WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER
- A STORY OF IRRECONCILABLE TEMPERAMENTS
Where Shall We Go This Summer? is the shortest of all the novels of Anita Desai. She dwells on alienation, incommunication and incertitude in married life in this novel. The novel depicts the aching void in the life of Sita, the protagonist who is to face the loneliness of a woman, a wife and a mother by probing deeper into her inner life. R.S. Sharma rightly states, "the novel is restricted to a very narrow canvas in which the complexities of Sita’s actual alienation and anguish fail to find adequate expression". Sita’s anguish is domestic and mundane but not existential and psychic as that of Maya of Cry, the Peacock. According to R.S. Pathak, "The marital discord results chiefly from the dichotomy between two ‘irreconcilable temperaments and diametrically opposite view points represented by Sita and her husband, Raman”. Sita, a sensitive, over emotional, middle-aged woman, saddled with four children and pregnant for fifth time feels alienated from her husband and children and undergoes unbreakable mental agony because of her high strung ‘sensibility and explosive emotionality’. The violence she sees in daily life makes her feel alienated. Her suffering springs from her constitutional inability to accept the authority of the society. So her alienation is natural and dispositional.

Raman, Sita’s husband, like Gautama in Cry, the Peacock, fails to understand her violence, the feeling of ‘ennui’, ‘boredom’ and ‘passion’. He is made of a different stuff. He is always sane, rational and passive. His face expresses an idea of his practical commonsense approach to life. His wife is ‘irrational and hysteromaniac’. Her introversion like Maya’s leads to her ‘psychic odyssey’. She becomes ‘a square peg in a round hole’ in their house. Unable to put up with the members of the family, she
withdraws herself into a separate apartment along with her husband. She is a victim of maladjustment with her surroundings and environment. The violence she finds all around makes her feel a stranger herself. She even withdraws herself from her husband which is suggested through the crows’ preying on the young wounded eagle. She wants to save the eagle and hate the crows. As she fails to do so, she is disturbed badly. Thus her alienation is biological and physical.

Sita finds life hardly any better even after moving into a separate small flat of their own in Bombay. for the people continue to intrude upon her privacy. They are unacceptable to her. She is ‘appalled’ and ‘frightened’ by their guests. They are friends, visitors, business associates, colleagues or acquaintances to Raman. But to her ‘they are nothing-nothing but appetite and sex’. They are neither pet animals nor wild animals - ‘they are pariahs…. in the streets, hanging about drains and dustbins, waiting to pounce and kill and eat.’ She always prefers to ‘live alone’ with her husband away from his friends and relations of Raman.

To Sita, the city appears to be a place of madness where the children enact scenes from the movies, fighting on the floor and the servants’ quarrels in the roadside dumps. These scenes increase the sense of insecurity in her heart and they upset her. She is shocked when she finds even her little children fighting.

Now she sees the destructive element in her children’s behaviour. She watches Menaka crumble a sheet of new buds and unable to bear the sight of such "unthinking destruction". So she shouts at her. She fails to tolerate the increasing sense of aggressiveness in the younger generation. It perturbs her greatly. This thoughtlessness
indicates the negative side of human nature and destruction of creativity. She is upset by the sight of crows feeding on a young wounded eagle and tries in vain to protect it from them with her pop-gun for which Raman laughs at her. She is a symbol of nature and so cannot adjust with the modern mechanical life. She finds herself a stranger in such an atmosphere. "Restrictive criticism and vindictive gossip are frequently only disguised methods of expressing hostility," observes Coleman. Sita's behaviour shows clear signs of violence seething inside her and forcing her to find fault with everyone even with her children and husband who are integral part of woman's existence. She indulges in verbal aggression and open criticism of others. She develops the phobia that the world around her is not moving according to her whims and fancies and can no more offer security and safety. Her habit of smoking shows a vengeance and sadistic impulse to hurt other's sentiments.

