



Optimistic Approach of Anita Desai's Sita towards Life: In the Novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*

Dr. Aneeta Srivastava

Assistant Professor (English), Falahe Ummat Girl's P.G. College Bhadohi (UP)

Email id: aneetasrivastava72@gmail.com

Abstract

Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Distinctive Sahitya Academy Award winner novel vignettes the female's psyche of Indian middle-class women. Desai is a note-worthy writer of novels of Indo-Anglian era once again examined analyzed and appraised the female character Sita. Indian mythological related name Sita has its own worth and maintains an ideal physique with few characteristics. But Desai's Sita is a modern middle-class figure with her own sensibility and aspiration. This particular novel during 70's brought a new wave of intelligence and enlightened the society about female's inner world of frustration and state of mind. As they look calm and tranquil but a bustling or swarming of emotion talk place in the inner heart. Those inner pages are well devoured by Anita Desai and tried her best to paint with different shades of colors in such a way that it looks vivid and realistic. She propitiously accomplished it. Her fictional technique brought out every corner of Sita's animation with chanciness. Her fictional image somewhere co-relates with middle class women of India and they perceive their real self in Sita's identity.

Keywords: Identity, feminism, mythology, female psyche

Anita Desai in this novel (*Where Shall We Go This Summer?*) portrayed neurotic character Sita who does not want to deliver the baby. A character that is different from Maya, Monisha previous female characters of Desai. As she is courageous and takes decision based on inner self decision. 'Where shall we go this summer'? This is divided into three parts namely 'Monsoon 67' 'Winter 47' and 'Monsoon 67' respectively. These parts indicate and delineates Sita's, present, past and her youth. Somewhere we find the impact of Virginia Woolf's 'To the Light House'. Sita's consciousness develops through the passes of time, rejection and finally acceptance of the fact. She wants to live a new life on her own stipulation. For that purpose, she left everything in hope of fortunate. Desai's novel unfolds the changing trends which are taking place in man and women relationship. She writes about sensitive people who are the part of insensitive world.

She is the part of Bombay city. Once again, Desai delineated mismatch marriage inform of Sita and Raman. The structure division of the novel truly represents three main stages of Sita's

personality and life. Section I is the part of her present life in Bombay II is based on her escape from Bombay to Island Manori and final section (III) describes her return to Bombay, the world of reality. From utopia to reality is a long journey of her life. Bombay's episode is the world of reality. And no can survive in world of fantasy. But this time Desai's Sita takes a risk through her bold decision and moves towards island in hope to recurrent her life. But there is a difference between illusion and fact.

Sita is an Indian mythological name who is supposed to be the daughter of earth. As she ideal woman of Indian and is chief protagonist of Ramayana. But most surprisingly this word also exists in Spanish where Sita means flower. And in Sanskrit it means 'furrow' she is also known as avatar of Laksmi. But Desai's Sita is a middle-class woman who has her own wish and wants to go against nature. After spending time in Manori an Island she comes back to the life of Bombay as she realized that her existence cannot take place in that isolation place, but she has to live further in these modern worlds like Bombay.

Ram and Sita an ideal name but Raman and Sita are mismatched couple. Desai portrayed just opposite of that image where Raman is extrovert and Sita is introvert. She is a sensitive, middle-aged woman, saddled with her four children fails to understand her husband but Raman is a balanced one and avoids sentimentality. There is a lack of understand and Sita had opinion that her marital life is not based on love but a compromise with him as he just married her because of her father's death. She is not able to free herself from the spell of the magic Island. It is for her like Prospero's enchanted island in *The Tempest*. Her coming to an Island in hope of not to give birth a child is just a pilgrimage in her life where miracle can take place. Her childhood and adolescence was spent in that place as suggested in the first part of the novel. She spent many years there and so regarded it as the land of miracles:

"She was not really a child at that time... she saw the island as a piece of magic, a magic mirror it was so bright, so brilliant to her eyes after the tension and shadows of the childhood. It took her some time to notice that this magic, too cast shadow." (Desai 63)

She is unable to decide whether bringing out the baby in world is an act of creation or destruction. As she notices violence around her, and no peace is there. As she at advanced age conceive is haunted by a strange idea. She wants to hold it but Alas! It is not possible. It is against the law of nature.

