, sensitive, emotional and poetic, the husbands are prosaic, matter-of-fact and insensitive to the feelings of their wives. And Raman is no exception. He considers Sita’s behaviour frivolous. He never tries to understand her agonies and emotional complexities.
He refuses to involve himself in Sita’s inner life and always appears to be “as stolid as a soundly locked gate” (WTS P. 24), it is understood through the words of Indra: “though, of all the male protagonists of Desai, Raman wins the sympathy of the readers.” (P. 89) The polarity of attitudes between the sensitive Sita and the matter-of-fact Raman is brought out by another incident. Raman brings home an assortment of his business friends and throws a wild party. Most of them, according to Sita, are a rotten lot.

As a result, Sita cannot even treat her husband’s friends, guests, colleagues, business associates, and visitors with tolerance and understanding. So, she says: “They are nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter. Animal” (WTS P. 43). But to Raman they are all “Indian merchant class” (WTS P. 43) and he wants that his family should get used to themTired of such a life of monotony and mutual recrimination, Sita slips into a life of silence and brooding.

“Physically so resigned, she could not inwardly accept that this was all there to life, that it would continue thus, inside this small enclosed are.” (WTS PP. 48-49)

Sita, caught between the world of primary values and the possible nightmare of urban living, yearns for a life of peace and innocence. Hence, her return to Manori is both an escape and return in search of her true self.

“Sitas voyage is a quest for discovery, her pilgrimage to the sources of life, the hidden aspects of experience, a reality which can only be felt but never communicated.” (P. 48)
Sita considers her visit to the island as “a pilgrimage.” She also treats it as a place of refuge from the boring life of the town. After the death of her father, she had left the island with Raman. It shows the disillusions of Sita about her life. She begins to enjoy the slow-moving life of the island a lulled life, half conscious, dream life. But Menaka and Karan get bored with their life on the island. The fear, that her stay on the island may make her lose her admission in Medical College, makes her restive and she sends a message to her father secretly to take them to Bombay.

There is not a mutual understanding and adjustment between husband and wife. This is the reason that Sita feels herself like a woman unloved, a woman rejected and betrayed by her children at the arrival of Raman. She does not wish to go back and realizes that it would be very hard to make compromises when one didn’t want to. She is moved by the eagerness of her children. Ultimately she decides to return, accompany with her husband.

Yet she is unable to decide which half of her life was real and which unreal. This enables her to delineate the existentialist sensibility and emotionality Like Maya and Monisha, Sita is sensitive and wistful. Her story moves from Bombay to Manori, the island where Sita goes to get a relief from the tedium of life, but she becomes there still more isolated. Sita also fails to get rid of her restlessness. But she is more courageous than her predecessors. She feels stirred, though unwillingly and unexpectedly, to welcome her husband’s coming to the island.

Ironically enough Raman notices only the dress of his wife. In fact he has not come to see her to fetch her as she had supposed. Sita feels betrayed by all and yet she compromises with the terms of life and returns to Bombay. Anita Desai graphically presents the theme of husband-wife alienation in Where shall we Go this Summer?
The domestic discord starts right with the marriage of Sita and Raman. It is neither a marriage of choice nor a marriage of love; Raman marries her, as Sita herself says,

“out of pity, out of lust, and out of a sudden will for adventure,
and because it was inevitable” (WTS P. 89)

Hoping her marriage with Raman will be relief from her monotonous life in Manori. She accepts the marriage. But she gradually finds the city life has “ceased to offer security of safety but implied threats of murder.” (WTS P. 90) Sita’s attempt to escape from the sickening confines of her married life takes her to the island. She tries to refurnish her drained sensibilities by attempting to enact her childhood experiences. Quite contrary to anticipations, they no longer provide her with the expected charm and remedy. This only goes to aggravate her predicament though she remains seemingly unperturbed.

While at Mnori, Sita’s attitude takes a new turn. Her natural affection and concern for her children and husband surface. She instinctively worries about them. Her dilemma to say Yes or no comes to an end. though Sita notices with hurt feelings that Raman has come not to see her, but to fetch her.

“They had all got together” she feels, “her family to fight her, to reject her, to run away and hide from her” (WTS P. 91)

Though it is a hard time, she is in a dilemma whether time works as preserver or destroyer. However, she passively returns home with Raman, admiring his courage to face life. There is a distinct change of attitude in this novel pertaining to the portrayal of man-woman relationship.
Sita neither dies in the end nor kills anyone nor does she become mad. She simply compromises with her familial time. Vimala Rao in her analysis of Sita’s character, regrets: “It is sad that she has to give up her individuality to some extent in order to accept life.” (P. 49) Having spent her childhood and early adult life with gay abandon on the lonely island under the wings of a Prospero like father, she expects the same atmosphere in Bombay and her father’s image in Raman.

When Raman proves to be a contrast to her father matter of fact, unimaginative and pragmatic, she is totally at a loss to adjust herself to her new life. Added to this is the lack of privacy in their early married life. They live in the “agerotted flat at Queen’s Road” (WTS P. 43) of her husband’s family till she and her husband move into a small flat. The loss of a vast expanse of a picturesque island for a tiny flat, the displacement of a hoard of admiring aboriginals by some cynical relatives in the husband’s household, and above all the gulf between an all-powerful father and an ordinary and prosaic husband cause a great turmoil in her consciousness.

Unable to put up with the indifference of her husband, Sita realizes that her marriage is on the rocks. She feels, suffers and revolts, and her plight is never understood and appreciated by her husband or the other members of the family, including her children. In a family where everyone takes her for granted, Sita rightly feels isolated.

Desai depicts the theme of love and marriage very beautifully and minutely in Where Shall We Go This Summer? It seems to be an epitome of an irresistible yearning for a purposeful life. The heroine of the novel Sita, like Maya of Cry, The Peacock, is a highly sensitive girl. With the help or marriage one can not revive the heart-rending troubles or pains or the happiest moments of other’s life.
Marriage needs more faith. It is the aspiration of the soul to gain wisdom or virtue. The life of Sita is no more faith, good understanding and adjustment. Her heart has a cry like never be appeased by her husband Gautama, Raman, too, looks like Gautama who can never join her into conjugal love and for him, to think over it is useless, like the blind search for another realm of lucidity in the midst of chaos.

Sita is also tired of her hellish life. She has given birth to four children with pride, pleasure and emotional satisfaction. But now she fails to understand what she should do at the time of the birth of fifth one. Her condition is miserable. Raman also utters, “a woman now is her forties, graying to behave with such a total lack of control.” (WTS P. 38)

As the story progresses, the reader is slowly provided with glimpses into Sita”s psyche and the memories of the scars that her married life have left on her feminine consciousness. Incidents seemingly trivial to her husband have left deep ruts in her memory. What appears to be adventurous and worthy of appreciation is dismissed as foolish by Raman.

“Unlike legendary Rama and Sita, Raman and Sita in this novel do not represent an ideal husband-wife relationship; instead they are an ill-assorted couple, lacking altogether in harmony in their lives.” (P. 65)

Temperamentally Sita And Raman are ill-suited to each other and they are wide apart like the two poles. Anita Desai effectively communicates this in the little scene where they talk about the stranger they see during their visit to Ajantha and Ellora. On their way from Ajanta, they encounter a foreign tourist stranded on the highway, waiting for the bus and Raman offers him a lift in his car.
When the tourist tells them he wanted to ‘wander about India for a bit.” Sita cannot help admiring his bravery. But Raman cuts her short with a remark that the foreign tourist was not brave but only foolish, as he “didn’t even know which side of the road to wait on” (WTS P. 46) This summary dismissal of her opinion in a casual and brusque manner disturbs the mental poise of the sensitive Sita. Sita is always reminded of her humiliation at Raman’s hands and his indifferent nature.

Once, while she is going for a walk with her children in the Hanging Garden, she comes across a beautiful Muslim woman and an old man looking at each other with all affection and tenderness. The scene is deep into her memory like a work of art. It reminds her of her own search for love in a loveless family. She narrates this to Raman to remind him of her loveless plight. Indira expresses,

“When her confession draws only a bewildered response from her husband, Sita realizes that they run on parallel lines… Sita feels like a felly fish washed off by the sea waves.” (P. 90)

Sita’s life is full of tension, struggles and tortures which make her life hellish. Many a time she tries to mend it, to test it and to repair it and to fulfill her duty but she is lost in the tangle or the net of those problems which she wants to get rid of. She thinks of her past childhood.

Free from all the tension makes a contrast between her childhood and her present young womanhood in which she is cast into another environment of tension and shadows. In spirit, this novel is undoubtedly reminiscent of D.H. Lawrance’s long tale *The Woman Who Rode Away.*
“Desai and Lawrence have written these pieces with different ends in views…. It is needless to say that she is much more effective than Lawrence, and she very powerfully conveys the anguish and agony of her heroine.” (PP. 63-64)

In this novel, as also in her earlier novels *Cry, The Peacock* and *Voices in the City*, Anita Desai once again very remarkably voices:

“the terror of facing single-handed, the ferocious assault of existence through a recurrent, favourite existentialist theme of husband wife alienation and incommunication that lays bare the agonized modern sensibility of an Indian woman.” (P. 64)

She, also, studies the marital discords resulting from the conflict between two untouchable temperaments and two diametrically different ideas represented by Sita and her husband Raman. Sita is a young sensitive emotional and middle aged woman, who has four children. She feels isolated from her husband and her children and becomes the victim of mental agonies because of her sharp lost in the reveries and psychological contrast between the past and present.

