

# *Clear Light of Day: A Study of Personal Relationship and Harmony*

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**Abstract:** Anita Desai has also given a new dimension to the various aspects of the concepts of motherhood in the novel. Though Anita Desai is feministic in her tone, she chooses not to go beyond treating women as an individual and has brought to light the importance of personal relationships especially in the institution of marriage for the attainment of harmony in life, and has sought maternity, that may be in the form of nurturing or sustaining mother as a means to gain totality of being. She has tried to project the fact that neither fantasy and imagination nor reality and reason can be all in all for an individual and that one has to go beyond the imagined and the literal to strike a balance between all aspects of life, to attain a vision, that wholeness and perfection of life, which every individual craves for can be attained not in aloofness but in love. Such a state can only be achieved by approaching life and relationships without any pre-conceived notions or prejudices and by giving up aloofness. Motherhood has a well-established image in the human mind and Anita Desai extends this image to a new reality she projects through the character of Bim who though unmarried successfully strives for and achieves. *Clear Light of Day* shows with stark clarity three images of motherhood in Mrs. Das, Mira Masi and Bim and shatters the myth that being a biological mother provides a celestial gratification and ties the mother and her progeny in an unbreakable bond.

**Keywords:** Harmony, Marriage, Relationship, Pathetic, Influences, Domestic.

Infact as the novel projects motherhood is a state of mind, a tie of love and affection and a desire to nurture which may not have anything to do with being a biological mother Mrs. Das shows total lack of concern and maternal instinct for her children and considers that her duty of a mother is over after the birth of her children. Then there is Mira Masi who widowed soon after an unconsummated marriage nurtures Tara Bim, Raja and Baba as her own children looking after their physical and material needs and finally there is Bim who evolves as the novel progresses to become the family's support system providing emotional sustenance to each of her brothers and sister to ultimately become the real mother figure in the novel. Infact Bim shatters the pre- established image of a woman as well as of the concept of motherhood by choosing to stay single, to be a surrogate mother to her siblings and emerge as a fully realized character in the novel. The earlier part of the novel depicts anger, bitterness and ego which seem to disrupt the pattern of life, but these are brought under control through removing the flaw in love, proper understanding and a forgiving attitude. The novel also deals with time in relation with eternity - a domain of psychological novel and what Anita Desai states: "time as destroyer, and preserver, and the effects of the bondage of time on her characters"(Rao 187).

The novel traces the story of physical and emotional growth of its protagonists and their journey through life. From their early childhood Raja and Bim find a greater mental and temperamental affinity with each other than with their other brother and sister, Tara and Baba. Raja and Bim are bold and possess a fiery spirit. Baba is congenitally handicapped and is unable to learn beyond a few simple things and Tara is very

sensitive. "The childhood closeness is lost gradually as the children grow older and become aware of their different dreams and aspirations and seek fulfilment of their dreams. Raja, Bim and Tara realize the dullness of their household and the strange distance between the world of adults and children. The Das home had seen many a childhood drama and it is these that are conjured up in the collective memory of Tara and Bim until, upon their completion, Bim and Tara realize a sense of the worth of their sibling relationship". (Jamkhandi 246)

During their childhood, the Das home is a place for deaths, bridge games and a place wherein they wait for something exciting to happen. Mr. and Mrs. Das cause disintegration in the lives of their children by their indifferent and negligent attitude towards the family. They are either physically absent from the house or when at home they are too occupied in the papery world of cards. Their names itself are symbolic of their being slaves to the pleasures of playing cards. Their separate world of club and card games creates a chasm between the parents and the children, and they do not pay any attention to their children's need of love. This attitude of theirs makes Raja and Bim violent and Tara substitutes them with Aunt Mira, who becomes a surrogate mother (Jamkhandi 247), not only to Tara but to Bim, Raja and Baba as well. She sees to their needs temporarily, be they emotional or physical. Mr. Das presence creates terror bound silence and in his absence, the mother is expected to reign, but she too cannot absent herself from the club. The cries of the mentally retarded baby also cannot move her to be aware of her responsibility as a mother. She is a mother who thinks that her duty is over after the birth of the child, and transfers the child to the care of the 'ayah. Her negligence makes the children suffer. Mrs. Das proves to be a failure as a housewife and a mother for she performs only three things dominating the husband, children and servants, playing cards and enhancing her beauty with the help of artificial makeup, while her children are left to suffer the ignominy of an uncaring home. The children's souls crave for warmth of love, security and company and they long for someone who would attend to their problems. This makes the children vulnerable and makes a childlike Bim grow mature at a young age and Tara and Raja to run away from home. Even during Mrs. Das's illness the children are not taken to the hospital to see the ailing mother on the pretext that it is useless to see the unconscious mother. Mr. Das though suffers the pangs of would be separation, yet he does not share his grief with his children. Mr. Das is so involved in himself that he does not even bother to console the children and nor does the mother show any signs of her wish to talk to her children. Neither does the mother show her anxiety regarding the children and nor does the father bother to console the children which forces them to turn to their Aunt for consolation.

