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Sita : From Fraction to Form in Anita Desai's 'Where Shall We Go This Summer?'

Anita Desai's contribution leads the Indo-English novels at the new extent of maturity. She explores the inner being of the woman and presents her predicament. Her novels are the pioneer in the history of Indian Writing in English at the psychological level which has been reflected her finest artistry. K.R.S rightly asserts that—

"Anita Desai has added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian Women Writers in English fiction." (p.470)

Anita Desai has presented the contemporary theme deals with some of the current problems of the society through her novels and especially through the male-female characters in their marital life. She analyses the various problems to show the changing face of the human relationships in the society, through her novel. She doesn't show any kind of the revolt against the men or the patriarchal society but show the need of the equal rights for both man – woman. Her characters desires the freedom and sometimes escapes too but couldn't be rooted out of the tradition. They can't be far away from the family, society or towards their responsibilities. Anita Desai has brought the deep- rooted agonised psyche of womanhood to the time-light in her literary bloom. She has presented the woman protagonists at the three phases physical, emotional, and spiritual. She has reflected the mundane life of the middle class married women in the family, in the society desired to be escaped but coloured with the traditional surrounding.

Study of literature is the whole lot of manifestation of the human life and the expression of the human self. Human life is the presentation on the compass of the theatre. The literature is the direct handed reflection of the human life along with the various characters of the human society and our surrounding. Field of literature focuses those unreached and the untouched corners of the dark human world which is difficult to be brought at the surface of the human world.

Sita , the protagonist of the novel '**Where Shall We Go This Summer?**'- the novel of Anita Desai is in no way of exceptional example of the character in the human world. She is hypersensitive and out of the ordinary character. She is unable to do easy adjustment like other middle class women of the typical Indian society. She is in a way distinguished dimension of the image of women in the family and society. Sita is no common in her emotionality. She is something un adjust with the ordinary women's definition in the term of sensibility. She can neither be omitted nor be put in to exceptional cases. Women are considered as the unbreakable wheel of running the family and the family business fluently, without stopping but she used to consider as the wheel of being in constant running phenomena without speaking and expressing the dislike and undesired, without identity. The ethnic Indian woman is depicted in a multiplicity of roles- mother, wife, daughter and sister. Women are considered as the monument of the endurance and loyalty, she takes pride in service and she is forced to take pride in service and in self sacrifice and enjoy the given happiness and the status by accountability in the society.

The self quest arise when the in the world of human, the human is considered as the inhumane. Women are in search of the self as in form of the equal human. Feminism or feminist movements are neither novel or exceptional. It has been emerged as the world wide cultural movement to secure a complete equality of women with men in the enjoyment of all human rights- personal, moral, religious , social, political, educational, legal, economical, etc....

Sita is a stubborn, romantic dreamer, liberated minded, far away from too much rigidity trying to escape procreation, a very normal human phenomenon in comparing of her sister Rekha. Sita list her mother from the very childhood. She foolishly imagined that she is without mother but it's her brother Jeevan learns that their mother forsaken them and ran off to Benaras and is leading there a widow's life. Sita very closely associated with her father. She tries in constant search of the past life but desperately get disappointment. Raman is far more practical than Sita. He is a very good and caring father but unsuitable with the mentality of Sita. In the ancient Epic Ramayana Sita was left by Rama in the forest due to the society but here Sita herself escapes from the

mundane life of the family and the trends of the middle class mentality. In search of the identity Sita goes to Manorie, but the very atmosphere there of miracle, magic and spell has evaporated and Sita becomes cynical to the core. Sita has some special attachment with the island due to the memory of the past life which she spent with her father during childhood. She wants to live that past. She is in search of that liberation and freedom. She needs the emotional warm support of her husband. She wants to feel security and emotional safety in company of her husband Raman but she gets fail. The distance gets wide between her and her husband. Sita has become mellow, enduring and animated to cope with the trials and tribulations in life with all its ups and downs. Her tussel is investigative of the **“ intelligent and sensitive woman’s revolt against the male smugness and philistinism trampling all finer values in marital life.”**

Sita came to an island in order not to give birth to a child in her womb. She comes on an island on a pilgrimage. To beg for the miracle of keeping her baby unborn. (p.28). She had four children with pride, with pleasure-sensual, emotional, Freudian, every kind of pleasure-with all the placid serenity that supposedly goes with pregnancy and parturition. In concern of the fifth child now she has become uncontrolled. Control was an accomplishment that had slipped out of her hold, without her husband’s noticing it, over the years, till now she had no more than an infant has, before he has begun the process of acquiring it, and so she wept and flung herself about, over-forty, grey and aging. (p.29) when Raman said her that she should not worry about the children because she always like children, Sita revolts this time that ‘I’m not pleased, I’m frightened,’ she hissed through her teeth. ‘Frightened’. (p.29). For Raman it was easy to give birth to a child.