Here Anita Desai reveals the character of Sita through stream of consciousness method, with layers of thought in her mind. Virginia Woolf demonstrates in her novel *To The Lighthouse* the minute consciousness of human mind. Longing to find some solace for her bruised consciousness and hurt ego, she tries to relive her past assisted by the memories of her childhood. But to her dismay, her children Menaka and Karan are not all that pleased with life on the island. They do not see eye to eye with their mother about the pleasures of island life and long to get back to the city of Bombay.
Menaka even secretly writes to her father asking him to come to Manori and take them home. Manori belies her expectations of being a refuge from her shattered domestic life because it has lost its childhood charm for Sita. Finally, when Moses informs Sita of the impending arrival of Raman, she initially responds with shock but later resigns herself to it and even feels relieved. She feels one violent pulsation of grief inside her, like a white bird flying up with one strident scream, then plummeting down, thinking,

“It’s all over and then a warm expansion of relief, of pleasure, of surprise on the happy surprise. She begun to laugh.”

(WTS P. 118)

The sudden change attitude of Sita will be misreading of her character. Desai has cleverly contrived to bring about this metamorphosis in Sita’s personality as an inevitable outcome of a sensitive and disappointed woman’s acceptance of the stark realities of life and her submission to live with them, for what cannot be cured must be endured. Soon they are joined by Raman, and the Children appear so happy in his company that Sita feels let down.

When the husband and wife are having a discussion as to why Sita had found her married life disappointing, Sita tells him frankly that happy occasions have been so rare in their married life that she is able to recall only one happy moment. But Raman thinks otherwise accuses her of being inhuman:

“Any woman – any one would think you are inhuman. You have lived comfortably, always in my house. You’ve not had any worries.” (WTS P. 134)
It is this authoritative attitude of Raman which gets expressed in words like: “You have lived comfortably” and “my house” (WTS P. 134) that has accentuated Sita’s sense of alienation. In fact, her disillusionment with the institution of marriage has even made her cynical about people and life in general. “She had realized what a farce marriage was, all human relationships were” (WTS P. 139). Ramesh K. Srivastava has revealed that:

“At Manori when Sita and Raman meet after a long time and Sita breathlessly waits for Raman to say that he needed her or missed her; to her shock, she comes to know that Raman had nothing to say. It might be either because he had nothing to give her or that he was unaware of her needs and demands. Yet Raman, more prone to make attempts at understanding and adjustment than Jivan and Gautam, wins Sita back and brings her to Bombay from Manori where she had gone in order to rebel against the type of life that she had in Bombay. But Sita’s coming back to Bombay is not a gesture indicating her realization of the existence of love and understanding between them, but rather a result of her newly gained knowledge that there is no magic left in the island capable of sustaining her in need. Hence it is in a state of disheartening helplessness and due to a wish to compromise with her husband “the nicest man she knew” that she comes back to Bombay.” (P. 224)
Like Maya of Cry, the Peacock who is not understood by her husband Gautama, Sita is also not understood by Raman. When Sita is tortured by the fear of her fifth pregnancy, Raman does not understand her anxiety and tantrums. He simply exclaims: “Don’t be silly”. And “Sita, don’t behave like a fool” (WTS P. 147).

On other occasions, when Sita is appalled by the wounded eagle chased by the bloodthirsty crows, or the irritating behavior of servants, Raman not only fails to understand her agony, but also fails to relieve her of her fear. Sita craved to be hugged and loved by Raman. Seeing a couple in the Hanging Garden, loving each other, free from all the worldly conversation so intense, quite divine or insane and her heart begins to weep and she murmurs distractedly.

For Sita, married life has been the life of discontentment, the life of hypocrisy and vanity and only one escape into the past, to the island, the magic land. She knows that there are two periods of her life, each in direct contrast to the other. And life for her has no direct, no stretches. It simply swirls around, muddling and confusing, leading to nowhere. That is why she explores her idea to go to Manori at the questions asked by Raman because drawing man catches straw.

In this context, Sita may be compared to Rosie the heroine of R.K. Narayan’s Guide, she is enchanted by a guide and neglects her husband devoted to research work, but in the climax of the life, she repents and has hidden desire to become one with her husband. Due to her frustration, tension and enigmas, she gets estranged from her husband. Unless such enigmas and cobwebs of human life are set aside, it is very difficult for a man or woman to restore to mental peace. And calm of mind, all passion spent is well said by Milton in Samson Agonistes.
Passion leads to passions, to chaos in life. Sita’s return to Manori is like the withdrawal of Monisha and Nirode, and act of rejection. She is unable to bear the violence and destruction around her the quarrelling sessions of the servants and the fighting amongst the children etc. She has not been able to adjust herself in her husband’s family and has longed for the sensitive approach in others. Her defiance has been manifested earlier also, in her provocative attitude towards the women-folk of her husband’s family, and in her taking to smoking. It is not only the violence of the life around her but also the violence in the world at large:

“They allhammered at her with cruel fists the fallen flocks, the torn water colours, the headlines about the war in VietNam, the photographs of women seeping over a small grave, another of a crowd outside a Rhodesian jail; articles about the perfidy of Pakistan. . . they were handgrenades all, hurled at her frail gold fish-bowl belly and instinctively she laid her hands over it…”

(P. 35-36)

The destruction around her overwhelms her and she goes to Manori in search of a miracle, of same way of continuing and preserving life without the need for it to be exposed to constant danger. The trip of Manori becomes for her a trip of self-discovery and a recognition of reality. Her island home is not as she remembered it. In herself she has no importance.

She is tolerated because of her father, and later her husband gets welcome in his own right as a man. Her return to Manori is no thunder and illusion of her past life. While on the island, as a young girl, she had slowly but unmistakably grown out of the chrysalis of childhood.
She had struggled to free herself from the magic of her father, but after twenty years, the island life has again gained an ascendancy over her and the island has become a symbol of a private refuge and is only a route of escape for her.

“. . .knowing that accepting that, she knows it was because ordinary lie, the every day world had grown so insufferable to her that she could think of the magic island again as of release. If the sea was so dark, so cruel, then it was better to swim back into the net. If reality was not to be borne, then illusion was the only alternative.”  (WTS P. 74)

She sees the face of reality in this world of illusion and realizes that in essence there can be no running away from reality. After her return Sita’s withdrawal is indicative of a need for love, the kind of free, unquestioning love which would envelop her. Her happy marriage does not relate to her personal life but to her experience, which can be seen by a young woman attended by a person who loved her. It is revealed by Jain:

“The kind of love transcends the self and makes no claims. It is love in the face of death, in the face of human finitude. It is this kind of relationship which she wants from Raman, but which she is unable to achieve.”  (P. 37)

Sita is not happy with her indifferent husband. In this novel Raman and Sita do not play a role of an ideal husband-wife. There is a lack of harmony in their lives. Like Gautama, Raman also keeps himself busy and indifferent to his wife. He is opposite to his wife both in ideas and attitude. He represents the prose of life, while Sita the poetry of life.
In fact Sita’s alienation from her husband was inherent due to her relationship with her mysterious father. This is the reason that Sita finds herself away from society and family. She feels suffocation owing to her lack of adaptability of people living like animals. She finds every existence threatened with boredom because her husband keeps himself busy in his business and children growing independent. In this situation Sita struggles in the grip of the monster of boredom. Her husband fails to understand how or why she feels bored.

“She herself 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.” (WTS PP. 33-34)

The life of Sita is haunted by loneliness. It represents modern married women’s existentialism. The agony and unhappiness in Sita’s soul spring from her inability. She fails to compromise with her husband and children. She faces “the ferocious assaults of existence” and knows that her rebellious attitude towards society will crush her. Partly, this novel is based on nostalgic element. Sita moves like a pendulum between her past and present memories. She spends her childhood on the island of Manori with her father who becomes a legend in his own life-time. After independence of India, her first visit to Manori with her father who wanted to civilize the island by the forces of progress, is always remembered by her that:

“Like Prospero in Shakespeare’s The Tempest, he! Too presided over Manori like a saint, like a magician and proudly introduced Moses and Miriam as “the original inhabitants of his “paradise”.

(P. 69)
Thus both Sita and her father stand in sharp contrast with each other. Both look for an earthly paradise free from fear and anxiety but their ideas differ. Her father sees the life on Manori as the life in an ashram, but she sees, “the island as a peace of magic, a magic mirror” (WTS P. 75) Her probe towards her past memories creates a complex in her. Between the two the contrast remains inadequate. Her father brings the water to the island and teaching the profitable ways of forming but at the same time she finds the water from the well not sweet and real.

Sita always bears mental tension and lives in conflicts. The conflict between Sita and her uninvolved children is also seen in the novel. Both Menaka and Karan fail to adjust to the primitive life on Manori. They want to go back to Bombay to live the urban life. The sharp conflict between Sita and Menaka is also seen in the novel in which she discusses the science and opulence of art, Sita says,

“Science can’t be as satisfactory. It’s all-all figures, statistics, logic, science is believing that two and two make fourbooth”

(WTS P. 82)

She gives her argument and says, “It leads you to a dead end. There are nod dead ends, now in art. That is something spontaneous, Menaka alive, and creative...” (WTS P. 85) Hence after her marriage she fails to adjust herself with her family. She wants to know the realities of life.

