

Chapter 2

**Psychological Realism in the Novels
of Mamoni Raisom Goswami and
Anita Desai**

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PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM IN THE NOVEL OF MAMONI RAISOM GOSWAMI AND ANITA DESAI

2.0: Introduction:

Psychological realism also known as psychological novel is a distinctive literary genre that emphasizes on interior characterization to explore the inner world of the characters in a fiction. Psychological novel, as the name suggests, takes interest in the innermost feelings of the characters. Psychological novel deals particularly with the thoughts, emotions and subconscious urges of the characters in a fiction. Its focal point is the psychological process of the character. Plot is of secondary importance in a psychological novel. Here thought is more important than the external action. The happenings in the life of the character are generally expressed through the thought and feelings of the character. Psychological realism novels take the readers to the inner world of the characters and explore a different world from that of the visible one. It focuses on why something has happened rather than what has happened.

The word ‘psychology’ has been derived from the Greek word ‘psyche’ meaning mind, soul or spirit and ‘logos’ meaning discourse or study. The literary meaning of psychology is the study of mind. Therefore, psychological novel can be defined as a narrative work of fiction where the study of human psyche is done.

While discussing about psychological novel the name of Sigmund Freud must be taken into account. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), an Austrian psychologist, was the

father of psychoanalysis. The literature of the 20th century was highly influenced by Sigmund Freud and his theory of psychoanalysis. Freud's masterpiece '*Introduction to Psychoanalysis*' published in 1920, worked as a guide book to a new group of novelists called 'psychological novelists' of the Western literature. These writers had applied his theories of psychoanalysis in their novels making them look more realistic. To illustrate Henry James, the brother of the famous psychologist William James used many psychological concepts in his novella '*The Beast in the Jungle* (1903). He focused more on the psychology of his characters than their actions.

The psychological novelists use Stream of Consciousness as their primary technique to expose the inner world of their characters. It was the famous psychologist William James who coined the term 'Streams of Consciousness'. William James first wrote about 'Streams of Consciousness' in his famous work '*The Principles of Psychology*' published in volumes between 1878- 1890. Later on the term has been widely used by many novelists such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, D. H. Lawrence etc. James Joyce '*Ulysses*' published in 1922, is an example of its kind.

The novelists undertaken for study namely Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai have contributed a lot to psychological novel. They have deep insight as psychological novelists. They beautifully portray the confused and complex psyche of their characters. In order to express the psychological agony of their characters they have used interior monologue, streams of consciousness technique and flashback. Both Goswami and Desai mainly show interest in the mental world rather than the physical world of their protagonists. They try to expose the innermost realities and psychic echoes of their characters, generally female, in their novels.

Mamoni Raisom Goswami deals with the psychologically and socially deprived widows in her novels. Goswami, being a young widow who has lost her husband only after 18 months of their marriage, can well understand the psychological world of the widows living in a patriarchal society. Therefore she takes interest in the portrayal of female psyche especially widow in her novels. Many times Goswami's personal experiences as a young widow are reflected in the lives of her widow women characters.

The other novelist Anita Desai is a pioneer of psychological novel in Indo-Anglian literature. She has introduced a psychological strain in the Indo-Anglian literature more prominently than any other Indian novelist of her time. She tries to explore the inner most psyche of her female protagonists with utmost care. Desai masters in handling the theme of psychological realism in her novels. She presents the psychic world of individual human being very sensitively. She has explained in this connection that it is "depth which is interesting, delving deeper and deeper in a character as a scene rather than going round about it."¹

2.1: Psychological realism in the novels of Mamoni Raisom Goswami: Mamoni Raisom Goswami's novels bear of strong sense of psychological realism. She gives a psycho-analysis of the female protagonists in her novels. Psychological elements are always present in her novels.

2.1.1: Psychological realism in *Chenabor Shrot*: Mamoni Raisom Goswami's first novel *Chenabor Shrot* is about the plight of the labourers engaged in a construction work under a construction company at Kashmir. The novelist, through the character of

1. Jasbir Jain, Anita Desai: Interviewed, Rajasthan University Studies in English: page 61-69

Soni, portrays the feminine psyche of a lonely woman.

Soni is a beautiful young female labourer who has experienced the bitterness of life. She moves from place to place in search of livelihood. She has married twice but is not fortunate enough to enjoy a blissful married life. Now she is a pregnant widow of a labourer Gauri Sankar. Soni's first husband Sibanna deserted her when she needed him the most. Then she marries Gauri Sankar for the second time. The marriage does not last long as Gauri Sankar meets an early death in an accident at his work place. The unexpected death of her husband shattered Soni completely. She has no one to support her. Moreover she has her old father-in-law Rambir with her who cannot earn for himself. Everybody laughs at Soni for staying with her widowed father-in-law in the same house. Soni feels embarrassed at their nasty comments on their relationship. For the workers there can be only one relationship between a man and woman. But for Soni it is the bonding of humanity.

Soni's attractive physique stands as her enemy. She understands that it is difficult to live alone for a woman amongst so many lustful eyes. One day Sadashiva, Raghama's husband, tries to bribe her along with a proposal to pass the night with him. Upon being refused he calls her a prostitute. Soni feels humiliated. In the meantime Soni meets her first husband Sibanna at her new work place. Soni realizes that it is Sibanna who is responsible for her miserable life. Sibanna wants her back in his life but she does not excuse him. Soni's heart is full of hatred for him for his selfishness. Then she is informed about Sibanna's relationship with one company manager's wife. One night she also goes to enjoy with the militaries with a view to enjoy her life and also to take revenge on Sibanna. But Soni's heart fills with self hatred and she starts spitting on herself. Her sense of guilt is doubled within a very short time when she finds

Sibanna waiting for her in front of her house in such a cold night. When he asks Soni to sit by him she replies:

“Let me bath first. Then only I will sit by you. Don’t touch me beforehand.
Don’t touch me! Don’t touch me.”²

Soni’s psychological tumult is well described by her words. Sibanna doesn’t consider her guilty of her sin. He takes all the responsibilities on his shoulder and welcomes her into his life.

2.1.2: Psychological realism in Nilakanthi Braja: *Nilakanthi Braja* exposes the agony of Saudamini, a young widow. Saudamini’s deep anguish becomes the centre of this novel.

The novelist herself commented about the novel that she was so deeply absorbed in portraying the tortured mind of Saudamini that she had missed the opportunity to draw broadly the external world of Vrindaban.³

The novelist also admitted that she has moulded the psychological conflict of Saudamini after her own psychological problems as a widow.⁴

Saudamini is the only daughter of Dr. Raichoudhury and Anupama. She becomes a widow at a young age. Following the death of her husband Saudamini falls in love with a Christian youth. She wishes wholeheartedly to start life a fresh with

2. Mamoni Raisom Goswami Upanyas Samagra: Chenabor Shrot, Vol.1
ed. Hemanta Kr. Bharali, page -57

3. Mamoni Raisom Goswami Rasana Samagra: Moor Lekhar Nepathyar
Katha, ed. Hemanta Kr. Bharali, page -478

4. Ibid., page – 428

her lover. But her orthodox parents can never ever dream of accepting such an affair. It is beyond their imagination to allow their widow daughter to marry again. Even the society considers it as a sin. Saudamini does not care for social status and religion but only her happiness. They decide to take Saudamini to holy Vrindaban with a big hope that the holy ambience of Vrindaban will bring peace to their daughter's weary heart. Saudamini comes to Vrindaban with her parents and tries to absorb the holy air of it. She tries to find mental peace while nursing the patients in her father's hospital. But she fails to find peace there. Instead she feels suffocated in the dark chambers of Vrindaban:

“How many days will she stay here? Until cleansing of her mind?