Due to family disturbance, she started smoking to spite her in laws that later on become her habit. During 5th pregnancy it was dangerous for her health. It is used by Desai as a symbol to create her will not to believe her baby. Sita is described as wounded eagle that is cage. Her character symbolizes her pathetic condition as her condition is beyond her reach. This bird symbol is not a new technique as peacock is used by Desai in her first novel 'Cry the Peacock.' Where Maya, chief protagonist wants to dance and reach at the climax of love, but it could not have happened because of circumstances were not favorable. The same bird symbolism is used in case of Sita. Here her condition is not like dancing peacock but wounded eagle. Like it she is also not able to fly by sitting on balcony realizes there is no chance to survive in life of eagle. But she is not ready to accept. Stream of consciousness is well used by novelist. Through that Sita thinks about Island. Part II of the novel takes 20 years back in the life of Sita. Past of her makes it clear that broken childhood is one of the reasons of being neurotic. As she had no idea why her mother had left the father's house and she developed a father's fixation in her nature. The house situated at island named 'Jevan Ashram' was actually given to her father by him Parsi millionaire devotee and admirer. After his father's death her sister Rekha left the house. Deedar's son Raman came there to fetch her with him in out of pity due to emotion he married to Sita. As there was no choice was left for her. She accepted this relation. After marriage Sita faced the hard realities. Actually, the gap was there urban and ruler life. She could not adjust in new setup. Charm and magic of island was still there. The rain is used by Desai as hardship of human life. So many years had passed but there was some ease. That took place during her pregnancy as not to delivering the baby. There goes a conflict in her mind:

“There is a conflict between her logical and illogical mind. Her logic says that the child must be born, but her illogical mind wants to keep the child within her with the help of the magic of the Island. Ultimately, she balanced her mental condition...” (Desai 8)

Sita's mental abnormality, besides her hypersensitivity, is shown in her unfeminine desire of not giving birth to the baby in her womb. Generally, motherhood is the perfection of a woman. But not so with neurotic Sita for whom “Children only mean anxiety concern-pessimism. Not happiness, what other women call happiness is just, just sentimentality.” (Desai 147)

Their names are legendary, but they do not present the image of Goddess Sita and Lord Rama. Thus, the mythological names are ironic. Sita's desire not to give birth should not be taken as feminist stand. If she is to be taken as a feminist she should not have married or if so, should not

have conceived. Her desire not to deliver the baby is childish and absurd. Finally, Sita realizes that illusion and reality are the two sides of life which she has to face and they can never be separated from each other. She finally realizes the existence of family and came back Bombay with the family members to face the realities of life. The positive end makes it remarkable where ‘*Cry the Peacock*’ and ‘*Voices in the city*’ accord negative ending. Its positive solution in Sita’s life gives a light in female world. Even though, there is a discrepancy between fantasy and verisimilitude. The island and city is presented in a symbolic way; city a symbol of reality and Manori island of illusion. The title itself a part of technique of Desai as it’s a universal question to all human beings if we remove summer. As we have no clear idea about our journey. Perfect solution is impossible to find. In accordance with Anita Desai in her own style tries to find an answer to this baffling question. This question is at the root of Sita’s conscience, her total self, and a query of her total personality. It is a complex theme and delicately handled by Desai.

Another technique of Desai is used to explore the mental status of Sita through poetry. In her novel she used German Poet’s; C.P. Cavafy’s lines to show the seriousness of Sita. In second part Sita is ready to face the realities with Raman and at this point.

