

**THE THEME OF MARITAL DISHARMONY IN ANITA DESAI'S**  
*WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*

**PANKAJKUMAR D. PATIL**

PES'S B.N. COLLEGE,  
PEN, INDIA

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**Abstract**

*The Purpose of this paper is to project the suffering of women in Anita Desai's Where Shall We Go This Summer? Anita Desai has introduced marital disharmony as a central theme. Anita Desai portrays a woman who suffers from isolation and marginalized physically, socially and emotionally. Anita Desai presented her female characters in search of their identity in the male dominated world. Anita Desai in her present novel explores the marital disharmony of a common woman.*

**Key Words:** *Marital disharmony, identity, quest, marginalization.*

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## **THE THEME OF MARITAL DISHARMONY IN ANITA DESAI'S WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?**

**-PANKAJKUMAR D. PATIL**

The present study studies marital disharmony in the novels of Anita Desai. Desai's heroines are occupied with the difficulties of fulfillment and self-definition in man's world, the conflicting claims of self-hood, wife-hood and mother-hood. Desai focus on the psychological exploration of inner mind of Indian women in the Indian novels in English. Desai explored deep into the inner mind of the depressed women. Desai has a definite idea of a happy conjugal life. Some of her young immature, romantic heroines seem to have only a rainbow dream. The concept of marriage which is related to a delicate union of two different minds has not been properly realized in most of the Indian male-dominated families. Woman's individual identity has not been positively and open-mindedly realized in Indian social life. Woman has never been accepted as a full-human being. She is taken for granted on number of fronts. This casual attitude causes her consistent suffering and miserable life. Indian women have to keep their mouth shut and remain silent because of unfavourable circumstances imposed on her through their husbands. It is always expected from Indian women to be ideal wives like Sita and Savitri. Desai's women are the victims of exploitation, separation, negligence. It is always reminded to them that woman has no significance and dignity without her husband in Indian society.

Marriage is a union of two different minds, some adjustment is bound to be there, and this adjustment should naturally come from both the sides- the husband and the wife. In Indian social situation, if a marriage is successful then credit is rarely given to a woman for her contribution to make it successful. In fact, it becomes successful because of her grace, love, wisdom and a sense of understanding, tolerance and sacrifice. If a marriage becomes unsuccessful then

the woman is sometimes held responsible for the same. All the marriages in Anita Desai's novels are more or less business transactions. A marriageable daughter is handed over to the male-partner without considering the delicacy of her mind and feelings. She has to fulfill either the parent's responsibilities or the relative's demands with different intentions. But sometimes this peaceful order is caused violently, the shadow batters its head against the iron fists of its owner and manages to leave a few blood stains, a wife revolts, runs away, commits suicide, becomes murderer, finds a great deal of freedom in blessed widowhood. Anita Desai humbly admits that she is allergic to writing social novels; however, she is involved in the problems of marital discord and the hypocrisy, the faithlessness and the soul-destroying, grinding process of compromise which accompany it. In each of her novels, we encounter traumatic experiences of married lives. She fearlessly puts forward the fact that in society, marriages generally follow the jungle law of the survival of the fittest. Being physically stronger, man survives.

Anita Desai's novel *'Where Shall We Go This Summer?'* provides a passionate commentary upon the maladjustment that spiritually renders Raman and Sita totally homeless. Disaster inclines from the very beginning. Sita's marriage to Raman was unsteadily moving to the point of collapse. It actually collapse when sita goes away to Manori Island, hoping that she would be saved through miracle from giving birth to a fifth child in this violent and greatly destructive world around her. Anita Desai has explicitly presented a sense of alienation in *Where Shall we Go This Summer?* Sita's condition is representative of the loneliness of a woman, a wife, a mother- a loneliness conditioned by family and society. Sita's mental disturbances are the direct result of a clash between the hypocritical world and her inherent honesty that resists any such compromise. Marital disharmony clearly strikes us in *Where Shall we Go This Summer?* Sita is changed from an ordinary wife and mother into a creature who lost all feminine, all maternal belief in childbirth.

Sita's marriage to Raman was not settled through proper understanding and love between them. Her marriage was settled "and finally- out of pity, out of lust, out of a sudden will for adventure and because it was inevitable, he

married.”(Desai: 99) Sita is highly sensitive, emotional and touchy; carelessness on Maneks’s part in breaking all the buds unconsciously disturbs her mental peace. Her sons used to play roughly. They used to throw their bodies at each other playfully. It is an act of violence and destruction to Sita. She is so sensitive and unbearable to her. She finds it extremely difficult to adjust with Raman and his relatives.

Raman was a businessman. He had a purely business attitude to life. He ignored Sita. He had some business-minded friends. They used to visit Raman’s house and talk about business only. Sita did not like their business-mindedness. Raman never tried to understand sita. They lived together; he did not even know this basic fact of her existence that she was bored, dull, unhappy and frantic. During the first few years of their married life, they lived with his parents and other relatives in there are-rotted flat of Queens Road. Sita never got used to anyone. She revolted against their subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness.

The sense of alienation as an existential problem is greater in this novel than in the others. Sita’s condition is symbolic of the unrelieved loneliness of a modern woman, in the garb of a wife, a mother and a daughter. This loneliness is conditioned by her family and society in general. Her neurosis is the direct result of clash between the hypocritical outer world of her marriage and her inherent honest that resists any opportunistic compromise. The maladjustment between Raman and Sita is based on the clash of values, of principles, of faith even, or between normal, double social standards and the iconoclastic attitude of uncompromising honesty. The marital discord between Raman and Sita is based on the conflict of values, of principles, of faith even or between normal, double social standards and the iconoclastic temperament of uncompromising honesty. It is a clash between the compromises with disappointment, as Raman puts it and the capacity to say the Great No if and when needed, as believed by Sita 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 is halved to suit

individuals.

The layers of experience, melancholy and boredom make Sita wait for something: "Sita was always waiting. Physically so resigned, she could not inwardly accept that this was all there was to life, that life would continue thus, inside this small, enclosed are, with these few characters churning around and then past her, leaving her always in this grey, dull-lit empty shell. I am waiting, she agreed- although for what, she could not tell." (54) Sita never thought of the life she was required to live after her marriage- a life of dullness, hopelessness, boredom and disappointments: "It was as though he had been expressly sent by providence to close the theatrical era of her life, her strange career and lead her out of the ruined theatre into the thin sunlight of the ordinary, the everyday, the empty and the meaningless." (100) "Knowing that, accepting that, she knew it was because ordinary life, the everyday world had grown so insufferable to her that she could think of the magic Island again as of release" (101). "If reality were not to be borne, then illusion was the only alternative" (101). Sita's revolt is representative of an intelligent sensitive woman's revolt against the male smugness and philistinism trampling all finer values in marital life.

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