Then why has she come? An exploited widow like her ...”⁵

The more Saudamini wishes to console her heart, the more her physical desires grow.

The novelist explains Saudamini's condition:

“Saudamini comes into her dark room. She has to over look her loneliness, but it's not so easy. In between she examines her body. How beautiful it is! The mental torture of the last seven years have failed to touch her physical beauty. No, no, its impossible to compromise ...”⁶

She is unable to forget her Christian lover as he is the only source of comfort for her.

The Christian lover gives her that consolation which the holy Vrindaban fail

5. Ibid., page – 17

6. Ibid., page – 22

fails to provide her.

Saudamini's late husband loved her so much. But his love can no longer be an inspiration as Saudamini has long forgotten him. Now her heart is occupied by her Christian lover. She wants to enjoy life and fulfill her physical needs. On the otherhand Saudamini's parents try to bring peace to their desperate daughter. Dr. Raichoudhary tries to keep her busy with nursing work. Anupama meets a hermit to seek blessing her daughter. Pointing to Saudamini Anupama, says to saint Deoghari:

“Lord, I want nothing for myself. Please take responsibility of my daughter ... I am unable to show her the right path ... I am trembled with fear ...”⁷

Saudamini understands that her parents will never allow her to marry her lover. She wonders if she is the lone widow who is unable to bury her desires in the bottom of her heart. She wants to hear the elevating voice of Braja that comforts many a weary souls. But she fails to hear the divine call. She only hears a voice within her that strongly appeals her to meet her Christian lover. Saudamini's worldly desires stand in her way of attaining spiritual happiness.

Saudamini moves from this to that temple aimlessly looking for a new hope. One day being frustrated, she asks Charanbihari if he does not want to make love with her. Charanbihari asks her whether her deceased husband inspires her to live or not. In reply Saudamini admits that she cannot even recall his face. Saudamini becomes restless to see a newly married couple sleeping under a tree. Even the warm sand of

7. Ibid., page – 27

Yamuna arouses her emotions. She understands that she cannot spend her whole life in Vrindaban like this. Saudamini, being exhausted shouts at her parents:

“I cann’t pass my whole life by the grace of others. I am not so great as you to spend my whole life by doing social work. I am free. I don’t care ... If you think I am changed ... You are cheaters ... I can compare you with the butchers.”⁸

Saudamini talks to artist Rakesh about her strong passion for her Christian lover. She confesses that her carnal desires have not been changed even in the holy environment of Braja.

Finally, with the good will of her father, Saudamini meets her Christian lover at Vrindaban. She surrenders herself to the man for whom she has been waiting impatiently for a long time. Suddenly she feels a vacuum in her heart. Now the most waited moment of meeting her lover is unable to bring happiness to her heart. She questions herself if that is the consequence for which she has long desired for. She wonders if there is any other person for whom the holiness of Vrindaban is meaningless in front of love. She has started feeling guilty. She feels an inexpressible pain that has torn her heart apart. She feels completely defeated. Her moment of success brings sorrow to her mind. Suddenly she feels sorry not to recognize the power of holiness. She feels as if a divine light entered into her soul. She takes her ultimate decision and says to her lover:

“Please pardon me and go back. Please pardon me.”⁹

8. Ibid., page – 54

9. Ibid., page – 126

Then she runs towards the river carrying the divine light in her heart and sacrifices her life in the river.

2.1.3: Psychological realism in Ahiron: Mamoni Raisom Goswami gives a psycho-analysis of a sterile woman through Nirmala, the female protagonist of *Ahiron*. Nirmala, as a girl, has lived a simple life. She goes to college, participates in debate competitions and works for the flood victims. Nirmala's marriage has been fixed with a wealthy doctor. The news of her marriage has aroused jealousy in one of her admirers and he has brought moral transgression to her. The mad lover of Nirmala has made her half-naked in the crowded market place one day. The expected consequence of this fearful and shameful incident is that the doctor has refused to marry Nirmala. Nirmala, without any fault of her own has to pay for the misdeed of her lover. Nirmala's life has taken a new turn. Instead of becoming the wife of a doctor she becomes the life partner of a tuberculosis patient Pandey. Nirmala's married life has brought disaster to her life. She has undergone a psychological pain as a result of her unhappy married life. There is non-reciprocation of feeling between Nirmala and her husband. Under this circumstance Nirmala's dream to be mother is not fulfilled. She remains childless. Nirmala suffers mentally as there is none with whom she can share her problems. During this crucial time she meets manager Harshul and develops an intimacy with him. She discloses her fear about her husband to Harshul Sahib:

“Have you noticed the man? There is no flesh and blood in his body. I have nobody to share my pains. You cannot understand the tumult of my heart.”¹⁰

10. Ibid., page - 87

Harshul teaches her how to drive a jeep. Later on after the death of her husband she joins a school as a teacher. Nirmala suffers from loneliness and being frustrated she writes to Harshul Sahib.

Nirmala has already perceived that Harshul has a soft spot for her. Though she has male partners, she wants somebody who can fill up the void in her heart with love. Therefore she proposes Harshul to marry her. When Harshul asks her to rethink she cries:

“Don’t give me lesson ...take me as a bad woman. I don’t force you.”¹¹

Finally Harshul marries Nirmala. Nirmala’s unfulfilled dream to enjoy motherhood revives in the company of Harshul. But Nirmala’s luck does not favour her. She has not conceived even after three months of their marriage. Now a days Nirmala remains silent and sad. She moves aimlessly. She has lost interest in everything. She is occupied with a deep pessimism. One day she unveils her weary heart to one young Engineer Mahesh:

“... after a prolonged humiliation I felt I have got life – I will hold this life – I will make myself free from the intense loneliness of my soul. But alas! Am I not a failure?”¹²

She says to Mahesh Thakur that her idea to be happy with her second husband after the death of the first one is quite ridiculous. Nirmala’s husband Harshul understands her problem. He can read the frustration in her eyes. Harshul also knows

11. Ibid., page – 103

12. Ibid., page – 119

his limitations. Therefore he indirectly encourages young Mahesh to make her happy. Mahesh, who has already developed a warm feeling for Nirmala, offers her to have a baby from him. Nirmala accepts his proposal and surrenders to him. Nirmala, already upset by her own sinful act becomes perturbed to discover that she is pregnant. Nirmala's long awaited moment has brought misery to her. She cannot be happy with the fruit of her sin. She cannot bring more disgrace to her husband. She cannot bring her child to this world. She decides not to break tradition and establish a wrong example. Therefore Nirmala, in a moment of madness, aborts her foetus by punching with her fists.