*He who refuses does not repent. Should he be asked again, he
Would say No again. And yet that No—the-right No—
Crushes him for the rest of his life. (Desai 139)*

There is some certain divergence in their basic nature. Roman very empirical one and predisposed to accept the other side of coin. For presenting this type of man a poem is enough to portray:

*To certain people there comes a day
When they must say the great yes of the great No.
He who has the yes ready within him
Reveals himself at once, and saying
It crosses over to the path
Of honor and his own conviction (Desai 139)*

During last section D.H. Lawrence’s poem provides a vision to Sita to live life by accepting the realities and giving birth to the unborn baby. As the fact is that no one can sustain in this world

without compromises. The wild young heifer, glancing distraught, with a strange, new knocking of life at her side runs seeking loneliness. The little grain draws down- the earth, to hide, nay, even the slumberous egg as it

Labors under the shell,

Patiently to divide and sub-divide,

Asks to be hidden and wishes nothing to tell (Desai 150)

Desai employed Hindu mythological names for her characters, sometimes the names are used in positive sense and sometimes ironically as in case of Sita. The mythological Sita of the Ramayana goes to Valmiki ashram to give birth to Lava and Kush but Desai's goes to the island not to deliver the baby. In the novel, Desai makes use of fantasy and realism for special purpose. Life in the enchanted island, Sita's legendary father, his medicines etc but her pathological state of mind is examples of fantasy. But life in Bombay is realistic. The two represent the dichotomy between life and life-to-be. Sita's desire not to deliver the baby is unrealistic and childish. Once conception has taken place, unless it is miscarried or aborted, delivery is inevitable. Sita's anxiety about children shows her emotional immaturity. True, giving birth and bringing up baby is a demanding task but every woman does it. Sure, there are sweat and tear. But that is the way of the world. Being a woman Desai knows it all. Her description of labor room is so realistic that it may be juxtaposed with the fantastic world of the enchanted island. Her delivery is described in realistic way. From the technical point of view Desai used poetry, fantasy, bird symbolism, ironic mythological names, suggested novel division, fantasy-reality dichotomy and present- past juxtaposition to present Sita's character and different style of life. This time Desai's chief protagonist is totally different as she had courage to take step. And after introspection she comes back to the previous life without any guilt. Even though as Given birth to the baby that's natural phenomena of life. Somewhere a beautiful song of pink signifies the aspiration of modern Indian women whose ethos was glimpsed in Sita's character:

Tu khud ki khoj mein nikal
tu kis liye hataash hai
tu chal tere vajood ki
samay ko bhi talaash hai...

Tu aarti ki lau nahi
tu krodh ki mashaal hai

tu khud ki khoj mein nikal
tu kis liye hataash hai

...(Pink, Times Music India, 2016)

She lights up torch for self-satisfaction but somewhere admit her mistake. As she knows that she cannot go against Nature. Nature is a life-giving source and natural fertility cannot be stopped furthermore the same case is in women's life. At the end Sita who is unable to come out of her egotistical self now get an apocalyptic vision. That is signifies Desai positive ending of the novel with new futuristic vision. Even so, the negative vision evanesces with a positive note. It also constructs a clear path for women on which they can move on with self-pride and specification. Anita Desai had shown the optimistic attitude through Sita and illuminated the female world with new aspiration. In essence of the icon Sita, Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer* sprang up the feminine inner most *torment* with the pragmatic view of *New Fangled Age*.

References

Bande, Usha. *Introduction the Novels of Anita Desai*. Prestige Books, 1988, pp.10-100

Desai, Anita. *Where shall we go this summer?* Orient paperback, 1982, pp.6-160

Goel, Bala Kunj. *Major themes in Anita Desai's fiction language and theme in the Anita Desai's fiction*. Classic Publishing House, 1989, pp.17-21

Gulati, Bhushan Vinod. *Structure in the Novels of Anita Desai perspectives on Anita Desai*. Edited by Ramesh K. Srivastava, Vimal Prakashan, 1984, pp.99-112

Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Academy, 1912, pp. 241-243

"Tu khud ki khoj me nikal." YouTube uploaded by Times Music India (on behalf of Pink); The Royalty Network Publishing, BMI-Broadcast Music Inc, Times Music Publishing and 13 Music Rights Societies, September 19, 2016, <https://youtu.be/NX7HdE8kEYQ>