

“Anita Desai: A Psychological Retreat in view of Where Shall We Go This Summer?”

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Abstract

Anita Desai undoubtedly holds a prominent position among the contemporary writers of Indo – Anglican fiction. She is the bold and experimental novelist with a new sense and vibrant richness. Much attention is given to the emotional crisis of her protagonists who live in a chaotic society. From her novels, clearly she possesses one of the healthiest and psychologically most balanced minds in the realm of Indo – Anglican fiction and the sanity of her tastes and attitudes, is almost exemplary, a point worth emulation for her fellow religionists in the field of writing. Desai is the foremost Indian writer achieved distinction as a novelist. Desai’s heroines suffer because they are tragic characters. They couldn’t mingle with the surroundings and even in the families and society. All of them were psychologically disturbed (Indian English writers of fiction.) Anita Desai centers around her with the urban sensibility and a style of what she calls the “Language of the interiors .“Anita Desai’s novels marked “a departure from current modes of fiction writing.” She studied on the individual psychic emotions of the people leads the novels of character. Desai sees her novels as a pattern that imposes itself on her imagination: “shutting out all other conflicting patterns that might be there, I began to put in the pieces.”(Questionnaire, 5) These pieces are "snatches of conversation, face glimpsed, one insomniac thoughts, and reactions to one’s memory.”(The novels of Anita Desai P: 10)

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1. Introduction

As a woman writer she does not profess to be a feminist, and yet she voices the fears and concerns, the hopes and aspirations of her characters in her own artistic way. She is deeply fascinated in exploring the social structure through the central characters in her novels. She is an observer of the society existing around her, perceiving everything exhaustively and delicately so that the situations can be presented in a poetic style. Anita Desai differs from other Indian novelists such as R K Narayan, Mulkraj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Raja Rao in her set of language and style that she employs to portray the inner crisis and tension existing in the life of a character. Where shall we go this summer? Is her

fourth novel, which depicts the inner – outer world of its female lead Sita and her fatigue for life? The husband-wife alienation, temperamental incompatibility, feelings of despair and loneliness are recurring themes in the novels of Anita Desai. This novel deals with the discord in the family of Raman and Sita because of their failure to adjust themselves. Both differ in their attitudes of life. One is the matter of fact, practical and the other highly emotional given to sentimentality making much of even ordinary incidents. Sita, the heroine suffers mental agony. This powerful work of fiction by Anita Desai represents the predicament of a lonely married woman who aspires to triumph over the chaos and suffering of her rather unusual existence. This is a deeply engrossing and disturbing novel with an inner fury which reflects the problems of life in this modern society.

2. Flashes of Vision

In her novels, there are no themes but she relies on flashes of vision. She focuses on the characters not on the story. Her protagonists are introverts. Desai justifies her selection of solitary and introspective characters in the following words:

“Well, I think solitary and introspective people are always very aware of living on the brink. Anyone of us might face an experience which may push one over, but perhaps my introspective characters are more aware than others are of what lies on the other side”. (“Interview”, stairs to the Attic, 10). Sita, the protagonist of the novel a middle-aged heroine. She resents her fifth pregnancy. Her wish is not to give birth to her child. She wants to go to Manori. Raman, the husband of Sita, Menaka is the daughter of Sita. Rekha and Jivan's siblings of Sita. Moses the watchman in Manori, Jamila the tea shop owners' wife. Ali, the caretaker of the neighboring house. Many characters are defeated, and few characters 'succeed in saying 'no' to society. She goes finer and finer rather than going around about it. Sita, a middle-aged heroine not only a sensitive but also an emotional woman who has four children. She resents her fifth pregnancy. She feels alienated from her husband and children. She undergoes mental agonies. Sita changes from three stages thesis, antithesis and synthesis or doubt, rejection and acceptance. This novel was compared to Virginia Woolf to the light house by VimalaRao. The action took place on the Manori Island in the first section, second in her past and third she accepted as her future.

In most of Desai's novels she writes on man-woman relationships. In general, Men think rational and Women are sentimental. They are always having separate attitude and interest. They react on few incidents differently because their point of view is different. 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. Sita, a sensitive, over-emotional, middle-aged woman, saddled with her four children and pregnant for the fifth time feels alienated from her husband and children because of her high strung 'sensibility and explosive emotionality' wanted to be in Manori. This is how Sita, the protagonist in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* It is characterized. Having escaped from duties in her life she came away to the island Manori wishing for miracles in the island. Her stay realizes her life's reality and accepted it. Sita mental issues conflict between the polarities yes and no. She is fed up with her life and could not tolerate the violence she sees in daily life.

