Chapter – IV
Impact of Time on the Individual

Through analyses of passages and monologues in the novel in *Fire on the Mountain* the psychic working of the female protagonist is elucidated. Based on the theoretical interpretation by the various psychoanalysts, the how, the when and the why of the psychic behaviour of the female protagonist are explored. Tied to prove that Nanda Kaul, the female protagonist in the novel undergoes psychic pressures such as psychic conflict, confusion, dilemma, struggle, strain, illness and worries due to the impact of various hostile forces with which her mind comes in confrontation. These forces are nothing but problems that a woman has to face in her life: the time which plays all the tricks.

In the beginning time of her life woman suffering from male domination, hypocrisy, the evils of patriarchal social set up, the double standards for the male and the female and male chauvinism. In the time of the middle of their life they are suffering from infidelity of the life partner, neglect by children, overburden of household duties, dissatisfaction in marriage and the like. Though Nanda undergoes mental problems due to the strain of these unpleasant forces in her final stage of life, she clings to the fundamental characteristics of the feminine psychic pattern such as desire for respect, recognition and love, love of nature, motherly feelings, identification of shadowy character, sincerity in marital relationship, and retreating to an isolated place for peace. *Fire on the Mountain* incorporates the story of Nanda Kaul and her great-grand daughter Raka. Nanda flees life only to realize that it is difficult for her to keep her past time out of her mind.
Some where in her unconscious Nanda has become an epitome of devotion, duty and sacrifice by attending to so many guests, looking after so many children and serving her husband efficiently. the novel one can notice a critical situation when Nanda retreats to Carignano.

When the novel opens she is thoroughly disillusioned with all her emotional bonds, whether matrimonial or filial. She felt lonely and neglected. Her husband's life long affair with Miss. David was a source of agony throughout her life. This creates a sickness in soul and she distrusts the social relevance of all attachments and affairs. She appears like the centre of the consciousness that is built up in the novel. Her mind is assailed by painful memories. In her husband's home she was the home-maker. She was the centre of a bustling joint-family. She had presided with such an air as to strike awe to visitors who came to call and leave them slightly gaping. She had her cane chair there, too and she had sat there, not still and emptily, and mending clothes, sewing on strings and buttons and letting out hems... she thought of that hubbub and of how she had managed and how everyone had said, pretending to think she couldn't hear but really wanting her to, "Isn't she splendid? Isn't she like a queen?"... (*FOM* PP. 17-18)

She was acting so many roles simultaneously. She had grabbed the roles of a hostess, wife, mother, tailor and queen. This is because of her feminine nature Robert -J A. Johnson comments on feminine nature: The feminine aspect of the human psyche has been described as unfocused consciousness. The feminine nature is flooded with the rich vastness of possibilities in life and is drawn to all of them, usually all at once. But this is impossible; one cannot do or be so many things at once. Many of the possibilities open to us oppose each other and one must choose among them. Acting many roles together, Nanda was the centre of attention. But this was a kind of burden on her shoulders as most of them oppose each other. Ila Das tells Nanda:
"Isn't it absurd, (Ila) rattled on, how helpless our upbringing made us, Nanda. We thought we were being equipped with the very best-French lessons, piano lessons, English governesses-all that only to find it left us helpless, positively handicapped"

(P. 127)

Nanda's enthusiasm to read repeatedly the passage from The Pillow Book of Sei Shonogon shows how her psyche works and her attitude towards the women who are homemakers. She reads the passage:

"I greatly dislike a woman's house when it is clear she has scurried about with a knowing look on her face, arranging everything just as it should be, and when the gate is kept tightly shut." Nanda reads the passage with a faint smile. "Each time it went down her throat with a clear, luminous passage, like chilled dry wine" (P. 27).

As Ladha Barathan says in Female Voices: To woman is attributed another selfhood as essential selfhood, but not that of the male. For woman, anatomy is destiny and it is the centre of her being. Her role is that of the procreator and nurturer. She inhabits a colourful margin. It becomes her essence and paradoxically a path to her own essentiality. On the one hand she is said to have an essence, which defines her as woman but on the other hand she is relegated as matter and can have no access to this essence. Sidonie Smith rightly says that a woman's life is affiliated socially and culturally in relationship to others. Lalitha Rarnamoorthy observes:
“First of all there is her social self that connects her to the society at large. Her familial self binds her to her parents and her children and thirdly there is her private self that is the core of her existence. To recognize this self is her aim and her self realization.” (PP. 10-11)

Very well find that Nanda's life is made up of various selves that often override each other and her real self and individuality are sacrificed at the altar of the time of family, i.e. familial time. From these various selves, different opposing forces drag her along and it generates unresolvable struggle in her mind. About a woman's prime concern, De Castillejo comments that "in the case of woman, the outstanding almost invariable object of her concern is, the person or persons whom she loves" (P. 154) Love is her primal driving force. What De Castillejo speaks of is wholly personal love, not the love of causes or of country. From her observation she writes:

“Wherever I look I meet this incontrovertible fact that a woman always needs some person to do things for, even though to the outsider there is no apparent connection with the loved person what she may be doing. We all know how difficult it is for a woman even to cook a meal for herself. She cannot be bothered. A bit of bread and cheese will do. But if there is someone to cook for, she prepares quite elaborate dishes with delight.” (P. 155)

According to Chesterfield they know the true value of time; so the snatch, seize, enjoy every moment of it. What De Castillejo projects here is an aspect of feminine psychology.
Nanda does everything in her house nearly just for the person whom she loves, her husband. In the Vice-Chancellor's house, she has performed her duties, keeping up his status. Though she struggles to maintain his dignity, she never thinks of her identity as a woman and her emotional safety and mental balance. "Draped in silk sarees, she has presided over his table and managed her household" (FM P. 66) About women's instinctive quality Johnson observes that a woman is supposed to know how to sort out things creatively. It is an "instinctive and quiet quality, legitimately available to women" (She P. 55)

The capacity to protect her self and her family from destruction is special only to women and femininity. A woman's mind is made up in such a way that she is willing to act according to the wish of the man. She is often accused quite naturally by men of futility or hypocrisy, because when asked what she wants to do, she replies "Whatever you like." But it is not hypocrisy. She really means that her desire is to do what he wants. It has not occurred to her to have any special preference. Even if she knew she wanted to dance it would give her no pleasure to do so if her lover was longing to watch a cricket match.

This adaptability is not unselfishness and has no particular merit. This is the way a woman functions. Panda thinks her work as a burden for she realizes that no one, not even her husband is going to acknowledge this as he is in love with another woman. She never receives emotional and mental sustenance from her husband. She seemed to hear poignant shrieks from the canna beds in the garden-a child had tumbled off the swing, another had been stung by a wasp, a third slapped by the fourth-and gone out on the veranda to see them come wailing up the steps with cut lips, bruised knees, broken teeth and tears and bent over them with that still, ironic bow to duty that no one had noticed or defined. (FM P. 19)
She was fed up with the monotonous and the endless chores in the life. Looking down, over all those years she had survived and borne, she saw them, not bare and shining as the plains below, but like the gorge cluttered, choked and blackened with the heads of children and grandchildren, servants and guests, all restlessly surging, clamouring about her. (FM P. 17) About older women and their dilemma, De Castillejo says: If no one whom she loves wants her services there is no one to do things for. There is in fact no reason for which to live. She is faced with an entirely new situation in which for the first time she has to discover what are her own wishes, her own tastes and in which direction her energy, with no love focus to act as magnet, will consent to flow. It is fascinating to notice how a widow will sometimes reverse the habits of a married life time after her husband's death.

The extent to which she does so is the measure of her earlier adaptability. Nanda's behaviour after her husband's death can be justified on the basis of this feminine psychology ' Nanda Kaul's life has two sides—the public and the private. The former is characterised by the role of an ideal mother, a housewife, an organizer of parties and the centre of her husband's social life. The latter is life of silence, memory and feelings. In the beginning as a mere housewife she has been dominated by her husband about men's domination, Johnson, interpreting the story of the mythological Psyche says, "Women almost always have to endure a period of Aphrodite-domination, a time when they feel lower than the lowest." (She P. 52) All the household tasks, finally Nanda gets into a world of relief—Carignano. In the public life she was very loyal to her relationship. According to Johnson, being loyal to relationship is a very feminine principle. He observes, "It is the essence of the feminine principle whether in a man or woman to be loyal or Eros to relationship.
Always follow the path that will keep relationship with the anima or animus, for it is with this you have to live most intimately." (P. 51) egnano offers her much relief from the domestic monotony at "his house, never hers." "She had suffered from the nimiety, the disorder, the fluctuating and unpredictable excess" (P. 30). She seeks pleasure in "the sound of the cicadas and the pines, the sight of this gorge plunging, blood-red, down to the silver plain" (P. 19).

In the myth of psyche, one can see her thinking of drowning herself in a river. In every difficult situation or task she wants to destroy herself. In human life, the urge towards suicide signals an edge of a new level of consciousness. Before an archetypal experience, often a woman collapses. From this collapse, she recovers and restores her inner being. As Johnson interprets, in this also a woman differs from a man. When he prefers to seek a heroic task, she prefers to withdraw to a very lonely place and remain still. Johnson's remarks on women's control over their feelings and their capacity to enter the world of calmness are apt here: It is bewildering to a man to discover the degree to which a woman has control over her feelings and inner world, a capacity unknown to most men. She can enter at will a deep place within herself where healing and balance are restored.