2.1.4: Psychological realism in Mamore Dhara Tarowal:

Goswami has explored the inner psyche of Narayani in her novel *Mamore Dhara Tarowal*. The novel explains the consequence of abject poverty in case of the labourers. Narayani, the female protagonist of this novel is a labourer working under a construction company at Rai Bareilly district. She belongs to Harijan community. During that time Harijans are considered as untouchable by the upper caste people. The Harijan labourers live a marginal life. The novel describes the life struggle of the Harijan labourers during a labour strike.

Narayani is portrayed as a poverty stricken pregnant woman labourer living with her ailing husband and a baby. Narayani has an attractive body. Even her poverty is unable to fade her beauty. Narayani has been very beautiful and amiable from her girlhood. As a girl, she has always dreamt of a princely youngman who will love and take her out of her poverty. It is her beauty that has attracted a young engineer Choudhury to her. Narayani's happiness has known no bounds to be loved by such a person. She has forgotten her caste and position. Soon their relation has turned to be a

more intimate one. One day they are caught red handed while making love. The Engineer has to leave the branch within a short time. He has betrayed Narayani as he has neither informed nor casted a look at her while leaving. She has been left alone to suffer the humiliation of the people. Following that incident Narayani's life has become a hell as every youth has tried to seduce her on the street.

Narayani has undergone a psychological tumult amidst all the humiliation and insecurity. Her dream of becoming a princess ends bitterly and she, with a shattered heart, marries Shibu Dhasla, a Harijan sweeper. Thenceforth misfortune befalls on her as she has to live hand to mouth. Moreover, her drunkard husband is so ill that he cannot earn his living. She has moved from one branch to another in search of work. They have lived somehow that again another misfortune comes in the form of labour strike. They have no money even to buy milk for her baby.

The strike has made living almost impossible for the labourers. Narayani thinks of suicide to escape from her miseries. But in the next moment she decides to fight rather than die. She goes to one Thakur Sahib for help. Thakur agrees to give her money but for her body. Narayani regularly goes to Thakur Sahib's quarter at night. One night she is caught by two spies while returning home. When they have tried to snatch her possessions she cries with anger:

“Did you help me with a penny while I was asking for help carrying my pregnant belly during Dhasla's ailment? Now again by going on strike have you not snatched away food from us ... you bastards?”¹³

13. Mamoni Raisom Goswami, “Mamore Dhara Tarowal, page – 47

Narayani protests them desperately saying that it is her choice if she works as a prostitute. Narayani proves that necessity knows no laws. She becomes a prostitute for the sake of her family. Narayani hesitates to move freely after the discovery of her prostitution. Some people humiliate her openly and even throw stones at her. She has tolerated every insult silently. Now she is unable to manage money to buy medicine for her husband and milk for the baby. She becomes tired of life. But still Narayani has not given up her feminine ego. In this crucial time of her life she encounters with her former Choudhury Sahib. Choudhury offers her money but she directly refuses to take help from the man who has once played with her emotions. Narayani considers him guilty of making her life a hell. She does not want to listen to his apologies. Narayani can die of hunger but cannot lose her self respect by taking money from Choudhury.

The fire of hunger has become stronger day by day. At this time suddenly Narayani discovers that she is pregnant. She realizes that it is Thakur Sahib who has deceived her. Narayani has known Thakur Sahib to be an impotent person but actually he is not. Being extremely helpless Narayani is searching madly for any work. Then a proposal comes to her to serve her very familiar Thakur Sahib in his tent. Narayani goes to meet Thakur Sahib and makes physical relation with him. That very night she kills Thakur with an axe that her husband has brought in. Narayani's act of murder shows her inner conflict.

The novelist has transformed Narayani's psychological conflict into protest. Narayani has had ideals in life. But her poverty has compelled her to dispel her ideals and sell her body. She is suffering psychologically after being a prostitute. She understands that nobody helps without intention. Thakur Sahib gives her money only in

exchange of her body. She kills Thakur Sahib to take revenge on him as he has made her a prostitute.

2.1.5: Psychological realism in *Datal Hatir Uye Khowa Howdah*:

Mamoni Raisom Goswami uses psychological realism in her novel *Datal Hatir Uye Khowa Howdah*. In this award winning novel, through her female protagonist Giribala, the novelist exposes the psychological complexities of the widows.

Giribala is the lone daughter of a Gohain family. She is the younger sister of Indranath, the future head of a Vaishnavite monastery. She returns to her parental house as a widow. The sight of Giribala as a teenaged widow renders every one's heart. She has lost her husband Bangara Gohain only after a few months of her marriage followed by a miscarriage.

Giribala has been married off to Bangara Gohain before reaching puberty. According to the upper caste Brahmin it is customary to marry off the girls before reaching puberty. Giribala suffers from an incompatible marriage. Giribala's husband has neglected her as a wife. He has never appreciated her beauty and tender heart. He has been a man of weak moral character. Therefore Giribala has never lived happily with her husband. After the death of her husband, Giribala's mother-in-law has tortured her so much that she has got an abortion.

Giribala is a very beautiful young widow who has not seen life yet. She has to follow many rules and regulations as a Brahmin widow. It is very painful to see Giribala giving up every pleasure in such an age in the name of custom. Giribala is yet to understand the meaning of widowhood. Now she is asked not to eat non-veg; not to wear beautiful clothes; not to decorate herself beautifully etc. As a Brahmin widow she

has to worship her late husband's khadau (a kind of wooden foot wear) everyday considering him as her God. Giribala tries but fails to do it wholeheartedly as she does not have any beautiful memory with her husband to be cherished. Moreover she has not found a single virtue in her late husband to consider him as her God.

Giribala lives a colourless life devoid of all warmth and feeling. But she wants to enjoy her budding youth. At this time of her life she meets Mark Sahib who has come for research in their Sattrā. Indranath asks her to assist Mark Sahib in his work. Giribala feels that Mark Sahib has heartfelt sympathy for her helpless condition. As a young lonely girl she feels a natural attraction for this hermit like Mark Sahib. But Mark Sahib has no any intention to woo Giribala. Once, Mark Sahib has cured her of snake bite. When he cuts her wound with a sharp knife she shows no pain. She has laid in such a way that as if she was hypnotized by his touch. She seems to enjoy great pleasure in pain in the company of her dear person.

Giribala, unlike Saudamini in *Nilkanthi Braja*, has no fear of religion. She does not care for vice or virtue. She does not know how to suppress her desires. As a widow Giribala has been taking a vegetarian diet for a long time. On the feast day at her house she, being tempted by the mouthwatering scent of cooked meat forgets her custom of a widow. She also forgets:

“...for a Gohain widow it is a sin even to intake the spicy scent of cooked non-veg.” 14

14. Mamoni Raisom Goswami, *Datal Hatir Uye Khowa Howdaw*, page – 114

Giribala eats voraciously from the meat kept separately in a big pan. She is caught red handed and badly beaten by her mother. Then she has to undergo penance for her sin. The novelist has skillfully presented the whole situation to show a widows protest against the pitiable existence of the Hindu Brahmin widows. Giribala has been living the life of a widow. But her body is not ready to follow the ‘no more love’ rules of a widow. She wants to be loved. She is tormented by her biological urges. The novelist shows Giribala’s irresistible feeling in her mad approach to the silk umbrella in her room. Giribala has been left alone in a room after penance. Then she has seen the silk umbrella kept in the room. Looking at the umbrella she develops a strange desire to touch it. The touch of the silk cloth feels as the soft skin of her Christian lover Mark. She, like an insane, starts to rub the silk cloth against her neck, shoulder and breasts. While doing it she whispers:

“Take me out of this Urium wood box ... I plead you ... I plead you.”¹⁵

Giribala’s strong desire to escape from her cage shows the psychological tussel of the widows to get freedom.