Her introversion and inability to adjust to the society make her feel alienated and this alienation is quite natural and dispositional. Raman, on the other hand, is a 'practical' man always sane, rational and passive. The novel begins with the arrival of Sita and her two children to the island. She occupies the house in Manori. The reason for her coming to Manori is to achieve the miracle of keeping her baby unborn. The reasons which led her to leave the city are discussed. She is much agitated over even ordinary events of life. Her morbid fear of the people in the city and the emotional alienation from her husband led her to the island. She considers the world wicked and full of destructions and does not want to give birth to her baby in this cruel world.

Part two of the novel describes her life before marriage in the island. She spent her childhood with her father in a big house in Manori. As her father was a freedom fighter, he did not remain in one place and at last when freedom was achieved, they settled down in Manori. Everybody in the island had great respects for him. He set an ashram in his house, and many followed his ideals and principles. He was considered to be a legend in Manori with his new ideas and magic cures. The people of Manori had immense faith on Sita's father and approached him for all their problems. As Sita's mother deserted them, it is her father took care of Sita, her sister Rekha and brother Jeevan. The children lived in the midst of the crowd, as their house would be always crowded by men and women who come to their father for medicines. Sita thinks sickly to hold back her pregnancy and with her behavior demands. She makes her family miserable. These characters come under neurosis, psychosis or sudden end. Anita Desai, of course if one is alive, in this world, one cannot survive without compromise- drawing the line means death, and in the end, Sita opts for life with compromise consoling herself with Lawrence's verse, with the thought that she is compelled to make this tragic choice because she is a part of the earth of life and can no more reject it than the slumberous egg can or the heifer or the grain.

3. Psychological Approach

Intra psychic conflicts the compromise with the life start. Sita shifts from compliance to rebellion and then to withdrawal, again come back to compliance. A vast change in her behavior is inconsistent and has to lot of scope for the disparity between her thinking and actions. In the starting, she fights with her husband as a rebel and goes to Manori. Before going, she thinks "what. I'm doing is trying to escape from the madness here escape to a place where it might be possible to be same again". (WSGS, P135)

Sita's husband is a static entity, old and unimaginable people. In married life, a woman has to adjust and come for compromise in many things. Moses is the watchman of the house in the island Manori. The Monsoon was withdrawn temporarily. However, in that land everyone waited for rain to begin again very soon. He went for the tea to the tea shop. Jamila was the tea shop owner's Wife. Jamila served Moses his favourite cashew nut spirits in a thick smeared glass. First, he drank alone later neighbour from his island and few from the mainland have come and joined him, who have come to the open- air market in marvel. Ali was the caretaker of the neighboring house Ali said 'hey Moses'. 'All dressed up for the market, are you?' Huh! The market.' Moses belched in contempt.' Am I a trader? No, I am here on duty. Drinking duty eh?'(P: 8). All the people over there laughed at him Joseph asked him about the new lung and it's not even time for the big fair in Bandra. It has checks of rose

and maroon with square-cut gems it's a careless and proud flick. Moses was sent twenty rupees by his Memsahib, so he had to spend on something. Joseph asked whether it was his mother-in-law."My Memsahib!" reared Moses suddenly putting an end to the titters scampering around the table.' The Memsahib is coming.'(P: 9).Ali was telling no one was coming from twenty years. Moses roared and said she will definitely come because she sent me 20 rupees.

"For preparing the house, getting it ready for her and her children.' (p:9).Moses led the whole house fallen down who says the house has fallen downward Moses asked to show me bricks that have fallen down. Many of them had fallen down, and your wife has built a bathhouse out of the fallen bricks.

Two policemen came from Malad are standing just outside the shop drinking tea. They'll make me pay-they'll make me -pay-"p: 10)

Moses told let the come and count the bricks. The younger daughter is coming. It was long ago they lived on Manori. No one has forgotten the father? He rid my house of snakes and scorpion, and no one was bitten again it was believed by collective effort rather than individual inspiration. Another one said he made by wife bear a son for 12 years. Another one said he treated for fits and boils with power pearls and rubies and charged nothing. They all remembered.

