The Element Of Existential Despair In The Novel “Where Shall We Go This Summer” By Anita Desai.

Abstract:
Anita Desai, a name which has gained an important place in the field of Indian English literature. Anita Desai has written on a style that has been highly influenced by Virgina Woolf, D.H.Lawrence etc--- fiction with psychological therapy for the readers of Anita Desai. We can find an element of intellectual supremacy in almost all the works which has been done by Anita Desai. How to tie up with readers emotion it has beautifully been seen in the novels of Anita Desai. Her mastery over humans mind, emotion and character can be seen in the novels of her. And for Anita Desai’s major role in the field of literature, she got Sahitya Akedemi Award in 1978. And here i am dealing with Anita Desai's one of the best novels “Where Shall We Go This Summer”. Like other novels this novel too has a female protagonist, who is fighting with her inner conflicts. Anita Desai does not identify as a feminist, despite writing from a female perspective and using her artistic voice to communicate the worries, dreams, and goals of her female heroines. She finds it incredibly interesting to probe the foundations of society via the protagonists of her stories. She observes everything carefully so that she may accurately portray the society she encounters in her writing. Anita Desai is unique among Indian authors like R K Narayan, Mulkraj Anand, Bhabani Battacharya, and Raja Rao because of her mastery of language and style in conveying her characters’ inner anguish and tension. After publishing her first novel, Cry of the Peacock, Anita Desai became a household name In her fourth novel, Where Shall We Go This Summer?, we are taken inside the cynical head and world of Sita, the heroine. Anita Desai frequently features themes of marital discord, hostile personalities, hopelessness, and loneliness. Raman and Sita's inability to change causes tension in their home, which is explored in this story. Everyone sees things from their own special angle. The former is practical and grounded, whereas the latter is overwrought with emotion. Sita, like Maya in "Cry, the Peacock" and Monisha in "Voices in the City," has mental anguish. The protagonist of Anita Desai's moving work of fiction is a lonely married lady who desperately wants to flee the pain and instability of her peculiar life. The frustrations of modern existence are reflected in the novel's protagonist, whose wrath is both fascinating and terrifying. The novel's three sections mirror its shortened length and enhanced content richness. Part One, "Monsoon '67," Part Two, "Winter '47," and Part Three, "Monsoon '67" each focus on a certain season, year, or geographical area.

KEYWORDS:- Anita, Sita, Raman, Manori, Children etc.

The prologue sets the scene on Manori and introduces us to Sita before she gets into trouble. The second section details our history with her, and the final section features her acceptance of the favourable outcomes that lay ahead. Sita, a middle-aged lady who is pregnant with her fifth kid while still caring for her four older children, is emotionally estranged from her husband and children due of her great sensitivity and impulsiveness. She can no longer take the routine acts of violence that she is witnessing and has had enough. Her shyness and lack of confidence in social situations make her feel like an outsider, yet her feelings of alienation are organic and inherent. On the other hand, Raman is what one would call a "realistic" man: he never loses his cool and is always reasonable and obedient. Raman the peacock struggles to communicate with his human wife Sita just like Maya's human spouse Gautama does in Cry. According to R. S. Pathak:
Sita and Rama are symbolic of two radically different temperaments and worldviews, both of which contribute to the tension in their marriage.(28)

Part One of the novel begins with Sita and her two children, Karan and Menaka, arriving on the island. She currently resides at the Manori house. In order to stop the birth of her kid, she goes to Manori in search of a miracle worker. The reasons why she decided to leave the city are discussed. She is often frustrated by even everyday occurrences. As a result of her unreasonable fear of the city's inhabitants and her growing emotional distance from her husband, she decided to go to the island. She thinks the world is a terrible place full of evil and destruction, and she has no desire to raise her child there.

In the second half of the book, she talks about her life on the island before she was married. In a spacious Manori house, she spent her formative years with her father. Her father was a freedom fighter, therefore the family moved around a lot. Manori became their permanent residence when independence was achieved. He had the utmost respect of everyone on the island. As a result of the widespread influence of his ideas, he founded an ashram in his backyard. He became a folk hero in Manori thanks to his ground-breaking research and unconventional therapies. The people of Manori had a lot of faith in Sita's dad and would go to him if they had a problem. Sita's mother had left the family, so her father raised Sita, her sister Rekha, and her brother Jeevan. Since many people came to their father for medication, the house where the children lived was often crowded.

