



Research Paper

Anita Desai's Novel "Where Shall We Go This Summer": A Psychological View of Image and Symbols

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ABSTRACT: *The soul of any literary work is image and symbols that enhances the quality of the work. It allows a writer to explain his or her vision clearly and allows the reader to imagine what the writer describes, revealing the hidden truth that cannot be expressed in any other way. Because the traditional narrative style does not serve her literary objective, Anita Desai, a novelist of psychological insights and inner problems, employs the technique of metaphors to express the truth hidden in the subconscious of her protagonists. In her work "Where Shall We Go This Summer," she is possibly the most powerful imagist-novelist in the Indian English literary canon, using image and symbol as the two wheels that drive her narration, which borders on lyrical language. By giving a key for the reader to grasp the complicated issues of her works, she is able to create the scene, build the environment, and elicit the proper mood using symbols and imagery that are an intrinsic part of her literary fabric.*

KEYWORDS: *Alienation, Distress, Illusion, Liberation, Image, Existentialism and Symbols*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Anita Desai, one of the most outstanding novelists among Indian English writers, has earned a name for herself in the literary world because to her deft characterization. She is unlike Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, and R.K. Narayan in that she does not present the socio-economic and political realities of Indian society. However, she, like R.K. Narayan, is drawn to characters who are unique and unusual. She progresses from external coarse truths to internal complexity in her works, attempting to examine the consequences of society on her characters' psyches. Her main focus is on the one-of-a-kind individual. She tackles the everyday and commonplace in all of its befuddling complexity through her writing.

Desai has captivated the literary world with her portrayal of 'Maya,' a neurotic woman in her novel 'Cry, The Peacock' (1963). 'Voices in the City' (1965), 'Bye-Bye, Blackbird' (1971), 'The Peacock Garden' (1974), 'Where Shall We Go This Summer?' (1975), 'Fire on the Mountain' (1977), 'Games at Twilight and Other Stories' (1978), 'Clear Light of Day' (1980), 'In Custody' (1984), 'Baumgartner's Bomb' (2004). Mrs. Desai has made each of her works a marvel of construction, free of political zeal. 'The Indian Writer's Problem,' according to an article, "By producing novels that have been classified by writers as psychological and totally subjective, I have been able to utilise simply, the language of the interior," Anita Desai writes. Even when two characters meet, they utilise this unique form of language, which has nothing to do with geography and may be written in any language: the language of their ideas, their interior selves."

We find individuals struggling violently in their psychic levels beneath the calm surface of each of the characters: Mira Masi, the widow who dies of drinks, Maya, who wants to live life fully, commits suicide, Monisha, who loves darkness and prefers death to life, Sarah considering reconciliation, Sita fed up with her domestic life, and Nur, the devouring character living in a facade of glory [1]. They perfectly encapsulate the novelist's psychological viewpoint. This style of presentation is uncommon, and it deserves to be explored thoroughly so that the undiscovered facts of these characters' lives can be brought to life. Anita Desai's research focuses on three aspects: existentialist ideas, alienation as a theme, and human interactions. Other issues that

have piqued the interest of researchers include the issue of identity, the expression of feminine sensibility, the treatment of violence in society, and the plight of women, among others.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Women novelists in Indian English fiction have drawn a lot of attention in the previous four decades for their excellent realistic repertoire. Anita Desai has taken on the difficult challenge of dealing with psychological realism in the characters, and she asserts her supremacy over her contemporaries by using imagery and symbols to embellish her language [2]. The characters' subjective experiences are objectified through photos in her work. Musicality, a sign of style, and synaesthetic experience can all be found in her writing. She's turned her back on historical romanticism, as well as social and political reality.

She wants to convey her characters' psychological suffering, and her image and symbol serve as a mirror to reflect the harsh facts. Her images and symbols reveal the individuals' perplexed emotions as they search for their true identity. Agony, conflict, reconciliation, murder and suicide, alienation and solitude are all topics she writes about. Imagery and symbols become her powerful literary devices, which she employs to express her characters' inner turmoil and overwhelming emotions. Memories, dreams, daydreams, plans, visions, and fantasies are examples of images. Visual, auditory (sound), tactile (touch), thermal (heat or cold), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), and kinesthetic (movement) sensations are all investigated (movement). All of the above sources have been used by Desai to enrich her novel.

Desai's characters are neither losers nor victors in the traditional sense; they simply try to swim against the current and fight the battle of life while keeping their ambitions and dreams intact. They are frequently lonely and alone; some are motivated to commit suicide, while others merely hold on because they feel imprisoned. It is necessary to investigate whether their behaviour is determined by their family, society, or their very character. Given the paucity of research in this area, studying the psychological aspects of Anita Desai's novels will be a worthwhile endeavour [3]. The purpose of this research is to examine the Image and Symbols in Anita Desai's significant novel "Where Shall We Go This Summer" from a psychological perspective and attempt to describe the characters' behaviour.