"Who has forgotten the well? Moses roared to raise them again,' The only well inManori that gives sweet water?" "Ah, the well, the correctly we remember. We know' (p: 11).He went to himself to the well, to fetch water. Jamila sang that she can see him, in white, as barefoot as us to fetch water. It was sweet water, and the cow drowned the other day. It was fortunate to have a sweet death. One harsh voice cried he died penniless with disappointment and bitterness. Moses served that man looked after his house, trees and waited for twenty years.They arrived and had not come out of the car, and it is like they were unwilling to come out of a car until he invites. Firstly, the driver came out of the car dressed in khaki chauffeur's uniform and opened the door then children and at last the mother came out. He began taking out the luggage. No piece of a bag looked smart, expensive or new. She stood staring across the sea at the island. She was a young girl at that time, and now it turned gray hair. However, mosses expected someone else with dignity, the ascetic splendor of the fabled father. Moses heard that there were four children but only two are seen. Sita caught hold of the small child and walked to the shore together chaos. The boat was ready they shouted. Moses knew that all the peoples' eyes were in this family. The owner of the diesel oil pump owner, Manori fisherman was watching them together. All the Manori fisherman brought their dried Bombay ducks and green coconuts to the market and kerosene tins to be refilled, Marathi women in saris carrying baskets of custard - apples and Christian girls wearing stiff frocks with flower's church, etc.... All were surprised to see Moses in the with the luggage.

4. Characterisation

The characterization of Desai is amazing, every character of her novel represents one or the other person in the society and everyone feels him/herself and identifies with the character of Desai. Moses took up the oars and dipped them. He saw the audience murmuring. Sita brushing her hair and looking into the sea, she insisted her son Karan we are

in a boat, 'sailing across the sea.' It's only a rowing boat. The daughter pointed out flatly. Honey 10 needs are categorized into three and the third one is moving away from people. Sita stay far from others. She maintains distance in order to avoid being tied down and dependent upon other people. This is a neurotic need for self-sufficiency and independence. So she went to Manoriisland. She escaped from mainland to magic land. "Look how dark the island looks against the sky, the shining white sky. See how exciting it looks!" 'Dim', the boy whimpered, peering over her shoulder oh yes. It is so dark on the island. At night, you see stars that you never can see in the city. She assured him. 'But no lamps, told her flat-voiced daughter p: 17)

There will be lamps but not electric bulbs but the real ones. Sita dipped her hand in the water but the boy shouted to don't, don't there are snakes in the water! Sita thought that child's imagination was pessimistic. They reached the place the island helps the girl out of the boat mother said with some cruelty, "If there had been a storm, we wouldn't have been able to cross that bit, and the boy as Moses lifted him out of the prow and set him down beside his sister, agreed. 'Father said we would all be drowned', he said with a sniff"(p: 11). Mother refused Moses hand and climbed down clumsily. He saw that she was heavily pregnant. Moses went back to bring the luggage and shouting, but none understood his voice. He thought that there were some troubles in the family since there was no father to hold them together and lead them in neither obedience nor even a husband. On the island, there were soda water and the bullock cart, and it was decorated with red paint on its horns with the luggage they started in bullock carts, all there wincing every time another bag was flung in, and the bullock staggered. The woman's face twisted with disappointment or dejection. According to Fromm's theory of social unconsciousness families reflect our society and culture. We feel that we are acting according to our own free will, but follow orders. We no longer notice them. Moses feels Sita is not like her father. We only remember him. The soda shop ala sat and observing then the Moses entered into the driver's seat. He is everything to them would row a boat, drive a bullock cart and convey them about the criticism and mock done by the other people. The boy chuckled but enjoyed the novel ride.

The Manori village was once flowing with drains, thatched roofs, mud huts, etc. The village pond was with broken stone steps. The artificial tank water was not brown but green as spinach. The water is like a woman wearing a green sari dipping narrow necked vessel of brass. One muscular woman with an aborigine skin, wearing a mango green sari stood up and was first on the island to hail them. There were a mango Grove's dark-colored leaves and parrots shot out like so many rockets at a carnival. It was a brilliant scene.

Moses, wife is Miriam, who is alike in height, breadth and even the habits. Sita's son was going to sleep so she took back her son, kissed and called 'come Menaka, the house is here'. Mental complained that there's no light. Moses will light the lanterns. But you can still see the sky lit up. Sita still remembers Moses's hut, his cattle shed, goat house chicken pen and well to the house at the top of a knoll. Sita decided to enter the room and realized that the boy had not slept. He started crying dark room until the lantern or candle was there. Moses came to light the lamps Sita asked why not Miriam, but he replied that he had the keys.