‘Why? Why? He spoke gently. ‘everything will go well. I thought it grows easier and easier.’
‘It’s not easier. It’s harder-harder.
It’s unbearable,’ she wept. (p.29)

For Raman it would be alright once she gives birth to a child. Once the discomfort and physical misery were over, she would fill again into that comfortable frame of large, placid joy, of glazed satisfaction, of totally intuned pride and regard, as she did usually, as did other women one saw pacing with a measure that would be majestic were it not a little vainglorious. Raman doesn’t understand her exact condition what she feels instead considers her as fool. She insisted that he doesn’t understand her condition. She refused him before acquiring the step but got fail. The term of abortion is also something called sin for her. She wants baby safe in her womb but she doesn’t want to give it birth. When she expresses her thought in such sense Raman calls her ‘Mad’. She is in furious mood pack the suitcase and said-

‘I think,’ she said, ‘what I’m doing is trying to escape from the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to be sane again’.(p.32)

Raman gets irritated by her decision of going to an island. He said very furiously that she runs away like a bored wife- in a film. This is something small incident for Raman but something disastrous for Sita. Giving birth to a child is something routine for him. He said-

“But you’re not leaving for such small incidents, Sita? They occur in everyone’s life, all the time. If you’re an adult you know how to cope with them—they are only small incidents”.(p.34)

Sita’s desire for independence is evident when she decides to spend sometimes on the island- Manori. She wants freedom what Raman has occupied. There was long distance between Sita and Raman. Both they have vacant marital life. Their living together was just reasons of children, home, society, responsibilities and physical relationship, which lengthens out to drabness and boredom, quite killing. The tension in Sita’s life goes without let-up. she finds her life disharmonious. She finds her position is something imbalance. She doesn’t have ‘self’ to be express. She has to patch up with what the husband desires, society, family, the children, their needs, demands etc....Raman has completely business attitude to life. He ignored Sita and her desire. Sita doesn’t like his and his business- minded friends talk only of business. Raman is not introvert nor an extrovert,- a middling kind of man, he was dedicated unconsciously to the middle way. He neither tries nor bother to know Sita. He gets busy with his friends and the business people. With some he ate meal, some came to see him, others he visited. He found them very like himself and not worth much thought or introspection. Not introvert, nor extrovert- a middling kind of man, he could not tell what she meant or what she folded her arms about her and stared at the closed door by saying-

“They are nothing – nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter, Animals”.(p.43)

They lived together but just bodily. He didn’t even try to know the fundamental act of her existence that she also gets bored, dull, unhappy, tired and uncontrolled. Sita is also oppressed and depressed with loveless wedlock with Raman. Sita is badly frightened by the labour pain and if not then the pessimism comes through the

children ,once again the routine of changing the nappies of the child and the standing service of the new born baby, besides the baby itself in the womb if she doesn't abort, if she aborts that's call killing the child and the biggest crime. She wants to escape from all these. She wants some magical effect for not giving birth the child. In order to marginalize her wish, where she lived with her father, until her marriage. She behaves like neurotic. She finds magic on the island. Sita is nervous, sensitive middle-aged woman with explosive and emotional reaction to many things that happen to her, she now wants to escape from the responsibility because she finds the present life mundane and meaningless. From the childhood she feels lake of love. Her father got busy with the chelas and the patients and after marriage her husband got busy with the business. She feels as if she is the machine of bearing the children. Except this she doesn't have other work in the life. She wants to express what she about the life, love, children, Raman but she couldn't. For Raman everything is normal and everything should be normal but for Sita it's not an easy matter. She doesn't want to face the very laborious pain of giving birth to child. Her silence transformed in to sudden rebel, uncontrolled anger, outburst fear. Sita feels too much lonely in her life. Though she lives in Bombay she feels alone. Even though she lives in Manori along with the two children she feels alone because the children have much affection towards the father, they didn't even both to understand the feelings and care of their mother but it looks something routine to them. They too have much fascination towards the modern world, the career, the toys, the delicious food, films etc. Raman fails to fulfil her expectation. So there is a marital discort, tension between husband and wife. Raman and Sita have irreconcilable temperaments and attitude to life. Sita represents a world of emotion and feminine sensibility while Raman is a man with an active view of life and the sense of the practical.