Sita's "whole abhorrence of life in Bombay is triggered off by the violence around her," as Jasbir Jain remarks. She becomes almost mad by seeing the violence and destruction around. She does not like to have her fifth baby in this violent and destructive world. She would not wait for it to come, for anything worse may happen to it. Unable to reconcile herself to this violence, Sita leaves for the island of Manori where her father had created enchantment out of emptiness. In fact she wants to escape the "tyrannous grips of a cannibalistic urban milieu. She wants to escape the forces of fear and destruction, which breed archetypal urges. Her alienation from all experience is due to her love for life and her reluctance to accept violence in any form" as rightly pointed out by Swain and Nayak.
Sita thinks that she cannot keep her children perfectly. She feels that destruction is more powerful than creation. So she loses all feminine, all maternal belief in childbirth. She begins to fear it as yet one more act of violence and murder in the world. Srivastava observes, "The incident in which a number of crows assault and kill an eagle becomes symbolic of Sita’s own plight amid violence so much prevalent in society." While she is in such troubled mind, her husband asks her as usual, ‘Where Shall We Go This Summer?’ to which she immediately responds and tells, to ‘Manori’ and "Fed up with the dreary metropolitan life in Bombay and tormented by the ‘Paranoic’ fear of her fifth and reluctant pregnancy, she leaves for Manori islet off the Morvi mainland." Her neurotic fears and anxieties make her terribly aware of violence around her. She finds it intolerable, a potent threat to her identity and sanity. So she takes a refuge in the Manori island. In order to protect her child from the bad effects of violent atmosphere, she comes to Manori where she has passed her childhood. This island is her dream world, and she wants to live in it with her children and husband away from the violence of this (city) world. Obviously, she tries to run away from the bitter realities of life to the dream world.

Sita’s tormented life, loneliness and boredom represent modern married woman’s existentialist predicament. The agony and unhappiness in Sita’s soul spring from her inability to float with the general current of society. So she takes a strong decision and refuses to accept the cruel dictates of society to which average people submit so uncomplainingly. Her mental, moral and emotional issues begin to oscillate between two polarities of "Yes" and "No". As Atma Ram observes, the novel "dramatises two kinds of courage : a struggle between the positive ‘No’ and a potent ‘Yes’". Sita’s anguished soul cries out "the great No". From the depths of her memory, Sita brought out a poem
of Cavafy’s that she kept there like an amulet, she reads the lines of the poem when she
is afraid of -

"..... He who refuses does not repent
should he be asked again
he would say "No" again
And yet that ‘No’ - the right ‘No’ - crushes
him for the rest of his life (Cavafy’s Poem T.37)

Realising pretty well the literal meaning of the lines of Cavafy’s poem, she takes a
challenge to face ‘the ferocious assaults of existence’. She is quite aware that rebellious
attitude towards society and her great ‘No’ would certainly shatter her and crush her.
Yet voluntarily she welcomes ‘a bewitched life’ for herself and for her unborn child.
She wants to stop the birth of her child by stopping the very flux of time on Manori.
Her journey to Manori is in search of a miracle. She sees the island as a piece of magic,
‘a magic mirror’ where she thought, could be sane and peaceful. Her wish to hold back
the birth by magic is an outcome of her sick mind. In this regard she seems to be nearer
to Maya and Monisha. She is self-alienated. According to Feurlicht Ignace “Total self-
alienation may also be another experience for insanity.” The insane obstinancy of her
wish to hold back the child, and the overwhelming despair, put her in the category of
Maya and Monisha heading for neurosis, psychosis or sudden end. But her final
resolution to reconcile with life, saves her from a melodramatically drastic end.

Being alienated from family and society and to keep the baby unborn, Sita finally
runs away from the main land taking her two children, Karan and Menaka to the island.
The island house deserted for twenty years symbolises her temperamental condition. As
Vimala Rama Rao aptly suggests, "The island concretizes the feeling of isolation of Sita.
She retreats into it, as into a womb, with an obsessive desire to recapture once again her
childhood innocence and purity... obviously, her own frustration with her life in Bombay drives her in her desire to provide her unborn infant with a world that is incorrupt". She foolishly hopes that her father's magic island will provide a sanctuary to her. The island has become a symbol of a private refuge and is only routine of escape and "the everyday world had grown insufferable to her that she could think of the magic island again as of release... if reality were not to be borne, then illusion was, the only alternative" (p.101). Her return journey allows her to see the face of reality in this world of illusion. She realises that in essence there can be no running away from reality. The magic of the island 'if it had ever existed was now buried beneath the soft grey-green mildew of the monsoon chilled and chocked by it'. Sita holds that she has escaped to the island because she cannot make a compromise with life based on one sided love. She believes that on the island she can lead a life as she wishes and that it will be more meaningful, for she does not want to live a mechanical life. She alienates herself from the society and her unconscious self wants to disobey the social norms and restrictions totally. But even on the island she cannot lead her life according to her wishes, since her mind could not be released from the burden of responsibilities.