Her return to Manori allows her to see the face of reality in this world of illusion and she realizes that no body can run away from reality. At the time of Raman’s arrival and through her reluctant conversation with him, she comes to realize that the escape from the cold actualities of life is no positive solution to her spiritual impasses.
She feels that she is a coward and intensely realizes that life must flow on and she must have courage as Raman has, to flow on with life. Sita prepares herself to return from Manori, as she eventually perceives the realities of life. Her second visit to Manori ends in an utter fiasco only because her inability to remember her part. She tries to recapture the glory of the past without taking into account the vital truth of life. Now everything is changed. Thus in all ways, she wants to compromise with her family after her marriage but fails to do so. Sita always remembered that,

“life, at every step, raises problems and it is the business of philosophy to find solutions to them.” (P. 45)

Her mental disposition is totally disturbed because of Raman’s misunderstanding. It is true that faith begets faith and hate begets hate.

“She finds herself unable to do even a single activity. How much painful and tearful her life has become. She things whether she should yield not in traditional way of life and this makes her much more violent. She reminds the heart-touching words, Endure as long as you can pain, does not matter to a man” (WTS P. 103)

This married life presents before her more tension and shadows. This is the reason that she wants to run away from her husband. The conflict is going on from beginning to end between Sita and Raman. Her husband does not spend his time for Sita. She weeps in her heart of heart.
“... She spent almost all her time on the balcony, smoking, looking out at the sea... chosen this small flat because of sea below it – the sea was to have come surging up and washed the city away” (WTS P. 48)

Infatuation, attachments, affection, understanding, cooperative relationship, and common interest in children can contribute towards shaping the relationship between husband and wife. But it must be said that interdependence between husband and wife is not much and not many normal regulations characters the relationship. Anita Desai does not like to separate art from life and always sees them as a part of one pattern, drawing upon each other for their existence. Therefore she deeply rooted in the heart of a women whose heart has to existence. In every circumstance and in each and every walk of life, she presents her powerful characters with full enthusiasm and encouragement.

Sensitiveness is the main characteristic in all her famous novels. Therefore, in this novel, she has painted a real and pathetic picture of a lonely married woman who aspires to triumph over the chaos and suffering of her rather unusual existence. Sita, having much more conflict between in her sensitive and emotional mind, she desires to leave the boredom and hypocrisy of middle class and showy comfortable life.

She has only one last desire to go to Manori at the question asked by Raman Where Shall We Go This Summer? She had become fully tired of the hustle and bustle of human life full of passion, hypocrisy and dishonesty. She possesses an inner fury which makes one thinks about the problem life. Desai explores the inner feelings of a woman’s heart. She writes that the life of women in India is slow and empty but in the west hurried and busy.
Raman, Sita’s husband, is caught by western civilization and culture in which he is fully involved but such culture can not give peace to the mind of a sophisticated girl Sita. She goes deep in the fathomless depth of her heart and has very keen and minute observation to the very small incident in the eyes of Raman, as he utters,

“But you are leaving for such small incidents, Sita? They occur in every one’s life, all the time, they are only small incidents”
(WTS P. 34)

It is true that such small incident which has no importance for others has much more importance for someone like Sita. She has many questions haunting in her both conscious and unconscious mind. They have been said in her speech: “Who is mad here? In this house? What madness.” (WTS P. 36)

Really in India the condition of woman is very pitiable only because she fails to adjust. An Indian woman has self-respect and at the cast of it, she will never yield. But there is limit to such adjustment in her life. She becomes the victim of her husband”s cruel desire. She has no longer the nerve or the optimism to continue her life in her own way. It seems to her as if she were herself in the pot with full of water. She utters,

“More and more she lost all feminine, all material belief in childbirth, all faith in it, and began to fear it as yet one more act of violence and murder in the world.” (WTS P. 47)

When she remembers all her past life, She finds full enthusiasm and hope to go to Manori, the mainland, the land of solidity of streets, security of house. But there was nothing left now a contrast of the present with frustration and disappointment and the past with hopeful enthusiasm.
Sita thinks that destruction may be the true element in which life survives and the creation merely a temporary element. So she makes up her mind to escape to Manori all above, where she lives with full enthusiasm, satisfaction. She finds there a place of magic, happiness and pleasure away from the life of political fear, turmoil, tension, cruelties, separation and tortures.

Sita has similar cry of heart caused by suffocation restlessness and want of mental peace in the company of Raman as we discover in the heart of Maya, the sensitive young girl of *Cry, The Peacock* obsessed by a childhood prophecy of terrible accident and by marital discord. Consequently, she suffers from nervous breakdown and wants an escape to Manori, the house of soul, the island of magic and peace.

Sita thinks of her cosy, carefree childhood with tensions and shadows and makes a contrast of her present young womanhood in which she is cast into another environment of tensions and shadows. This new married life presents before her more tension and shadows, she is lost in reveries and psychological contrast between the past and present. Here, Anita Desai revealed the character of Sita in a stream of consciousness method.

Desai thinks that marriage alone does not provide a solution to life’s tension and chaos. Mental satisfaction and happy married life means better understanding between husband and wife. One needs the help of the other. A sort of co-operation at every level is needed. Psychologically Raman fail to come to a harmonious whole. The reason is obvious. In general, it is said that marriage is a legal prostitution. Desai’s novels refer to this truth which lies in every heart of human beings.
But with the help of marriage, one can not revive that heart-rending troubles of pains or the happiest moments of other’s life. For it faith is necessary. It is aspiration of the soul to gain wisdom. In the life of Sita, there is no faith and good understanding and adjustment. Her heart has a cry of innumerable dreams and fancies in her innocent heart. Raman is like Gautama who never joins her in the company of love. Now Sita is tired of her hellish life. Her condition is miserable.

Her craving for love does not resemble like the heroine of Kamala’s novel Possession. In the novel, Caroline desires to satisfy her lust with Valmiki, an innocent boy of 14 years. He may become the prey to her carnal desires but that desires can never be appeased. Passion leads to passions in human life. It becomes Penelope’s web. Hence in order to restore peace to mind, there should be an end to all these passions of life.

So one can say that the tragedy of Sita is obviously due to her “constitutional inability to accept the values and the attitude of society and her irreconcilable temperament.” (PP. 49-50) To portray the complex character of Sita and to bring out the inner dialectics Anita Desai has made use of symbolic imagery. Sita is the main character around whom the theme of the novel revolves.

The symbolism also becomes an effective structural design of the novel. Like Maya in Cry, The peacock, for whom the dance of peacock is the symbol of love and death. Sita sees herself a wounded eagle and crows represent the callous society around her. In the first incident of the novel Sita finds that crows are joyously pecking at something on the ledge below the balcony of her flat. It is an eagle, injured and unable to fly.
She is irritated at the crows and tries to drive them away with the help of a toy gun. But Sita knows that the wounded eagle has really no chance of survival against the attack of crows though she does not admit it openly. Through the incident Anita Desai has very skillfully suggested the impending tragedy of Sita and discovers that the same fate as of the eagle awaits her metaphorically at the end of the novel.

Sita is like the proud eagle-violence of crows. This incident also highlights the total absence of communication between Sita and the incidents around her. In another incident in the novel some other aspects of Sita’s personality are symbolized. While returning from holiday at Ajanta and Ellora caves, Raman and Sita come across a tall, blonde, young foreigner who wants a lift to Ajanta. Raman thinks that he is a fool who didn’t know which side of the road to wait on but for the Sita he “Seemed so brave.” She says that it was not his foolishness but innocence.

And “it made him seen more brave, not knowing anything but going on nevertheless.” (WTS P. 52) Sita identified herself with the foreigner because like her he is so vulnerable. Thus in ideas and attitudes both are opposite to each other. Other contrasts in the novel are also sharply drawn which show the cause of their unsuccessful married life. Raman stands for prose life, conformity and sanity while Sita stands for sensitivity, feverish imagination and romanticism. These internal contrasts are matched by contrasting external setting in the novel.

Desai has revealed the aspect of life that is against negativism of life. She seems to assert that life in spite of its nastiness, brutishness, madness, tedium, and boredom, should be lived. This is effectively conveyed through pregnant Sita who escapes the bored, dull and unhappy life and admits that life must be continued with all its business.
When Sita brought her children, Karan and Menaka to the island, the feeling of forlornness haunted her. She does not enjoy. Everything moves at her harshness and wildness. The betrayal of her husband, his family, her children, friends has torn her and now violence comes from her like blood. When Raman came to the island she thought he had come for her but he was there at Menaka”s admission to medical college. But he said nothing and kept his face averted from her.

Either he was indifferent to her or he was just unaware of her needs and demands. Raman does not understand the feelings of his wife and he should understand it. Because these trifling things are a bridge of the successful married life. Sita stares at him bored into him with her eyes, wanting and not being given what she wanted. On the other hand he stares at her distaste. Both husband and wife become the victim of misunderstanding.