The parents' attitudes leave the children in an emotional turmoil so much so that when their parents die, they are not torn by grief of separation and their death does not seem to make a difference in the young one's lives. The role of parents remains unimportant to them and as a result they feel guilty and awkward when people pay a formal visit to their house. The parent's death is mourned mainly by their companion card players. The only difference that their death makes in the children's lives is that their temporary absence becomes permanent. Files, shoes and a car are the things that remind them of their parents and not the day to

day happenings. Their father does not even insure his children's future because of his negligence in business, leaving everything in the hands of the manager. The children get rid of his memory as fast as possible. This brings to light the point made earlier and proves it, that what sustains life is not merely money or biological relationships, but bonds of love, care and affection.

Bim is presented as a mature, reasonable and a strong character and an improved form of all the earlier women protagonists and seems to have a greater depth of understanding and vision. She is commendably capable of judging her potentialities and evaluating the direction towards which she is heading (Goel 37). Her name is symbolic of the characteristic of the protagonist. Bim (short name for Bimla) hints towards a strong overwhelming, dominating and towering personality of the character. She is defiant and martial according to her name. Her physical structure - the big nose and square shoulders befit her name. In the end she gets rid of all the dirty qualities like bitterness, anger and misunderstanding. Clear light of day dawns on her the conclusion is also hinted at by her thought provoking meaningful name (Vimla) free from dirt. (Bahri 751) Bim being the eldest child suffers most at the hands of her parents because of their uncaring attitude, but even then she is not given to fantasies and dreams and is realistic, practical, duteous and ambitious in a worldly practical way Her mother's illness, Father's occupation and Aunt Mira's insignificance influences Bim's future course of action when she decides to remain a spinster and shoulder the responsibilities of her family. R.S.Sharma rightly says, "Bim...is symbolic of forces that have sustained the foundation of all family life. She becomes symbolic of the archetypal sustaining mother" (Sharma 137). She tries to get rid of the hopeless dull atmosphere of the house by using her stamina and vigour by doing well in every field, be it studies or games or fine Arts.

She like her brother Raja who is of the same age group as her- is bold, independent and possesses a fiery spirit. Although Tara as well admires their young brother immensely, Bim alone is able to keep pace with him. If Raja aspires to be a 'hero', Bim aspires to be a 'heroine'. If Raja makes Lord Byron his ideal, Bim idealizes women like Florence Nightingale and Joan of Arc. Single selfless women are her Goddesses and following them she opts out of marriage and chooses to stay single.

Bim identifies herself with Raja and tries to be his equal intellectually and emotionally. Initially, Bim has an urge to enter the male domain which is seen in her wish to copy Raja by wearing his trousers and smoking cigarettes like him. She rebels against the traditional image of a woman as her ambitions lie in being independent and becoming a liberated woman in the true sense of the word and she does succeed in becoming one. She enters the male world by becoming the sole breadwinner of the parental home by working as a lecturer and by her ability, to argue with, and on topics of male interest. She is sceptical of and does not approve the docile submission of Tara to her husband Bakul and her family. While being strong willed and possessing a decisive nature she draws praise from men like Bakul. Her interests lie in reading, unlike other women known to her and she looks down upon frivolous yet conventionally accepted things like jewellery, clothes and parties, and for this reason, she thinks of Misra sisters as dull and uncultivated. Her