Giribala does not let go any possible opportunity to show her passionate feelings to Mark Sahib. Actually she feels that Mark Sahib is the only person in this world who can unshackle her and open a new world of love and hope for her. Once she says to Mark Sahib that she cannot pass her whole life praying to the footwear of

15. Ibid., page 151

her late husband as has no existence in her memory. She also says:

“I don’t feel that I have done any sin by eating meat as a widow ... I don’t feel as a sinner even after doing penance ... I can’t live like other widows ... I will be a ghost ..”¹⁶

But saint like Mark Sahib does not response to this beautiful young widow who is surrendering herself to him. Mark Sahib advises her to keep patience. Mark feels helpless to see the sufferings of Giribala. The novelist shows the utter loneliness of the widows through the character of Giribala.

Giribala’s dream to put an end to her miserable life with the help of Mark Sahib remains uncertain as there is no response from him. On one particular day, when she has come to know that her in-laws have sent some people to take her back she becomes mad. Giribala’s fear of insecurity compels her to go to Mark Sahib for the last time. Giribala, the widow daughter of the head of a Vaishnavite monastery runs to a foreigner at midnight neglecting the hail storm over her head for a word of love. Giribala hopes to be accepted by Mark Sahib. She, drenched completely, breaks his door and enters his room like a horrified deer. She puts off her dress and becomes almost naked. Mark Sahib requests her to go back saying that she has broken the age old tradition. But Giribala is not at all ready to hear him. Looking straight to his eyes she says:

“My in-laws have sent for me ... I don’t go ... to go there or to go to crematory is the same ... I can’t go to hell alive ...”¹⁷

16. Ibid., page 151

17. Ibid., page – 219

Giribala says that she could not bind her husband with her beautiful body and mind. Her husband was never hers. So she is not ready to go back to her in-laws house to pass the rest of her life memorizing him. She urges Mark to touch her to make her feel alive. She asks him to accept her. But Mark stands stable as a monk. Saint Mark can never understand in what woe a woman can take such a test of herself. Mark, who has never come in touch of any woman, can never understand the mystery of feminine heart. He turns to be an iron man, though he feels pity for her. But the innocence of Mark Sahib is questioned by the society. The society considers their meeting as immoral. Mark has faced humiliation and Giribala has to undergo a strict penance for the sin they have not committed. Being directed by the head priest, some boys have erected a shed of dried plantain leaves. The priest has asked Giribala to enter the symbolic shed and come out just after the shed is put on fire. But Giribala, who has already decided not to live in the hellfire, has not come out of the shed even after so much pleading. Giribala sacrifices her life in the fire.

The novelist gives a painful description of the end of a young widow who has lived a miserable life. It is heart touching to hear the cry of Giribala to put fire on the shed. Giribala has completely lost hope of life. Being so hopeless she asks the people watching her purification:

“Put fire on the shed ... put fire.”¹⁸

Giribala becomes so desperate that she welcomes death rather than living such a meaningless life. Giribala's death by fire shows the desperate plight of a widow.

18. Ibid., page - 225

2.1.6: Psychological realism in Tej Aru Dhulire Dhusarita Pristha:

Tej Aru Dhulire Dhusarita Pristha shows the psychological conflict of the narrator. It must be mentioned that this novel is penned down by the 'I', the narrator who is also an eye-witness of bloody Delhi. The Delhi we find in this novel is not a Delhi of dreams but of blood shed and terror. The narrator, often considered as the author herself stands as a witness of anti Sikh riot aftermath the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984.

The narrator is mentally disturbed to witness the serial killings of Sikhs. The Sikhs are considered guilty of Indira Gandhi's murder. She has witnessed the burning shops of the Sikhs. The sky over Delhi hangs with gloom and dark smoke. The air of Delhi is filled with the smell of burning human flesh. The narrator is tortured by killings and more killings. The narrator is dumb struck hearing the Sikh baba's daughter Kuldeep's brutal murder and cutting off her breasts.

2.1.7: Psychological realism in Chinnamastar Manuhto:

Chinnamastar Manuhto also shows the psychological conflict of a tender girl Bidhibala. Bidhibala is the lone daughter of Singha Dutta Sarmah from Sualkuchi. Bidhibala's father has decided to sacrifice a buffalo at Kamakhya temple for the well being of his daughter as he has arranged her marriage. Bidhibala has no consent to this marriage. Her heart sinks at the very thought of being the second wife of a man already having two daughters. Bidhibala only at the tender age of eleven cannot make up her mind for marriage. She can predict her own future with such an aged husband.

Bidhibala has reluctantly come to Kamakhya along with her family members for sacrificing a buffalo. The buffalo is brought to Kamakhya in the same boat in which

they have come. Bidhibala is mentally disturbed by the innocent look of the buffalo. She can never imagine to sacrifice the life of such an innocent animal for her own well-being. Bidhibala cannot understand what kind of betterment does her father wish for her after deciding to give her future in the hand of such a person. Bidhibala suffers psychologically for everything. The novelist writes:

“She has been carrying a pain continuously in her heart. Why there be no pain? Pain has started at the very moment the stout man has said at her face that she is just an angel.”¹⁹

Bidhibala’s mother has objected to give her young daughter to the man with grey hair. But her father is adamant. Bidhibala is unable to digest all these. She feels as if the ugly face of the grey haired man followed her all the times. She feels exhausted.

Bidhibala comes to Kamakhya when the movement against animal sacrifice is in full swing. Under the leadership of saint Jatadhari, Ratnadhar a young follower of Jatadhari secretly campaigns against animal sacrifice at Kamakhya. Bidhibala requests him to let loose the buffalo that her father has brought to sacrifice. She is so much disturbed by the bellowing of the buffalo. She prays Goddess Durga to save the life of the calf. At the same time the ugly face of her would be husband disturbs her. The man has slept with his first wife for last ten years and now dreams to marry Bidhibala in the hope of a son. She hates the lustful look of the man. But she does not dare to go against her father.

19. Mamoni Raisom Goswami, *Chinnamastar Manuto*, page – 102

Bidhibala's father becomes ferocious at the missing of the buffalo. He, considering Ratnadhar guilty beats him badly. Now being mad with anger, Singhadatta vows to sacrifice two instead of one buffalo. The situation becomes the worst when Bidhibala busts out:

“You cannot get buffaloes. You cannot bring buffaloes. I will not marry the man already having a wife ... You cannot sacrifice buffalo ...”²⁰

At this tense moment Ratnadhar declares to marry Bidhibala if her proposed marriage cannot take place without the buffalo sacrifice. What follows next is really unimaginable for all the people. Bidhibala secretly goes away from Kamakhya with a group of prostitutes and finally returns as a dead body. The prostitutes say that she dies of hunger as she has not taken any food for a month in grief of the sacrificial buffaloes. Bidhibala, as reported by the prostitutes, has murmured as:

“My buffaloes are sacrificed. My buffaloes are sacrificed.”²¹

The novelist shows how a girl at her very tender age of eleven is touched by the cruelty of man against animal. Bidhibala finally meets a pre-matured death being grief stricken.

