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Alienation in the female protagonist Sita of where shall we go this summer- by Anita Desai

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Abstract

Alienation arises when someone doesn't feel himself able to reconcile with the existing norms and values. Existence becomes meaningless to him who doesn't cope up with the situations. This fills their heart with up rootedness, estrangement from their partner. Marital maladjustment is the another name of marital alienation which is prevalent these days. This alienated state is found in Sita, *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, a novel written by Anita Desai.

Alienation is a state where one person fails to maintain her identity that leads him to get affected by psychological problems. He feels absurd to himself, towards society. When this state comes it is called alienation. Sense of alienation exists in persons in some extent or other. No person is found fully sensible or fully alienated. Human beings are social animals. They have to play their roles in the society whether they like it or not. Human beings have to make efforts to keep their social circle to function well. But when they caught themselves in difficult situations, mostly people gave up doing anything, and they become alienated.

The Oxford dictionary of Psychology defines the word alienation as,

“Turning away; inducing someone to become indifferent or hostile or causing their affections to be diverted the state of being an outsider or feeling detached from society, a state in which one's emotions are experienced as foreign so that the self and the outside world appear unreal.”

Alienation reveals out of the psychological problems faced by human beings. Persons who try to discover the real meaning of life falls in the flux of mud from which they put the question on their existence, they say, ‘what does it mean to exist?’

Anita Desai has portrayed her female characters from psychological and sociological point of view. In literature readers come through various types of females who suffer, fight and win their battle. As Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer*. Sita who lives a life of ease and comfort suddenly gets bored and feels herself isolated from society and family. For this she decided to leave to a lonely place and went their to regain her lost strength.

The aim of this paper is to deal with the psychological problems faced by female protagonist of the novel which makes her alienated from society, family and from herself. Sita becomes alienated due to her disturbed childhood, neglected behaviour of her parent's and with the feelings of pity with which Raman has married her. All this affects her badly and makes her isolated from society and herself.

Keywords: Alienation, protagonist sita, summer, Anita Desai

Where shall we go this summer- Sita

This novel of Anita Desai presents the yearning for love and affection of Sita, the protagonist. She suffered isolation and alienation due to her bad childhood experience, lack of parents affections, and disharmony in her relationship with her husband, Raman. There is a gap between the two, Sita is very emotional rather Raman is very practical and reserved. He never expressed his love towards Sita but it doesn't mean that he doesn't love her. This novel presents the alienation of a woman, a wife and a mother who is affected by society and family.

Sita is very similar to Maya, has psychological problems, suffers from isolation and dejection, but a bit different to her. Sita being a married woman, mother of four children and fifth is going to be born, is feeling alone in her own house. Raman her husband is a businessman, a factory owner lives busy in her office and has never given enough time to Sita. But it doesn't mean Raman doesn't love her. Their growing children are becoming Independent; they are too busy in their own affairs.

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They also don't notice their mother's requirements, needs of love and care. All this has made Sita isolated and alone. She feels boredom all the time and spends her time by sitting alone in the balcony of her house which they have bought near the sea side just to see the natural sights. To get rid of her loneliness Sita starts smoking. She wants an escape from the life of city humdrum. Her escape from society and family is best described in the words of Uma Banerjee, "This is not simply a case of an emancipated woman, revolting against the slavish bonds of marriage. It is much more than that. It is a question of the basic truth that is bitter and naked and can neither be hidden nor be halved to suit individuals." (Bannerjee, 153)

Sita is not happy in her life. A middle aged woman is struggling to get peace and comfort in her life. At this crucial time one more problem arrives in her life. Sita gets news of her pregnancy with fifth child. It disturbed her even more. She doesn't want it now. She is getting bored with the city life of Bombay. She doesn't want to bear the sufferings involved in the process of delivery now, she doesn't want to be hospitalized now. She wants peace and wants her child to be unborn safely. For this Sita decides to go Manori, an isolated hilly area which has magic spell caused by her father in their childhood. This magic island is attracting Sita, and she thinks that this magic island can give her much solace and helps her in her pregnancy and will keep her unborn child safely in its magic spell. Sita wants to escape from the harsh realities of life, wants to get rid of the hypocrite life of middle class society in Bombay. Sita herself tells about her escape to Manori as,

"What I'm doing is trying to escape from the madness from here, escape to a place where it might possible to be sane again." (WSTS, 35)

The cause of her unhappiness and isolation is not her life after marriage, busy life of her husband and her growing children. But she suffers this isolation in her childhood also. Her mother has left her husband and children for some reasons; her father has extra marital affairs with other women. Her father spends his time with his chelas (followers) and never gives time to his children. All this has affected Sita's mind so much, she feels neglected and alone. Raman is very rational, understanding, and sympathetic towards Sita. After her father's death Raman has taken care of her, also marries her. Due to his busy schedule in his own office, he has not given much time to the family, but he loves his children and wife but he doesn't express his love and care to Sita. Sita has spent her life at Manori in isolation suddenly she becomes the part of the fashioned class society, the Bombay life. She can't understand the growing demands of new modern life in Bombay. This lack of understanding becomes the reason behind Sita's decision of leaving to Manori. When she declares of her leaving to Manori, Raman replies her as,