Sita is the symbol of those women who silently suffers in the name of 'women' and the most responsible person of the family who faces the listless behaviour of their men, try to invent ways of fighting out against tyranny undesired, or manipulate situation to their advantage in a deadly manner. The distance between Raman and Sita gave birth to a stubborn woman. Now she feels that passions are dead, warmth is icy . She is crude and harsh. She doesn't want to keep any concern with what Raman desires and wants. Having birth the child and passing through the labour pain, she finds Raman is responsible for that and for the termination of the child, which she considers as killing of the innocent child, the sin she finds him responsible. She didn't want the child now but she has which she finds now unsoluted so she wants to escape from that reality. She becomes vigorous when she finds that Raman has least concern with what's her condition and what will she face and what will she be passed through which makes her revolted and vigorous too. Now she doesn't want to do any kind of the compromises. She wants that her husband and her husband should understand at least what she is? What does she feel? What does she wish? What makes her happy? What does she want? What does she desire? But the result is in nil. The rebel in Sita for the freedom, liberation and search for self makes her much disturb and she finds herself restless and much tense to feel peace from the root of her heart and getting solution of her inner dilemma. She wants care from her husband and the children but she feels as if she is taken as routine by everyone. She needs some special concentration, some care, some emotional transparency between her husband and children but gets fail.

At the island she takes much more care of her two children Menaka and Karan of their each smallest need, comfort and happiness but all goes in vain she finds when Raman comes by the call of Menaka and both the children shows thirst to meet their father, she finds her care is nothing. What she wants to give them they don't accept that neither they want to understand the worth of it. So she feels alienated there. Menaka called her father which shocked Sita, she finds the children disloyal.

Everyone around her winced--she saw them wincing at her harshness, her wildness that they so dreaded. But she could not stop herself now, not even for Karan's shake. Their betrayal had torn her open with such violence, now violence poured from her like blood. In it was also the shame, the disappointment: he had not come to see her, to fetch her, as she had supposed; he had come because Menaka had called him. He had betrayed her too. They had all betrayed her. Why? (p.121-122).

The children have much affection towards the materialistic life, which is fulfilled by their father, but didn't concern with the inner peace, inner beauty, inner freedom, to be liberated by boredom life. Raman is practical in a ways that he thinks to settle his children in terms of career. He came island to take back the children because it's an admission matter of Menaka in medical field. Sita stared at her hostilely and twisted her own lips in bitterness. She finds that her daughter is a traitor and Raman came there to take her back, as per her letter. She finds Menaka also different and disloyal to her, as was Sita not with her father. She didn't remember about her mother but she had much fascination with her father, which she didn't find here in her case. She didn't have mother so she wanted to take much more care of her children to fulfil the best role of a mother in their life but she found as she was worthless for them. She was just important for them to fulfil their basic needs, day to day necessity. Just as Raman's approach towards her. She wants where exactly she is with them? Among them? Sided of them? Behind them? Where? Because she finds herself strange among them. She finds as she is just a machine , just an instrument of uses, for uses. From where Sita escapes her husband and her children desires passionately to go there. To be involved. Sita watched, listened, bitterly and feel jealousy. She marked their eagerness for the old

routine, old friends, the city comforts and customs, and thought it treachery. She marked that how they did not mention the island, had nothing to tell their father about it. What gets worth for here, they discarded such as jelly fish, drowned cow in the well, crabs, shrimps brought in baskets—nothing the children shared with their father. Sita finds as they all had got together, she decided, her family, to fight her, to reject her, to run away from her and hide from her. Sita is the hyper sensitive woman. Up to this she faced lots of unnoticed existential movements in Bombay but she controlled and became unvoiced but now she is uncontrolled. She is something the form of fire which can't be bear or hide. She considers all these uncaring situations, the self centre diversion of the children apart from her, as treachery. In that case Sita looks the most abnormal who thinks about the children's smallest approach in this particular sense like this but she needs some space among them. She wants her involvement. She wants her worth among them which she doesn't feel. She wants some important. She wants that she is not an instrument or a machine but the human one understand what does she feel? In case of a husband and the children too.

