

---

## A STUDY OF FEMININE SENSIBILITY IN ANITA DESAI'S WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER

### Article Particulars

Received: 27.01.2018

Accepted: 26.02.2018

Published: 27.03.2018

### G.PRIYA

M.Phil., English, Sakthi College of Arts and Science for Women  
Oddanchatram, Tamil Nadu, India

### Abstract

*This paper focus on feminine sencibility in Anita Desai's Where Shall We Go This Summer is present her favorite theme of investigating the consciousness of an introvert and sensitive women who is bore and frustrated by her commenplace and hum-drum life and tries to escape into purposeless and unprotective loneliness.*

---

### Introduction

Anita Desai was born in Mussorie on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1937, to a Bengali father and German mother. She began writing fiction at the age of seven and published small pieces in children's magazines. She has educated at Queen Mary's school first and at Miranda house, later at Delhi University, Where she look her B.A Degree in English Literature in 1957. Anita Desai got married to Ashwin Desai, she has four children. She has been living in various cities Calcutta, Bombay, Chandigarh, Desai, and Poona. Anita Desai wrote her first novel *Cry the Peacock* (1963). Her other novels are *Voice in the city* (1965), *Bye Bye Black Bird* (1971), *Clear Light of day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Fasting Feasting Diamond Dust The Zig Zag Way*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975). Anita Desai, who was shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times, received a Sahitya Academy Award in 1978 for her novel *Fire on the Mountain* and a British Guardian Prize for *the Village by the Sea* 1992. He is also the author of a historical novel *A Flight of Pigeons*, which is based on an episode during the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

Anita Desai gives a new dimension to the Indian novel in English by shifting the emphasis from outer to inner reality. The most predominant theme in the Anita Desai's novel is the complexity of human relationships particularly man and woman relationship. Her women are not ordinary women, but sensitive beings. They posses refined sensibilities with the complexion of aesthetic and logical. This temperamental incompatibility triggers a sense of frustration and alienation among her women characters. They live as emotional unfulfilled souls.

Anita Desai writes about the miserable plight of women suffering under their insensitive and inconsiderate husbands. So man and woman relationship brings characters into alienation, withdrawal, loneliness and lack of communication that frequently occurs in her novels. Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* describes the tension between a sensitive wife and the rational husband Raman. It emphasizes the triumph of life over chaos and of art over life. The protagonist Sita's main problem is maladjustment with her husband, Raman who ignores her desires and misunderstanding between them. She fed up her husband, his business, surrounding and also his friend. Raman's lack of love and feeling brings her to the verge of insanity.

Desai has wanted to highlight the marital, self-freedom, and self-identity and self-power against the male dominated world, where she has universalized the feminist message with the inner gaze. Though Desai attempts to analyze women's sensationalism and vivid expressionism in the field of fictional world, however, she has no willingness to sense herself as self-conscious feminist writer. Anita Desai, in her psychological novels, focuses on the minute and subtle images of a tormented, tortured, toiled, trodden and self-frustrated feminism preoccupied with her inner heart, soul and mind, her sulking depression, melancholy, pessimism, self-storming pragmatics surrounding the atmosphere of mankind. The existential predicament of female world contradicts the masculinity.

Though her female protagonists or feminine fatal figures, Desai makes a fervent appeal and plea for a radiant dawn for the whole female community. The novelist discusses the vivid and clear cut problematic features of temperamental incompatibility, conjugal chaotic and conflicting dilemmas and ever growing hatred and despised disparity between male and female. In her novels, most protagonists cum heroines are segmented and alienated from the world, society, family, parents, and even from their own selves, because they are not average people but individuals who hardly enable to cope with the patriarchy, unable to keep abreast with this setup, rather they drift into their own requirement world where they spin their great expectations, ambitions, dreams, which automatically disappears in the realm of oblivion.

### **Feminine Sencibility in Anita Desai where shall we go this summer**

The aim of this paper is to highlight the feminist message through the protagonist, Sita in Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975). Anita Desai's chief concern is human relationship and she explores the disturbed psyche of the modern Indian women. The protagonist, Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is a nervous, sensitive, middle-aged woman who finds herself isolated from her husband and children because of her emotional reactions to many things that happen to her? She takes a holy pilgrimage to Manori, an island for spiritual purification. She also redefines her relationship with her childhood soil, Manori where she understands her husband,

children and city life.

."She saw that island illusion as a refuge, a protection. It would hold her baby safely unborn, magic [for she is in her advance stage of pregnancy]. Then there would be the sea – it would wash the frenzy out of her, drown it. Perhaps the tides would lull the children, too, into smoother, softer beings. The grove of trees would shade them and protect them". (WSWGTS 91)

There is also a change in Sita's identity and she is redefining her relationship with her husband. She accepts to go with her husband. She return to the mainland with her husband is the result of her realization and her sense of alienation is rootless.

Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go ThisSummer?* deals with the inner world of the protagonist, Sita. She is physically unimpressive and over-sensitive. Her over-sensitiveness does not allow her to mingle with an ordinary life. It compels her to go away from this burdensome and crowded area. Sita decides to flee to Manori where there is no crowd except landscapes. Her over-sensitiveness does not allow her to give birth to her fifth child. But her stay at Manori helps to understand that she cannot live forever on a make believe stage and that she has to accept her existence as a whole. Sita deals with the past and holds the key to the present behaviour in this novel.