Sita's trip to Manori is a trip back to her childhood. She relives the past. But this is a trip of self-discovery and recognition of reality for her. The island home which she saw as a child is different to her now. The house is almost in a ruinous stage and the welcome they receive is a shabby one. She realises that she is equally an 'outsider' there, as she was on the main land. She remains an island on the island. The daily disappointments are many and as Jasbir Jain observes, "Memories and uncertainties of the past are at once rendered more clear by her indulgence in them". The well water
which was not really 'sweet', the quack cures of her father, his relationship with the islanders, his hold on his children - all these are relived by her through her return to Manori. And at once the power and the ego of her father come through and destroy the belief in the myth that had survived him. Sita now accepts that her father had been a wizard. He had cast an illusion as a fisherman casts his net upon a flock of fish in the sea. All his chelas and women were caught 'most inescapably'. But his wife made a hole in the net and escaped into the ocean. Others were caught and trapped in the magic net of Sita's father. When he lay dying, they were released into 'their native sea'. When Sita accepts and comes to a conclusion finally that her father had been 'a wizard' on the island of Manori, she loses all hopes of keeping the baby unborn. At last she comes out of her illusionary island and her father-fixation also gets shattered before coming to Manori. Sita thought that her father's 'legend was still there in this house' and he might work another miracle posthumously. She had come in pilgrimage to beg for miracle of keeping her baby, unborn. She also thought that her father's magic island would hold her baby safely unborn. Now she realises that her escape to the island is madness. She could not find the magic of island that she had promised herself and to her children. She also feels that 'there was no magic here - the magic was gone'. She was very much disappointed and in a desperate mood of isolation she felt alienated. Her second visit to the island ends in "an utter fiasco only because of her inability to evaluate her past with detachment," as aptly observed by Madhusudhan Prasad.

For a proper evaluation of Sita's character, her childhood should be taken into consideration. She is a motherless child. She experiences partiality, neglect and uncertainties right from the beginning of her childhood. Her situation is just the reverse
of Maya’s. If Maya’s father is over-protective and creates a conflicting situation. Sita’s father neglects her completely. He has no time for his children. He regards Jivan and Sita just as he considers his sycophant chilas and devotees. But he loves his eldest daughter Rekha. Sita grows in an atmosphere of neglect, hypocrisy and partiality. Both consciously and unconsciously she is uneasy. She has her own doubt about her relationship with Rekha as there is no resemblance between the two sisters. The disclosure that Rekha is not her real sister drops ‘on her skin like acid and she felt them burn whenever she caught an exchange of that heavy lidded look between father and daughter, or his arm in its fine white sleeve lie fondly across her round shoulders’ (p.79). There is a clear hint of incest. She feels discarded and unwanted when she notices her father’s tenderness towards Rekha. Due to her father’s partiality, she is deprived of Rekha’s company also. This serves as the foundation stone of her anxiety-ridden personality. The indifferent attitude of her father towards her, her mother, her lack of communication with her elder sister Rekha, made her an alienated being. She wishes to get herself free from father-fixation. Psychologists like Robert Wordsworth and Mary Suhan emphasise that "parental defaults of one kind or another, neglect, indifference, display of favouritism to another child, over solitude, spoiling - can produce basic anxiety, the feelings a child as of being isolated and helpless in a potentially hostile world."

Sita feels that her father’s day light pragmatic wisdom and charisma had its nocturnal aspect. Her alienation from her father blurs her vision about his identity. Her father’s dubious ways seep down her psyche as a bad human experience. Her world is peopled with hypocrisy. The island eludes her imaginative vision. Her environment is
injurious. It shatters her faith in life and in the goodness of the world. It is "a strange life, an unusual life". It does not offer her the freedom. But it lets her 'withdraw into the protective chryssalis of childhood for longer than is usual for most'.