At that time her face is a face of a woman who is in need of love and whose beauty has turned haggard through nerves, neglect and indifference. Raman also looked grey and „both of them were too old to be having another baby.” When Raman and the children have gone to the beach Sita goes out on the terrace and decides that all make a plan to fight her, to reject her, to runaway and hide from her. In this undecided state of mind her alienation approximates to Sidney Finkelstein”s definition of alienation as,

“… a psychological phenomenon, an internal conflict, a hostility toward something seemingly outside oneself which is linked to oneself, a barrier erected which is actually no defence but an impoverishment of oneself.” (P. 137)
Though in its broad outlines the story appears to be simple, the narrative technique adopted by Anita Desai endows it with a deeper significance than what it might appear to be for the casual reader. The novel is not so much about what Sita does and what is done to her as it is an examination of her inner life. Though there is nothing extraordinary about the incidents portrayed, Sita’s psychic life with all its emotional turmoil is effectively brought out through them.

Sita’s inner fury and Raman’s cool and unconcerned attitude towards her present in bold lines the agony experienced by a sensitive woman in a male-dominated family. Where Shall We Go This Summer? takes the readers to the wonderland of miracle and mystery. This is not a mere escapist indulgence in dream and vision. Situations arise in human life when one likes to transcend reality—where transcending fact becomes a downright necessity.

Exploration of the possibilities to transcend reality and phenomenon is a mighty psychic effort and only proves how chained and tied man is. The mighty struggle of Sita to transcend time and space and shackles of fettered life is definitely Anita Desai’s effort to transcend the shackles of her art and thought and to plunge into new unexplored regions of experience. The works written hereafter reflect this mighty effort generating a hope thereby that Anita Desai has yet to achieve the miracle of her best writing.

Anita Desai’s fictional outlook seems to have undergone a significant transformation by the time she came to write this novel. Her preoccupation with the fascinating vistas of the diseased psyche of hyper sensitive individuals is not so much altered.
But whereas in her earlier novels, characters caught in the maze of life’s problems committed suicide or sought some such melodramatic solution, the heroine of Where Shall We Go This Summer? after moving dangerously off the course of the well established and generally accepted path of life, returns to it in time to make up for the leeway. In an interview given to Atma Ram, Anita Desai makes it clear that suicide would have been “too melodramatic an alternative for the middle-aged woman that the heroine is.” (P. 27) Thus Desai’s Where Shall We Go This Summer? is an answer to temperamental incompatibility and the resultant self-alienation. This novel is contrast to the other novels like Cry, the Peacock and Voices in the City, in which the problem of frustration of the female characters come to violent and tragic end. This novel presents a positive approach to the existential predicament.

Sita neither dies in the end nor kills anybody nor does she become mad. She simply compromises with her destiny by expressing her readiness to move to Bombay back with her husband, Raman. Such selfadjustment and self-perception are the answers to her problem of selfalienation for which she is responsible. Therefore, her jouney to Manory for self-alienation was bitter but her journey to Bombay for self-perception is comfortable.

It is a faithful record of the post-war state of reality, characterized by a sense of muddle, confusion, meaninglessness, pervasive horror and fear. The only thing that represents tradition is Sita’s memory of the past; and her conviction that the past still continues to exist in its full form is countered by the debris of the past itself. The present, however, is not religious enough to retain the glory of the past, hence her isolation, loss of identity and breakdown of her relationship with her husband and others in the family. In Where Shall We Go This Summer? the suffering of Sita is caused by the factors psychical in origin.
The betrayal of her unconscious inclination to preserve and uphold traditional values of an integrated life in face of the chaotic values of modern city civilization is at the root of her unhappiness an loss of identity. The values she represents are rejected in modern waste-land because there is all round degradation. Life turns out to be “a tale told by an idiot”, as Shakespeare says in Macbeth, when the world is faced with tendencies of the lost generation.

There is no concentric focus in the present century so as to ensure a common term of reference in all spheres of life. The world presented in Where Shall We Go This Summer? deviates from the institutional values, dogmas and old certainties, not is it surrounded by either magic or illusion, as Sita thought earlier. The characteristic meaninglessness of absurd literature has become the meaning sought for.

Anita Desai’s world in the novel is the present age which “has shrunk in spirit languishing in confusion, frustration, disintegration, disillusionment, meaninglessness and rootlessness”, as R. S. Pathak suggests in his study of “The Alienated Protagonist in the Indo-English Novel.” (P. 69) The central issue of the novel, that is, identity crisis as a result of husband and wife polarity, is also a predominant theme of the other novels of Anita Desai.

Together with this, the cultural and racial conflicts as evident in Bye Bye Blackbird may have originated from the writer’s own family background directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, for her is an offspring of parents of different cultural backgrounds. Though little material is available as to how far the subject in question is true or not, in psychoanalysis this is a matter of immense significance. Through the study of symbols used by a writer, his or her personal life as mirrored in the work can be defined.
This suggests that the writer and his work are inseparable. The truth of this platitude may be seen in proper perspective if one recalls what Lawrence once said:

“But one sheds one’s sickness in books – repeats and presents again one’s emotions, to be master of them.” (P. 234)

No doubt, Raman is impotent of a sudden sense of his getting old and grey and not wanting to have another child mark his unattractive role as a husband sexually, physically and emotionally. Sexually repressed, Sita remains isolated in the background while her children and husband share their life and experience together. Her realization that hers was a “farce marriage” makes her unnerved because her husband does not know the basic fact of her existence, her soul’s existence, her instinct’s existence. The more she thinks the greater is her shock.

Once more she becomes hysterical, and to an introverted person this is bound to happen. She lives in a world of phantasies, incongruities and violent outbursts as a means of escape from reality. Her entire life is woven in this strange manner inscrutably. It is at such a moment that her mind recaptures the image of the two lovers in a park. This may truly be characteristic symptom of introversion as put by Freud:

“...introversion describes the deflection of the libido away from the possibilities of real satisfaction and its excessive accumulation upon phantasies previously tolerated as harmless. An introverted person.. is in an unstable condition; the next disturbance of the shifting forces will cause symptoms to develop, unless he can yet find other outlets for his pant-up libid.” (P. 365)
In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, Anita Desai employs images and symbols in order to hint at the psychological state of the protagonist at a given moment. Images and symbols serve to underline and illuminate the intentions of the novelist and as such they become an integral part of the texture of her novels. According to Indira:

“…in Mrs. Desai’s novels, there is always a close correspondence between the mood or the psychic state of the character and nature. Nature participates in the human drama and highlights the mental states of the characters.” (P. 73)

The island and the sea are the dominant images in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*. 

“While the sea in the island revives and rejuvenates her, the sea in the city seems to be attacking her, throwing up the rot at her, with venomous violence. The sea to symbolizes only the violence and aggression that frightens Sita.” (P. 78)

The recurrence of sea imagery hints at the dominance of the sea of emotions in Stia’s consciousness. By choosing apt images that evoke the right reactions and convey the implied messages, Anita Desai achieves effective symbolism. To cite an example, the city image is so deftly repeated that it gains symbolic overtones.

“…if the city is symbolic of a rational way of life, the island is also symbolic of the primitive reality that Sita discovers. Thus the sea and the island remain the two most significant unifying symbols throughout the novel.” (P. 73)
Sita’s obsession with violence and destruction figures repeatedly through a series of significant images of prey and predator. The most memorable image of violence in Desai’s novels is the prey-predator image which spotlights Desai’s tragic vision of life. This image is presented in a scene in which Sita is seated on her balcony holding a pop gun trying to “keep away the crows what were attacking a wounded eagle on a neighboring roof top.” (WTS P. 34) There are other images which echo the theme of human vulnerability and the conflicting demands of protection and freedom. It is the island which reflects this image.

Sita expects protection from this island but what it offers her is a hostile, cold welcome with the islanders way of talking to her and the palms “hissing and clattering their dry leaves together harshly like some disturbed animals” (WTS P. 26) The house, “a waste of ashes,” the cold remains of the bonfire her father had lit there to blaze” (WTS P. 28) reminds Sita of the crows tearing a wounded eagle. Images of darkness that are suggestive of Sita’s disturbed state of mind abound in this novel. When Sita returns to the island, darkness greets her and her children.

“They stood despairingly in the deep veranda, the white doors of the house all swinging outwards revealing the crowded darkness inside. Below them was shifting, sighing darkness of the palm leaves.” (WTS P. 27)

The house situated on the top of the island suggests her total isolation She has to withdraw herself from society to this island. Thereby the house becomes the symbol of her alienated self. The shifting and sighing darkness symbolically suggests her sense of unease and apprehension.
The prevailing atmosphere on the island intensifies Sita’s inner turbulence and frustration as seen in the continuous rain. Through the pattern of monsoon winds Desai conveys the tumult in Sita’s mind.

“The monsoon flowed now thin, now dense: now slow, now fast; now whispering, now drumming; then gushing. There was silence always the roar and sigh of the tide, the moan of the casuarinas in the grow below. Tossed and hurled about in grey, tattered billows.” (WTS P. 102)

Desai’s astounding ability to link the external events with the inner life of the protagonist is beautifully manifested in the image. The monsoon receives dual responses from nature. It protests against the unceasing flow but resigns helplessly after sometime. The same contrariness is seen in Sita’s responses to the meaningless void of her life. Sita also roars and sighs like the tides of the sea. Just as there is no break in the rain and no relief for the mourning casuarinas and palm trees, there is no peace for Sita in her life. When Sita learns that Raman has come to the island to take Manaka back on the daughter’s request but not for her, she becomes furious and nervous. Once again Raman and Sita are at logger heads. It seems to her that he always tells her that.