20. Ibid., page – 133

21. Ibid., page – 168

2.2: Psychological realism in Anita Desai's novels:

Anita Desai's novels present the concept of psychological realism. All her novels bear the aspects of psychological novel. Anita Desai's novels can be analyzed psychologically.

2.2.1: Psychological realism in *Cry, the Peacock*:

Anita Desai's first novel *Cry, the Peacock* appeared in 1963 as a milestone in the field of psychological realism. This novel proves itself to be a powerful psychoanalysis of Maya, the female protagonist of the novel. *Cry, the Peacock* presents a pen picture of a neurotic woman, Maya. Maya is the wife of Gautama, a busy practitioner of law. Maya and Gautama are quite different from each other in both manner and temperament. Maya sees life as enjoyment through the fulfillment of desires. On the otherhand, Gautama being a practical man thinks rationally about life. Maya is the only daughter of a wealthy lawyer. She has no mother and hence brought up by her father with so much love and care. Maya recalls:

“...he has looked after me alone and his beam is especially tender, his attention especially loving.”²²

Maya is so close to her father that Gautama considers it as her “father-obsession”.²³ Gautama finds her mentally immature. Gautama tries to keep her happy in his own way but Maya is not at all contented with him. She considers him as a heartless and feelingless person. Gautama, a learned and rational person has own

22. Anita Desai, *Cry, the Peacock*, page – 37

23. Ibid., page – 122

ideologies of life. He does not accomplish her childish behavior. Gautama is of her father's age and Maya takes him as her father substitute. Hence, she wants the same emotional attention from Gautama as her father gives. Maya and Gautama do not make a perfect match. The differences between them are more than enough to spoil their conjugal life. The scene would have been different if they have any off-spring. Maya's unhappy married life and sterility makes her feel alienated. Maya feels insecure and behaves strangely. Maya is continuously haunted by the idea of an early death either of her or of her husband as prophesied by an Albino astrologer in her childhood.

The death of Maya's pet dog Toto at the beginning of the novel intensifies her fear of death. She feels the presence of death everywhere. Toto's death reminds her of the Albino astrologer's prophecy of death in the fourth year of her marriage, either hers or her husband. She admits:

“... it was not my pet's death alone that I mourned today, but another sorrow, unremembered, perhaps as yet not even experienced, and filled me with this despair.”²⁴

Maya is overwhelmed with grief at the death of her pet Toto. For childless Maya, Toto was her child substitute. The novelist writes:

“Childless women do develop fanatic attachments to their pets, they say. It is no less a relationship than that of a woman and her child no less worth of reverence, and agonized remembrance.”²⁵

24. Ibid., page – 15

25. Ibid., page - 15

Maya is sorry to see that Gautama is not at all touched by the loss of Toto. Gautama considers death as a natural phenomenon. Maya, to escape from the frustration, takes resort to her happy childhood memories.

Maya compares her happy childhood to her present life as a married woman. She is not happy with her busy husband. Gautama neglects the emotional yearnings of his wife. Maya complains that he knows very little about her. Maya feels lonely. Maya's hyper- sensitivity can be understood from the following narration:

“... telling me to go to sleep while he worked on his papers, he did not give another thought to me, to either the soft, willing body or the lonely wanting mind that waited near his bed ... it is his hardness – no, no, not hardness, but the distance he coldly keeps from me. His coldness, his coldness and incessant talk of cup of tea and philosophy in order not to hear me talk and, talking, reveal myself. It is that – my loneliness in this house.”²⁶

Maya's loneliness hastens her fear of death, an early one, as predicted by the Albino astrologer in her childhood. The Albino astrologer's words have still been echoing in her ears.

She is preoccupied with death. This fear of death follows her like a shadow everywhere. When she approaches her husband Gautama to share her problems or her fear of death, he just put a deaf ear to her saying that her fear is baseless. Gautama

26. Ibid., page – 14.

fails to provide his wife with a faithful company in the hour of need. Maya's father could redeem her fear of the deadly shadow but Gautama fails to soothe her. Thus Maya becomes more and more lonely. Maya's loneliness affects her psyche so much that she becomes neurotic. Maya's neurotic state is symbolized by the use of different animal images. The image of a lizard is repeatedly used to refer to her sick mind. Maya desperately tells Gautama:

“Oh, you know nothing of me and of how can I love. How I want to love. How it is important to me. But you, you've never loved. And you don't love me.”²⁷

Maya complains Gautama that he does not love her. Gautama's inattentive nature makes Maya lonelier and frustrated. She is becoming more and more obsessed with the prediction of death. According to the Albino astrologer the tragedy would befall on them in the fourth year of their marriage. Sadly it is the fourth year and Maya becomes almost mentally imbalanced. Even insensible Gautama senses some danger when he sees strangeness in her behavior. Gautama could have saved Maya from her tragedy but he is unable to conceive her inner woman and also her desires. Maya's insanity is multiplied by her lack of sexual satisfaction. The novelist describes

Maya's crave for private intimacy for carnal pleasure:

“...longing to be with him, be close to him ... make haste in undressing ... But when I went to rouse him from the couch, with a touch, I saw that he had closed his eyes not with mere tiredness,

27. Ibid., page - 96

but in profound, invulnerable sleep, and was very far from any would of mine, however enticing.”²⁸

Maya is love-famished. She is childless. She is lonely, depressed and frustrated. In this situation the dance within her has grown more and more disturbing. The images of the Albino astrologer, the kathakali dancer, the Peacock the bronze Shiva come to her mind one after another. Finally Maya becomes insane. Maya feels:

“Am I gone insane? Father ! brother ! husband ! who is my savior? I am in need of one. I am dying, and I am in love with living ... There is no rest any more – only death and waiting”²⁹

Gautama does not understand her emotional hungers. Maya longs for his company and enjoy life before death. She hears the scream of the peacocks for mating. The peacocks fight before making love. The peacocks are in love with life before death.

“Living, they are aware of death. Dying they are in love with life”.³⁰

Maya is also in love with life before death. She enquires if Gautama has heard the peacocks cry for love making. But Gautama fails to hear them. Maya comes to a conclusion that Gautama loves neither life nor her. Therefore he has no right to live in this world. She, in a fit of agony hurls Gautama down from the terrace of her house and kills him. Maya’s insanity turns her to a murderer. Finally she also commits suicide to put an end to all her psychological problems.

28. Ibid., page – 81

29. Ibid., page – 84

30. Ibid., page – 83

2.2.2: Psychological realism in *Voices in the City*:

Anita Desai's *Voices in the City* is also an example of psychological novel. Here the novelist analyses the psychic turmoil of the three siblings– Nirode, Monisha and Amla. All of them are educated, sensitive and self-conscious. They are bound by circumstances to leave their home town Delhi and live in Calcutta. They have come from Kalimpong in search of a new life; a new identity.