The disintegration of the family soon after her father's death proves that nothing can bind them together as a family. Rekha leaves without shedding a single tear, 'as though she had waited for and planned for this moment of release from the old man's love'. Jeevan disappears a couple of days before the demise as if he had a foreknowledge of the calamity. Only Sita stays on, to marry Raman, the first man in her life. The family would not have broken so abruptly had there been a sense of belonging.

As Usha Bande observes, "Belongingness is a subjective feeling in which an individual experiences personal involvement." As she does not have a home, she has no feeling of belongingness. Erich Fromm maintains that "by uniting himself with other person in the spirit of love and shared work man can hope to end his alienation." A family is the most important group to condition a person's relationship to himself. R.D.Laing considers "family to be internalised in each one of us. It is like a flower, with mother as the centre, the children as its petals around it. The most, vital link - the mother is missing in Sita's life." Unknown to her, a deep seed of insecurity is sown in her life. This leads her to an alienation from self. As Usha Bande feels "her vague fears, an abiding sense of dissatisfaction, nausea and mortal dread of taking on the responsibility of the new-comer - all point towards the sense of insecurity bred in childhood."
When Sita's love for aloneness on emotional and mental level inhibits her from discussing her anxiety and tension with Raman, he does not think it necessary to grope into the dark recess of her anguished self. Coleman rightly observes, "emotional insulation provides a protective shell of aloofness and detachment which prevents a repetition of previous pain but it reduces the individual's, healthy, vigorous participation in life". Sita's withdrawal from the world outside reaches the limits of absurdity and improbability. When she wants the baby unborn, Raman rightly considers her mad and when expansive remedies fail, she resorts to withdrawal. She is seen mostly bored with and disinterested in life. She neglects her appearance, grows defiant and difficult to approach. A mental and physical inertia pervades her spirit. She grows an on looker on life, keen only to guard her freedom. The very idea of leaving the island and going back to the mainland means compromising with her freedom. In moments of tension she tells her focus 'I shall keep you safe inside. We shall go nowhere'

In the concluding part of the novel, Sita is seen struggling to find an answer to her existentialist impasse. She has come to the island for silence, peace and to keep the baby unborn. Even on the island which she thought, is always calm and quiet, there is 'never silence - always the roar and sigh of the tide'. Sita's life on the island is presented through the monsoon. She finds the island quite changed. Monsoon rains continue and indicate the obstacles and hardships of human life. Sita can not realise the reality of life because it is buried under the dreams and illusions of life. The continuous monsoon reminds her of the harsh reality of life. Sita can not serve fish to her children due to this monsoon. She is shocked to see the great change on the island, the magic and beauty of it has vanished, consequently her faith is shaken. The endless monsoon
continuously shatters her faith and dreams. She is badly depressed and disappointed by it. Her children begin to accuse her. They are frightened of the threatening weather when she tries to analyse the return to the island. She briefly identifies herself with her mother, suddenly she focusses her thoughts on life. She realises that "life in Bombay is the reality, the island represents a stage world, an act of imagination of make belief, a world which collapses on close contact." The reality, Sita is forced to accept, is indefinable and relates to the self: "which half of her selves was true, which false? All she knew was that there were two periods of her life, each in direct opposition to the other... She shook her head angrily at the confusion, the muddle of it all" (p.153). It becomes a cyclic movement with the demarcation obliterated. "If reality were not to be borne then illusion was the only alternative'.