IMAGE AND SYMBOLS

"Where Should We Go This Summer?" says the author. Sita, her middle-aged heroine, is similarly subjected to life's harsh assaults. Sita, like Monisha and Amla, goes against the grain. Raman, her husband, satisfies her monetary needs, but he has no idea how deep her emotional hunger runs. Moses, who has been waiting for the past twenty years, has been compensated for his "*monumental patience*". Everyone on the island is hoping for rain, not for someone like Moses. The verb 'waiting' becomes a symbol for humanity in this context; to live life to the end, but this varies from person to person. This waiting is both sweet and rich for Moses. Moses, carrying Sita's luggage to his boat, seemed to be a "dusky ox" who could be loaded and trusted. This dark bull, on the other hand, notices Sita's brilliant penetrating strength, which may consume the entire sea. Sita is from the metaphysical world, and her eyes are incredibly bright, despite the fact that her face appears to be dry and worn.

"He was made to notice her enormous size and remarkable brilliance in that dry, worn face when he saw her eyes start from her head so exaggeratedly." She shifted her head from side to side, her enormous eyes taking in the entire sea, the massed cliffs, and the palm trees of the island ahead of them - they were so large, so open, they could consume it all." (DESAI,17)

Karan, Sita's son, has a pallid complexion that mimics the late-afternoon sky. Karan and her daughter bluntly refuse to perceive anything enticing about the island whereas Sita can see something thrilling there [4]. Without a lamp, it's plain dark for them. Sita's children appear as larvae in stiff-spun cocoons when she experiences violent emotions. This research conveys the mother's and children's perceptions of the island, which are diametrically opposed.

"In contrast to their mother, who was constantly bursting into wild outbursts of emotion, the children appeared rigid, wrapped in their own silences like worms in stiff-spun cocoons." (DESAI,19)

The island appears to the children to be flat, toneless, associated to the muddy monsoon, sea rather than the sky and cloudscape. Moses is compared to some giant porpoise that readily lifts and falls with the waves and is never flipped or turned, when riding the heave and swell of the bullock waggon.

Moses, who has become one with the island's good and evil, is depicted using zoological imagery. Manori village has lost the lustre it once had when Sita's father was alive. The island's charm has vanished since his death.

"The Manori settlement was an abomination of overflowing sewers, gaping thatched roofs, and decrepit mud homes. Like a pair of owls, Karan and Menaka sat in silence in the shadows cart by the lantern." (DESAI,30)

They, like the bird, become a passive observer in the darkness. Desai coined the name "Zombie" to describe his dissatisfaction with the city's opulence. She isn't like her father in any way. In Moses' opinion, she is **"the unworthy offspring of the famed and well-remembered father"** (DESAI,28).

She has learned to smoke, something that even the island's male residents are hesitant to do.

"..... she said as she lit a pack of cigarettes. She got them up by stamping them underfoot; charged them, then put them to bed with her last ounce of power, moving semi-consciously like a Zombie." (DESAI,30)

The island has become a symbol of isolation. The protagonist wrestles with existential issues such as 'death.' The question of the "meaning of human existence" must be addressed. The island was formerly known for its mystical properties [5], but it now appears to be desolate. The summer season is used to represent a 'state of tedium' that the protagonist is experiencing. The unsettling rainstorm on the island reflects the protagonist's psychological struggle. Sita is irritated by her fifth pregnancy. She despises modern-day violence and, like Maya and Monisha, becomes neurotic. She doesn't want her child to be born, but it doesn't mean she wants to abort it. The island, thanks to her father's miracle, provides her with a safe haven where she may keep her unborn child safe from the world's attack [6]. Her father's posthumous miracle will save her from having to deliver the baby.

For her, childbirth is no longer a creative act, but rather a destructive act. The infant emerges from the womb in a massacre and is born into this cruel world. She is bothered by the question. Sita wonders,

"Would she be committing an act of creation by giving birth to the kid now so safely contained, or, by unleashing it in a terrible, pain-wracked carnage, would she merely be destroying what was, at the moment, safely contained and perfect?" (DESAI,56)

The ayahs' quarrel makes her think of a savage civilization, and while telling her husband about it, she says symbolically, **"It's like living in the wilds."** (DESAI,43)

Sita is moved by the violence and becomes melodramatic about it. Like black clouds in her dramatisation, ayah's disagreement is exaggerated. Desai is a big fan of colour imagery, and she freely employs it to express the turmoil in her characters' heads. The sight of a swarm of crows preying on an eaglet disturbs Sita. She thanks her son for assisting the injured creatures. The ravens represent the city's savage civilization. The 'eaglet,' or victimised self, represents Sita, while the crows represent the problems that drove her insane.