'What keys?' she asked passionately. 'The house is all open, but the store is shut'. He said and disappeared into the house presently the first lamp was lit, then the second." p: 25)

There we can smell the odour of bats, its like a natural shell or a lump of twisted driftwood. She inquired. Why haven't you cleaned it? He replied to it takes much time to

clean. She asked the beds made and about the food. She has sent money for food. He replied that there was no fish in monsoon season couldn't you bring vegetables and milk for the children. She called him 'to come here'. "We might at least have bought one servant with us ", Menaka said bitterly p: 27). At one point, thought hysterically 'help me'. She felt guilty, at last she fed them with biscuits and milk, smoked a string of cigarettes. Mental to shut the door but Sita lay and replied 'what for'? She was listening to the tide she had come here in order not to give birth."yet she had arrived, arrived. She on the island, in order to achieve the miracle of not giving birth wasn't it this Manori, the island of miracle? Her father had made it an island of magic once, worked miracles of a kind." (p: 28)

One Saturday she was helping her older son in geometry then a cruel drama had aroused crow troubling the eagles wound an eagle was wounded and its very young the crows started disturbing the eagles wound. It rose weakly, tried to crawl into the shelter. Sita shouted for sons to bring stones. She shouted for the gun but unfortunately, was no gun. She needs very urgently Karan said toy gun then she sent him to bring it. He ran to too fast fall down, he even cut his chin, he ignored the older boy fed up and said it's dead and went into their room. Mental from her friend was astonished to see the scene went away with without for an explanation. At five 'o'clock in the afternoon Karan Karan sent out with his ayah outside where all the ayahs discussed about their Memsahib's, Mensalis, lovers and the cinema. Suddenly, was a second but not accident it was a clash between the women. Sita was looking at the street but was not visible in cul-de-sac. Children were crying and not daring to leave ayah. Bombay women very strong and were pushing each other. Sita saw Karan rubbing his knees, mouth open and crying loudly. Sita called Rosie. She did not listen. Rosie was the one who involved in the fight and growling at the other women. Karan was with shaking fingers. Fingers. I followed her, dragged her son from Rosie and tried to interrupt her. Rosie's into tears and went howling to her room.

The cook says Rosie is aggressive. Everyone fights they all are violent Sita asked what's happening? Nothing they replied to the cook, we were just talking and not fighting. Menaka was away from her room then mother looked into her room and went through her water colours. A Monsoon scene Menaka used water to dilute the paint gave an authentic rain Menaka said they are not worth keeping and no good. Her husband looked very coolly curious with the family expression. People are his friend visitors, colleagues with whom he maintained business and had a meal with them. He is neither an introvert nor an extrovert. He could not tell what she meant or what she felt when she folded her arms about her and stared at the closed door, saying,

"There is nothing - nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter. Animals. I thought you liked animals.' (P: 43)

5. Conclusion

Like the character Sita many women are self-centered, least mother like. As a mother she is a failure. The parent sibling relation between Sita and her children is unsatisfying. Thus Where Shall We Go This Summer? It offers a positive solution to the present-day existentialist predicament of temperamental mala adjustment and resultant alienation. The island symbolically projects the very psycho of Sita and is also symbolic of that archetypal urges which motivate us to seek a separate unique identity of our own. In Sita, there is a temporary blockage of consciousness, but she shows steady science of dynamism for constructiveness. There is no breakdown of power. It helps her in self-direction. She tells Menaka that if she had the talent to paint or sing she would have nursed it to full growth. Creativity would have lent meaning to her life: if only I could paint, or sing, or play the Sitar well, really well, I should have grown into a sensible woman I should have known how to channel my thoughts and feelings, how to put them to use. I should have given my life some shape them some meaning. (P: 117). Finally, Sita's behavior is the result from a total neglect and indifference. Here the story centers on Sita's apathy, listlessness, her 'insane' wish to keep her fifth child within the womb and her search for existence. I returned to the island in order to find an answer to her dilemma but realize that it is a magic land in her imagination. Here arises from a question that how long sita wish to keep her fifth child in her wound? Is it a foolish thought? At last it accepts her husband's and returns to Bombay. Desai molded Sita's psychological disturbance cleared in the climax.

6. References

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