Sita is an uprooted woman who wants to regain her primitive self. Her escape to the island is a biological, not an existential necessity. Ironically, Sita’s pilgrimage with its promise of reward and regeneration is the result of her social-alienation. There comes a change in Sita’s identity. But the children refuse to share the primitive reality which is the very identity of the island. Hence their alienation has very little or no impact on their individual identity. The children, especially Menaka, was very much bored on the island. She points out the ‘filth and the stink’ present there. Sita tries to see only the magic beauty of the island. The island forms the core of Sita’s conscious existence. Sita’s other identity finds expression on this island. It represents that part of her self which she had failed to realise earlier. The island is a projection of her other self her other identity. She knows there exists a close tie between herself and the island, but she knows too it is the island that alienates her from her instinctive drives. The
parallel existence of these two selves of awareness in her mind gives rise to her identity crisis. It keeps on tormenting her till she discovers that "undifferentiated life is like a jellyfish, live and objective but without form, without definite identity." Through the objective correlative of the jelly fish, Desai depicts Sita’s amoebic and shapeless life. Now Sita realises the existential nature of all reality. She cuts herself off the deceptive, elusive and quasi-mystical words of her father. Her escape to the island is an escape from the 'madding crowd' and from the dictates of her social consciousness. Her refusal to live life as it comes, motivates her journey to the island for the second time after a lapse of twenty years. It is a self-conscious journey made to revive and recreate the past. As Swain and Nayak point out, "this quest for the forfeited charm and simplicity of her past identity, is an illusion. Her frequent return to childhood days hinder her refusal to grow up and accept the responsibilities of adult life, and her inability to comprehend the past conspires against her marital disharmony."

Sita’s father - fixation hinders her contact with her husband. Desai once again returns here to the elusive father figure. She demonstrates Sita’s temperamental incompatibility with Raman through the scene where they talk about the stranger encountered enroute from Ajanta and Ellora: ‘He seemed to be brave she observed when Raman asked her why she had once more brought up the subject of the hitchhiking foreigner months later; Brave? Him? Raman was honestly amused. ‘He was a fool .... He did not even know which side of the road to wait on’. ‘Perhaps that was only innocence’, Sita faltered, ‘and it made him seem more brave, not knowing anything but going on nevertheless’ (p.52). Sita’s unconscious recognition of the irrationality of the stranger is illustrative of her own longing for a life of primitive reality and the distance
she had travelled away from her husband. According to Swain and Nayak, "Sita's unconscious identification with the stranger's irrationality is expressive not only of her own quest for a life of primitive reality, but also of her alienation from Raman who regards it practically as an act of infidelity." Sita knows that since the 'infidelity was only psychic', it was so much more immeasurable for that. Raman asks Sita whether she always feels happy with this life. She is very much surprised at his question. Yet she wants to assure him of her happiness but she does not like to do so. She realises that her marriage with Raman is not based on understanding, but it is only superficial. She remembers that he has married her 'for her fire and beauty, her quite outstanding fire and beauty'. Moreover Raman had married her out of pity because of her father's death. So she has a feeling that her relationship with him is not based on true love, but on compromise only. None of them tries to touch the inner feelings of the other. They have lived together superficially.

Sita's alienation from her husband is also clearly revealed when Raman asks her the reason for her boredom of her daily routine. Then she laughs at him most hysterically and reminds him of one happy moment in her life in the Hanging Gardens. For her, love is an engulfing passion like the vision of the Muslim couple she sees in the Hanging Gardens. She remembers and tells her husband: '.... They are like work of art - so apart from the rest of us. They were not like us, they were inhuman and divine'. Besides their tender loving kindness, her own life looked 'like a shadow, absolutely flat, uncoloured.' The pathetic sight of the old man and fatally anaemic or fatally tubercular but beautiful woman looking lovingly at each other suggests the alienated plight of Sita in hard, harsh world beaming with lust and violence. Such love
transcends the limits of the self and human finitude. Sita aspires for such divine love from Raman or like ideal Sita. She aspires for the true love of Sri Rama of the great epic The Ramayana. But Raman being busy and complacent can not offer her such love in inhuman passion to Sita as she desires to have. Unfortunately she fails to achieve it. The inhuman and divine love could have made Sita happy and ignore the violence and destruction around and stopped her going to Manori. The scene in the Hanging Gardens made Sita realise that ‘life has meaning’. This true love impelled Sita to realise the hollowness of her married life. Her vision of their love indicates mutual love without any compromise and selfishness, while her own married life is based on duties, compromise and selfishness only. Life without love is almost violence and disharmony to Sita. Though the Muslim couple are very near to fast approaching death, they love each other truly and are very near to life : but Raman cannot understand the real meaning of Sita’s vision of true love.