Desai uses the colour black to represent the city's violence. The crow theatre appears to be a 'dark drama,' featuring murder, infanticide, incest, theft, and robbery. she says,

"In this crow theatre, there was always much black play - murder infanticide, incest, theft and robbery, all was much practised by these gruff, boisterous, rasping tatterdemalions," (DESAI,38)

Sita is terrified by her boys' squabbling, ayah's quarrels, and Menaka's disintegrating sheaf of young buds. Karan's decision to toss a tower of blocks over the edge irritates her. All of these minor instances point to the harshness of city living [7]. she says,

"The horror was that destruction came so easy," (DESAI,45)

The insecurity of city life drives her to return to her safe magical island Manor, which will calm her troubled mind with its miraculous touch. She senses the destructive energy gaining power, threatening to suffocate all creation.

"Against the overwhelming need to destroy, the creative impulse had no chance." (DESAI,46)

The town residents place a high value on food, sex, and money, which she finds unpleasant, and she criticises her husband's friend for referring to them as animals.

"They're nothing but appetite and sex," says the narrator. Animals, only food, sex, and money are important." (DESAI,47)

She despises Raman's buddies, describing them as pariahs on the streets, loitering about sewers and dustbins, waiting to pounce, murder, and eat. Sita, like Monisha, exalts her enthroned self and despises their subhuman placidity, peacefulness, and sluggishness. When she lives with her in-laws in a Queens Road flat, she is enraged by their vegetarian complacency. They're like elephants, she thinks eating grass, shuffling from foot to foot, swaying their trunks, smalleyed eating, she thinks. The entire house smelled like a kitchen; everyone chatted about the meal that was about to be served; if meals were not being served, they were being cooked, cleaned up after, or planned.

Desai's three lovelorn heroines, Maya, Monisha, and Sita, revolt against the traditional household, signifying feminine rebellion [8]. Maya despises political and financial debates. Monisha despises the mention

of saris and her obstructed fallopian tubes, and Sita despises the focus on cooking. **"What a waste, what a waste life is,"** Monisha yells, while Sita screams, **"They're nothing, they're nothing."** (DESAI,48)

They all represent a poetic world in which only love works. They desire to be pampered by their husbands and to live in a fantasy world. Because of the proximity of the water, Sita and Raman choose for a tiny flat. Sita sits on the balcony for hours, gazing out at the sea, waiting for the waves to come crashing in and wash the city away. However, fish carcasses, smelling seaweed, green trash, rubber shoes, bones, and tattered tins cover the shore's rocks. Sita wishes to observe society's attractive features, yet this wretched existence would undoubtedly bring her ugliness. It appears weird, and Sita has a queer reaction to it.

"Strangely enough, the tide carried very little away, but it brought a lot to those rocks where it recklessly poured, littering them with decaying fish carcasses, smelling seaweed, and less explicable objects like a ring of green plastic, a rubber shoe, bones, and tattered tins. The sea hissed as it threw them up at her, fold after fold dragged back, drawn back till she cringed at the prospect of what further it may show." (DESAI,50)

Sita shudders as her sea yields in an awful way, symbolising life's challenges that will be difficult to overcome. Sita wonders what further challenges will come her way and how she will conquer them. She is attempting to find a moment of respite by reflecting about her ennui in order to give herself a sense of purpose. Her bridal self now looks to be a ruse, which she used to defend herself by comparing to some alien insect features [9].

In this novel, 'waiting for something or someone' has become a recurring theme. All of the people who are waiting for someone demonstrate incredible patience, despite the fact that they are unable to provide an answer for what they are waiting for. This waiting represents a way out of this drab, dark existence.

"Are you on the lookout for someone?" (DESAI,51) As she sat out on the balcony, smoking rather than reading the book in her lap, looking at and then away from the water, she was occasionally asked by one of the passing youngsters or by her husband. She would occasionally respond with a nod, because she was always waiting. She couldn't accept that this was all there was to life, that existence would continue in this small, enclosed space, with these few characters spinning about and then past her, leaving her in this grey, dull-lit, empty shell.

Sita, on the other hand, recognises that she will wait and wait until she becomes a waiting monument. She has a nagging feeling that she will be waiting forever.

".....it felt as if these years of her life had been stained, painted through and through with the colours of waiting." It wasn't a pure colour; it was tinged with anxiety at times, resignation at others, or frenzy, patience, grimness, and terror at others. But whatever its hue, whatever its tone, it had seeped into her, flowing through every little capillary until she, too, had taken on the colour of waiting, had become a living monument to it." (DESAI,55)

She doesn't want anything to happen because everything is so violent. Her unborn child was compared to a goldfish bowl fish, and the outside aggression was launched at her delicate goldfish bowl belly like hand grenades. In the middle of the bloodshed, Sita fights to keep her foetus healthy and pure [10]. It would **"certainly get hurt, fall, and die,"** (DESAI,56) she predicts.