Nirode Roy, in the very beginning of the novel, comments that life is unfair. Nirode's discontentment with life can be understood from his approach to life. Nirode is frustrated of his meaningless existence. He is lonely. For him

“aleness alone is the sole natural condition, aleness alone the treasure worth treasuring.”³¹

Nirode considers himself as a failure in life. He has a mother-fixation and hates his widow mother, as she has become the mistress of Major Chaddha. He develops a hatred for the women folk except his sisters.

Nirode has an artistic mind. He has self-respect. He wants to earn for his living. But he does not want to lose his self respect by working any valueless work under any dishonest person. He wants mental satisfaction first from his work rather than money. Therefore he suffers from depression while executing the task of cut and paste strips of newspaper as that does not require any creative art. He dreams to open a book shop of his own where he will keep dictionaries, scholarly text books, first editions etc.

31. Anita Desai, *Voices in the City*, page - 24

Nirode wishes to establish his individual 'self'. He suffers mentally in the process of establishing himself in the society. He knows that it is not an easy task to establish himself in this devil city. Nirode considers Calcutta as a "beastly, blood-thirsty Calcutta".³² He starts a journal of creative writing called 'Voice' but soon it proves to be a failure. Nirode's rejection of the reality brings him failure after failure. His lack of dedication, hardwork and positive energy lead him to fail in every attempt that he makes to prove himself in the society. Nirode hesitates to start afresh in fear of being disappointed again.

"He was wearied by his own unsureness in which he swept back and forth like a long weed undulating under water ... he was intense enough to be capable of whole-hearted dedication – yet he drifted, a shadowy cipher and his life consisted of one rejection following another."³³

He also refuses to be known with "the family name, family money, family honour."³⁴ Finally Nirode is rescued from failure, poverty and death by his sister Monisha. He starts his own business as a second-hand bookseller and tries his luck in Calcutta.

Monisha, like Maya in "*Cry, the Peacock*", is a victim of incompatible marriage. She is married to a rich man Jiban against her will. Like Maya, she is also haunted by death. Monisha records her psychic turmoil in a diary. She is a very passive woman. She is a prey of marital disharmony. Monisha's husband Jiban is an

32. Ibid., page – 96

33. Ibid., page – 60-64

34. Ibid., page – 156

Officer in a Government department. He is a passive and dull husband. Monisha is quite unhappy with him. Jiban's big joint family is a problem for Monisha as she is unable to adjust to the family. The first unpleasant experience for Monisha in her in-laws house is the tradition of touching the feet of a large number of elders. She gets tired by touching so many feet.

Monisha, like Maya in "*Cry, the Peacock*", is a childless woman. She suffers mentally for her sterility. The family members talk openly about her inability to bear a child. She feels as if she had laid naked in front of them. She feels:

“...my ovaries, my tubes, all my recesses moist with blood, washed in blood, laid bare to their scrutiny.”³⁵

Nobody feels pity for her physical problems. They talk only about her 'blocked tubes'. Every day she is reminded of her childlessness.

Monisha suffers from existential problem. Monisha, in the course of her self-discovery loses herself. Unlike Maya in "*Cry, the Peacock*", Monisha has an overcrowded family. Maya suffers being lonely in her house. On the contrary Monisha suffers in a joint family. Monisha feels herself pity for her mean existence. She is unable to pretend. She feels:

“To sort the husk from the rice, to wash and iron and to talk and sleep, when this is not what one believes in at all? What force of will does it require to shed ---- alternative to my confused despair,

35. Ibid., page – 113

there is nothing I can give myself to -----”³⁶

Actually she wants to live a clean, husked and irreducible life. But now her life is completely different from that of her imagination. She feels a psychological breakdown to live a non-identical life.

Monisha wants to maintain a separate identity from that of her fellow women. But she fails to elevate herself because of her neurotic despair. She wants some space for herself but her sister-in-laws interfere in her life without being aware of it. They often come to her private room and continuously discuss about Monisha’s blocked fallopian tubes. She feels suffocated in such an environment. She feels trapped in her in-laws house. She fails to perceive herself as a member of the family. She considers herself and the other Bengali women as caged birds. She writes:

“I see many women, always Bengali women, who follow five paces behind their men ... like the female birds in the cages ... Lives spent in waiting for nothing, waiting on men self-centred and indifferent and hungry and demanding and critical, waiting for death.”³⁷

Monisha’s husband Jiban is a busy person who has no time for his wife. Like Gautama, in *Cry, the Peacock*, Jiban is insensitive and indifferent. He cannot provide his wife with emotional security. He does not know how to support his wife at the time of distress. Monisha feels that Jiban is not with her. He could have helped her to consider herself

36. Ibid., page – 121-122

37. Ibid., page -120

as a member of his family, but not as a separate part. He never raises his voice supporting her even when she is right. There is no warmth in their conjugal life. Jiban is totally influenced by his family. Once when some money he kept in the wardrobe is found missing, he directly suspects his wife. He does not try to know the fact.

Instead he supports his family who unanimously considers her as thief. This unexpected accusation has made Monisha to suffer psychologically. Monisha is accused of theft of her husband's money. This incident has created a tumult in her heart. Monisha complains:

“They think me a thief. To be regarded so low by men and women themselves so low ... I find that I am alone.”³⁸

Monisha's loneliness makes her impulsive to live a life almost in 'exile' in Jiban's house. Her loneliness turns to be self-destructive. She feels pity for herself. She cannot take refuge to religion as she does not believe in it fully. She feels dwarfed. She locks herself in her room and tries to find herself by reading books. To mention here, Monisha has brought her valuable books with her when she comes to Jiban's house as a bride. She reads books to feel superior to her in-laws and also to feel self important. She compares herself with her younger sister Amla. Monisha realizes:

“Oh not little now – with all her talents, her career, her confidence, her gaiety, she is very large indeed, much larger than I. I grow smaller every day, shrink and lose more and more of my weight,

38. Ibid., page – 136

my apporpenances the symbols of my existence that used to establish me in the eyes of this world. I am already too small to be regarded much by anyone. I will be invisible yet.”³⁹

She feels inferior to her sister. But her sister Amla is also not happy in life. Amla marries a promising painter Dharma in hope of a prosperous life. Amla very soon realizes the futility of human existence.

Monisha thinks of going back to her mother. But she does not want to bring disgrace to her mother by going back from her in-laws house. She feels traceless, meaningless and uninvolved. She finds no hope and utility of life. Finally she decides to leave this life which is already a non-existence. She does not want to die day by day in every moment. Instead she chooses to die as Maya did. Monisha, being tortured by her own neurosis commits suicide by self immolation.

Thus Anita Desai presents the psychological realism mainly through Monisha in the novel.

2.2.3: Psychological realism in Bye -Bye Blackbird:

Bye-Bye Blackbird depicts the psychological problems of Indian immigrants in England. The novel is a psychological analysis of the love-hate relationship of the immigrants towards their adopted country. The inner conflict and crisis of the characters exhibit what every immigrant undergoes in their adopted countries. The novel presents the story of Adit Sen, Dev and Adit's English wife Sarah. Both Adit

39. Ibid., page - 139

and Dev have come to England in search of material pleasure. Adit marries an English girl Sarah and lives happily in London and then, Dev joins them.