“You must. One must” and that she was always shaking her head crying. “No I can’t. The palm trees all shook their heads along with her, their leaves rustled one against the other, “I can’t”, always producing that sound of battle, that sound of distress” (WTS P. 14)
This image suggestively portrays Sita’s inner conflict, dramatizing powerfully the incompatibility between Raman and Sita. Usha rightly says:

“Sita’s compromise with life reveals on her part a step forward to accept reality. The awareness that life is not to be shunned but to be lived is significant. Participation in the act of living means acceptance of the responsibility. Sita, while walking on the beach with Raman, carefully chooses Raman’s foot marks to tread on. Symbolically it suggests that Sita decides to contribute positively to their lives.” (P. 118)

This image presents Sita as a humble bride following her husband to make a fresh beginning. The images of sea and wind, of land and the city, and of darkness and trees are the most suggestive and significant, highlighting the dominant themes of violence, despair, escape, withdrawal and realization delineating Sita’s conflicting mind. Sita’s rebellion against the external world has been the result of alienated consciousness.

“To her disappointment she finds that urban milieu cannot provide the answer to her question.” (P. 91)

Images which suggest togetherness and stand out in sharp contrast to alienation have also been used by Desai in order to enhance the required effect. It is the image of a Muslim woman and a man lost in tender love, seen by Sita in the Hanging Gardens which keeps reminding her in a tantalizing way of the absence of pure and deep love in her relation with Raman. The images of the mythical Ram and Sita who are hinted at by the consciously chosen names Raman and Sita also serve to sharpen the reader’s awareness of alienation in this relationship.
A gap between two semantic levels of interpretation, suggesting the different planes of existence at which Sita and Raman live, becomes prominent in tracing the marital alienation in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*. Pregnant for the fifth time, Sita declares, “I don’t want to have the baby.” (WTS P. 34) It is indicative of her metaphysical desire not to commit an act of violence by giving birth to a child, which is now so safely contained in her womb, into a world which is full of violence and destruction.

Raman interprets her declaration as her will to have an abortion, that is why he says, “one can’t have an abortion at this stage.” (WTS P. 34) The metaphysical level, at which Sita lives, is far beyond Raman’s reasoning which is confined to material common-sense. The difference between these two semantic levels of interpretation makes the couple stare at each other uncomprehendingly and designate each other as mad. For Raman Sita’s desire to keep the child for ever is madness, while for Sita Raman’s interpretation of her desire as abortion is madness.

Images taken from day-to-day life present the violence which is latent in all normal behaviour and which comes naturally to all. In the novel, for instance, Sita’s sons hurl their bodies at each other, get their faces red, and hair chopped for the sake of fun because “This is how they did it in the fil-um” (WTS P. 45).

Menaka unconsciously reaches out her ringers and crumbles “a sheaf of new buds” which Sita has been labouring “to grow on the balcony.” (WTS P. 45) Sita’s ears ring with fearsome sounds and she rushes to the kitchen, thinking that the servants have been fighting, but the cook and the ayah were just talking—even their normal way of talking was so violent.
All these images depict the acts that are done normally, habitually and even unconsciously. The animal imagery employed at the beginning of the novel, introduces expressions like,

“…nodding their heads briskly up and down like so many goats neighing about the table”, neighed the goats, wagging about the table”, “the goats neighed their replies and all seemed to sing, to hum together some mysterious not wholly intelligible chant.”

(WTS P. 11)

Anita Desai’s profound interest in such characters makes nonconformity a pivotal theme. Her characters being highly emotional, sensitive, intellectual and freedom loving, find it very difficult to accept the roles assigned to them. Any intrusion in their personal worlds is intolerable to them.

This polarity of attitudes adds to the estrangement between the matter-of-fact Raman and the sensitive Sita. In this regard, Tripathi comments that thematically Anita Desai makes a minute study of the undercurrent of feelings between husband and wife. He emphatically pronounces that the disaffection proceeds primarily from their temperaments.

“If Raman is social and extrovert, Sita is introvert. If Raman thinks only of the immediate present, Sita is foresighted and has higher notions about life than the average woman will have. Because of their temperamental difference many points of discord between the two frequently occur and their responses to life are different.” (PP. 66-67)
The story of Sita is a study of female consciousness, suffering and struggling within the framework of conjugal life. By placing her protagonist in the above context, Anita Desai delves deep into her consciousness and analyses the agony silently experienced by such a hapless creature. She also projects Sita as a victim of maladjustments to situations in which she finds herself than her own choice. But Sita does not allow her personality to be splintered; fortunately, she comes to terms with life.

Unlike Maya in *Cry, the peacock*, who loses herself to the whirlwind of her own sensitivity, Sita emerges from the storm of her sensibilities with a new-found awareness that „ripeness is all” and gets back into her familial life. Her acceptance shows growth, implying her ability to connect the fragments of life. Thus,

“the quiet note with which the novel ends, speaks of the maturity of perception achieved by both Sita and her creator.”

(P. 105)

In her celebration of freedom from duties and responsibilities, from order and routine, from life and the city, Sita lacks comprehension and clarity. She does not want to go back to the mainland and finds horrible things happening on the streets and in the flats everything is ugly and cruel. Raman tries to disillusion her mind about the contraries in life.

One should be grateful that life is only a matter of disappointment, not disaster. In portraying Sita who is opposed to society and forces of life, and stressing on her inner conflicts Anita Desai give the impression that life in spite of the contraries that assail it, has to be lived because “the existent lives in constant interaction with other existents or existence is being with outhers.” (P. 102)
Life is full of treasons and treacheries, one can not avoid it. These are elements that penetrate a person as air and water do. It struck that Sita and Raman have suffered from worry and anxiety about her. Ultimately she understands the meaning of life. She realizes the differences between the necessity and the wish, between what a man wants and what he is compelled to do. Her desires to bear the child and returns with Raman to the mainland signifies her return to life, community and society. One of the main features of this novel is its positive ending which is highly encouraging and life-enhancing. It is clear that Anita Desai is, as a novelist, dealing mainly with feminine psychology and very often her heroines came to violence at the end as in *Cry, The Peacock*, and *Voices in the City*.

Sita neither kills anyone nor commits suicide, nor dies, nor goes mad. She simply compromises with her fate and learns the courage to face life boldly with all its ups and downs. She believes in time which is a healer of all worries and problems. Sita’s compromise with life reveals on her part a step forward to accept reality. The awareness that life is not to be shunned but to be lived is significant.

The life of Sita is a study of feminine consciousness, suffering and struggling within the framework of conjugal life. This the intense story of a sensitive young wife torn between the desire to abandon the boredom of any hypocrisy of her middle class. Though Sita thought that the time of earth was limited, but she still make the most of the days she has remaining. She is of the belief that, “When you love what you have, you have everything you need.” So, as per her belief, though Sita had suffered a lot like the Jesus who bear the cross for the sinners of the world, led her life amid many cross-currents.
*Clear Light of Day* presents a story between pre and-post independence about the history of an extended family and the tragedies they faced. It is within these characters and writing techniques that Anita Desai reaches the readers of the middle class, thus expanding and developing their realms of imagination. Desai wove the history of Delhi with a middle-class Hindu family.

The novel does not represent a new trend in Desai's fiction though it differs from her earlier novels. There is no real change in the thematic interests and the technical concerns of Desai. New York Times praises the novel "as a wonderful novel about silence and music, about the partition of a family as well as a nation. A review in New Yorker says,

"A rich, Chekhovian novel by one of the most gifted of contemporary Indian writers. Brijtj Singh compares the novel to "an extended piece of music, subtle, sensitive, sensuous in its line and melody but also complex and richly integrated in its total effect." (P. 67)

*Clear Light of Day* was a landmark in her career. "It marked my breaking out," says Desai, explaining also the change that came over her use of language. She incorporated the rhythm and tone of Indian speech into English and the effect was described as "four-dimensional" by noted critic Gabrielle Annan in the Times Literary Supplement. Sunil Sethi says in the words of Desai the novel is "about time as a preserver and destroyer, about what the bondage of time does to people. The title of the novel, *Clear Light of Day*, refers to a passage in the fourth part of the novel in which Bimla Das, who had always believed in the past, matures now and begins to look afresh in 'the clear light of day' that she felt only love and yearning tbr them all:
"If there were hurts, these gashes and wounds in her side that bled, then it was only because her love was imperfect and did not encompass them thoroughly enough and because it had flaws and inadequacies and did not extend to all equally" (p. 165).

In the ‘clear light of day’ of her maturing consciousness, Bim realizes that she was narrow in her love and forgives all. It is the story of a woman wrapped up in the world of fantasies and visions. Bim lived in the dreamy world of the past but wakes up in the clear light of day to mend her relations with her brother. The summer of 1947 has divided the nation and the family - Hindus and Muslims are torn apart by Partition. Part I traces the effect of partition riots on the family.

It describes the main events in the family against the background of the 1947 upheaval. Much of the conflict in India during the time of Anita Desai's novel Clear Light of Day centers upon religious tensions between the Muslims and Hindus. Desai, while mentioning the events that were caused by the religious tensions, neglects to address the religion issue in any great detail. While there is little mention of religion, language, which in India is divided along religious lines, is brought up many times. Through Tara's and Bim's consciousness Desai examines the same events from different points of view.