Part Three of the Novel Picks Up Where Part One Left Off. Her hope that the island will miraculously improve her life is dwindling.
Her city-bred offspring struggled to adjust to island life and began to accuse their mother, Sita, of insanity. They are eager to get off the island and visit their preferred big city. So, Menaka writes a letter to Raman, requesting him to secretly pick them up and bring them home from the temple. After considerable debate, Sita agrees to leave the island when Raman arrives and join her husband and children in Bombay. After realising that a miracle wasn't going to happen on the island, she moved back home with her family in the big city. Sita and Raman are like magnets and poles; they repel each other instead of drawing one other in. Raman is just your average person; he has a sensible, practical, and realistic view of life. However, Sita is an emotional woman who has difficulty integrating into her family and community.

Anita Desai makes an effort to show Sita's distress, which stems from her biased worldview. Sita is an extremely sensitive individual who, after having grown up in the country under her father's watchful eye, now finds herself trapped in the concrete jungle. Her stomach turns at the thought of returning to the island where she has enjoyed the simple joys of rural life and where she feels her origins to reside. After losing her father and her house, she begins to feel empty and turns to her husband, Raman, for comfort.

She has low self-esteem and constantly criticises Raman. Either he didn't realise what she wanted or he was completely out of his depth. Karan looked into his eyes, boring into them in a desperate attempt to get what she needed from him, and he responded by gently running his hand over her hair. (132)

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Sita has always favoured excluding himself and his wife from his social circle. She thinks Raman's friends to be "appalled" and "frightening," thus she could never accept them as houseguests. Raman's business colleagues dropped by, and he found them to be kind and manageable. She observes them soberly and without much humour. Sita, on the other hand, considers them nothing more than sexual fodder. Money, sex, and food are the only things that matter. Animals" (47). She insults her guests by calling them "pariahs... on the streets, prowling about drains and dustbins ready to pounce and slaughter and consume" (47)

She never warmed up to his friends and family, much less anybody else. She had a hard time getting along with his family when they first moved in together on Queens Road, and things haven't improved much now that they're all living together in a city apartment.

She stands for nature and its resistance to technology. It would seem that she is a "weird one," estranged from both her family and the rest of society. Concerned, she watches as birds devour a newborn eagle. The crows are harassing the injured bird, so she swiftly grabs Karan's toy weapon and uses it to scare them away. She has displayed the naivety of a kid throughout this interaction.

She was unable to save the bird from the crows, and Raman didn't believe her storey when he heard it. Nothing except a few bloodied feathers remained on the ledge in the morning. Raman said that whomever worked on your bird has excellent workmanship. Notice the feathers that are sticking out towards the crow's beak. (41)

Raman is unfazed by life's challenges and takes a "practical" approach. He has the complete opposite personality of Sita, who takes everything seriously. The outside world, in her mind, is dangerous and unfriendly. She sees the city as a chaotic place where people fight in trash cans and kids act out scenes from movies. She finds it abhorrent that ayahs get into vulgar, lowcost street fights. The devastating nature of her children's actions shocks her to her core. Menaka, her daughter, breaks a vase full of new flowers, and she shouts at herself because the sight is too painful to bear. Menaka becomes upset when she breaks one of her painstakingly painted and stunningly gorgeous works of art.

Sita, who stands for nature, is uncomfortable there. The chaos and violence that permeate our culture concern her deeply. She constantly berates everyone, including her own family. Since the world isn't adapting to her whims and preferences, she feels she has no place in it anymore. According to Jasbir Jain, the violence in her environment "triggers off the entire aberrance of Bombay life." Raman and Sita's contrasting personalities are a major factor in their marital discord and the novel's overarching theme. Raman, whom Sita regularly accuses of being unable to understand, has always found Sita's emotions and behaviour to be childish and naive. Sita appears to be a confused woman. Her husband Raman had a hard time getting to know her because of her complex character. Given the state of the world today, she has no interest in having children. She insists she has no interest in procreating.

Sita screams "crazy!" when Raman asks her opinion on abortion. You've lost your mind a bit. Eliminate the baby? To have it is all I ask. To be clear, I intend to hoard it. Raman seems extremely baffled as he explains (35) that she just told him, "You don't want it." And now you say you want it! What gives? What gives? (35) Raman is exactly like any other spouse in that he deeply values his wife and children. His hesitation to give Sita to Manori is evidence of the tender husband he is. Raman, who really values his wife and kid, tells her, "I respect you more than I respect Manori."