Most men have no such control over their feelings or inner life. Many women presume this same differentiation in their men and are hurt that they are not capable of the same degree of sensitivity. (She P. 48) Johnson's observation of feminine psychology is true in the case of Nanda. 'She controls her wishes and feelings and finally enters a world of calmness Johnson goes on to say, the best way to solve this dilemma is to stand absolutely still, and that is what Psyche finally does. Once she gets past her suicidal feelings, she sits very quietly. If you have been dazzled out of your wits, if you have been knocked totally out of orbit, it is best to keep very still. (P. 48)
Nanda's longing for psychical stillness leads her to Carignano. She retreats to her basic feminine quality—going in search of a realm where she can stay still and be peaceful. Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* argues,

"Sex role assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest and ambition to the male" (26).

This is true of Nanda and Mr. Kaul. Nanda, though a successful wife of a Vice-Chancellor has only the mean identity of a woman in a patriarchal society. She is a mother as well. Man, even if he is a misogynist, respects and should respect woman as a mother. Certain spiritual qualities like nurturing and sacrificing are attached with motherliness and so man cannot but appreciate her. Women always expect this kind of recognition and respect from their husbands. It is a part of their original instinctive pattern. The time which makes her to do so. For him, she should be the ideal woman who is capable of fulfilling all his expectations and longings. But in the Vice-Chancellor's house, Nanda never gets such a consideration and recognition from whom she expects these. She is a mere supplement to the Vice-Chancellor and has no independent identity nor had her husband loved and cherished her and kept her like a queen. He had only done enough to keep her quiet while he carried on a life long affair with Miss. David, the mathematics mistress, whom he had not married because she was a Christian, but whom he had loved, all his life loved. (FM 145)

The above passage in the last page of the novel is a key to her aberrant and enigmatic psychic processes. as an archetypal mother, the vortex of her husband's social evenings, is a role she put on as she has no other. Her real self is exposed at her exile to Carignano after her husband's death.
Her mind no longer welcomes any intrusion into her territory. She reaches this state of psychic frigidity in connection with inhibited femininity. Writing about inhibited femininity, Karen Horney observes: On the one hand, man searches for his life's companion and friend who is close to him spiritually, but toward whom his sensuousness is inhibited, and who, deep down, he expects will reciprocate with a similar attitude. The effect on the woman is clear; it can very easily lead to frigidity, even if the inhibitions she has brought with her from her own development are not insurmountable. On the other hand, such a man will search for a woman, with whom he can have sexual relations only, a trend he manifests most clearly in his relationships with prostitutes. The repercussion of this attitude upon the woman, however, must also result in frigidity. Since in women the emotional life is, as a rule, much more closely and uniformly connected with sexuality, she cannot give herself completely when she does not love or is not loved. It is because of Kaul's illegal relationship with Miss. David that Nanda becomes frigid.

Often a conflict in the relationship arises because of the conflict between the polygamous desires and the partner's demand for a monogamous relation. Horney relates monogamy in marriage with the demand for possession. She says: The demand for monogamy is closely bound up with analsadistic instinctual elements, and it is these, which together with the narcissistic elements impart a peculiar character to the claim for monogamy in marriage. For contrast to free love-relations, in marriage, questions of possession are in a two fold manner intimately connected with its historical significance. The fact that marriage as such represents an economic partnership is of less importance than the view according to which woman was regarded as a chattel of man.
Hence without any special individual stressing of anal characteristics, these elements come into force in wedlock and convert the claim of love into an anal sadistic demand for possession. Here one can notice Nanda, tied to women's original instinctive pattern of possessiveness. Women's psyche is more possessive than that of men and hence Nanda, like any other woman expects monogamy from Mr. Kaul.

When she realizes that the unexpected is in store for her, the conflict arises in their wedlock. For Nanda, just like most of Anita Desai's female protagonists, the conflict gets intensified and becomes a controlling force on the state of the deeper levels of the mind. Frigidity and the conflict in her psyche thereafter are the basic characteristics of women's essential soul. Its impact can be observed not only in her love relationship with Mr. Kaul but in her household work also. Horney opines that in such situations a frigid nature can be observable in women's household chores. "Either housework is overrated and turned into a torture for the family, or it tires her excessively, just as every task that is done unwillingly becomes a failure. She explains the consequences of such situations: One relationship will regularly be impaired or incomplete namely, the attitude towards the male. . . . Whether they reveal themselves in indifference or morbid jealousy, in distrust or irritability, in claims or feelings of inferiority, in a need for lovers or for intimate friendships with women, they have one thing in common-the incapacity for a full (that is, including both body and soul) love relationship with a heterosexual love object.

As the root cause of Nanda's irritability, tiring household work and the indifferent attitudes towards Mr. Kaul lie in her partner's life long unfaithfulness psychic frigidity even leads her to over developing the animus side. This masculine side comes in the place of her genuine or feminine nature of devotion and about woman's animus possession, Neumann says in The Fear of the Feminine: Often a woman's neurotic
Animus possession is the expression of her inability to differentiate herself from the Masculine. The woman becomes the victim of her tendency to identification and alienates herself from her own nature by overdeveloping the Masculine, animus side. This identification with the spiritual and Masculine can find expression in truly tragic conflict. By identifying with the transpersonal Masculine that takes the place of authentic surrender and devotion, the woman relinquishes her own earth nature and thus becomes a helpless victim of masculine powers.

This danger, which may lead even to psychosis, is also occasioned by the fact that in her extreme surrender of self the woman never gets to the point of assimilating the masculine side, which lives not only in her partner but in her own psyche, and hence never develops an autonomous personality in her own right. Though Nanda's long cherished wish is to have identity of her own, her peculiar psyche possessed by the animus never leads her to an autonomous personality. This is one of the occasions when Nanda is driven by a strong force-masculine power. The solution De Castillejo offers for this animus possession is tears. "Tears, spontaneous, genuine tears will, without fail, dispel any form of animus possession. Tears in a woman should be welcomed. They wash away all falsity, and leave her naked, truly herself, and ready to be met." (P. 20)

But in the novel one cannot see Nanda in tears. She is fearless and tearless. This shows how far she is entangled in the web of male powers. Nanda suffers from some kind of psychic sickness "Really, Vice Chancellor is lucky to have a wife who can run even as she does and her eyes had flashed when she heard, like a pair of black blades, waiting to cut them" (FM P. 18). Nanda's life as the Vice-Chancellor's wife was devoid of sense of fulfilment. She believes that every attachment to be the preface of a new betrayal and that all socialization is fake.
This realization makes her psyche sick, and she distrusts all attachments and affairs. Her attitude towards him is not the same as his towards her. Homey finds it as a difference in the psychology of men and women. When she discusses the psychogenic factors in functional disorders, Horney observes: Here is a marked difference in the psychology of men and women. In the average case sexuality in women is much more closely tied up with tenderness, with feelings, with affection, than in men. An average man will not be impotent even where he does not feel any particular tenderness for the woman. On the contrary, there is very often a split between sex life and love life so that in extremely pathologic cases such a man can only have sex relations with a woman whom he does not care for and can feel that he has no sexual desires for and is even impotent toward a woman of whom he is really fond. With most women you will find a closer unity between sex feelings and their whole emotional life, probably for obvious biologic reasons. Therefore a secretly hostile attitude will express itself very easily in the inability to give or receive sexually. This defensive attitude towards men need not be very deeply rooted. In some cases men who are able to awaken tender feelings in these women may be perfectly able to overcome the frigidity; but in another series of cases this attitude of hostile defense is very deep and the roots of it must be exposed if the woman is to be rid of it. Nanda's love life and sex life are attached with one man alone whereas those of Mr. Kaul are with different women.

Thus there is a split between sex life and love life, and this causes a psychic split in Johnson interpreting the myth of Psyche observes that a woman is shocked to know that marriage is only one aspect of man's life though it is the primary fact of hers. The very same normal attitude of women is reflected in Nanda also. Inspite of this she only prolongs her relationship with him because she is an unwilling victim of a force-male infidelity—and is unable to resist it.
Ada allows herself to be a victim or a silent observer of his hero archetype, another force into which she is plunged. She has only "a moment of private triumph, cold and proud." It was the moment when she watched her husband stealthily. He had been to drop some of the guests home—no, she corrected herself with asperity, one of the guests home... She had watched him cross the veranda, go into the drawing room, and waited till the light there went out and another came on in the bed room... (FM P. 26) It remains a confidential triumph in her mind. She does not try to make it public. Hence he remains a hero archetype. This hero impulse is very particular to man's psyche. De Castillejo observes that in every man, there is hero impulse. This is one of his instinctual drives.

She says: It is his particular instinctual drive which has enabled him to overcome the obstacles of nature, time enlarges his knowledge and utilize Nature's energies and secrets for his own purposes. Every new mastery over the resources of the earth, every new penetration, whether into outer space or into the mysteries of the atom is an achievement of heroes. This impulse to overcome danger and difficulties is built into the structure of man's psyche, and evidence of the pattern is clear enough even in little details. That it is this instinctual drive or heroic impulse that made Mr. Kaul to overcome the familial barriers in his illicit relationship.