Although the characters barely venture beyond their front gate, they live out the legacy of India's bitter battle for independence. "The spunky children of a poor Indian village, the Old Delhi family torn apart by Partition, the ageing debauched poet, the dignified, tired matriarch, the plain and lumpish spinster - Desai's characters are never cardboard cutouts, they aren't victims and they aren't heroes - they are just human."
Clear Light of Day, Desai's masterpiece of familial attachments and avowedly her most autobiographical novel, evokes this transition through an anglicised family in Old Delhi in the 40s. "Perhaps fused my sisters, both working women, one married, the other not, into one character, Bim," says Desai. "But what's mostly autobiographical is the atmosphere of that household and that house. This novel describes the emotional reactions of two main characters, Bim and her younger sister Tara, who are haunted by the memories of the past. At the novel's heart are the moving relationships between the members of the Das family, who have grown apart from each other. Bim is a dissatisfied but ambitious history professor at a women's college who lives in her childhood home, where she cares for her mentally challenged brother, Baba.

Tara is her younger, unambitious, estranged sister, married and with children of her own. Raja is their popular, brilliant and successful brother. As Holly Smith says, "When Tara returns for a visit to stay with Bim and Baba, old memories and tensions resurface and blend into a domestic drama that is intensely beautiful and leads to profound self-understanding. In the words of Brijrj Singh,

"Desai's world may be small, but it is a world through which the same winds blow as sweep through the whole of the subcontinent."(P. 31)

The rhythm of life of middle class children growing up in such a setting, their play, their hopes and frustrations, the seasons, especially the summer, the river and the sandbanks, the dusty gardens, the koels, the coppersmiths, the barking dogs, the carts on the road, ice cream, sitting on the lawn with cool drinks, sleeping out in the open, the whirring fans and bamboo chicks-all the details of the kind of life being described are vividly created by Desai till the reader who has lived through them all begins to feel that it is a part of his own life that is being evoked.
Desai is able to show the outer sides of her characters through Bim and Bim's family and neighbours. Externally, Bim is portrayed as a strong, stable, at times traditional Indian woman who is a bit bitter at others, especially her family members: "She had always thought Bim so competent, so capable. Everyone had thought that" (p. 148). She is the one who is forced to take care of her mentally handicapped brother, Baba. Tara does not understand why Bim doesn't want anything to change, when she rejects the hopeless atmosphere of the house:

"Why did Bim allow nothing to change? Surely, Baba ought to begin to grow and develop at last, to unfold and reach out and stretch. But whenever she saw them, at intervals of three or five years, all was exactly as before. Even after she becomes accustomed to her brother, Bim is forced to care for her alcoholic Mira-rnasi, "swigging secretly from her brandy bottleneck' (P. 5)

Bim is an independent woman. Bim's memories of the family past dominate her sterile existence, she feels betrayed by her sister Tara and replays her memories in the decaying family mansion in Old Delhi. Their mentally retarded brother plays old records. Throughout this novel, the house is a threatening presence characterized by an explosive silence and a recurrent image of Baba grinding the old gramophone and listening to the old cracked records of the forties. Madhusudun Prusad says,
"It is this dominant static image of the house that looms large in the mind of the reader, symbolically suggesting the suppressed anger and bitterness of Bim. It seemed to her that the dullness and the boredom of her childhood, her youth, were stored here in the room under the worn dusty red rugs, in the bloated brassware, amongst the dried grasses in the swollen vases, behind the yellowed photographs in the oval frames - everything, everything that she had so hated as a child and that was still preserved here as if this were the storeroom of some dull, uninviting provincial museum" (P. 16)

Tara finds the house dusty and shabby. On the other hand Bim realizes that it must seem strange to Tara and Bakul who have travelled far and wide to find the house in a sorry state. She tries to link up its boredom with that of the locale of Old Delhi:

"Old Delhi does not change. It only decays. My students tell me it is a great cemetery, every house a tomb. Nothing but sleeping graves... ." (P. 14)

Once the house had been a constricting prison for her. Now it becomes a refuge from the world on which Bim resolutely turns her back. She lives there, bitter and angry and alone save for Baba. Bim is a manic depressive woman who is very annoyed with life because it is unfair and she ended up in the wrong side of the table.

She wishes to perpetuate the romantic past, ignoring the changing realities and relationships. So she resents everyone that happened to be lucky enough to avoid life traps and despises those who fell on them. She keeps nursing a massive feeling of hurt against the world in general and against her brother Raja, in particular.
They had all gone. Raja with his Muslim wife to Hyderabad, Tara with Bakul to a gay life abroad. Even though the book is beautifully written, the dark mood that the author impress on its main character, permeates to the reader and you become caught up in an atmosphere whereby reading is an effort, so each page develops slow, very slow.

Bim's reactions to her adolescent days have nothing of the romantic and sentimental glamour of Tara's musings about them. An ambitious and talented girl, she has seen her high aspirations thwarted by the sudden change in the circumstances of her life and family. After the death of her parents and the marriage of Tara, she is left alone to nurse her ailing brother Raja, attended to the aged, alcoholic and invalid aunt and look after the mentally retarded Baba.

Being burdened with heavy responsibilities at a very young age, she cannot even think of her marriage and the happiness of conjugal life. Dr. Biswas who is disheartened by her negative response to his overtures of marriage, understands later on that she has sacrificed her life for her sick brother, her aged aunt and her little brother. When aunt Mira dies and Raja leaves her and Baba with callous indifference she says,

"I have to go. Now I can go: I have to begin my life sometime, don't I? You don't want me to spend all my life down in this hole, do you? You don't think I can go on living just to keep my brother and sister company, do you?" (P. 100)

She is left alone in the company of her helpless brother. The unhappy experiences through which she has passed and the alienation from those whom she has loved, drain all her enthusiasm for her past. Seeing Tara yearning wistfully for her childhood days she tells her,
"But you wouldn't want to return to life as it used to be, would you? All that dullness, boredom, waiting. Would you care to live that over again? Of course not. Do you know anyone who would-secretly, sincerely, in his innermost self-really prefer to return to childhood?" (P. 4)

Bim's sturdy exterior contrasts that of her shy sister Tara. Tara is seemingly content with her husband, Bakul, who,

"had gradually trained her and made her into an active, organized woman who looked up her engagement book every morning, made plans and programs for the day ahead and then walked her way through them to retire to her room at night, tired with the triumphant tiredness of the virtuous and the dutiful" (P. 21).

Bakul, an Indian diplomat, seeks out Tara for his own personal gain, before he acquires a self-righteous attitude about reforming her. As a member of the foreign service, specializing in European languages, Bakul approaches Tara with the hope of taking a wife with him when he is transferred to Western Europe. Bakul requires a wife, like Tara, to mirror his own ideals and produce children that will sustain such ideals, as well. With his own personal motives, he ambitiously chooses to acquire Tara, as Britaichose to possess India.

Tara becomes the subject of male domination when she marries Bakul and allows him to suppress her true self. The young girl, who would run down the verandah steps and search for guavas or who would search for treasure and find delight even in snails, did not disappear, but only "if she could be sure Bakul would no look out and see", Tara would do the same (p.1 I).
Bakul attempts to 'modernize Tara in the same manner Britain tries to 'civilize' India. Baba always seems to be oblivious to everything going on and, therefore, is assumed by everyone to understand nothing. His constant amusement with pebbles, wanderings aimlessly into the streets and obsession with musical instruments only validate his oblivion and deficiency to others:

"Now Baba took his hand off the gramophone arm, relinquishing it sadly, and his hands hung loosely at his sides, as helplessly as a dead man's. His head, too sank lower and lower."

(P. 13)

Contrary to the inferior Baba, there is the bold brother, Raja, who is looked up to by his family. He is the proud, confident, brave and independent son who escapes to his Muslim neighbours' parties during riotous times and leaves Bim without a doubt. Another seemingly self assured male character in the novel is Tara's husband, Bakul:

"While she stammered and Bakul tried gallantly to help with some more polished and assured phrases that he slipped in with a self-assurance that tilled in the gaps left by Tara and even propped up the little that she managed to say, coolly and powerfully" (P. 63)

Bakul is seen, especially in Tara's eyes, as a smart, successful and sophisticated man who has prevailed in the much adorned "America." In the words of Poonam Patelon, Anita Desai uses the characters in her novel to manifest the outer facades of people. Raja is the most obviously hero-conscious character. First of all, he is extremely artistic and idealistic, so he adores poetry, in both English and Urdu. As Laura Melton says,
"Raja is not trying to be an original poet on his own; he simply tries to be exactly like his heroes, which he does perfectly. Through the Urdu poetry that he so admires, Raja becomes acquainted with Hyder Ali. Going to the Hyder Ali's garden parties brought him close to Muslims and their conversations and he began to view things the way they did. Raja does succeed in marrying Hyder Ali's daughter Benazir and succeeding to Hyder Ali's rich estate, so that part of his dream comes through. He shared his love of poetry with Bim and though she lacked his own artistic sensibility, she tried to participate in it and, above all, admired it profoundly. She imitated him in some ways and her professed desire to be a heroine was merely because Raja had first said that he wanted to be a hero. Raja was, unquestionably, Bim's hero. However, after a letter from Raja, which deeply offends her, she completely rejects him and all his heroic ideals. Even though she had been so completely devoted to him, she now feels rejected herself and denounces his poetry as "terrible verses" (p. 25)

And later, rages about Raja's giving his son a white pony, merely to fulfill his own obsession with imitating Hyder Ali. Since she received the letter, she has had no contact at all with Raja, periodically rereading the letter in order to reinvigorate her anger. However, at the end of the novel, following pressure from Tam and a rereading of Raja's poems, Bim comes to peace with both her idealistic view of Raja and her later disillusionment.
She neither adores nor despises him, rather, she understands and forgives him, telling him that she would like to renew contact. As Bim thinks,

"The poems were really very derivative. On each of them she could clearly see the influence of the poets he loved and copied. There was no image, no metaphor, no turn of phrase that was original. Each was a meticulous imitation of what he had read, memorized and recited . . . . One could see in them only a wish to emulate and to step where his heroes had stepped before him"

(P. 168)

Bim, who has idealised her brother, is inevitably disappointed when she discovers that he is an ordinary young man and becomes bitter. However, between Bim and Tara, the emotions shift and Tara is no longer the feeble victim in Bim's eyes, who inwardly envies her sister's happiness found in adulthood whilst resenting it. Twenty years ago when Tara married, she left Old Delhi and a home full of sickness and death, while Bim continued to live in the family home, taking care of Baba.

