

STATUS OF WOMEN IN PORTRAYED IN ANITA DESAI'S *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*

Dr.T. Vijayakumar, Assistant Professor, Post Graduate and Research Department
of English, Presidency College (Autonomous) Chennai – 600 005.

ABSTRACT

Anita Desai's preoccupation with the individual, highlighting the Psychological motivations, Frustrations, sense of failure and awareness of the futility of existence radiates in all her novels. The novel portrays the theme of alienation and incommunication in marital life, existential notions like dread, agony of facing the violent reality, boredom, loneliness & death can be found in this novel. Desai dramatizes the conflict between two irreconcilable temperaments, of two diametrically opposed attitudes towards life. The major protagonist of her novel is a nervous, sensitive middle-aged woman who finds herself alienated from her husband and children because of her emotional and explosive reactions to many things that happen to her. Sita, the heroine of Desai's novel, is introverted and subjective as Maya, the heroine *Cry, the Peacock*. The problems and the unhappiness in the life of Sita spring from her constitutional inability to accept the values and the attitudes of society. She finds that the majority of the members of society live lives full of dullness, boredom and deadness.

Key words: Anita Desai, Woman psyche, status of women, Alienation and isolation

Sita, a middle aged woman arrives in a mood of desperation and doubt. Unable to bear the violence and destruction round her, and also the anguish of another pregnancy, She has come away from Bombay, leaving Raman, her husband, in pain and despair, She has come there in order to achieve the miracle of

not giving birth, for, Manori, is an island of Miracles. It is not only the complacency and violence of the life around her but also the violence in the world at large that makes her think madly of keeping the child inside her. A busy, indifferent husband and the grown-up children, distrustful of her melodramatic outbursts, have driven her to the edge of the precipice.

What is normal and usual for the others is abnormal and unusual for Sita. Even though her daughter Colly informs her that they were only playing, Sita screams, this mere play for Sita represents the violence and the hatred that she finds all round her daughter Menaka, coldly and methodically destroying all beautiful drawings. She had so carefully made, the ayahs fighting like animals completely oblivious of the crying and frightened children in their midst, all represent the myriad faces of a mad and violent society.

This conflict between the sensitive individual and the insensitive world is objectified in terms of a series of situation which vividly convey the tension, the conflict, and the withdrawal of the wounded and bruised soul into its own protective shell. The problem arises to Sita because of loneliness and her loneliness is symbolic of the loneliness of a woman, a wife and a mother. The difference between her sensitiveness and the insensitiveness of the world is revealed in terms of a series of situations and incidents which reflect the all pervasive brutality and violence which appeal Sita.

The theme of marital discord surfaced in this novel had its genesis in the creeds of status of women, especially Indian women who all took up the role of wives there by surrendering themselves to the conflict of diametrically opposing viewpoints of conformity and rebellion, the “Yes” and “No”. In this novel Anita Desai limited her stance of a woman who was unable to see anything beyond the

family and the limited area of domestic ties. When her husband asked her that she would not have abortion at stage she replied that she did not want to kill the baby but at the same time she wanted the baby to be born in her father's magic island.

All Sita's experiences in the nasty brutish and mad world of city life drove her to the extent of seeking comfort in the island where she was born. She had the peculiar trait of inversion and introversion coupled with inherent inability to accept the values and attitudes of her husband society. She wanted to live a tailor made world of her own to make her happy. She failed to understand that the world could not be remoulded according to her whim rather she had to modify and adjust her personality after learning the techniques of interacting with others. But her enjoyment out of such interaction with others could not materialize on account of her critical estimate of the people around her.

In Sita one could visualize the paranoiac tendency of rage, fear revolt of Indian women over forty, grey and ageing but still a poor being of child bearing who long and love to escape from the madness of their filial existence to an imaginary place, where they thought that it might be possible to be sane and mentally balanced. The complex modern life in the city with her husband Raman and her four children did not offer her any sense of enjoyment or fulfillment. This was a similar plight of every Indian women of that age. She started living a life of waiting for the emergence of a new aspect of human life.

Like a bored runaway wife on a film she too wanted to run away from the main land full of violence, harshness, wildness, bloodbath, infanticide, and total disappointment. She kept that courage alive through day and night and came to the island along with her daughter Menaka and the youngest son karan. The lack of understanding between Raman and Sita was the resultant factor of their inherent

temperamental differences. She was so subjective and in her preoccupations she had no firm grip on outer realities. There are two incidents narrated in this novel showed clearly how Sita hated all pervading phenomenon of violence found exhibited in the objects around her. One of such incidents was the parliament of birds attacking a wounded young eagle as their common prey. For her it was an exhibition of black drama in the crowd theatre murder, infanticide, incest, theft, and robbery, all were much practiced by these rough, raucous, rasping tattered demagogues which she could not stomach and reminded her nothing but the expression of appetite and sex.