It is very queer to note that it is by the same instinctual drive that Nanda is driven along the course of life. Nanda allows him to live with heroic impulse throughout his life though this makes her course of life flow with whirlpools. It was very easy for Nanda to expose the hypocrisy of her husband and be triumphant and powerful like or more like a man. But she, like the mythical Psyche, never longs for power. She uses the masculine energy in a moderate way. It is all because of the realization of familial time by Nanda Kaul.
Johnson when interprets the story of Psyche in She, asks, "Why can't Psyche take his fleece and leave triumphantly like a man?" The answer he gives is that she does not like to be a Delilah and kill a Sarnson in order to obtain power. Johnson says:

This bit of mythology raises a very large question for modern people: how much masculine energy is enough? I think there are no limits so long as a woman remains centered in her feminine identity and only uses her masculine energy in a subsidiary way and as a conscious tool. So also with a man: he may use as much feminine energy as he can so long as he (P. 246)

Remains a man using his feminine side in a conscious way. Too much of either can cause a great deal of trouble. (61) Here one can see Nanda inspite of a suitable opportunity to expose the villain in him, clings to her essential soul which is not power loving. An analysis of Nanda's attitude towards Mr. Kaul's outside marital relationship based on feminine psychology will make us assume that Nanda might have expected her husband's revelation of his inmost thoughts to her one day. But as feminine and masculine psychology differ, Kaul cannot rise to the expectation of his wife. De Castillejo's observation of feminine and masculine psychology is apt to quote here. She observes, "Even the modern woman who consciously admits a man's right to live his life without accounting for every moment of his day and expects to do the same herself, still wants to share his inmost thoughts and feelings, for that to her is the essence of true relationship" (101). This reveals the fact that Nanda is not so easily separable from her original pattern of feminine psyche-being tolerant and giving a man enough time to repent his sin. Even if she is pulled aside by a strong force of man's infidelity, she seeks identification with him to reveal it himself. This very genuine difference in their mental behaviour and attitude causes their psychic estrangement.
Though they are physically together, mentally they are poles apart. Kaul's infidelity is one of the main causes of Nanda's psychic illness which makes her to think of an isolated life at Carignano.

"She did not live here alone by choice-she lived here alone because that was what she was forced to do, reduced to doing"

(FM 145).

Neumann's observation on women's mental illness and fidelity is apt here: Even today women's mental illnesses can be determined by attitudes of a traditionally faithful and constrictive patriarchal psychology,

“... Fidelity is a central problem especially in the psychology of woman, for all too often fidelity is not the index of a vital relationship to her partner but rather is only the expression of psychic lethargy and hampers the developmentally necessary progression to a new phase of life.” (P. 49)

Nanda has undergone psychic oppression due to her husband's infidelity. This is revealed at the end of the novel. The patriarchal social set up allows such lapses on the part of men. It is the wives who suffer a lot due to this set up. Though Mr. Kaul kept a life long affair with another woman, he had children in his relationship with Nanda. De Castillejo comments that man has a wrong notion about how to restore broken harmony in marriage. She opines: As a rule a man has no conception of the basis of woman's fears nor of the inner voice that repeats them to her. For him sexual intercourse will in itself restore any broken harmony. He has no idea that for a woman a bridge of spiritual attunement must first be built before she is able, not willing, but able to trust herself to cross the bridge of sex.
Basically the patriarchal social set up is responsible for Mr. Kaul's infidelity. Nanda happens to be an unwilling victim of the double moral standards in such a set up. Still she sticks closely to her original feminine psychic pattern which does not like to revolt or retort, doesn't look for intercourse to restore the disharmony but looks for spiritual harmony and peace of mind at the cost of her own progress in life. Johnson's observation on woman's concept about marriage is apt in this context. He says that, for a woman, marriage is nothing but sacrifice whereas for a man, there is no sacrificial matter in it. Nanda is overburdened by domestic duties and social obligations. But she has no complaints because she longs for a peaceful life. As a Vice-Chancellor's wife, she has to host teachers and their families. "It has been a vocation that one day went dull and drought-struck as though its life-spring had dried up" (FM P. 30).

She suffers from the trauma of looking after a family of many children and an unfaithful husband. The faithlessness of her husband makes her lose faith in all human relationships. Ipso facto, she longs to be alone at Carignano without the company of her children. So "the thought of them sickened as a box of sweets might sicken." (P. 31) Nanda longs for a free and isolated life. Along with the outward life of Nanda as the Vice-Chancellor's wife, Anita Desai portrays her inner life. Her mind, even after reaching Carignano is not tension free. She goes to Carignano where "unobstructed mass of light and air" abounds. It seems that in Carignano, Nanda loves to be in the company of nature. After a while, she went out into the garden, the hills were still sunlit, but the light was hazy, powdery. They seemed to be covered with a golden fuzz and melted into soft blues and violets in the distance. She wished, as often before, that she could invite an English water-colourist of the nineteenth century to come and paint the view from her garden. They were masters, she felt, at conveying light and space, the two elements of the Kasauli view.
Here hills melted into sky, sky into snows, snows into air. As Nanda's husband keeps a psychic alienation from her, she holds an intense relationship with Nature. About woman's relation to Nature Neumann says: In all decisive situations of her existence, woman is exposed to or, better yet, left to the mercy of the numinous in nature and to its working to a far greater degree than is the man who is only masculine.

For this reason woman's relationship to nature and to the deity partakes of greater familiarity and intimacy, and her bond with the anonymous-transpersonal dimension exists earlier and works more deeply than does her relationship to her personal male partner. The protagonist's intimacy with the Nature develops more intense than her relationship to her male partner. She refuses her previous but exhausted role as a mother and wife and retreats into a landscape. She puts on isolation as a mask of self-defence against her previous domestic world of pain, sorrow and psychic struggle and likes to be in the company of Nature. Though for some time she is forced to go along the course of her husband's psychic alienation, later, she shows her basic feminine inclination towards Nature.

At Carignano a telephone call is like a death warrant for her. Each time she makes an abortive attempt to make sure that her privacy is maintained. Her daughter's letter about Raka's arrival makes her to struggle "to suppress her anger, her disappointment and her total loathing of her daughter's meddling." (P. 16) She is "sighing under the weight of destiny." (P. 45) Raka's arrival creates psychic complications in Nanda. As J.B. Tripathi observes, "She tries to remain unaffected, detached by the emotional upheavals and therefore she avoids new involvements of any kind." (P. 89) She said that the arrival of her great-grand child would spoil her loneliness. The very thought of the arrival of Raka gives her a feeling of defeat and it makes turbulence in her psyche. She bumps against a bed-post and is bruised. She doesn't go to receive the child.
The intrusion into the privacy of a woman's life is another force which she wants to avoid at any cost. The psychic worries of Nanda's daughter Asha, about her daughter Tara, son-in-law Rakesh and grand daughter. Raka also cause much psychic turbulence in Nanda. This is evident in the suppressed reaction of Nanda when she reads the letter of Tara.

In this writing she conveyed a series of disasters and tragedies to her mother who read it through with her lips pressed so tightly that it made deep lines furrow the skin from the corners of her nostrils to the corners of her mouth, dark runnels of disapproval. Nanda knows that Tara's family life is far worse than her own. Nanda's grand daughter suffers both physically and mentally from her husband. Desai gives a picture of Nanda's grand daughter's suffering: Somewhere behind them, behind it all, was her father, home from a party, stumbling and crashing through the curtains of night, his mouth opening to let out a flood of rotten stench, beating at her mother with hammers and fists of abuse-harsh, filthy abuse-that made Raka cower under her bed clothes and wet the mattress in fright, feeling the stream of urine warm and weakening between her legs like a stream of blood, and her mother lay down on the floor and shut her eyes and wept.

Under her feet, in the dark, Raka felt that flat, wet jelly of her mother's being squelching and quivering, so that she did not know where to put her feet and wept as she tried to get free of it. Ahead of her, no longer on the ground but at some distance now, her mother was crying. (71-72) These may be some of the disasters that Asha wrote to Nanda which caused her mental suffocation and disapproval when she read the letter. Now, it is the time of male which plays a crucial role in the family. This male torture is another force which Nanda could not resist as she herself is a victim of mental torture from her husband and she shows the feminine reaction of disapproval.
The second section of the novel opens with Raka's unwelcome arrival. Nanda expresses what she thinks of the child's name: "Raka — what an utter misnomer, thought Nanda Kaul. . . . Raka meant the moon, but this child was not round faced, calm or radiant" (FM P. 39) This reveals that her reaction to her grandchild does not arise from affection or concern; it is more and more from an analytical tendency based on mental distance. Her first encounter with Raka reveals her condition: Then it was not possible to postpone the meeting any longer and both moved a step closer to each other and embraced because they felt they must. The inevitability of time is proved here. There was a sound of the bones colliding. Each felt how bony, angular and unaccommodating the other was and they quickly separated.