"But you are leaving for such small incidents, Sita? They occur in everyone's life, all the time, they are small incidents." (WSTS, 34)

But Sita is losing her faith and getting feared in giving birth to her fifth child. She feels as she is doing a thing of violence and a kind of murder. She thinks,

"More and more she lost all feminine, all material belief in childbirth, all faith in it and began to fear it as yet one more act of violence and murder in the world." (WSTS, 47)

Sita wants to live alone. She doesn't want to accompany anyone in her house. There is much gap between the nature of Sita and Raman. She wants isolation whereas Raman loves to be social. Raman invites guests, clients at home, but Sita gets disturbed and relate it with the violence going around. The incident of eagle killing and fighting of children and servants, and other incidents always haunts her and she gets frightened at this and says to Raman,

"It's all a madness- the boy acting out that scene from the film they say, fighting each other on the floor, Menaka and her magazines and the way she's torn all those drawing of her's. I'd kept so carefully; the ayah taking Karna to that-that road-side dump where all the ayahs sit and gossip and fight; the way you long had because I tried to keep the bird alive! The people here abound us." (WSTS, 36)

Sita feels frustrated and decides to leave her house to find peace. Finally she goes to Manori; she takes her two younger children Menaka and Karan with her. She thinks if she can't avoid her fifth unborn child to come into life in reality, then illusion or the magic spell of island may help her somehow. Sita says,

"If reality was not to be born, then illusion was the only alternative. She saw that island illusion had a refuge, a protection. It would keep her baby safely unborn, by magic. Then there would be sea- it would wash the frenzy out of her, drown it. Perhaps the tides would lull the children, too, into smoother, softer beings," (WSTS, 101)

She comes at Manori, with her children with a hope to escape from the harsh realities, but doesn't get satisfaction. There is no magic left at Manori, which can help her in a way or other. Both children are feeling boredom and also they think it as a waste of time. They fear about getting late in admission. Sita feels their disturb state of mind and secretly sends a message to Raman. Raman comes there to take them all back to their own house in Bombay. Sita is expecting some words of love and concern from Raman, but being a rational man Raman speaks nothing but asks her to go with him to their own house.

Sita's short stay at Manori has taught her a new lesson of life and gives her a new vision and a new approach to life. She is changed completely and has understood the truth of life that it is impossible for human beings to get rid of their responsibilities. Sita understands this fact that she cannot avoid her responsibilities whether she likes it or not, she has to fulfill all the responsibilities. Even after getting no words of love from Raman, Sita gets ready to go with Raman and follows his footprints. She accepts the reality and bows in front of the situations. She has suppressed her emotions of loneliness and gets a new vision and compromise with the situation. B. Ramchandra Rao has best describes her situation as,

"Sita and Raman represent the eternal opposition between the prose and passion in lives. Raman says the 'great yes' and achieves honour and success in life. Sita, in her obdurate pride says 'No' but is ultimately compelled to

arrive at some kind of compromise with life. ” (The Novels of Anita Desai 60)

After getting her new vision to understand the reality of life. Sita understands that there is lack of communication and understanding between the two that has left her alienated. Sita has tried her best to reconcile everything. She thinks that with love and care she can fill the gap. Sita cries out in pain when she sees Raman at Manori and says,

“My father's dead- look after me.” (WSTS, 131)

She feels insecure, longs for love and tenderness at Manori. But the cold response of Raman has not given her much assurance. Even then Sita feels relaxed after seeing Raman on his second visit to Manori,

“He had nothing more to give her, or he was just unaware of her needs and demands. He raised his hands and stroked Karan's hair with a gentleness she herself ached to attract, and she stared at him, bored into him with her eyes, wanting and not being given what she wanted.” (WSTS, 132)

Sita is not happy while making compromise, but it is the need of hour. She is pregnant, she needs a good environment and care in her life. And marriage is not a bed of roses that always makes you feel good everytime. It is another name of making adjustments. As Chesterton gives his opinion on marriage,

“Marriage is a perpetual compromise and any compromise or sacrifice for a greater good vindicates one's victory and greatness. Only by ‘connecting’ extreme one can arrive at an acceptable path in life. This is the positive solution that the novel offers to the present day temperament maladjustment and consequent alienation.” (World literature, 27)

Sita's decision of coming back to her husband and family is suggested,

“The facing of the sordid realities of life and pilgrimage to the island have graduated her into acquired a mature sensibility.”

She makes her mind and understand the reality of life as,

“Life must be continued and all its business.” (WSTS, 138).

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