Sita is psychologically obsessed with her loveless marriage with Raman. Here marital relation as well as man-woman relationship has been portrayed with a remarkable poignancy. Sita is a married woman and has four children, but in the picture of misery and dejection. She feels herself to be an encaged bird in a house which offers her nothing but a crust of dull tedium, of hopeless disappointment. Her unhappiness in married life finds expression in emotion of contempt for the friends and colleagues of her husband.

Her cruel childhood, stricken with deprivation doubt and despair, had a negative impact upon her psychology. She feels enslaved within these doubts and struggles to free herself. A series of situations and incidents project the seething tension, the compulsion and withdrawal of Sita's festered soul. The doubts, the waiting, the unsolved questions that seethe within her and prey upon her mind, turn her into a hypersensitive and depressed individual, with a certain element of mental deranged. She turns into a paranoid character, a cripple without crutches, like a flying creature that startles at the slightest sound.

Sita reacts abnormally and suffers from psychological hesitation. What would hardly be noticed by another person becomes to her an act of persecution. She develops a haunting fear that there is a contradiction around her. There is a clash between the conscious individual and the insular, complacent world around her. Sita's smoking is a trace of silent rebellion, of self assertion, an effort to be her and to show the world, which has an identity of her own, whereas in reality she is actually crumbling down.

Her untidy before her husband is the outcome of an underlying desire to prove that she does not care for anybody in a world that has not cared for her. Her abhorrence

against the patriarchy, her boredom is only camouflages to conceal her failing strength from the world. Gradually, all the problems and complexities of her heart magnify in dimension. Like other protagonists cum heroines of Anita Desai, Sita repels from everyone, but she remains like an encaged bird. She can never attain peace and solace whether she is in Bombay or in Manori. Her condition reminds one of a person in pair who shifts from one posture to another with a vain expectation of removing untold sufferings and conflicting senses.

Her rejection of her in-law and her alienation from social dictum are only camouflages, the way a tiny creature might adopt certain features, not of its own breed, to conceal her insecurity, restlessness her search for her true identity and her own unsucceeding inner strength from the abode. She has the conviction that she would ensure her expectations in loneliness. There is, no doubt, a temporary solitude at the time Sita comes to Manori, but absence makes her heart grow fonder and she realizes that this attitude towards life is more rational than her inner self. His courage in facing the complexities and realities of life has a greater meaning. She had merely been a coward and had all along felt obsessed while confronting the "ugliness of a meaningless life." Sita felt to make a compromise to live with her husband and travel alone mentally and emotionally. But later on, it became improbable for her to make any compromise. Hence, she escaped the land of necromancy but there she found that time had made it damage there also on the place and its dwellers.

The intensive realization brings her back to painful reality, forcing her to retrace her steps back towards the safety and slavish security of her house in Bombay, to wait for the birth of her child. She takes sagacious attempts pacifies herself and she acts before annihilation can occur. Sita's final moment of realization comes, ironically not when her husband is patient with her on trying to reason with her but at a time when he has deserted her. Now she feels "released" and tension-free. The tensions and emotion within her psychology are not quite independent of her husband's, that life with him is real and the future is more precious than the past. And, with this realization the truth dawns upon her that her behaviour had not been completely unnatural because the heifer, the grain, the slum barons all hopes to hide and resort to alienation before giving birth. In each case, the solitary experiences precede that of creation. She returns to Manori in order to give her fifth baby for a normal birth.

Till now, there had been complexities in her thought. She was like a restless spirit unable to attain solace. With the realization that true courage is in facing the complexities, the realities of life, and that fleeing away is merely an act of cowardice she comes to peace with her self. Her fleeing away from her home and urban milieu has brought about a damaging effect. None of her doubts and problems has been resolved. In fact, she has become winner in alienating herself further from her husband and children. The one and most important aspect where she has emerged triumphant in her escaping to Manori is her sanity and normality. She realizes that real courage is

what her husband exposes, it means standing up and trying to tackle the circumstances and coming to terms with them quietly, boldly and creatively. In alienation, she has discovered that her true identity can be forged only in relationship.

If she has to live on earth, she can do so merely either by adapting to her circumstances or by copying with others to whom she has to deal in the course of life. With Sita, this realization and subsequent reconciliation is more important than the previous conflict that had haunted her mind. In this kind of realization, one can discern as advancement in Desai's vision of a woman's struggle to find her existence. In this novel, it becomes clear that Desai has fostered out the radical change in place of conservative. Though the heroines of Anita Desai often act violently but in this novel there is a positive change. Sita reconciles herself to her fate. She strikes a perfect balance between her inner self and the outer world. Her alienation is not temperamental or environmental.

### Conclusion

Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Depicts the real portrait of an Indian woman who rebels against the convention and old mode of life, in the life of western freedom. In transforming her experience in the form of art, Desai uses visual details and an impressionistic style in an attempt to convey a sense of underlying meaning in everyday affairs, manner and treatment. So, Desai needs a positive change in the life of woman.

### References

1. Desai Anita, 1975, *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, Orient Paperbacks 2005. Print.
2. Rao. V. 1978, Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer: An Analysis*, Commonwealth Quarterly, December issue.
3. Desai, Anita. *Where Shall We Go This Summer (WSS)*. Delhi: Orient paperback, 2008. Print.
4. Kanitha.S Lalitha.R "Rebellious and Grunted Women Characters in the novels of Anita Desai, p 407-414 print.