“To Nanda Kaul she was still an intruder, an outsider, a mosquito flown up from the plains to tease and worry. With a blatant lack of warmth.” (P. 40)

An analysis of Nanda's psychic workings against Raka's intrusion enables us to understand how far she is disturbed with her great-grand child's arrival. She asks Ram Lal about what he is going to cook. The omniscient narrator reacts at this: It was as if she had never made up handsome dinner parties for fifty or seventy guests on Convocation Day, and been praised for the brilliance of the kebabs she served, or the richness of the puddings. . . . Now not one idea remained, not one with which to feed a single small great-grand daughter. (P. 32) It is her intense longing to have a life of her own that sets up such an agitated mind. She wants to be away from man and matter. "She wanted no one and nothing else. Whatever else came, or happened here would be an unwelcome intrusion and distraction." (P. 3) Even the sight of a postman causes mental agitation.
The letter from her daughter Asha requesting to accept Raka makes her psyche restless. The news of her great-grand daughter's arrival was a kind of threat to her. She receives the letter and thanks him "in a voice of suffering" (P. 12) To represent Nanda's psyche at this juncture, the garden of Carignano plays an important role. It is a projection of her bare and empty psyche. She identifies herself with the lonely pine tree. She likes the emptiness of the garden and doesn't like to add anything to it. It is elegant and perfect through age and experience. The garden is lonely as its owner. As Nanda doesn't like any intrusion into her life, she does not wish to plant any tree in the garden. This longing for privacy in life is a very basic feminine characteristic.

Nanda resents Raka's intrusion because it awakens her past memories which she had buried in her mind along with her husband. She is made up of such a stuff that she is adamant in not going back to her past. But psychologically speaking, it is essential for one to return to past and to shed the unshed tears. De Castillejo opines about the awakening of past memories:

“I believe one has to return to one's past, not once but many times, in order to pick up all the threads one has to let fall through carelessness or unobservance. I believe above all one has to return again and again to weep the tears which are still unshed. We cannot feel all the grief of our many losses at the time we offer them. That would be too crippling. But if we would really gather our whole lives into a single whole, no emotion that belongs to us should be left unfelt.” (157)
Both of them protect their world of freedom. But at times Nanda's fundamental feminine characteristics tempt her to love Raka. Raka is a recluse by nature and that is what attracts Nanda. She often compares herself with Raka and her maternal love overcomes her detachment. This is one of the occasions when she shows her basic feminine nature. A woman is not made up of stone or brick. She is the very earthly being. As Jung observes, she is guided by eros-emotions and feelings.

Nanda's unconscious wish to be loved is also evident here. To love and to be loved is the very essence of a woman's life. In the beginning, though she is deadly against intrusion, later she returns to her original instinctual drive to love and of being loved. She derives material from The Travels of Marco Polo and spins fantastic stories for Raka. She gives her stories a personal touch and the background of the stories is her own maiden home. She tries to have a better rapport with Raka. She is no longer a detached woman.

"But now Nanda Kaul seemed unwilling to stop talking to let Raka out of her sight. There she flopped on her chair, the child a small fish gasping for its native air, but the old lady had her on the hook-a sharp bright hook-and held the string tight"

(FM P. 95)

Nanda finds fantasy world to escape from reality. Her psychic world is far away from her real physical world. In the silence that followed, Nanda Kaul bitterly cursed her failure to comfort children, her total inability to place herself in another's position and act accordingly.
“Fantasy and fairy tales had their place in life, she knew it so well. Why then did she tell the child the truth? Who wanted truth? Who could stand it? Nobody. Not even herself. So how could Raka? (FM PP. 88-89)

How her psyche works to impress Raka is worth noting. She was sure that Raka would not be interested in the truth—her husband's infidelity, Raka's mother's illness and conflict between Raka's parents. So she invents stories about her childhood days on the bank of the Dal lake, about streams, pets, bears, leopards, cats, fruit trees in the orchard, her father's hobbies, adventures on the way to Tibet and the Buddhist image. Though Nanda has strong mental opposition to the spoiling of her privacy, she shows a tendency to return to her motherly feelings. As a woman, she knows very well what to tell a child and what not, to impress it. This is truly a feminine instinctive quality.

One evening when Raka touches a bronze image of Buddha, Nanda grabs at the opportunity to start a companionship with her. She weaves a fantasy around it. She says how her father had journeyed across the borders searching for adventure. Raka rejects her and she wonders

"at this total rejection, so natural, instinctive and effortless when compared with her own planned and wilhl rejection of the child"

(FM P. 47).

So it is evident from Nanda's mouth itself that her rejection of the child and her strong mental opposition was not genuine but imposed and artificial. A woman cannot reject a child at will, for it is contrary to her feminine instinctive quality of love of children.
Maternal love combined with her basic nature weakens Nanda's self-imposed detachment. She looks for someone to care for. She experiences a conflict between her complaint and resigned drives. These tendencies pull her in opposite directions. She must keep a safe emotional distance, yet she cannot help being drawn to Raka. In the midst of all these forces of complaint and resigned drives, by self-knowledge Nanda identifies her own shadowy character in Raka. Nanda appreciates that Raka "alone understood Carignano, knew what Carignano stood for-she alone valued that" (FM P. 80)

Her curiosity to know about the outside world is aroused by Raka. What Nanda identifies here is her shadow, the alter ego, which has a positive aspect. About shadows, De Castillejo opines that it should take special note of three shadows—the national shadow, our own personal shadow and the darkest of all, woman's shadow. She says:

To accept one's own personal shadow means to accept responsibility for its behaviour, not necessarily the licence to live and to put in practice all we find within—this is a common fallacy. It demands not only self-knowledge but the utmost vigilance to see it does not break out unawares. And if it should, to call it back and make amends and admit very humbly that this unruly shadow is a bit of me. (P. 40)

Nanda often compares her own withdrawal with that of Raka. It is her main focus of attention towards Raka. Anita Desai, through the moon image, gives an idea of the various strong forces that pull the protagonist to diverging situations and directions and shows, her psychic workings change in these situations. Neumann's observation on lunar influence on woman's mental changes is that in every phase of a woman's psychic
change, moon has a very good influence and impact on it. It can be observed that lunar changes are well reflected in the psychic characteristics of women. Neurnann observes:

“For the world of the dawn of time, every phase of the moon is essential; it manifests the essence of the moon, just as each phase of life manifests the nature of a human being. The changing psychic constellations that are characteristic of woman, or in which woman experiences her relationship to men, are projected on to moon.” (P. 69)

When Nanda walks down the memory lane, she is reminded of her earlier life with husband and children. It is then the first image of the moon appears. She recalls the "waxen moon . . . climbing over the ghost grey branches of the eucalyptus trees along the drive, easily silent" (FM P. 25). Her relationship with the unfaithful husband and unmindful children are the initial forces which pull down her life into the monotony of the domestic work. About the symbol of moon, Neumann says:

As the symbol of the waxing and waning self-transforming heavenly body, the moon is the archetypal lord of water, moisture and vegetation, i.e. of everything growing and living. . . . With its dominion over the psychological world of moistness and growth, all waters of the deep, streams, lakes, springs, and living juices are subject to it. . . . The fertility of game animals, herds, fields, and the human group, stands at the mid point of this world, which consequently to a great extent is the world of the Feminine, of giving birth and nurturing, i.e., the world of the Great Mother over which the moon holds sway. (P. 73) About waxing moon, Esther Harding says that "it is patron of all things that grow, or should grow . . . patron would mean one who watches over or cares for the things that grow. . . ." (Woman's Mysteries P. 25).
Virendar Parmar's interpretation is worth quoting: This vision of the moon exemplifies Nanda Kaul's failure to live the role of a "patron"; on the contrary, it shows utter lack of concern, involvement or feminine commitment in her familial and relational matrix . . . this woman seeks moments of seclusion, moments with herself, moments when she practised this stillness, this composure, for years, for an hour every afternoon: it was an art, not easily acquired.

The symbol of the waxing moon, therefore, is an unconscious reminder to the truncated feminine to integrate not only her own split self but also to inspire and revitalise the scattered psyche of the family collective. (Women in the Novels of Anita Desai 109-110) It is believed and true that the fertility depends upon the magical activity of woman and the moon is the guiding transpersonal power on woman. Neumann says that the moon is Lord of fertility and of fertility magic. The moon is also regarded as Lord of women. It is believed that moon is woman's lover and her real husband. The actual earthly man appears only as the co-spouse. The relationship of woman to the moon extends far beyond the biological. The waxing moon in the novel symbolises Nanda's mental estrangement from her husband. The early culture of human kind is created and invented by woman.

The activities like preservation of fire, preparation of food, clothing, spinning, weaving and making pottery form part of woman's primeval domain. Moon is regarded as the God of all these activities and thus proves to be the lord of the female life. Neumann observes: Moon figures of lunar time are centers of vibration, waves, currents and power that permeate the world and pulsate throughout psycho-biological life from within and from without. Moon-time determines human life. New moon and full moon are the earliest sacred times; . . . The pre-eminent place where the moon and its periodicity manifests is, of course, woman and the Feminine, which men and the
Masculine therefore ever and again identify with the moon. Woman is not only bound to the moon's periodicity in her monthly changes—although her inner lunar period has made itself independent of the external moon—her entire mentality, too, is determined by the moon, and the manner of her spirituality is informed by the moon archetype as the essence of matriarchal consciousness.