refusal to accept the pearl string, a gift from Raja disrupts her relations with him and earns for her the name of being stubborn and dominating. The year 1947 comes as the year to test the ability of Bim as a mother. With three patients to look after and a growing sister who adds to her liability by remaining out late at night, Bim gets overburdened with too many responsibilities. She looks after her father's business and marries off Tara and tends to the sick, which proves her to be strong willed and independent and capable enough to shoulder responsibilities all by herself. Even when Bim is attacked by a swarm of bees, she asks Tara to escape, which symbolizes Bim's readiness to bear the burden of life all alone, and Tara's escapist attitude. Bim's shouldering all responsibilities by herself, make her appear twenty times older than her actual age, a resultant of all worries with no one to give her a helping hand. Though at one point of time she gets an urge to discuss her worries with Dr. Biswas, but then she decides not to, for she being a woman of strong will, she dislikes to reveal her weakness to others, and hence her comparison to the hedge. The way the hedge conceals the house like-wise she too hides her real self. She dislikes sympathizers like Dr. Biswas and Bakul who offer her help. Her rejection of marriage offered by Dr. Biswas who presents himself as a saviour and wants to bring Bim out of the atmosphere of sickness and anxieties, makes people like Dr. Biswas lose confidence in themselves and thus make him stutter and behave abnormally in her presence. Aunt Mira's fate further strengthens her resolve to stay single, though at one stage of the novel she is drawn towards the doctor, who appears to hold a promise of bringing her happiness through his gentleness and considerate attitude, but even this phase passes soon and the whole idea of marriage repulses her. Her excessive attachment with Raja also prevents her from acquiring any harmony with the doctor and ultimately, she rejects the doctor's proposal for marriage which proves her to be a woman of courage who can forsake her pleasures for the sake of her duty.

Bim willingly chooses the path of being a solitary hunter in life rather than compromising and accepting the relationship with a person whose nature is contradictory to her own. She acts as a dutiful mother in the case of Tara's marriage with Bakul, and very much like a conventional mother by being thoughtful and comprehensive regarding Tara's marriage and at the same time acts like a modern mother by allowing Tara's will in her right to marriage. Without a speck of jealousy, she considers Bakul to be the right match for her sister and marries her to Bakul allowing her to run away from the sick, dull atmosphere and burdens of responsibilities of her parental home. This shows her large heartedness and her self-confidence to deal with challenges of life all by herself.

Aunt Mira's pathetic life as a widow influences Bim to a large extent so that she chooses not to enter the institution of marriage and inculcates in her, love for nursing. She develops a sub-conscious attachment with her Aunt, who at the time when the children needed a mother, was there to tend to their needs, which fulfilled her role of a mother who cared and that is why her Aunt's death, affects Bim's psyche so much that even after Aunt Mira's death, Bim continues to see her ghost. The warm motherly link between the Aunt and Bim is broken and Bim is unable to accept her Aunt's death and the severing of their emotional bond and she feels that the Aunt is still there in her memory to guide her and give her company in sorrow.

After Tara and Aunt Mira's separation Bim gets emotionally close to Raja during his illness and shares his liking as well, for Lord Byron and defends him for his association with Hyder Ali's family on humane grounds. She visits Hyder Ali's family as a responsibility and advises him for his independent thinking and also sides with him in his wish to pursue Islamic studies. For Bim "Raja was truly the stuff of which heroes are made. She was convinced" (Desai 45). She provides him company during his sick days and supports him in every aspect and turn of life. Her admiration of Raja and support for him depicts the fact that she herself wanted to be independent like him and enter the male domain, which she does to an extent. But soon Raja deserts all near and dear include the old house in search of a new world. His marrying Benazir and then adopting their life style creates new interests between Raja and Bim.

Bim feels deserted and rejected, but she does not show her emotions and faces the situation and consoles herself by saying that now her responsibilities have been lessened even though she has to live in isolation. Her attachment to Raja cause in her a kind of bad feeling after he leaves them and this results in her developing a disliking for Hyder All's family. Raja then becomes a landlord of the house Bim stays in and his casual letter to her concerning the house hurts her and creates bitterness in her which extends to over twenty years. In her heart she does expect Raja to help her in her family affairs but her ego is hurt when Raja tries to console her burdened self with mere sympathy. The language of the letter is interpreted by her, to be satirical and offensive. The offer of being allowed to live in the house with Baba at the rent they were paying earlier, hurts her immensely for she hates to be considered poor and feels offended by the turn of normal, tender, warm relationships between her and her brother to a relation of an owner and a tenant. Raja's actions create anger and contempt in her, yet in her love for Raja, she interprets this changed behaviour to be a result of his association with the Hyder Ali family which though rich in money, was emotionally sterile and given only to satiation of physical pleasures. She begins to hate Tara as well and dissociates herself from all, not realising the negativity in the whole affair.