Now Tara has returned to her family home in old Delhi with her husband. It is her first visit in ten years. This is not an extraordinary return. They come home every three years. The timing of this visit coincides with a wedding of her niece in Hyderabad. Tara and her family will go. But Bim and Baba, the sister and brother who live in this house, will not. It turns out there is a deep historical rift between Bim and their brother Raja in Hyderabad. Bim refuses to attend. She can't visit their brother Raja who, like Tara, left her many years ago. Instead Bim dwells bitterly on her feelings of abandonment and the impact on her of her country's recent history:
“the violent conflict between Hindus and Muslims, the death of Gandhi and the ensuing struggle for political power and the malaria epidemic that killed so many. In Bim's presence, Tara once again feels "herself shrink into that small miserable wretch of twenty years ago, both admiring and resenting her tail striding sister", while "Bim was calmly unaware of any of her sister's agonies, past or present.” (CLD P. 234)

Alex Feeman says,

“With language that describes both the harshness and beauty of family and the land, Anita Desai takes the reader with Tara and Bim on their struggle to confront and heal old wounds. Tara's visit is incidental, it is mainly a device to open up the story of the siblings especially Bim's story. Two sisters differ in their attitudes to their memories of childhood because of their differing temperaments and circumstances of life.”

Prathima Maramraj says,

"When Tara returns home to Old Delhi, her earlier attachment to her home revives and she wishes to lose herself in the past. As the story opens, we find Tara musing over her salad days in "the rose walk of her ancestral house. The middle-aged sisters remember their childhood in Delhi just before the partition. Tara has lived away from her home and returns there after many years. To her the homecoming is like a return to the pleasant and unpleasant memories of childhood. By temperament Tara has
been a girl of modest ambitions. Raja and Bim want to do things, to be a hero and heroine when they grow up. They want to leave the old house and go away into the big wide world. Tara on the other hand is content to be herself. As children Raja and Bim were bright and ambitious whereas Tara was a mediocre with no unusual desires. Her ambition is to be a wife and mother when she grows up. She only wants the security of her house and the warmth of Mira-Masi's bed. She rejoiced in the sheltered life of her home in the company of Aunt Mira. Life has a way of upsetting childhood dreams. In their later lives, however, their careers are reversed. Tara is now a sophisticated lady but Bim and Raja are just ordinary persons. The marriage with Bakul and her stay abroad bring about a great change in Tara's life. Throughout the story, Tara faces confrontation with Bakul, but handles her oppression delicately as most women do. When he insists that they go into the city and shop rather than 'vegetate' in Tara's house with her family, Tara feels torn and confused. After not seeing her family for years, she persists on staying with her older sister, Bim. To Bakul her relapse into childhood frivolities is annoying: "and you won't let me help you. I thought I had taught you a different life, a different way of living. Taught you to execute your will. Face challenges. But no, the day you enter your old home, you are as weak-willed and helpless and defeatist as eve. (p. 17).
Bakul does use intimidation to control her, as he declares, "you can't just sit about with your brother and sister all day, doing nothing ... Of course you'll come ... There's no question about it' (p. 11). Yet with further resistance and opposition, Tara manages to get her way. In this novel Desai has resorted to her characteristic technique of using an image as an apparently independent artistic unit or as an objective correlative with a view to vivifying the psychic state or emotion of a particular character. She has employed this technique quite effectively in the novel. When Tara, on coming back home from abroad, begins to request Bim again and again to agree to join her, along with Baba, in attending the marriage of Raja's eldest daughter in Hyderabad for which purpose she has come home, Bim gets emotionally agitated but keeps silent. Desai depicts Bim's emotional commotion through two images put together serving as significant objective correlatives:

"In the small silence a flock of minahs suddenly burst out... while their shrieks and cackles still rang in the air, they heard another sound, one that made Bim stop and stare and the dog lift his head .... throwing back his head, bellowed in that magnificent voice..." (P. 6)

A little later Desai employs two more images—one of the pigeons cooing and the other of a gecko-clucking—to convey Tara's uneasiness and irritation caused by disorderliness in the house and summer heat in Delhi. The novel is written in third person, but in both voices.

When two sisters and a brother meet in their childhood home, past and present collide, leaving a sorrowful portrait of sisterly love. And it breaks linear structure. With her break from a linear structure, Desai brought in memories from the past of this house.
In the words of Mahmud Rahman she does not use it as a technique to depict Tara's life abroad. In fact, it is mostly unconcerned with her life in the U.S., another way she emphasizes the present and Bim and Baba's lives in the house. The past is of supreme importance in the novel. It is most skillfully woven with the present. Brijrj Singh says, Indeed even the most casual reader is likely to be impressed with this weaving of past and present into a single and unified whole.

The novel is carefully constructed and beautifully written. Shifts from the present time to the past time and back help create an appropriate mood of nostalgia so necessary for the rendering of principal characters' stream-of-consciousness. Moreover, the old house with its neglected garden having a disused well provides a suitable background to the novel, thus making it look a unified whole. This superb handling of past and present requires a talent for plotting and a sense of control which are abundant in Desai. Beginning and ending in the present, the novel sandwiches two middle chapters that go back 20 years to the time of India's partition and the story of this family is told through each sister's memory.

Tara does have a personal quest. She has carried guilt over having abandoned Bim and Baba. When a marriage possibility had presented itself during her youth, she had taken it. During this visit, she seeks Bim's forgiveness and she also tries to encourage Bim to put aside her grudge against Raja. There is a movement in time, from the past to the present and present to the past.

What is remarkable is not merely the skill of this weaving but also its economy. There is very little action in the novel. B. Ramachandra Rao rightly points out that it would be more accurate to say that nothing really happens in the novel. The characters are treated with the usual mixture of satire and sympathy, of detachment and insight.
Bim's present condition, her relationship with Tara and the atmosphere of the house compel the sisters to remember and what they remember constitutes the novel. Wiehe in his Book Review states that this is a novel of perfect details that looks at the world through a magnifying glass. The entire novel is made up of small bits of this family that somehow comprise a whole world within the pieces.

This novel reaches to the very heart of India and humanity.' The two epigraphs of Emily Dickinson and T.S.Eliot which preface the novel, highlight the theme to the effect of the remembrance of past on the chief protagonists. While to Tara the memories are a 'jubilee', a source of wistful joy, to Bim they strike like the 'knell' of sorrow. The former wants to live her past and enjoy it while the latter is wearied of it and wishes to escape from it.

Bim lives in the dreamy world of the past but wakes up in the clear light of day to mend her relations with her brother. The moment of truth when she sees the 'clear light of day', undoubtedly rests upon a silent gathering of insights, but the authenticity of that incremental weight somehow remains unrelated to her 'recovery' and redemption. Bim's recognition of her predicament and error is beautifully described by Desai. "She felt an immense, almost irresistible yearning to lie down beside him on the bed together they would form a whole that would be perfect and pure..." (p. 166).

For once in life, she is spiritually at ease. The excellence of Clear Light of Day is essentially in the psychological insight and in the poetic tone by means of which even when the emotional strains for Bim are numerous, the author never allows us to forget the spirit of tolerance, fortitude and self sacrifice or to doubt whether Bim really has within her the titanic strength for tragic purification.
In the paradox of Bim's tragic living we perceive that through the chill, brooding melancholy, withdrawal and disillusionment about her volatile nature and the mutability of a star-crossed fate, man may still apprehend, however poignantly, a beauty and grandeur that are not mutable. Not every writer could be trusted with the powers of a 'shaping imagination.' Harish Raizada says, "Desai's 'shaping imagination' and critical sense are the qualities woefully lacking in other Indo-English women novelists.

The inability of human beings to really know each other is very well communicated by the novelist through the analysis of the love, hate and misunderstanding that colour the relationship between the various characters. To the family living in a shabby, dusty house in Delhi, Tara's visit brings a sharp reminder of life outside tradition. For Bim coping endlessly with their problems, there is renewal of the old jealousies for, unlike her sister, she has failed to escape.