You need to be close to a medical facility, a telephone, and a doctor. The island is off-limits during the monsoon. You won't be able to conceive there. (33)

Sita's confidence as a woman and mother is shattered. She feels terrible about bringing a child into this world. The thought of yet another act of murder and violence fills her with dread.

Srivastava observes:
Sita's condition in this world rife with violence is represented by an incident in which numerous crows assault and kill an eagle. (XXXVI)

Because of her neurotic fears and anxieties, she notices the violence in her environment and wishes she could escape to her island, where she believes a miracle would occur.

Sita always tells Raman, "to Manori," when he asks, "Where will we vacation this summer?" She travels to the Manori islet off the Moris mainland grudgingly this year because she is sick of the monotony of city life in Bombay and is "paranoid" about her sixth pregnancy. (Swain 21-22)

Sita's early experiences might provide insight on her personality. Without a mother figure, she had an unkind, neglectful, and disdainful upbringing. Sita's father is too busy to pay any attention to his children, and Sita in particular never felt loved by him. He had a special place in his heart for Sita's sister, Rekha. She has worries about Rekha and their relationship because she and Rekha don't look alike. When she finds out from Jivan that Rekha is not her sister, she becomes enraged because "his words had spilled over her skin like acid." Sita has a persistent sense of being unwanted and alone (79). Because to her father's bias, she is also deprived of Rekha's company. Her adult mental instability may be traced back to repressed emotions from her childhood. Because to her mother's neglect, her father's apathy, and her sister's seclusion, she has undergone significant psychological changes. As expected, the father's death leads to family discord. Rekha leaves without a cry, Jivan vanishes without a trace, and Raman can only marry Sita.

A broken family is detrimental to a person because they will not receive the love and support necessary to flourish. Sita is one such victim who isolates herself after experiencing trauma in her formative years. It is only after she has betrayed her husband, his family, her children, and her friends that she begins to feel remorse. Raman confronts her with the truth about her actions and tries to help her see the suffering she has caused her family. Manori alters her routine in preparation for Raman's departure.

She ducked her head and searched for his footprints so she could retrace his movements on the way back. Hers and his footsteps mingled playfully.

Now that the island's enchantment and mystery have worn out, things on Sita are everything from calm and peaceful (150). They think her trip to the island is completely insane, and the foreboding weather has just added to their fears. She realises that life in Bombay is the real deal, whereas the island is a fabrication, an illusion, and a world that crumbles beneath her fingertips. (Jasbir 87)

Sita is convinced to embrace the truth despite her confusion. She had no way of knowing the facts or making a call. How much of the storey she told was based on facts and how much was fiction?

What part of the description was accurate, and what part was not? She could only recall two periods of time in her life, and they were consecutive. She hoped that finding happiness on the island would be possible, but she was wrong (153). Since she is unable to connect emotionally with her husband at home or her children in Manori, she has no one to turn to for emotional support. She had an epiphany and wants to get back to earth. She had come to the island in search of a miraculous remedy. But after coming to terms with the fact that man would always be apathetic to the ever-present threat, she resolves to return to confront life once more. (Singh 158)

Sita has come to the realisation that there is no way to separate reality from delusion. In her interview, Anita Desai emphasises the point that, if you're alive, you have to compromise in order to make it through the world; drawing the lines would mean definite death, and in the end, Sita chooses life, with compromises. (21) Unlike Maya from Cry, the Peacock, Sita doesn't harm anyone or take her own life; instead, she makes peace with her fate.

Harim Prasad claims that Sita has developed an appreciation for the pragmatic, or real-world, side of life, which addresses the many ways in which people face adversity. At last, she gathers the strength to face the ups and downs of her existence. (119) The portrayal of Sita's character is spot-on when compared to the struggles of a modern married woman. She avoids facing the truth for a while before finally accepting it.

While Desai's heroines have been known to resort to violence in the past, this latest work marks a welcome improvement. Sita accepts her plight and moves on. She has found the sweet spot where her internal world is in perfect balance with her external environment. Unlike Maya's, her withdrawal has nothing to do with her character or her surroundings. Insightful analysis by Ramachandra Rao: "The novel may, therefore, be viewed as a parable on human beings' incapacity to reconcile the inner with the outward, the individual with the group." (59)

Anita Desai's novels faithfully depict the world as she sees it. But she doesn't dwell on societal issues the way that other people do. She investigates in depth how patriarchy and male dominance shape a woman's growth and development. She investigates social realities from a psychological perspective, but she doesn't act like a social reformer to do so. Her writings are introspective examinations of the protagonists, and she has a gift for elucidating little nuances that are often glossed over.

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References