

## Psycho-analysis march and retreat of sita in *where shall we go this summer?*

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### Abstract

Indian society, undoubtedly, is marching ahead at the path of development but still assigns traditional roles to the woman. Woman cannot come out of these customary roles because of conservative outlook of the male dominated society. She is imprisoned in the four walls of the house where there is no one else to share her grief. Even if she is provided with the material comforts, she, the voiceless, tries hard to let others listen to her agony which goes unheard in most of the cases. The present paper aims at focusing the problems and the psychological trauma faced by the woman in Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* And it also shows how the predicament of the loneliness is experienced by the married woman and how the marital discord, which lead the woman to astray, severs the life of Sita, the protagonist.

**Keywords:** alienation, distress, illusion, liberation, existentialism

### Introduction

Anita Desai, a well-known Indo- Anglian Novelist of Post-Independence era is an Indian novelist and short story writer especially noted for her sensitive portrayal of the inner life of her of her female characters. Several of Desai's novels explore tensions between family members and the alienation of middle- class women. In her later novels Desai has dealt with such themes as German anti-Semitism, the demise of traditions, and western stereo typical views of India.

The English novelist before Anita Desai studies man and his world in relation to the objective social reality. They used their art as a powerful "public instrument" (Daiches 1965:01) to present social problems but Desai walks out on such a traditional approach to fiction. She writes neither for providing entertainment nor for the dissemination and propagation of social ideas. Her main pre-occupation is to study human existence and human predicament, her exploration being a quest for self. She is the novelist of psycho-emotional situations and her theme is the individual against himself and against the milieu. Like Joseph Conrad, she has a double function- to pull away the individual from the social milieu, so that "he can be put in extremist, and to act as an agent of self-confrontation" (Allen 1954:303). Anita Desai dealt though on a subjective plane, with the theme of East-West encounter, "the conflicts and reconciliations or two cultures" (Mukherjee 1947:64), Indian and Eurasian in matters of love, sex and marriage.

As Desai herself admits, her novels are not populated by heroic characters, whether male or female, at least in the traditional sense. Her protagonists are marked by certain passivity and have been criticized as being swept away by historical and social forces rather than being able to face and control them. Yet, Desai claims that "my characters that appear like losers, victims show a kind of heroism, of survival. I think if you can come through the experience of life with the heart and mind intact, without compromising yourself, that to me is a heroic act that needs to be celebrated.' In spite of the heroic nuances of these survivals, Desai's characters often meet tragic ending. Desai portrays a fictional world where,

according to her own definition, 'History is a kind of juggernaut' which completely drives over characters without mercy (Naval Kishore Singh 12).

*Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Is Anita Desai fourth novel which depicts the inner-outer world of its protagonist Sita and her fearful fatigue of life with the unborn child, the novel analyses the story of a middle-aged woman, Sita who is fed up with the mundane routine of a meaningless existence. She feels suffocated in her well-ordered, posh flat in Bombay and struggles hard to break away from it all. She wants to go back to the island Manori where she had spent her many golden days of childhood with her family to seek peace, pleasure and a great pause in her life. This novel is shorter in size but deeper in meaning. The structural pattern of the novel is strikingly similar to that of Virginia Woolf's to *The Lighthouse*. The concrete form, the befitting style, and the economy of detail make the work a curious tour de force. Similar to Woolf's novel, it has three parts: Part one. Monsoon' 67; Part two. Winter' 47; Part three. Monsoon' 67; each section of the novel is concerned with a particular season, time and space. The beginning section assimilates us on the island Manori and manifests the present time of Sita's life. The second Section connects us with the events of her past life and the concluding section evinces what she has accepted as her fortune of future life (D.K. Pabby 26).

In this novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Sita, who travels in the path of self-alienation before making a truck with the realities of the life and self-adjustment? Anita Desai's fictional outlook seems to have undergone a significant transformation by the time she came to write this novel. Her preoccupation with the fascinating vistas of the diseased psyche of hyper sensitive individuals is not so much altered. But whereas in her earlier novels, characters caught in the maze of life's problems committed suicide or sought some melodramatic solution, like the heroine, Sita of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* After moving dangerously off the course of the well-established and generally accepted path of life, returns to it in time to make up for the lee-way. In an interview given to Atma Ram, Anita Desai makes it clear that

suicide would have been “too melodramatic an alternative” for the middle-aged woman that the heroine is. (D.K. Pabby 152) The novel depicts the tension between a sensitive wife, Sita and the rational, practical, and worldly husband, Raman. Husband-wife discord, inadequacy of their mutual love relationship and disaffection is the major theme in the novel. Like *Cry, the Peacock* and *Voice in the City* this novel also deals with the theme of marital dissonance in depth. The natural flow of affection between Sita and Raman is very often shown as an intact relationship but more frequently it is blocked due to misunderstanding, lack of adequate forbearance and patience. The disaffection proceeds primarily from their temperaments. Raman is a successful businessman, realistic, having a rather pragmatic view about life. Sita is over sensitive, keen-eyed, poetic and imaginative, having more than ordinary sense. If Raman is social and extrovert, Sita is introvert. If Raman thinks only of the immediate present, Sita is foresighted and has higher notions about life than the average woman will have. Because of their temperamental differences many points of discord between them occur and their responses to life are different.

Sita, the protagonist of the novel has four children and is reluctant to deliver or to abort the fifth one. She wants to retain it in her womb because she is afraid of exposing the child to the violence in the modern world by giving birth. Fed up with the dreary metropolitan life in Bombay and tormented by the paranoiac fear of her fifth and reluctant pregnancy, she goes to the magic island, Manori in the hope of preventing the delivery with the help of miracles. There on the island, her miracles fail and instead of finding peace, she becomes alienated. She realizes and returns home to continue her passive life. T. S. Anand aptly finds her reason for her return and says:

[Sita] She had realized the difference between the necessity and the wish, between what a man wants and what he is compelled to do. Her desire to bear the child and return with Raman to the main land signifies her return to life, community and society... Existence is not possible in an insulated stage of being, rather existence implies being with others. (K.V. Dominic 39)

She has come to accept the prosaic nature of life which runs through difficult human situation in different ways. She finds the courage to face life, in the end, with all its ups and downs. Sita's character has been portrayed in such a way that it represents the predicament of a modern married woman in society. She initially escapes from reality and later reconciles to the circumstances. Desai's heroines often act violently but in this novel there is change. Sita reconciles herself to her lot. She strikes a perfect balance between her inner self and outer world. Unlike Maya's her alienation is not temperamental or environmental. Ramachandra Rao rightly observes:

The novel may, thus, be seen as a parable on the inability of human beings, to relate the inner with the outer, the individual with the society. (S.P. Swain 59)

Anita Desai's novels are certainly reflective of social realities. But she does not dwell like others on social issues; she delves deep into the force that condition. The growth of a female in this patriarchal male dominated society. She observes social realities from a psychological perspective without posing herself as a social reformer. Her novels are studies of the inner life of characters and her talent lies in the description of minute things that are usually unnoticed. The novels of Anita

Desai are 'modern' in the very sense of the word suggested by Irwing Howe Meena Belliappa writes “the focus of interest has shifted from girlish romance to a more complex search for value in human relationship” (52).

Anita Desai has handled the theme of reconciliation skillfully in this novel that it reflects our modern society in too many ways. Sita's character is a reflection of modern women in this changing materialistic world.

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