Tuomas Huttunen says, "But escape to what? Anita Desai adroitly focuses on the tensions of life in a changing society." A reader reviews, "This was a book that kept my interest from the beginning, in large part because of the expert characterization of the central characters. It is both depressing and optimistic; the characters mostly are constrained by their personality and history, yet at the end are able to transcend themselves.

It seems that in returning to what they are attempting to escape from - the family - they are finally able to become whole. Their flashes of insight and the author's analysis may seem contrived at times, but it's difficult to imagine how it could be expressed better." Another reviewer says, "Patience Pays Off! I think Ms. Desai would capture the heart of any woman of Indian origin. The book does start of very slowly but nevertheless beckons your patience."
Birnla, Tara, Raj and Mira Masi are not the most admirable characters, yet they touch you so. Despite the underlying depression, I could not help but smile! Foregrounding Bim's point of view is the radical departure in this novel. It is the point of view of someone who did not leave. And to add to that effect, the book eschews the journey motif. The entire novel is set within this house and the immediate neighborhood, the next door houses and the riverbank.

Two journeys are described, one in the past when Bim went out on a date and the other in the present when Baba makes a vain attempt to leave and take a bus, but both journeys end in frustration. This is a book that opts for the motif of enclosure, a choice often made by women writers. And even though Bim teaches in the college, in the time period depicted in the novel, even college is brought into the house where Bim organizes a tutorial session for her students. In the end, she reflects on the house and her family. The neglected and decaying house symbolizes the frustrated and wasted life of the aging Bim.

As the feeling of how she has suffered because of others overpowers her mind, she wishes to be left alone. In her mood of utter disgust she thinks that all her relations had come in her life like mosquitoes only to torment her and sip her blood: "It must have been good blood, sweet and nourishing. Now when they were t'ull, they rose in swarms, humming away, turning their backs on her?" (CLD P. 153).

In this mood of deep agony and anger she even wishes to get rid of the responsibility of Baba and tells him, "But I might have to send you to live with Raja. I come to ask you-what would you think of that? (CLD P. 163). She gradually regains her calm and her heart is filled with love for Raja and Tara and all of them who had lived in the house with her.
"With her inner eye she saw how her own house and its particular history linked and contained her as well as her whole family with all their separate histories and experiences not binding them within some dead and airless cell but giving them the soil in which to send down their roots and food to make them grow and spread, reach out to new experiences and new lives, but always drawing from the same soil, the same secret darkness.

That soil contained all time, past and future, in it. It was dark with time, rich with time. It was where her deepest self lived, and the deepest selves of her sister and brothers and all those who shared that time with her" (p. 182). Bim, the person who has stayed home, who has nursed her memories and grudges, who had been left behind by those who ran for the exit doors, finds it in herself to let go of her resentments. She appreciates her house and sees it as the embodiment of sibling love.

Mahmud Rahnnon says,

"With her break from a linear structure, Desai brought in memories from the past of this house. Unlike Adib Khan's book, she does not use it as a technique to depict Tara's life abroad. In fact, it is mostly unconcerned with her life in the U.S., another way she emphasizes the present and Bim and Baba's lives in the house. Clear Light of Day focuses more on the adult life of Bim and Tara, who are re-examining their childhood in an attempt to understand what they have become.” (P. 91)

In Clear Light of Day the socio-political situation is not the point of the story but that it is merely the setting as well as a contributing factor to the way the child develops. This is a point that has been stressed by many of Desai's critics.
Indeed, Anita Desai disowns all social concerns and asserts more than once that she is interested in individuals and not in social issues. Social issues intrude only where they affect the character. Political turmoil of the summer of 1947 is presented only through the eyes of Raja, the brother, who is worried because his neighbours, the Hyder Alis are in danger. She also manages to convey her own thoughts about the absurdity of the conflict by showing to what extent "Raja and Bim are aghast at the sudden outbreak of hatred, mistrust and parochialism among the Hindu-Muslim sections in India when Independence was to be declared".

Because they are children, Raja and Bim do not understand the complex situation which the country is in and are uninfluenced by their knowledge of India's past in perceiving the absurdity and horror of the sudden hate between neighbours. Their perception carries so much weight because it is so pure and is probably the only one which could show with such impartiality what is occurring in India at the time. R. James Abraham says, "I look at the female characters of Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* and analyze the ways in which Desai complicates or rejects the construction of Indian women as self-sacrificing, spiritual beings." Desai's story moves away from complex allegories of nationhood and focus on the private lives of an Indian family.

While Bim is capable of rejecting the nationalist construction of women in her private life, thereby empowering herself from being more than just an object of representation, her encounters with men are marked with an attempt to place her back into the role of self-sacrificing female. This most notably occurs when the larger narrative of Indian history intrudes on Bim's private life. "While Desai challenges the representation of Indian women that had been prevalent throughout modern Indian history, she shows a keen awareness that her own counter-narrative runs the risk of repression. Social issues such as the restrictions imposed on women are shed
light on through Bim, who in her naivete, fails to realize that "the Hindu social code sees external ambition in women as detrimental and unnatural" and that "sociological factors regard Bim's high ideals of service as only "sacrifice for the family." Judged by this conventional social matrix her sublime ambition is reduced to a pathetic search."

Desai is careful not to let her book become a piece of political propaganda and remain intent on showing the absurdities of politics through the children. It is the effect of an event on the people rather than the event itself which remains the focus of Desai. The tensions between women and society also run through Clear Light Of Day, where the unmarried Bim wrestles with family bonds while resenting her brother and sister who have both moved away. Desai's novels have been attacked for emphasizing the constriction of women's lives.

They explore the position of the isolated within the family, especially an intelligent, sensitive woman lamenting lost creativity, or counting the cost of being creative. It might be held against her by feminists that her characters are constrained. But how many women do break out? Anita's work belongs to two traditions. Her sensibility is deeply rooted in Delhi's mixed culture. As Hussain says, "She appropriated the language of English modernism and Virginia Woolf, as well as Japanese, Russian, and existentialist literature, to convey something very Indian.

Now there's a multiplicity of voices but then she was working pretty much alone. Anita Desai has created an entire little civilization here from a fistful of memories, from a patchwork of sickroom dreams and childhood games and fairy tales. Anne Tyler says, Clear Light of Day does what only the very best novels can do; it totally submerges us. It also takes us so deeply into another world that we almost fear we won't be able to climb out again. As Desai demonstrates in her novel, language can have a profound impact on people's lives.
It can divide people who otherwise share similar backgrounds or it can unite people who are extremely different. Lisa Grup says, "By studying the language usage in Desai's novel, similarities can be drawn between certain aspects of the Das sibling's relationship and the political situation in India. Urdu and Hindi, the native languages of India divided the Das siblings as well as India in a time of turmoil, while English was able to unite them. The Das siblings, excluding Baba, who did not communicate well, were deeply affected by these language differences.

In school the Das children were forced to learn different languages, as the political situation in India changed. Before the Partition, Raja was allowed to choose which language, Hindi or Urdu, he wanted to study. Raja's obsession with Hyder Ali also could have had an impact on his choice. Raja loved to compose poetry in Urdu and to also read poetry by his favorite Urdu poet, Iqbal. Bim and Tara could not understand this poetry with which Raja's life was consumed. By learning Urdu, Raja separated himself from his family and Hindu friends and connected himself to the Hyder Ali family.

This caused his Hindu friends to think that he was a traitor to the Indian cause. "When he spoke to them [fellow students] of Pakistan as something he quite accepted, they turned on him openly, called him a traitor, drowned out his piping efforts at reasonableness with the powerful arguments of fanatics". Raja's reading of Urdu and Iqbal separated him from his siblings, while uniting him with the Muslims.

Bim, the child "who desired to conquer the world but who ends up by conquering herself", who claims that she wants to become a heroine, offers a bittersweet example of the high hopes and impossibility of a youth's dream. Bim does not consider that being a "heroine" implies helping others, she considers its values on a purely personal level.
Tara lacks the idealistic mindset shared by Raja and Bim which drives them to latch onto heroic models. Much more down-to-earth and unimpressed by lofty goals, as a child she wants simply to grow up to be a mother. As Aunt Mira assures Tara, "There, there, you'll see you grow up to be exactly what you want to be, and I very much doubt if Bim and Raja will be what they say they will be." The passage continues, "This consoled Tara entirely and turned out to be true as well" (p. 1 12). Tara's humble, realistic goals fit her timid, cautious personality better than bold heroism. But mine is Bim, because she strikes a balance between idealism and reality. In the words of Anita Desai,

“I'm really not drawn to writing about heroes and heroines in the conventional sense of the words but I have found that my characters who appear like losers, victims show a kind of heroism, of survival. I think if you can come through the experience of life with the heart and mind intact, without compromising yourself, that to me is a heroic act that needs to be celebrated. Bim, however, has entertained ideals, had them crushed, and finally come to terms with her disillusionment.”

(P. 213)

Bim is the heroine in Clear Light of Day Anita Desai is justifiably renowned for her keen, subtle eye and her calmly elegant prose. She is also a mistress of synecdoche, a writer whose delicate portaits of the quotidian resonate outwards to convey tumultuous swathes of history. Although the characters in Clear Light of Day barely venture beyond their front gate, they live out the legacy of India's bitter battle for independence. As Paul Sharrad says, "Hers is a miniaturist's gift, precise, deft and powerful.