Nanda's attitude towards her spouse and her family and her longing to be alone are portrayed through the image of moon. The moon in the Indian context symbolises and reveals the protagonist's mind. Neumann says: Assigning moon-consciousness to the heart is generally true for that part of humanity in whom the head has not yet become the center of patriarchal consciousness, separated as it is, from the unconscious. Just as in Egypt the heart was regarded as the source of thought and of the creative spirit, in India the heart cosmically assigned to the moon—is believed to be the locus of a psychic and spiritual organ called manas and in the place where the highest, self-revealing god manifests. (PP. 97-98) The moon image in the novel evidently exposes how the psyche of the female protagonist functions at various situations in her life. Her responses are also influenced by the moon-consciousness. About moon-consciousness Neumann says:

“Moon-consciousness or matriarchal consciousness is creative and productive as beginning and as end. The light of the moon is the first light that illuminates the dark world of the unconscious, out of which light is born and to which it is bound; and everything growing, creative and feminine remains faithful to this connection with and indebtedness to the moon-spirit.” (P. 115)
Fire on the Mountain is the story of the life long frustration of a woman caused by an unhappy marriage. Even in her chosen life at Carignano, Nanda recalls how she had been ignored by her husband. She feels loneliness even in the midst of people including her husband and a large number of children and grand children. Even in her last moments, she utters what is in her troubled psyche—she exposes her wounded psyche. She is often reminded of how her husband carried on a life long affair with Miss. David. Kaul is over possessed by his anima. De Castillejo observes the varying moods of man when he is taken over by anima unknowingly:

A man can also be possessed when, unbeknown to himself, the unconscious feminine—or anima—has taken over (a state of possession expressed more by moods than words, as the feminine is seldom vocal). The moods may range from caprice to irresponsibility, from sulks to vanity, from sentimentality to sheer bad temper. He has stumbled inadvertently into the sphere which he does not at all understand and wonders why he is so ill at ease. On the other hand, a man who knowingly enters the feminine level of diffuse awareness will be able to use his natural gift for formulation to express the wisdom that he finds there. (20)

Nanda's husband belongs to first category. He has been taken over by anima unknowingly. So he fails to express his wisdom to make his wife happy and contended. His anima acts as a force that makes her life miserable. But still she sticks to her feminine instinctive pattern of the soul—tolerating to the last minutes. She waits till the death of her husband to fulfill her wish of a private life though it does not materialise. Nanda's life at Carignano is the culmination of her search for self discovery. There she forsakes her past—the role of a domesticated servile woman. It is freedom from the past of bitter memories of husband and the children who abandoned her.
From the very beginning, she had a psychic longing to be free-free from the dull and monotonous domestic work and the hypocritical and masked life of a Vice-Chancellor's wife. She is frustrated because of her husband's infidelity and the callous attitude of her children. She resorts to detachment and adopts the strategy of resignation. What she most wants is love. In the beginning, Nanda is a dutiful wife to win the love of the family which she loves and protects. This is purely a feminine quality. About woman's task of protecting her family, Johnson says: It is the feminine task to protect not only her self but her man and her family from the dangers of the inner world; mood, inflations, excesses, vulnerabilities, and what used to be called possessions.

These are things a woman's genius can merge much better than a man's. Usually he has his own task in facing the outer world and keeping his family safe. In the Vice-Chancellor's house, Nanda does her feminine task and she excels in it. But he fails in keeping his family safe and sound. Though she is a neglected and love-thirsty woman, she finds it difficult to move away from her very basic feminine nature of doing feminine tasks and protecting the family. It is mental fatigue that impels her to get out of the household duties. As Virender Parrner says:

“Nanda Kaul's decision to spend the rest of her life in an embodiment euphemistically means a psychological withdrawal into the depths of the unconscious. . . . This stage offers an opportunity to an individual to isolate himself from the world around to have a closer examination of his debits and credits and prepare balance sheet to decide his further course of action. This is a moment to keep away from the disturbance and tribulations of the world to establish a meaningful dialogue with
the inner recesses of the psyche.” (Women in the Novels of Anita Desai P. 97)

Parmer goes on to say: Her retirement to Carignano is, in fact, her identification and merger with a place that matches the inane vistas of her inner world. Her escape from the duties and responsibilities can be attributed to the psychic inertia and depression that engulf her completely. (99) According to Neumann, the characteristics of this stage of psychic depression are

"a loss of libido in the consciousness, expressed in lack of enthusiasm and initiative, weakness of will, fatigue, incapacity for concentration and work and in 'negative' contents such as thoughts of death and failure, weariness of life, suicidal learning . . . " (The Great Mother 26).

Inspite of all her psychic problems, she lives with her husband without any grumbling. Her mind is made up in such a manner that she is ready to resign to the world of her husband though it is quite undesirable to her. The thoughts that float through her mind, when she lived with her husband are made known to the readers only much later. Before Ila Das, she accepts the humiliating and bitter truth-her husband's affair with another woman. Jung explains the masculine and feminine psychology,

"It is an almost regular occurrence for a woman to be wholly contained, spiritually in her husband, and for a husband to be wholly contained, emotionally in his wife. One could describe this as the problem of the 'contained' and the 'container'" (P. 170).
Nanda, the contained, confined herself to the four walls of marriage. She does not try to get out of the institution of marriage though she is an unwilling victim of male chauvinism. What she shows here is her fundamental basic concept of marriage as a sacred knot. When her children settled in life and career, she was ignored. This created a sense of alienation and emptiness in her mind. Darkness and negligence overpower her psyche. This causes ego-depression. Mentally she remains an alien in the family dynamics. This can be ascribed to the inertia of her psyche and this causes psychic split. Parrner rightly observes,

"In delineating the character of Nanda Kaul, Anita Desai is in fact enquiring into the psychic labyrinths of a woman who has resolved to subsist on her own psychic energies refraining from participatory embrace" (PP. 104-105).

Writing about older women, De Castillejo rightly observes that unlike a man, a woman's life curve irrespective of the role she plays, is not a slow rising to the peak of power followed by a gradual decline in the later years. The curve follows more nearly the pattern of the seasons. The woman blossoms in the spring and in the long summer that follows is a very slow ripening "with nothing much in the woman herself to show for it. De Castillejo goes onto say: If she lives a traditional family pattern she will be giving all the sap which rose so abundantly earlier to nourish her offspring, materially, emotionally and spiritually. Then suddenly her children are all grown up, gone on their separate journeys, and she finds herself bereft. The apparent purpose of her life, for which she had strained every nerve, is snatched from her with the attainment of the goal. She feels stranded on the mud flats, while the river races by bearing away each new craft as it embarks, and she no part of the flowing waters.
“What then? What can happen then, with another thirty or forty years still to run and no one needing her? Even her husband has centred his life on his career and other interests apart from her while she was occupied with the growing family. At the best his need of her is not absorbing enough to assuage her aching emptiness.” (P. 149)

This observation is absolutely true of Nanda's life. She is abandoned by her children, and her husband is no more. She becomes an excess in the family. Whom she once nourished physically, spiritually and emotionally later causes her psychic starvation. De Castillejo's observation on the various stages in woman's life is very wide:

“The autumn of a woman's life is far richer than the spring if only she becomes aware in time, and harvests the ripening fruit before it falls and rots and is trampled underfoot. The winter which follows is not barren if the harvest has been stored, and the withdrawal of sap is only a prelude to a new spring elsewhere.” (P. 150)

Modern women know these facts and they get ready to welcome the autumn before the summer is over. But most women folk still feel that life is finished at fifty. This is what happens in Nanda—a psychic vacuum. This state comes from her very elemental nature. De Castillejo again comments: A woman's liberation from the service of nature's purposes, frees an enormous amount of energy for something else. A man at fifty is probably at the height of his intellectual or administrative power.
A family woman at the same age may be aware of an entirely new stirring. Latent possibilities dance before her unbelieving eyes. (151) But for Nanda, the only possibility is to retreat into a world of isolation. She never thinks of wide world where she also can contribute some new things. Here also, to overcome the psychic trauma caused by neglect and abandonment, in her feminine way, she thinks of a solution—to retreat to a place of isolation. The intrusion into her private life, a driving force comes not only from blood relation, but from society also. The telephonic message about Ila Das's arrival causes a psychic distraction in her.

"Nanda Kaul turned her head this way that in an effort to escape. She watched the white hen drag out a worm inch by resisting inch from the ground till it snapped in two. She felt like the worm herself, she winced at its mutilation" (FM 21).

The reader gets glimpse of Nanda's mutilated psyche. She thinks of her visit as an inevitable intrusion. "Nanda Kaul looked down from her height, having invited her to tea, having failed to put her away out of sight and mind" (112). What Nanda longs for is silence. She admits: "I never cared for music myself. It makes me fidget. I greatly prefer silence" (119). Nanda escapes from her past to the Kasauli mountains and Ila Das pours past memories to the unwilling ears of Nanda. Ila Das's visit and her death shake her psyche to the very foundation. The news of the rape-murder of her friend shatters Nanda's world of reveries and fantasies. She had created herself an illusory world as a psychic shelter. She realised that this glass house is shattering into pieces.
"She had dropped the telephone. With her head still thrown
back, far back, she gasped: No, no, it is all lie! No, it cannot be.
It was a lie-Ila was not raped, not dead. She had lied to Raka,
lied about everything" (145).