Sita wants to know where she is? With her husband? In which sense? Which form? With her children in which form? If she is wife? She is mother? She is not human? Does a mother or a wife have not that status to be expressive or reject something? Or feel? Realise? Or to say something 'no'? She finds as if she is minor. Why a woman be minor after she involve in family whether her own or of in-laws? Why is there not priority of her wish, desire, rejection, like and dislike? In the modern time there may be possibilities of the worth of the opinion of the woman but Anita Desai focused on the character of Sita who can be majority of women's case counted in minority. Minority in worth of the thought, approach, attitude, view point, decisions, rejections, likes, dislikes, expression of the desire both in case of sex, in concern of talent, abilities, skills, capacities etc... Sita wants her children should feel the inner peace, beauty, true freedom, individual freedom, apart from the materialistic life but none wants to understand perhaps this might be the reason that they are not hypersensitive as their mother Sita. Raman's view towards the life is that it must be continued. Also the business too. Raman is ready to face the responsibilities such as Menka's admission to medical college, wife to hospital, new child safely brought forth, the children reared, the factory seen to, money earning, filling the comforts of the family. Everything was clear for Raman, just Sita expected something more. She gets that she is weak in comparison of Raman because the children takes their father as the most powerful who can do anything. Sita feels shame. It's not something about the strength but about the worth, value. The children sensing him superior in comparison to her. Perhaps that's why the children turned to him. Sensing him to be superior in courage, in leadership. She can't bear that she should be considered as the weaker. Revolt is something showing of the maintenance of that courage. She faces the betrayal of Menaka and Raman's own part in conspiracy cut through her sharply and she reminded herself that she had courage, too, the courage of being coward.

He who refuses des not repent.hould he be asked again, he would say No again. And yet that No- the right No- crushes him for the rest of his life.
(p.127)

Sita escapes from the duties and responsibilities, from order and routine, from life and the city, to the unlivable island. She had refused to give birth child in a world not fit to receive the child. She had express her great 'No'. Sita felt, as she sat down beside him heavily, it was to be a battle between his brand of courage and her's. Or her cowardice and his. Sita doesn't want to face anything now in case of her pregnancy. Raman has booked her room in the hospital but She rejects forcefully---

'I can't' she repeated, 'go through it all over again. 'You must,' He said, she shook her head. It seemed to her that he was always saying to her,'You must. One must,' and that she was always shaking her head, crying, 'No, I can't.(p.129)

She is like all those trees which shook their heads due to wind and becomes distress. The very sound of distress comes through their leaves just the same way from her scattered and disturbed 'self'. She had had so many children but never grown used to the alarm in that city. Each time it tore a fresh gash in her. It made her wild, it made her run. Then to have another child, and hear it launch itself upon another scream.(p.129).

It looks as Raman has nothing to do with Sita's unbearable pain while delivering the child. He takes it as the most normal condition. Even he thinks that it is routine for her. He looked stubborn while saying that- 'Other people put up with it—it's not so, so insufferable,' 'Why can't you?' Perhaps one should be grateful if life is only a matter of disappointment, not disaster.' Sita finds such a disaster and danger in bringing the child in this world as she finds it mundane, full of stress, depression, frustration, despair, negativity, full of materialistic approached, loaded with disappointment, crowd, disturbance and unsafe. Sita loves children but she but needs something else too in the life. Children are there, husband is there, but she also wants to be there, somewhere, not everywhere in their life but at least have some worthwhile place in family , in home, in her own life, in their life.

Sita is in search of the tender love from Raman. Apart from the physical relationship and the loaded

responsibilities she needs something more. The tender love between the woman and the man in the Hanging Garden touched her a lot. She needs some relaxation in the life. She needs some relax easy going moments in the life. Instead of she finds her life as the life of the machine like. She finds work of Art in the relationship of that woman and man. She finds such kind of the relation and the moments in the relation is like divine. They were like divine and inhumane. So strong—that love, that sadness, not like anything she had seen or known before. In comparison of them she finds her life like a shadow, absolutely flat, uncoloured. Got marry, be the shadow of the husband, follow his desires, fulfil the responsibilities, giving birth to the children, taking care of them — is not just the life, she wants the time, space, joy, peace, relaxation for her 'self' too. Up to this her offered all the responsibilities honestly, but now she is uncontrolled. She wants space for her. She wants something for her. Now she justifies her mother's run away to Benaras. She was un complain in those harder time with Raman but she seems as it has become their whole life. That small harder struggle has become struggle for no limit. So she says-

'Do you know,' she added hesitantly, 'I think perhaps that is the urge my mother felt when she ran away to Benaras. But what happened to her? I wonder, Raman. I had to run away, too—to the island.' (p.135)

Sita feels her life as jellyfish. She finds herself washed up by the waves, stranded there on the sand bar. The problem she finds with her life is that her suffocation was not seen by her husband. If there is any difference in the life that's Sita could realise but Raman doesn't even want to understand perhaps he could but he takes it easy or routine. For Sita routine has become something Suffocated. Change was waited by Sita but now she wants to escape, though it's not right, now she doesn't think about the right or wrong but the result which she desires, that's peace, search for 'self'. Something magic in her life which makes her free from the child birth and even from the sin of killing the child. She said firmly, 'I'll go now,' (p.139). Sita feels her life long, straight, monotonous track of her life whip itself round and round till it's very lines dissolved and turned to a blur of silver, the blurred silver of the mirror-like windowpanes. She finds all was bright, all was blurred, all was in a whirl. Life had no periods, no stretches. It simply swirled around, muddling and confusing, leading nowhere. (p.140.)