However, she soon recognises that destruction is the only way for life to exist. With its evil power, the lonely island reappears, reminding her of how it had engulfed her youth. With her clothes and appearance, Miriam is introduced as a ripe fruit in the second part.

"..... a woman, round-thighed, yellow-eyed, and enclosed in a pink shirt and an orange blouse, as if she were some ripe fruit.... " (DESAI,61)

Morning light stretches its milky finger in 'Bye Bye Blackbird,' and the morning light on the island had a mother-of-pearl softness. Sita's father, pacing slowly on the beach, like a statuesque figure, like one of those white water birds who left their starry tracks on the sands. Rekha, Sita's elder sister, sings in the prayer room's attic, as if she were the bird that heralded the day. Sita has witnessed her father's face as he leaned against a bolster and closed his eyes in ecstasy, savouring the perfectly distilled wine of that pure voice. The lovely voice of Rekha has been compared to distilled wine.

Jivan's caustic words disclosing Rekha as the step sisters had burned into her skin like acid, and she felt them sear anytime she caught a glimpse of her father and daughter exchanging that heavy-lidded gaze. Sita has never had a fixed residence. She believes she is a part of the entire civilization. She has been compared to a flock of lambs as a result of her membership in mass.

"She belonged, if to anyone, to the entire civilization that existed at that point in history, as a lamb does to its flock, and she saw no reason why she should belong to just one family." (DESAI,85)

The image of Lord Shiva is used to describe the cremation and funeral in Benares. They burned these on the pyres, danced around them, fed the pyres with fuel, oil, and their own flesh, enacting Shiva's dance with their bodies, limbs, lives, and souls. Sita came into the attic like a shadow of a tree one night to discover her father in the pose of a broken lion, crouching on its haunches, pretending to be unconscious yet cryptic enough to arouse suspicion and astonishment [11].

The ill father's enchantment gradually wears off, and the past slips away, inviting the present to drop him into death's lap. Raman and Sita now close the house's door, which is now compared to an empty theatre, and Raman is referred to as the exhausted manager. He had the appearance of a fatigued manager bringing the curtains up, locking up the empty theatre with its cigarette stubs, stale odors, and dust, and heading out onto the street. Her father is described as a wizard who has conjured up an illusion of a net in the sea in order to capture the islanders, who resemble a flock of fish. Menaka rips her sketch and accuses her mother of strewing planks from a burst cartridge across the floor. She's behaving like a frightened bird that Sita has let loose. Miriam's embrace resembles a python's grip, and Karan makes every effort to get free.

"..... grabbed him in her arms, more suited to wrestling a python than caring for a child..." (DESAI,118)

To Meneka and Karan, the house in Manori appears to be a prison. **"..... the house that appeared so much like a prison to both of them, ringed by barbed wire and raindrops that never stopped falling." (DESAI,119)**

Her house is guarded by the palm grove, which looks like a flock of attentive cranes. Sita describes herself as

"a white bird swooping up with one strident cry then crashing down, thinking" when Raman arrives. "It's all over..." says the narrator. (DESAI,118)

Sita's resemblance to a jellyfish only adds to her shipwrecked status. Sita informs Raman that she has learned to say no and has never attempted to flee. She feels like a stranded jellyfish washed up on the sandbar by the waves, but then she feels like a released sea-bird circling and then lowering towards her home. Manori's residence represents her abandonment of normal ordinary life and the objectification of her terror [12]. She is not the fabled Seeta, who is suffering from the problem of alienation rather than recollections of deep love for her husband. In her melancholy state, she is attempting to reclaim her identity. Her struggle to remain whole is a metaphor for her dual personality.

"Where Shall We Go This Summer?" is a symbolic question in and of itself. The protagonist's scepticism and anguish are depicted. Desai has experimented with symbols and image by associating persons, situations, surroundings, and landscapes in 'Manori,' her utopian paradise, to escape the stifling of Bombay house. To make the narrative distinctive, she has carefully ordered her circumstances using the aforesaid devices.

II. CONCLUSION

The novel masterfully employs images and symbols to depict the characters' subconscious levels. Desai's style of writing from the perspective of a character allows her to delve into the subconscious, which she accomplishes through her distinctive use of interior monologue and flashbacks. With the use of these literary tactics, she delves inside the character's thoughts and uncovers the underlying reality. As the novelist seeks to convey the genuine value of things, small objects and attitudes take on great significance for her.

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