Her friend's death fills Nanda's psyche with many apprehensions about her
seclusion. Her confessions (towards the end) help her mind to clear and resolve her
shadow residues. Nanda's psyche becomes defenceless. Her defenceless psyche is well
portrayed through the imagery of the bird: A lapwing started up in the mustard fields
beyond the garden hedge, and rose, crying, in the air. That nervous, agitated bird,
thought Nanda Kaul, watching its uneven flapping flight through the funeral moonlight,
what made it leap so in fright, descend again on nervous feet, only to squawk and take
off once more, making the night ring with its cries? That hunted, fearful bird, distracted
and disturbing. (26)

Nanda's psyche is like the bird, nervous, agitated, fearful, distracted and
disturbing. She is defenceless and unable to fly. When the evil forces of the society
drag a woman, the feminine nature is to fill the mind quite automatically with fears and
doubts about the society as she loses faith in it. When she finds that the anticipated
worst has happened and she is unable to resist it, she becomes defenceless-a very
common feminine characteristic. If we observe the mental state of Nanda closely we
can notice that her psyche was ever longing to be alone in peace. But she had to wait,
wait for a long time to meet with her mental desire though not fulfilled. She waits till
the demise of her husband. De Castillejo observes that waiting is an essential positive
quality of the feminine and an essential part of feminine psychology. She says:
“As a tiny girl she waits to be grown-up, filling the time with all sorts of occupations and study, which to the essential growing point are quite irrelevant. . . . No woman as woman can plan her future. She can plan a career, but as woman she can only wait for the future to unfold itself.” (178)

Even in her longing to be alone in peace, Nanda exposes her leniency towards a very basic feminine quality or a genuine characteristic of feminine nature. "All she wanted was to be alone to have Carignano to herself, in this period of her life when stillness and calm were all that she wished to entertain" (FM 17). She revelled in "its barrenness, its emptiness" (31). Nanda takes refuge in Carignano to escape from her problems. But in her last moments she realizes the reality:

“ And her children-the children were all alien to her. She neither understood nor loved them. . . . All those graces and glories with which she had tried to captivate Raka were only a fabrication: They helped here to sleep at night, they were tranquilizers, pills. She had lied to Raka. Thus Carignano could not offer a solution for Nanda's psychic problems caused by various forces. Her miserable mind is implicit in her utterance before death. She could realize her vain effort only at the death of Ila Das. By the time, the fire burning in her psyche had devoured her. "Her shift from wifehood to widowhood corresponds to the spatial shift from marital home to post-marital exile" (P. 123).
This exile she uses as an obscure way to counter her husband. Writing about modern woman, De Castillejo observes, "In casting her net in wider waters modern woman has caught not only the fish she sought but a devouring monster as well which is busy destroying the more feminine among her number" (105). She continues to say: A woman can in her own obscure way counter a man's open opposition. It puts her on her mettle. As my old mother used to say, "One can't knock one's husband down but one has got to get round him somehow." But antagonism when hidden can neither be circumvented nor dissolved. It reinforces all women's internal doubts and is, I am convinced, responsible for endless frustration and even breakdown on the part of women. This is the devouring monster she has caught unwillingly in her emancipated net. It silently destroys every bridge that men and women try to build. (105-1 06)

Nanda's self-chosen exile from family and society is her very feminine psychic pattern to counter Mr. Kaul's open opposition in an inconspicuous way. Nanda's antagonism as it is hidden, results in her frustration. In an interview with Jasbir Jain, Anita Desai stated: I don't think anybody's exile from' society can solve any problem. I think basically the problem is how to exist in society and yet maintain one's individuality rather than suffering from a lack of society and lack of belonging, that is why exile has never been my theme. (Stairs to the Attic 10) Thus Nanda's psychic longing to be in peace and her attempt to antagonise were in vain. As Geetha Ramanathan says, "Unable to elude the gaze in the domestic space, she seeks to evade it in the wilderness of Carignano" (24). Without any deliberate attempt, she shows the basic pattern of the feminine psyche through her journey to Carignano.
Ila Das's observation of men and women itself will speak volumes of masculine and feminine psychology. Ila says, "It is so much harder to teach a man anything, Nanda—the women are willing poor dears, to try and change their dreadful lives by an effort, but do you think their men will let them, Nooo, not one bit" (FM 129). This observation is true of Nanda's life. She tries to change her life by her feminine characteristics, but in vain. Several forces such as familial and social drag her along. But still she shows a tie up with her original instinctive pattern of the feminine psyche. Ila's rape-murder, Nanda's death, the sufferings of Tara all demonstrate problems that confront women in a male-dominated society. De Castillejo says about the psychology of women, especially modern women: Women, still dazzled by the glitter of what they thought would be freedom promised by their emancipation, find themselves either pressed into the new unexpected moulds of our commercialized society or swamped by domesticity with no 'I outlet for the talents modern education has fostered in them. In either case they chafe and fret and, with their feminine subtlety of indirect attack and their capacity to close their eyes to what they do not want to see, break the prison that is nearest them and within their ability to break: the marriage of their neighbour or their own. (109)

These observations and the analyses of feminine psyche remind us that the freedom and peace offered through the emancipation of women is a line writ in water. Women novelists writing in English in India necessarily inhabit a rarefied realm. Anita Desai is no exception as she occupies the rare field of feminine psychology. Brahmanandachary says, "Anita Desai does not attribute any ideology to her characters. She aims at exploring their psychological crises and struggles" (88). Desai is a great analyst of human mind as well as an interpreter of life. As Usha Bande says:
“When we grasp her characters' psychology, we begin to see them as human with their weakness and potentialities. They are, indeed, caught in the web of their compulsions, but cannot be regarded as "haunted protagonists" who do not come to grip with life. . . . By her fictional rendering of neurotic behaviour, interaction and solution, the novelist not only plumbs human nature but also helps us to grasp their reality intuitively. What psychologists and social scientists treat objectively, by abstract analysis, Anita Desai provides subjectively by her aesthetic portrayal.” (P. 167)

This observation is absolutely true of Fire on the Mountain. As concluding remarks, it can be stated that Nanda Kaul, the woman protagonist, is driven by immensely strong forces such as unhappy family life, the burden of household work, loveless relationship with her husband, the neglect by children, the patriarchal social set up and its double moral standards, male chauvinism, male domination, male infidelity, psychic torture, male hero archetype, hypocrisy and intrusion into privacy. Sometimes she goes along with some of them in accordance with her nature, but quite often she is an unwilling victim of these forces. At other times she is compelled to go along the course or gets plunged into the entanglements of the evils which she does not like but is incapable of resisting. Like all women, Nanda is also tied to various original instinctive patterns of the feminine mind. She longs for love, respect, recognition and spiritual harmony. The hostile forces lead her to psychic conflict and frigidity. The common basic characteristics of woman such as love of Nature, motherly feelings, self-sacrificing love and eagerness to do feminine tasks are not alien to Nanda. She is a woman who gives respect to the sacred nature of marriage. She retreats to a place of isolation, identifies her shadowy character and becomes defenceless.
Anita Desai's first novel, *Cry, the Peacock* begins: "All day long the body lay rotting in the sun."¹ This is conventional for any post-war novel, but it has none of the implications of any war save the one perpetually raging within every sensitive human being. In this novel, the style had a curious compatibility with her theme because the narrator of *Cry, the Peacock*, Maya, is a hypersensitive young woman, tense, and over-wrought. The manner of narration reveals elements of her personality. The narrator's slow advance towards insanity and then death is the theme of the novel, and the main pattern is "the contrast between this woman's response to the world through her senses, and her husband's response through his intellect."²

The novel seeks to explore the metaphysical conflict between two different approaches to life manifest in the story of Maya and Gautama. Daughter of a wealthy father, Maya is married to Gautama who is very senior to her in age, a friend of her father. While Maya is interested in all good things of life - in nature, in its ever-changing beauty, in the life of birds and animals, in poetry and in dance - Gautama is a dry, matter-of-fact, and prosaic personality.

Maya's love for the good things of life is looked upon by him as nothing more than sentimentalism. Gautama looks down upon Maya's thoughts and musings as trivial and describes the cultural atmosphere of her father as decadent. At the root of Maya's psychic retrogression lies the disparity between their dispositions: "she experiences the world through the senses while Gautama looks at it through reason."³ There are a number of other differences between Maya and her husband but all these could have been endured by her, provided her emotional needs could be gratified. The novel begins with the death of Toto, Maya's pet dog. Its death causes a great fear in her mind: "she sat there, sobbing, and waiting for her husband to come home. Now and then she went out onto verandah, and looked to see if he were coming up." (5)
On the other hand, Gautama's reaction to the incident is that of intellectual detachment; he views it as a minor incident. He returns from office and very efficiently, precisely disposes off the matter: I sent it away to be cremated ... It is all over. Come, won't you pour out my tea? (6) Maya is a weak character easily swayed by emotions while Gautama is stronger because of his pragmatic approach. Maya is sensitive and her moments of illumination throw light on fossilized ways of being, but she lacks the knowledge and the strength to overcome her alienation and despondency.