Sita is a woman who wants to live assertively a life of meaning, one feels. Sita wants her separate identity, place and worth which can give the new dimension to her and life. Finding of magic or magical effect looks Sita's desiring for change in her unchanged life. The suffocation from within transform now in vigorous and open revolt. She has become rebellious. It's like pressure she preserved up to this time now she is uncontrolled. Sita is a traveller of the life, but of that life which was occupied by Raman and designed with Raman, but she wants to walk few steps in her chosen direction. She wants to cover some distance of her own choice. She wants to walk in some different direction which is not far away from the responsibilities but she needs some pause, some desirable pause from where she can breath and feel her own being, reason of being and living.

In '*Where Shall We Go This Summer?*' Anita Desai brilliantly explains that modern civilisation always provides a cage for primal natures. Sita suffers because of her sentiment and passionate seriousness. Anita Desai has presented this existential problem is evident in her major works. Through the profound study of the inner world of men and women, she enters the inner recesses of human soul to unfold the psychological miseries and sensibilities of her character. Raman is practical and egoistic person. Instinct, emotion and passion are alien to his busy commercial world. He fails to understand the psychology of his wife and he considers her feelings as mere idiosyncrasies. "You've gone mad"10.(p.32). Raman's indifference and hostile attitude makes Sita isolated. She considers her marriage as an ironic destiny. She finds herself alienated from her husband and her children. Like Raman the children are also insensitive, they don't share the sentiments of their mother. They are blind flowers of their father. As Sita finds herself unadjust and uneasy with her husband and children, she decides to go Manori. When Raman comes to take her and the children back she receives a blow and full of repentance. She gets back to the reality and there is a realisation in Sita that separation is not an ultimate solution. With all endurance and feminine sensibilities she returns back to home. On the island she was like a player. Now she feels as she is exhausted at the end of the performance, clearing the stage, picking the costumes. now she has to clear the stage and she has to go back to home. Here on the island she feels as she, being a married woman had played her role for many years, on the island she was like primitive actress in a theatrical performance was now to return to a life of retirement, off-stage. But now she is sure that there was not the other way around after all? Up to this time she felt that she was performing the duty to dull marriage life with false, with pretence and performance and only escape to the island, back to the past life is the only sincere and truthful work she has ever done in her life. Sita is undecided that which one is the false and the true life? She was undecided. She couldn't decide anything. Sita is an introvert and intellectual lady. She is a woman of cultured taste. She cannot cope with the artificiality of urban life. She too rejects the narrowness of the tradition, culture, approach of life, exclusiveness of the materialistic urban life. Sita's escape is not escaping permanently from the life and responsibilities but it's she wants some time to ne self-expressive and self-search. She wants to feel relief. She wants to feel some peace and relaxation on the island. She wants to go near to the past memory yet she knows that it's far from the reality. She got puzzled. Which of her selves is true? Which false? All she knew was that there were two periods of her life, each in direct opposition to the other. She finds life has no periods, no

stretches. It simply swirled around, muddling and confusing, leading nowhere. She feels that long, straight, monotonous track of her life whip itself round her in swift circles, perhaps a spiral, whirling round and round. She finds her present life is confused but she can't escape permanently. She finds something newness in her. She feels as the drama is over. Raman had no part in it. She feels release. She feels herself like a bird who lowers it down and goes back to home. She feels then the great gap between them would be newly and securely bridged when she recollects the lines of the poetry of D.H Lawrence. She 'The strange, new knocking of life at her side.....Asks to be hidden and wishes nothing to tell.'(p.137). She liked Raman's humorous approach when he said life on an island wouldn't be bad and he would like farming, farming of what? That's of Bombay duck. Something was ended between her and Raman which she liked.

There is a subtle attempt on the part of authors to establish a sort of harmony in married life of the female protagonists in spite of irritations while a quest for independence and a separate identity continues to haunt women most of the time. Sita's predicament is hypersensitive women's predicament. She is more like child in her petulance in her denial of life's responsibilities, in her deep concern with her own self. When she finds she is uncontrollably dissatisfied with her life she decides to escape but ultimately she gets some newness in her life.

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