A girl who excelled in every field earlier, becomes negligent towards life which is noticed in her shabby appearance, in worn and untidy clothes of Baba, in the neglected house which needs repair and above all cleanliness: Like the garden in the house, the weeds of negativism that have erupted in her mind need to be cleared. She needs to remove the webs that are threatening her otherwise stable state of emotions. Bim feels glad that the tall hedges conceal the house from view, which is symbolic of her role as a protector of the family and that she is not ready to reveal her family secrets. Bim once a successful organizer now fails to administer her house properly. She gets emotionally disturbed, violent and destructive in handling family relations which can be seen in her destruction of roses. She starts getting attached to her pets instead of showering affection on her near and dear ones and does not care for anyone around which invites a kind of animosity from her neighbours. She is so obsessed by her pets that she pours all the milk in the kettle for the cat and leaves little for Bakul's tea. She tries to compensate for her alienation from others in life through the company of her pets, Bim as a result becomes so strange that she pampers her pets and yet rebukes Tara for



spoiling her daughters. Bim who once had taken care of all her brothers and a sister and Mira Masi, now starts hating Tara and Raja, for she feels that they had deserted her in her time of need. The only people Bim remains attached to are Mira Masi and Baba. Initially Mira Masi had played the role of a caring mother, but during her last days of life, she switches her role with Bim. Bim mothers Mira Masi till her last breath and Baba and then her pets and through them tries to fill the void which her situation has created in her life.

Bim's calling her students to teach them and ignoring Bakul and Tara on the first day of their visit shows lack of communication, between the family members with Bim trying to fill up the absence of her loved ones with the students and uses them as substitutes, pampers them with ice-cream during tuitions and hopes that this might provide her emotional anchorage and that these children would fill up the vacuum in her life. This certainly shows her craving for love and children and her need to belong to somebody, a kind of security that she does not find from her family as she feels that Raja and Tara left her alone with Baba at the time of need. Tara's and Bakul's visit remind her of violated loyalty of Raja and her dislike of him and as a result Bim tries to get into a shell by acting aloof from her family members and showing excessive love towards her pets and students. Bim takes to muttering and talking to herself which can be seen from the activities and gestures of her hands. Instead of striking a balance of trying to understand or rationalize the whole situation, Bim reads Raja's letter time and again and keeps alive the bitterness and hatred in her heart and makes no attempt at normalising the tension between herself and Raja and starts imagining things about Raja and his family and mocks at him. In her anger she picks on Raja's juvenilia as the target of bitter criticism and calls them "terrible and nauseating" (Gupta 122). She mocks at Raja's liking for colourful and sophisticated life style which is hollow from inside, but full of vanity according to her. She rigidly defends her own stance to be right and that of Raja's to be wrong. Ironically, Bim who was a realist in the beginning and had admired and supported Raja for his decision to take up Islamic studies despite the strong resistance on the part of his father and Mira Masi, now falls a victim to imagination and starts mocking Raja's tastes, for his abduction of the family business and the pursuit of his own interests in Hyderabad which is a gesture of non-conformity to the expectation of Bim. Her bitterness for Raja goes to such an extent that she starts imagining terrible things to Riyaz, Raja's only male child. She rejects the gifts that Raja sends for Bim and Baba and her hatred for Raja is so much that it does not limit itself to only Raja and Benazir but to Riyaz as well and in the absence of Raja's family, Bim makes Tara her target of frustration and disgust. She rebukes Tara for wearing glistening ornaments, wasting oranges for it reminds her of the opulence of Raja. When Tara tries to bring out the pent up emotions of Bim, the latter considers her to be cruel and starts suspecting that Tara and Raja have got together against her and have no respect for her norms and standard of living, for they both live in a luxurious and extravagant world. Bim's feeling of ultimate rejection, results in the trembling of her lips, her taking to muttering, her shaking hands and her acquiring a strange gait. She hides her weaknesses under the garb of old age. Bim criticises the opulent life style of Raja and Tara which is contrary to her life style and unconsciously, she starts drifting away from her family. She gets down to meanness, by serving left over food and by not consuming or cooking expensive things, fearing that it might get wasted, not realizing that by not consuming them would also spoil them. But ironically, she had spent a

large amount of money in purchasing unnecessarily expensive volumes on history and Art because to her, vocation was primary and an opulent life style secondary. At this point Bim fails to strike a balance in her relations with her brother and sister and does not realise the imperative need to strike a balance with regard to her vocation, personal relations and life style. She loses her sense of co-ordination within herself and with the others. Her grief increases at a realization that earlier she was a pivot point, a centre, in her family around which the whole family moved and that now she is unwanted and rejected as being old.