Something slipped into my tear-hazed vision, a shadowy something, that prodded me into admitting that it was not my pet's death alone and I mourned today, but another sorrow, unremembered, perhaps as yet not ever experienced, and filled me with this despair. It is the confrontation with death that disturbs her and not just the callousness of Gautama:

“I crept into a corner of the bed, crouched there, thinking that it was perhaps because of Gautama not understanding. 'It is all over,' he had said as calmly as the meditator beneath the Sal tree. 'You need a cup of tea,' he had said, showing how little he knew of my misery, or of how to comfort me.” (PP. 8-9)

The alienation of Maya is not related to the reality of her circumstances. It is a product of her own consciousness. It is in part linked to the process of her growing up, from self-alienation to self-identification. In the development of the problem of alienation between Gautama and Maya, there is a perpetual seesaw movement between facticity and transcendence. The citing of the Gita and the manner in which Gautama preaches it with philosophical detachment is a sure and positive indication of his commitment to a higher and transcendent kind of love.
On the other hand, Maya pines for a life of sensations, a tender touch of his hand and for an exchange of laughter with him. Her attachment to him is but a physical one. It is this polarity between these two kinds of love that leaves her in the lurch. Alienated, she feels uncertain of her stance in the socio-psychic world. Hence she starts searching for her identity around her. The facts of life and the fiction of imagination are seen to be battling against each other in her split-self. The conflict is more psychological than moral. Gautama is not totally alienated from Maya. He tries to comfort her with a cup of tea. He helps her by attending to the needs of the dead Toto and sees to it that "they lifted him with 16 care" (6).

She feels that she is lonely and abandoned and none understands her and that her isolation and aloofness is of his making. In her own words, I ivas alone. Yes, I whimpered, it is that I am alone, and then gave myself up to a fit of furious pillow-beating, kicking, everything but crying. From childhood experience, I knew this to be sweetly exhausting. (9) Critics have tried to diagnose her mental break down and its pattern: "The thematic development of mental experience ... through the three stages of self-delusion, fragmentation and Schizophrenia and finally visionary intuition ... Maya is definitely pronounced mad and ... at the end of the novel, awaiting transfer to a mental asylum."( P. 4)

Thus her alienation is more mythical and illusive than real. It is however in the symbolism of the peacocks that Maya's estrangement is fully articulated. She discerns her identity in the monsoon-tormented peacocks pining for love and it is this selfidentification that generates anguish in her. The death of Toto stands symbolically for her own psychic death, a fact which her husband is obvious of. Lack of communication, contact and relatedness is the chief cause of her anguish. Her affinity with Gautama is marked by loneliness and lack of communication.
Alienation of Maya is existential for it centres round her hard and impassioned existence in an isolated world in which even her husband remains aloof from her emotional and sexual urges. Her predicament is indeed the fate of the alienated individual spirit craving for contact and companionship. In her childhood, Maya had been brought up by her father who had prevented her from seeing the ugliness and sorrows of the world. Having been brought up in a protected atmosphere, she is unaware of the unpleasant realities of life. In her own words: my childhood xwas one in which much was excluded, xwhich greio steadily more restricted, unnatural even, and in which I lived as a toy princess in a toy world. But it urns a pretty one. (89)

This has made her an extremely sensitive character with a lot of imagination bordering on the hysterical. She had lust for life, finding pagan pleasure in nature and world; she had "sensual pleasure in living." Her sensuous pleasure is so acute that she can readily and instinctively identify herself with natural objects and animals but not with human beings which demand the exercise of commonsense. One incident from her childhood makes it clear. A bear-trainer gets a bear to her house and Maya gets sentimental pleasure from watching the bear's "lavish delight" as it strips the bananas given by her "neatly and deftly and swallows them quickly, quickly" (87).

But she feels anxious that the trainer probably does not give much food to the bear and this haunts her so much that on that night she dreams of hungry bears "grabbing and gesticulating" and subsequently falls very ill. This focusses on her partial vision of the world, a world devoid of human beings and perceived only through the senses. Her husband blames her father for her immaturity and inability to cope with the realities of life which is more often than not unpleasant:
He is the one responsible for this - for making you believe that all that is important in the world is to possess, possess-riches, comforts, posies, dollies, loyal retainers - all the luxuries of the fairy tales you were brought upon. Life is a fairy tale to you still. What have you learnt of the realities? The realities of common human existence, not love and romance, but living and dying and working, all that constitutes life for the ordinary man. You won't find it in your picture-books. And that was all you were ever shown - picture books. What wickedness to raise a child like that.... And here you are, capable of seeing nothing but delusions, imagining them to be real. How prettily you stroll in your garden, dreaming of the fairies that sleep in the buds. (115)

This subjective and partial vision constitutes her illusion and she admits that as a child she had "enjoyed, princess like ... the fantasies of Arabian nights, the glories and bravado of Indian Mythology" (43). Here is a fairy tale world and it is no wonder that she fails to establish rapport with real human beings in her adult life. Her inability to communicate with Gautama proves sinister for her, for in the process of suppressing her emotions she grows insane:

“In a sudden, impulsive longing to be with him, be close to him, I leapt up ... preparing myself, then joining him at last .... But when I went to rouse him from the couch, loath a touch, I saw that he had closed his eyes not with mere tiredness, but in profound, invulnerable sleep .... I hesitated, wishing to summon him to me, yet knowing he could never join me. It was of no use. After all I sighed - and once more, was sad.” (93)
This shows the deep frustration in her married life, her inability to express herself. It is also suggestive of the wide chasm between her illusions and the reality of others, between what she expects and what happens. Maya is constantly obsessed with the prediction by the albino astrologer of death either for her or her husband within four years of her marriage. "In Maya, the deathwish surfaces when in her flight from the shades, she indulges in a riot of funeral fears and musings. At the same time, she is achingly responsive to the beauty and poetry of life. The tension thus built up defines the misery of her being."5

She becomes so obsessed with the predicted disaster that every trivial thing becomes an intimation of the impending danger and she is frightened by the prospect of death I knew the time had come. It was now to be either Gautama or I. (33) Maya's reminiscential excursions draw back the curtains of time, allowing the past to flood into the present and become a part and parcel of it. It is this psychic and reminiscential confrontation with the pale albino that generates the feel of alienation in her. She identifies herself with the myriad stars in the sky which are separated from one another by darkness. The infinite stars remind her of her own identity, of her loneliness. She sets up a melancholy yell, "what is the use? I am alone." (22)

Traditionally man has been regarded as a protector, a master, a guardian of women. The modern educated woman has however started resenting this attitude. For instance, Gautama treats Maya as a child and she resents it. At one point both of them are walking together and Maya refers to the beauty of a flower, Gautama plucks it and hands it to Maya saying, "who should deny you that?" he said "and smiled at me as to a winsome child" (121). Then in a debate Maya says: And you will think me a tiresome child for it, for showing what you once called my third-rate poetess' mind. (113)
Thus all of a sudden Maya behaves like the present-day woman who finally realized that she is not as helpless and dependent as a child. She is as much competent as man. But then the old samskaras shake her new faith and she is struggles to come out of the shackles of such old samskaras. Maya is genuinely interested in Kathakali dances, the ballet, etc. So she requests Gautama to take her to the south. To this he says, If that is your only reason for wanting to go all the way to south, I suggest you wait till a Kathakali troup comes to give performance in Delhi.... It will he less expensive. (43) In such a milieu, Maya feels herself an alien and an outsider in Gautama's family.

Her feel of alienation is intensified and she reverts to childhood memories as an escape but there too she feels estranged since the image of the pale and tenebrific albino is still haunting her psyche. Similarly the pet's death shatters Maya beyond measure. And she tells Gautama: Oh, Gautama, pets mightn't mean anything to you, and yet mean a world to me. (16) This irks him and he says, You go chattering like a monkey I am annoyed that I have been interrupted in my thinking. (16) The anguish in Maya's life may be traced to the fact that she believes surrender of self to be subtraction from her personal freedom and wholeness. Maya's unhappiness can be traced in part to external circumstances - her over-protected childhood and adolescence which makes it difficult for her to face the realities of adult life - and the Oedipus complex - excessive love and dependence on her father which makes her seek a father substitute in her husband Gautama which obviously is not possible.

This complex prevents her from achieving a satisfactory sexual relationship with her husband. The father in the unconscious impinges on the husband-in-the conscious, thereby creating martial discord in her conjugal life. Then there is her superstitious belief in the albino astrologer's prophecy - which predicted death after four years of marital life.
More than prophecy itself, her father's handling of the episode, the dismissal of the ayah, the hounding out of the astrologer - make Maya push the disagreeable prophecy deep into her subconscious. The death of her pet dog Toto triggers her memory and once again she is caught up in the horror of the possibility of her imminent death. The utter lack of communication between the husband and the wife add to her inner suffering and she becomes habituated to brooding over her miserable condition: Being intensely in love with life she turns hysterical over the creeping fear of death: "Am I gone insane? Father: Brother: Husband: who is my saviour? I am in need of one. I am dying, and I am dying. God, let me sleep, forget, rest. But no, I'll never sleep, again. There is no rest any more - only death and waiting. (98)

It is not only the memory of the albino astrologer's prophecy which pushes her towards insanity but her brother Arjuna's letter which mentions the horoscope. The tension within her gives rise to a severe headache symptomatic of her desire to elude issues. Maya's mother-in-law is highly active, social and concerned with many social causes. As is the case with such women, she is defeminized. She is more concerned with her social work than the crying need of lonely Maya who asks to stay for some more time with her. If Maya's voice is soft and lilting, hers is "a voice at once soft and broken with harshness, so that I could not tell whether she said this out of affection or had some motive far removed from any personal feeling" (47).