The most important aspect in the drama of human life from the pre historic times of today or other human beings in the portrayal of the growth and development of Sita's personality this aspect of other human beings plays the most pivotal role. It is because for her other people like her husband, children and her servant maids contribute for most of our pleasures like companionship, love, security, sexual gratification and admiration. Since these relationships are not only providing compensation and distraction from the most serious issues of social life but they are the bones of social structure. These relationships offer scope for Sita a craving for belongingness as an instinct of universal human attribute but they make her feel discordant and made her feel totally lost and saw in her the layers of experience and melancholy and boredom that had settled upon her face since then like so much grey sand.

She tried to be very quiet during her prayer hours because to keep distance from family problems and mental worries. This religious tenet of resignation that has offered a sense of security emanating from the feelings of belongingness and love from others for her father was a thing of reality for her father but this was found missing in Sita's married life. For her father, love and belongingness offered

by other people through their community devotions, with their festival atmosphere and sounds through gave him an avanesant bliss of happiness he had the scope to receive everlasting bliss of hapinesss outside this festival atmosphere in his house outside on one of the stone seats where nature reigned supreme in the formation of folige or checkoo trees. This blissful relationship of serene objective nature was also found missing in the life pattern of Sita. As a child born with the bondage of relatedness of secured and blissful nature found expressed as a fountain head of joy and happiness that too from her proximity to her saint like father breathing into the life of others safety and security. Sita's Mumbai life did not offer her such relatedness by nature and therefore she was enveloped in the dread of isolation if the fretted world.

As an individual Stia had no power to fight against such timeless war of destruction that had begun with time and was now roaring around her, battering her and her fish-foetus so that survival seemed hopeless. She started worrying how could one establish one's identity on the midst of this bloodshed and how could she protect the child from such a wounded, fallen, decadent world for no room for civilization to survive. The peace and tranquility essential for harmonious interpersonal ties would offer healthy existence of love and belongingness for the safety and security of the individual as well as outside world. Contrarily Sita found the over powering desire to destroy in the structure of her own child Menaka who had broken all the buds in her carelessness and did not feel any compunction for such an act of violence. It was on this day that Sita realized that the modern race continue with red and healthy blood flourished under the tendencyof destruction as a true elelment of the survival of life and creation a freak temporary and doomed event.

As a healthy relatedness of love and belongingness in the individual as well as the other human beings became thwarted in the world and therefore the spontaneous feeling in Sita and her responses get deadened and dampened so far she had to lead a life in the enclosed area in this grey, dull lit, and empty shell. As far as her existence in such world of blood stained feathers, with things fallen apart in Mumbai, she had lost the touch with what she wanted thought and felt. Her own impulses to develop a healthy self esteem as a psychologically, whole being and sociologically an assert being she was left with no choice to take a recourse to the Manori island and therefore when her fifth baby was under way, she quarreled with her husband to leave the so called sophisticated much secured and safety ridden fragment of society in the Manori island. She believed that the believes and practices of Mumbai of her kin group in Mumbai world molest the new born babe thereby making and molding it as a being of destruction and violence and not a healthy personality of love and belongingness as she personally felt disillusioned and alienated with her ties of the Mumbai world. She craved to mix with the family friendship and work groups of her childhood days.

Right from the beginning her husband Raman did not understand her needs. Now she had the fifth baby that left in her a paranoiac fear. The lack of understanding between them was due to their temperaments differences. Raman believed in the values of society but Sita, believed in the romance and reality, the beautiful and the sinister world of Manori Island. Further she had no grip happenings outer reality. The happenings around her created in her agony and a sense of vacuum thereby she expressed her, inability in the form of rage, fear and revolt and these emotions disappointed Raman. He felt sorry for her loss of self-control despite her mature age.

What Sita expected out her relatedness with the objective nature in Manori she did not realize in the world of her associations with Raman. She expected immense love and belongingness in a romantic manner but Raman was a man of sanity and rationality and therefore he expected from her orderliness, neatness and tidiness. Though Raman was a man of high sense of responsibility he did not accept his wife's melodramatic matters if came to know others it would be a scandal that would spoil their family relationship. In this juncture Anita Desai brought out the individual Sita's expectation of bringing out her child in a safe and secured place without any touch of destruction and violence. But she is disturbed by the insensitive world. It is conveyed through the most frequently recurring image of predator and prey. The resultant tension is reflected in her sensitive soul, finding inappropriate reflection in Nature.

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