Bim discovers a similarity between herself and Mira Masi when she imagines of death by drowning herself. Bim and Mira Masi are both symbols of sacrifice, and the only difference that ever was in them, was that Mira Masi was once married and Bim remained a compulsive spinster. Sometimes Bim wishes to be aloof like Baba but she cannot and to confirm her identity, she seeks assurance from Baba time and again that her existence is important at least to Baba, if no one else, but being deprived of such assurances she asks Baba to go to Hyderabad and start living with Raja. Her anger, pain and frustration is symbolised by nature as well in the form of heat rising to its peak. Ironically Bim makes Baba a victim of her anger whereas she needs him to gain wholeness and perfection of being. Her ego stops her to seek help from Bakul for her business and she blames her father and brother who did nothing to make her independent and she admires herself for the efforts she made in this field. Even though she establishes an independent Identity and teaches her students the same, yet she feels sad at not having become a heroine and having mocked at Tara for aspiring to be a heroine figure through motherhood. Ironically, Bim ultimately seeks motherhood, even though forced by circumstances, to make herself a fulfilled woman when in the absence of parental figure in the house, she has to perform the role of sustaining and sharing mother, and this gets appreciation for her from Tara who sees in Bim a refined and improved form of mother. Bim does put a false pretence of being contented in front of Tara, but the reality is contrary to it. She does miss her brother and sister but her hurt ego does not allow her to put it in open, but in the end Bim comes out of the misunderstandings and pretensions of life, when she admits flaw in her love for her brother and sister. The love that lies buried in her under cynicism and anger finally comes out because in her, flame of love was never extinguished. In her case too, "Love is the Ultimate, true and the miracle medicine of soul rejuvenation" (Desai 140). Her soul still yearns to be united with her loved ones and share joys and sorrows with them. Her sense of identity depends on her recovering her connection with her brothers and sisters, but she lacks the imaginative vision that could unite them. She feels torn apart in: "loving them and not loving them, accepting them and not accepting them, understanding them and not understanding them" (Desai 166). Ultimately in the clear light of day of her consciousness, she realises that "she was narrow in her love and forgives all" (Srivastava XVI). She comes out of the mesh of prejudices, anger and resentment and breaks out of the shell to discover her greater being in relation with the others so that they may form a whole. The last words of Aurangzeb give her the inspiration for selflessness and a desire to recast the past and present for the ultimate journey into the future. She re-reads her brother's poems and realizes that she misunderstood Raja and that he worshiped heroes, be it Hyder Ali or Byron and decides to tear Raja's letter. This change of perspective of Bim and her final evolving is symbolised through nature by the ascending of the moon and lightening the sky which depicts

peace and harmony and enlightening of Bim's heart and mind. Bim's tearing off of Raja's letter is the major action that symbolises the destruction of the rancour and bitterness of the past and she invites Raja to visit the house. Finally the wall of hatred that had bound Bim from all sides falls down and there is revival of love and this provides in her a sense of fulfilment. She becomes cordial and pleasant with Bakul and Tara as well. Bim's rejuvenation can also be seen in her decision to clear out the garden and bougainvillea so that sunlight may come in and cheer the house as well. Her liking for Raja takes her to the Misra family and enjoy Iqbal's poem. She learns a lesson that in order to achieve meaning and identity in life one must strive for harmony.

Tara on the other hand presents the picture of a character cast in the image of a conventional woman, whose aspirations are not too high, who is not plagued by emotional conflicts and contradictions of personality and longs for nothing else, but to be a mother. She gets married to a diplomat Bakul and goes away to live out of India. She takes interest like other girls in dressing up well and other frivolous activities. "Her marriage is a well-adjusted one, since she is happy to be dominated and governed by her husband Bakul. Bakul though admired Bim's personality but he chooses Tara to be his wife, who would be gentler and easily manageable" (Desai 19). Tara is a weakling till her marriage with Bakul, who like a sun provides Tara (star) the light of happiness, calm and security. Bakul's role is brought forth by his name -Bagula (clever one) (Bahri 572). Bakul is also the name of a medicinal tree (Maulshri) in Sanskrit (Bahri 571). His presence helps Tara to become a sophisticated and competent person from a timid and shy woman.