She is the ascetic type born to serve the world with immense energy, busy with her many preoccupations. Her asceticism is symbolized through her meagre and dull coloured clothes: In that stark room, I was the only one who wore a sari of a bright colour. The rest wore colours that no one could care about. (49) Maya earnestly needs her mother-in-law's company:
“If they stayed a while, they might help me, as my own father
could not, by teaching me some of that marvellous indifference
to everything that was not vital, immediate and present. I did not
know how they could do this, but somehow it had to be done.”

(162)

Being motherless, she craves for motherly tenderness and refuge from her
mother-in-law: And yet I yearned for her to hold 26 me to her bosom. I could not
remember my own mother at all. (163) Maya implores her to stay. When the mother-in-
law says: How can I, child? She said, smiling and then frowning, 'It is impossible.'
(163) She becomes searingly aware of her loneliness. Her desire for life turns into a
death-wish and this abrupt metamorphosis is first communicated through the
symbolism of the moon and later through the symbolism of the peacocks. The moon
symbolically becomes a demonic entity tormenting her mind. Maya's aloofness is the
result of polar motivation.

Alienated equally from family and society she leads an anguished life. Her
alienation is existential for it goes with the awareness of the loneliness of time and
impossible vastness of space, issuing out of her morbid reaction to Toto. It is nostalgic
and melancholic. The cooing of the dove irritates her. The doves in a mood for mating,
cooed to each other. She was distracted. Their mating was to her an omen of ill fortune
of estrangement, for their coo was a tedious repetition of the fatal words, "Go Away"
(35). But the alienation for which the copulating doves stand for is not the alienation of
Maya. Her's is a far more enduring one. Theirs is natural and instinctive whereas hers is
though apparently natural 27 yet self-imposed and compulsive. Maya develops in
herself a sense of abhorrence for the cooing doves, an apt objective correlative for her
emotional attitudes and moods.
It is her conjugal disharmony which engenders a sense of detachment towards the cooing and copulating doves she fails to "connect." Her inability to connect makes her anguished on seeing the dove's mate. Maya's existentialist quest for identity and her desire for emancipating herself from the clutches of her anguished psyche has been very graphically ventilated by Anita Desai in the following words: The rolling cotton-balls, the flying yellow leaves, the surging clouds of dust, all seemed to flee, and yet could not... and returned to continue struggle for escape. Something similar heaved inside me ... a longing, a dread, search for solution, despair. (35)

Maya's husband's sister Nila wants to separate from her husband and seeks legal help from her brother Gautama. According to Gautama, the marriage fails because of Nila and hence, he says, "I haven't time to waste on a case like hers - the mess she makes by 28 being too bossy and self-willed and bullying" (161-162). Her mother also dislikes the idea of divorce and believes that Nila has learnt everything "except lead a sensible life." She says tartly, "for she hated this matter of a divorce in the family, and children going fatherless." But Nila's situation touches the right chord in Maya and she was "admiring" her. The similarity between the two is their marital discord. Besides her father, Maya has some friends.

One of them is Leila who is nursing her dying husband whom she had married knowing that he is consumptive: He had been dying of tuberculosis when she fell in love with him, and she had married the fatality of his disease as much as the charm of his childish personality or the elegance of his dark hair falling across his white brow. (57) For Maya, she has "wisdom combined with calm." She is resigned and is a foil to Maya, for unlike her she has accepted the sick husband, one room house, and drudgery of life, never having fun, suffering a husband "teasing her parents who had not seen her, written to her, or in any way communicated with her since the day of her
elope" (58). From the educated fatalist Leila, Maya's memory comes to "pom, the pink, plump, pretty pom who did not speak of fate, who had never been ill, or overworked or bitter" (60). She is described by Maya: Logic, tact, diplomacy - nothing mattered to her who chattered so glibly and gaily all the day long, jumping up noiv and then to bring out a new pair of shoes, a new set of rings to show me, talking with eagerness and animation of anything that was new and bright, and never, referring to family, tradition, custom, superstition, all that I dreaded noiv. I was certain she hated such talk as much as I did, even if she had no reason to fear them. Such things simply did not step over the bright enamelled horizon of her painted world, for such things bore shadows, and shadows were alien to her. (61)

She is contrast to Maya and she is fed up with living with her-in-laws whereas Maya craves for the company of her mother-in-law and does not get it. In the midst of all these she looks for comfort in Gautama's company. He, for her is the "meditator" beneath the 'bo' tree, who seems to have arrived at detachment like Buddha. She wants to fulfill her existence through his love. But Gautama aspires as near the goal of the Gita as is humanly possible. Maya's account, though not objective all along, sometimes acknowledges that Gautama is perturbed by her behaviour, by her apathy, by her lack of vocation and self control.

And she sometimes feels that love rises above attachment. In such moments of sanity and control she wishes her death, a wish indicative of her desire to link her inner fears with the world of other reality. Maya internally rebels against Gautama for his autocratic and selfish behaviour. She knows the fact, "In his world there were vast areas in which he would never permit me and he couldn't understand that I could even wish to enter them, foreign as they were to me" (104).
Maya's suffering emanates from her existential struggle to make her relationship with Gautama meaningful and her desire to experience life with all the pleasures it is capable or offering. Gautama admits, "we work for fame, name, money." (117) In the midst of racking mental pains it occurs to her that since the albino has predicated death to either of them, it may be Gautama, and she whose life is threatened. Thus she transfers her death-wish to Gautama and thinks that as he is "detached" and indifferent to life, it will not matter much if he is made to lose life. Such is the disturbed condition of Maya that she is haunted by the word "murder." Gautama remains so much lost in his work that he is oblivious of the dust-storm that has occurred earlier in the afternoon.

However, he accompanies Maya to the roof of the house when she requests him to do so. While passing out of the room, Maya catches sight of the bronze Shiva dancing and she prays to the Lord of the Dance to protect her. While Maya and her husband are having a walk on the terrace she becomes enraptured by the pale hushed glow of the rising moon. As Gautama moves in front of her, the moon is hidden from her view. In a fit of frenzy, she pushes him over the parapet wall to pass through an immaturity of air down to the very bottom. Thus her husband's life comes to a sudden and tragic end, and in a state of complete mental derangement, Maya is sent by Gautama's mother and sister to the house of her father. Maya and 32 Gautama end up being two sides of the same coin, in each case the exclusiveness of the self makes it unable to accommodate the other. Unable to attain a dialectical synthesis the self is destroyed. The final scene of death where Maya pushes Gautama is a poignant comment on Maya's retrogression into her own fantasy world. Maya's homicidal act is an accident even though she comes to the conclusion that she, and not Gautama, is destined to live. Her will to life and power rescues her from one way of dying, but paves the path to another:
At the parapet edge, I paused, made him pause, and his words were lost to me as I saw the moon's vast, pure surface...so that it appeared a great, multifoliate, waxen xohite, virginal, chaste and absolute white, casting a light that was holy in the purity, a soft, suffusing glow of its chastity, casting its reflection upon the night with a vast, tender mother love.” (P. 179)

The mistake of Gautama was that he came between her and the worshipped moon, transgressing an inviolable law. 33 Explaining her stand to her husband's family members, she confesses: "It had to be one of us, you see, it was clear that it was I who was meant to live. You see, to Gautama it didn't really matter. He didn't care, and I did" (185). Maya's mind had lost the divisions between reality and unreality. "Alienation operates at two levels in the novel, the physical and the mental. Physical alienation which engenders an atmosphere of loneliness is lulled by psychic alienation which escalates the spiritual anguish of Maya."(P. 6)

Maya's meditative frame of mind, her tender sensibility and her artistic vision is also in a large measure responsible for her alienation. The sense of her isolation from the milieu aggravates her feel of insecurity and incertitude, which in turn leads to her quest for identity. The father in the unconscious keeps on torturing her mind. In her father, she identifies a part of her self... the self that belonged to the halcyon days of the past. She regards Gautama not as husband but as a father substitute, as a lover, which leads to her alienation and detachment from him. Dwelling in a universe that seems to her alien and hostile, she retreats within the vastness of the self, only to discover that she does not know herself ... 34 Engaged in an interminable monologue, she develops the habit of introspection to such a degree that she comes to feel entirely alone, cut off from communication with others.
Nothing real, learnt of all, herself. In Part III of the novel, Maya is not seen through her own eyes but as an elfin spirit in the ancestral house in Lucknow awaiting her assignment to an asylum, with the strange peace of a soul that has crossed the border of terror. The victory of her childlike leanings through a description of events leading upto Gautama's death upto how her own mental breakdown has come about have been reported by Maya herself in Part II. When her child-self is released, the darkness within could suddenly overwhelm and blot out the universe. That is what happens. Maya's long alienation - both physical and temperamental - finally ends up in an explosion - an explosive death she designs for her self.