Dev comes to England with a hope to establish himself in this promising land. But he feels humiliated and neglected as a newcomer. Dev feels upset to know that the English people call the Indians as ‘Macaulay’s bastards’⁴⁰. He is disheartened to see that London docks have three kinds of lavatories – Ladies, Gents and Asiatics. He feels insulted when a pedlar refuses to tell him the price of a Russian icon. Dev realizes that he is not welcomed and hence should not live in his new country of despair. He says:

“I wouldn’t live in a country where I was insulted and unwanted.”⁴¹

But finally the wheel turns and Dev develops an attraction towards the new country and decides to try his luck.

Adit Sen is satisfied with his London life as well as his English wife. He has been working as a clerk in a tourist agency off the old Brompton Road. He is very much proud of his English life. He comments:

“I have every right to enjoy them – because of my education, my tastes, my interest in them, admire English.”⁴²

Adit expresses his displeasure if any immigrant fails to adjust in the new country. Adit’s English wife Sarah supports him. Suddenly Adit’s life takes a new turn. He

40. Anita Desai, *Bye -Bye Blackbird*, page – 121

41. *Ibid.*, page - 19

42. *Ibid.*, page – 160

feels no taste for his English life. Adit becomes nostalgic and homesick. Adit decides:

“No England! I’ve done with England now. Sarah I am going back ... to India.”⁴³

He wants to leave for India along with his pregnant wife. He feels so homesick that he decides:

“He will be born in India, ...my son will be born in India.”⁴⁴

The novelist unfurls the psyche of Sarah Sen. Sarah is practical and balanced as a wife of an immigrant Indian. Sarah is a dutiful wife who loves her husband. But still there is a void. Sarah is different from Adit both in colour and attitude. Sarah is a Christian and Adit, a Hindu. The marriage between Adit and Sarah seems to be the marriage between India and England. Sarah does not feel comfortable in Indian saree and jewellery. She feels as a foreigner as she is unable to commute to Adit’s Indian friends and relatives freely.

Sarah undergoes a psychological tussle after her marriage with a black Asiatic man Adit. She has broken the social code of England by marrying Adit. Now Sarah is teased by her fellow Englishmen for marrying Adit. She tries to avoid any personal question regarding her married life, future plan and in-laws in India. Once, looking at her helplessness one of her colleague’s comments:

43. Ibid., page – 198

44. Ibid., page – 199

“If she’s ashamed of having an Indian husband why did she go and marry him?”⁴⁵

She is teased in the streets and in her work place. She suffers so much from identity crisis that she herself wonders where the actual Sarah is. There is anguish in her. Adit considers it her loneliness as “she had become nameless, she had shed her name as she had shed her ancestry and identity ...”⁴⁶

Sarah also thinks:

“Who was she – Mrs. Sen who had been married in a red and gold Benaras Brocade Sari ... or Mrs. Sen, the Head’s secretary, who sent out the bills and took in the cheques ... Both these creatures were frauds one in the morning at school and one in the evening at home. They were roles – and when she was not playing them, she was nobody.”⁴⁷

Therefore he wants to take her to enjoy her time with her old friend. But Sarah directly refuses his proposal. Actually she wants to keep herself away from her old acquaintances in fear of being insulted. It becomes impossible for her to go out with a free mind. She feels as if her own people are watching her scornfully. Sarah takes the shortcut to her house to avoid being seen. While walking in the street she hurries her

45. Ibid., page - 39

46. Ibid., page - 31

47. Ibid., page – 36

steps to hide herself from the people, from their curiosity, their questions and also from their touch. Looking at Sarah's pace one of her neighbours feels as if police was after her.

Sarah develops a schizophrenia Sarah wonders if she has any existence at all. She wonders if she would ever allow to enter the real world whether English or Indian. Sarah's dilemma is well explained through her endeavor to compose Indian music being played by Adit and Dev into a pattern, a harmony. But she fails at the end. Finally Sarah decides to say goodbye to her England. Therefore she insists on going back to India so soon as possible.

2.2.4: Psychological realism in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* :

Anita Desai's '*Where Shall We Go this Summer?*' is a study of feminine psyche. Here again we have a neurotic woman like Maya, the heroine of '*Cry, the Peacock*'. The most important point to be mentioned is that while Maya is a childless woman Sita is fed up with giving birth of children. Like Maya in '*Cry, the Peacock*' and Monisha in '*Voices in the City*'. Sita is also a victim of ill-matched marriage.

Sita is sensitive and emotional. She has high values of life as a wife and as a mother. Raman is cool, curious and uncomprehending. He is practical and rational as Gautama, Maya's husband. He is neither an introvert nor an extrovert. She is living with her husband and their four children.

Sita, now a middle aged woman is pregnant with her fifth child. She is tired of already giving birth to four children and now her fifth pregnancy seems to be a burden

for her. She thinks:

“Children? Children only mean anxiety, concern – pessimism. Not happiness – what other women call happiness is – just sentimentality.”⁴⁸

Sita feels an emotional void during her fifth pregnancy. She suffers from loneliness to a great extent. She feels alienated from her husband Raman. She becomes frustrated and aggressive. Sita’s behavior undergoes a drastic change. She “continuously breaks apart into violent eruptions of emotion.”⁴⁹ She looks dry and worn out. She smokes openly to show her agony.

Sita does not want to give birth of her baby. She informs her husband Raman:

“...I don’t want to have the baby...”⁵⁰

Sita adds:

“I mean I want to keep it – I don’t want it to be born.”⁵¹

Sita means that she wants to keep her baby inside her womb by not giving birth to it. She wants to stop the natural process of birth. Sita, in order not to give birth of her baby wishes to go to Manori island as she considers it as a magic island. She madly believes that miracle can happen at Manori. But her husband considers her ‘mad’. Raman asserts that it is impossible to stop giving birth and she cannot go to the island where there is no facility of a safe delivery.

48. Anita Desai, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, page – 134

49. *Ibid.*, page – 18

50. *Ibid.*, page - 30

51. *Ibid.*, page – 32

Raman says:

“You must stay where there is a doctor, a hospital and a telephone. You can’t go to the island in the middle of the monsoon. You can’t have a baby there.”⁵²

Sita raises her voice against her husband’s ‘you can’t’. Sita says ‘no’ to Raman as she considers that it is the time to say the great Yes or No. Sita moves like a pendulum between the “yes” and “no”. Sita recalls the poem of Cavaly that talks about saying “yes or no”. She says ‘no’ to her meaningless existence and wants to escape to live a meaningful life.

Sita is mentally sick. The lack of proper communication between Raman and Sita is very much responsible for her disturbed psyche. Moreover Sita’s hypersensibility and overwhelming despair add fuel to the fire. She considers people as pariahs:

“They are nothing – nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter. Animals.”⁵³

Sita has never tried to adjust in the house of her in-laws. She has revolted against their subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness. She is unhappy with their vegetarian complacency. Sita starts smoking in front of everyone to show her contempt. But Raman’s family members digest everything silently only to maintain the family bond. Finally Raman moves to a small flat by the sea to keep Sita happy.

52. Ibid., page - 30

53. Ibid., page 43

But the sea fails to bring her peace of mind. She exclaims:

“Bored? How? Why? With what?”⁵⁴

Sita is alienated not from the society but her ‘self’. Sita wants to make herself happy.