Tara admires her brother Raja but cannot equate with him or even Bim for that matter due to the difference in their age as well as mental attitudes. She is unable to find their company enjoyable and challenging and thus seeks refuge in the company of her Aunt or in a quilt. Her parents negligence has made her insecure and she remain in confident turning out to be weak-willed person. She replaces her parents with Mira Masi, after their death and suffers from a misconception that it was her father who killed her mother. She is unable to understand the situation of her parents, her fellow students and human beings at large and this makes her turn to fairy tales, dreams and fantasies and run away from realities of life. She becomes timid and shy and is often admonished by her teachers which make her further sink into herself. Bim's personality in school over shadows hers and Tara is often rebuked by her teachers for not being like her sister. Bim unintentionally becomes the cause of her suffering. The only thing she likes is being with Mira Masi who makes her into a modest being and arouses in her a desire to be a mother. Even though she is laughed at by Raja and Bim for this aspiration, she remains contented and satisfied with her ambitions. She often escapes to the Misra family, from her home and finally uses Bakul as an instrument to escape from the claustrophobic atmosphere of the house. Her submissive nature appeals to Bakul and after her marriage, she becomes totally dependent on her husband. Bakul comes as a saviour for her trains her to be active and organised, to be sophisticated and she starts feeling more confident. She feels that ultimately her childhood fantasies would be fulfilled through marriage. She is happy to be able to possess and wear pearls and jewellery and enjoy the pleasures of outings. She feels proud of being a mother of two young girls, a role she always aspired for. She comes out to be a mature person for she wishes to regain the favour of Bim by apologising to her for having



deserted the family amid problems. Tara responds sympathetically to the sufferings of her aging sister and helps her come out of misunderstanding and bitterness towards Raja, though submissively yet maturely and elegantly.

Through Aunt Mira, Anita Desai has tried to present the condition of a woman without her husband in a patriarchal society and has highlighted “the Indian society's violence to widows” (Goel 32). Aunt Mira, a victim of fate, widowed at the age of fifteen, rather than getting sympathy from her in-laws, is reduced to the status of a servant in her husband's house. This makes her look shabby, seedy and skinny. The untimely death of her husband makes her a virgin widow and as time passes, she is treated like a discarded article and her in laws show no respect for her emotions or her position in the house. She gets saved from falling prey to her brother-in-law's amorous desires on account of her unpleasing personality. She is labelled as 'parasite' a 'cracked pot' a 'torn rag' and 'picked bone' (Desai 108). Her wedding Sari's are taken away from her and she is allowed to wear only white but even during her widowhood, her motherly instincts do not die and they find expression when she seeks entry in the Das family. She loves the company of these children and is able to find a kind of emotional security which she could not find due to her widowhood The Das children were also pleased and could not have been happier to have her in their family, for now they had someone who would tend to their feelings and needs and give them a motherly hand. Mira Masi nurses the retarded child Baba and makes him independent to some extent. She understands the need of every child and gives them the kind of love each one of them wanted. She becomes the symbol of security, protection and warmth. Children prefer the human smell of her sari than the synthetic French smell of their mother. Her way of rearing children and rejoicing at their healthy growth is symbolised by Anita Desai through the creating of a tree, soil and earth image for her. The children became dependent on her. “They would swarm over her, reach up above her.... She was the tree, she was the soil, and she was the earth...” (Desai 110-111). She gets involved with the Das family which proves too much for her fragile, weak and old body. She is badly tormented by the problems of the Das family due to her attachment and in the heat of sorrow, she turns mad. Her madness reverses her role. Mira Masi becomes a baby and Bim the child becomes a mother to Mira Masi and takes care of her. Mira masi in her fit of madness runs naked out of the house to drown her in the well. Her tearing the clothes off her body symbolises that she wanted to get rid of all the heat of sorrows and turns towards the well to drown her and along with her the suffering of her life. She is fascinated with the cow that had drowned itself in the well and secondly her idea of pacifying the heat of suffering to the water of the well. Though Bim prevents her Aunt from drowning herself in the well yet the excessive dose of brandy one day relieves Mira Masi from the hardships of life and the Aunt dies peacefully in bed. Her death increases Bim's responsibility as the Das children were now bereft of the motherly presence of the Aunt. Aunt Mira's death affects Bim the most, and she often saw her ghost near the hedge or in the cup of tea which shows how much her life mattered to the Das children and particularly to Bim. Bim finds her ghost all the time with her as guiding her in her isolation. In this novel women emerge as strong and outgoing personalities. Their male counterparts seem to avoid their duties while women seem to shoulder responsibilities all by themselves.

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