Sita is already a tired mother. She is afraid to take the responsibility of a new born baby again. Thinking about her baby:

“Through her mind flowed a white, flapping succession in nappies, vests
... that would have to be gathered together. She could see the
expressionless faces of the night nurses in the gyne ward.”⁵⁵

Sita wishes to go to Manori island where she has passed her childhood. Sita, accompanied by two of her children escapes to Manori with a hope that a miracle will happen to her. Sita’s journey to Manori ends with a shock that Manori is no longer the island of her childhood. It has been changed utterly. But for Sita “she has come on a pilgrimage, to beg for the miracle of keeping her baby unborn.”⁵⁶

Sita already accustomed with the life of the island finds it the least problematic whereas her children are unable to adjust with the same. Having been fed up with the lifeless life of the island Sita’s daughter Menaka secretly writes to her father to take her back to Bombay. Raman arrives at the island as demanded by his daughter. When Sita comes to know that Raman has not come deliberately to take her back she feels disheartened. Sita feels ashamed and disappointed. Sita’s face looks like the face of a woman unloved and rejected. Sita starts considering her children as traitors. She

54. Ibid., page – 45

55. Ibid., page – 139

56. Ibid., page – 28

realizes that her marriage with Raman is a farce marriage. She is surprised to know that Raman is unaware that she is bored, dull, unhappy and frantic. Sita is not ready to go back with Raman to her normal life in Bombay. Finally Sita realizes her limitations. She considers her husband Raman more capable than her in arranging things. Raman never hesitates to do his duties. He never escapes from his responsibilities as she has done. Sita understands that the children have turned to their father only for these qualities that she lacks. For Raman:

“...life must be continued and all its business ...”⁵⁷

Sita returns to her house at Bombay with her husband as she starts believing that life is nothing but a compromise. Sita acknowledges the reality of life at the end of the novel.

2.2.5: Psychological realism in *Fire on the Mountain*:

Anita Desai's fifth novel *Fire on the Mountain* is an exploration of the inner psyche of the female protagonist Nanda Kaul. Nanda Kaul is not an ordinary wife or a mother. Nanda Kaul is the widowed wife of a Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University. She is tired of playing roles as a wife and a mother. Nanda has lived a fruitless life being alienated from her own family. The novelist writes:

“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

57. Ibid., page – 127

lifelong affair with Miss David, the Mathematics Mistress, whom he had not married because she was a Christian but whom he loved, all his life loved. And her children – the children were all alien to her nature. She neither understood nor loved them.”⁵⁸

Nanda has discharged her duties and over duties. She has done more than enough to all the people around her but has got nothing in return. She has lived a hectic life looking after all her children and maintaining her outlook as a Vice Chancellor’s wife. She does not want any more responsibility. She is tired of serving so many visitors as a Vice Chancellor’s wife. Now after the death of her husband she also wants to resign and withdraw from her busy life. Nanda wants to live the last part of her life all by herself without any interference. Therefore she decides to go and live all alone at Carignano like a recluse.

Nanda has come to live at Carignano in Kasauli hills. She wants:

“... to be alone, to have Carignano to herself in this period of life ...”⁵⁹

She has developed a hatred for her children and family. She wants no more to be connected with the world outside Carignano. Nanda Kaul is so much tortured mentally in her life that she wants to forget her past completely. Nanda’s Vice Chancellor husband has betrayed her by keeping a mistress. Nanda’s identity as a Vice

58. Ibid., page – 158

59. Ibid., page – 45

Chancellor's wife arises jealousy in some people. But only Nanda knows how it feels to be neglected and betrayed by one's husband. She has no courage to stand against her husband in fear of the society. Nanda has lost her individuality.

Nanda likes Carignano as it has nothing to do with her past. Here, in this deserted house there is everything she has wanted all throughout her life. Carignano is the place that she has wanted to live. Nanda feels:

“She wanted no one and nothing else. Whatever else came or happened here, would be an unwelcome intrusion and distraction.”⁶⁰

Suddenly a letter comes with the news of the arrival of her great-grand-daughter at kasauli. This news disturbs the life stream of Nanda Kaul making her restless. The reaction is that she gets angry. She wonders:

“Is it wrong? Have I not done enough and had enough? I want no more. I want nothing? Can I not be left with nothing?”⁶¹

Nanda has asked for nothing but peace. Now her world will no longer be hers with the arrival of Raka, her great grand-daughter. Raka is like a noose that is going to slip once more round her neck that she has thought is freed finally. Raka means a new responsibility and Nanda is not ready to take it. Here we are reminded of Sita, the

60. Ibid., page – 3

61. Ibid., page – 18

female protagonist of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*. Sita does not want to give birth of her baby in her womb as she is not ready to take any more responsibility. Sita is already fed up with children as Nanda Kaul. But finally Sita accepts the reality and gets ready to welcome her fifth baby. The same way Nanda also makes up her mind to welcome and take care of her great grand-daughter.

Raka is as alienated as her great grand-mother Nanda. She is aware of her loneliness. She sings:

“I’m ship wrecked, I’m ship wrecked and alone.”⁶²

Raka has undergone a psychological disturbance from her very childhood. Raka is a victim of her parent’s unhealthy conjugal life. She has a traumatic childhood as she has witnessed her drunken father beating his ailing mother. Raka’s unpleasant experiences have taken her childhood pleasure from her. She is no more childlike. She becomes self-sufficient. Raka is unusual as a child. Even her name does not match her anyway. Nanda thinks:

“Raka – what an utter misnomer ... Raka meant the moon, but this child was not round faced, calm or radiant ... she looked like one of those dark crickets that leap up in fright but do not sing, or a mosquito, minute and fine, on thin, precarious legs.”⁶³

Raka does not bother about her great grand-mother. She ignores her so calmly and totally that it makes Nanda breathless. Nanda realizes that Raka is not like any

62. Ibid., page – 45

63. Ibid., page – 52

other common child, nor like any of her children or grand children. Raka has no need except that she wants to be left alone. She lives her own secret life amongst the rocks and pines of kasauli. Finally Nanda feels attracted to this tiny creature Raka. She considers Raka no more as an intruder but as her own great grand-daughter. Nanda Kaul understands:

“If Nanda Kaul was a recluse out of vengeance for a long life of duty and obligation, her great grand-daughter was a recluse by nature, by instinct.”⁶⁴

Raka is an explorer of the nature. Nature never makes her tired. She turns to nature for she finds peace in her lap. Raka’s disturbed psyche finally compels her to put the forest on fire at the end of the novel.

2.3: Conclusion:

It is understood from the above discussion of the novels of both the novelists concerned that their characters: Giribala, Saudamini, Nirmala, Narayani, Maya, Monisha, Sita, Nanda- all go through a psychological conflict that questions their existence successfully. The two novelists are experts in exploring the inner turmoil of their characters. They bring out the mental sufferings of their characters resulting in loneliness, hyper-tension, suicide, murder etc. They have shown how the psychological disturbance sometimes gives birth of a neurotic Maya. The novelists also show how

64. Ibid., page – 52

extreme mental agony leads the characters: Giribala, Saudamini, Maya, Monisha to suicide to escape from their problems.

Thus, the novels of both the writers under consideration expose the inner realities of their characters. They have successfully explored the psyche of their characters.