When Raman receives a letter from his daughter Menaka, he goes to Manori to take her back to Bombay, and to admit her in a medical college. The news of Raman’s arrival to the island first fills her with grief because her freedom even on the island will be disturbed. But soon she feels ‘a warm expansion of relief, of pleasure, of surprise, of happy surprise!’. She is also happy because she has been feeling insecure here, but now with her husband she will be secure. She thinks that Raman has come on to the island for her sake. Then she expects to be told that her husband has come for her but instead he tells her that he has come because Menaka had called him for she wanted him to admit her in a medical college. Raman’s reply alienates her and leaves her with a sense of emptiness. She realises that she has always remained emotionally lonely. She
admits herself in shame, her total failure in life she begins to watch the waves in the sea. Their meaningless movements intensify her ambivalent attitude. She realises the farce of the marriage; the futility of all human relationship ‘their betrayal had torn her open with such violence. Now violence poured from her life blood. In it was also shame, the disappointment... He had betrayed her too. They had all betrayed her why’ (p.147). With Raman’s visit and children’s behaviour Sita finds that her route of escape is closed. She has to accept the fact. The sight of the children on seeing their father dashed cold water on her delight. They were very anxious to go back to Bombay soon. ‘They had all got together... to fight her, to run away and hide from her’. Sita now feels she has to stay whole... ‘I had to stay whole, I had to’. In such muddled state of mind, her alienation approximates to Sidney Finkelstein’s definition of alienation “a psychological phenomenon, an internal conflict, a hostility toward something, seemingly outside oneself which is linked to oneself, a barrier erected which is actually no difference but an impoverishment of ourself.”22 When she is offered freedom, she is unable to take it. Her return to Manori is the outcome of her desire to indulge in fantasy rather than to face the reality. Her effort to find an escape from harsh reality of the world proves to be a failure.

When Raman is resigned to her withdrawal, she finds that she is not ready to be resigned. ‘... She felt him release her then - give her up. She felt... as if his hand, till now clutching her hand, had let it drop, let it go. He did it, not out of passion, but out of pure weariness with her’ (p.149). However, we find that she submits to the will of her husband and asks him to look after her. It is proper to think that this conflict is between conformity and rebellion; the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. In the words of B. Ramachandra Rao “Sita and Raman represent the eternal opposition between the prose and the passion
in lives, Raman says the 'Great yes' and achieves honour and social success. Sita, in her obdurate pride says 'No', but is ultimately compelled to arrive at some kind of compromise with life. The temperamental polarities and contradictory drives pull them apart, making it difficult for each to comprehend the feelings of the other.' To Raman, life must be continued with all its business. Sita sensed him to be superior in courage and in leadership. Then she once again recollects Cavačy's poem:

To certain people there comes a day
when they must say the 'great yes'
or the 'great No'. He has the 'yes' (p.139)

ready with him reveals himself at once. Menaka's betrayal and her husband's conspiracy cut through Sita sharply and she reminded herself that she had the courage too, the courage of being a coward 'He who refuses does not repent should he be asked again, he would say 'No' again. And yet that 'No' - the right 'No' - crushes him for the rest of his life' (p.139). Sita had cried her great 'No' and so she is crushed.

As all the trials of Raman fail to convince her to follow them and to face the reality in life, he 'released' her and at last she was 'free'. He becomes angry with Sita because he can not understand her conflict between illusion and reality. He comes to a conclusion that she is a free spirit and 'from the way he turned, the way he disregarded her did not see if she followed or not she felt him release her then - give her up' (p.149). Yet the wind in nature did not allow her to 'stand still'. She had come to the island 'in search of some magical solution. But she realises that there cannot be a solution to man's indifference or the pervading menace around, she chooses to return and face life.' So Sita began to trail after him taking her packed up suitcase she lowered her head and searched out his foot prints, walking behind him, she recalled the
entire verse of D.H. Lawrence's poem, *End of Another Home Holiday*, she had long been pursuing:

The wild young heifer, glancing distraught
with a strange new knocking of life at her
side runs seeking a loneliness. The little
grain draws down the earth to hide. Nay,
even the slumberous egg as it labours underneath
the shell. Patiently to divide and
subdivide. Ask to be hidden, and wishes nothing
to tell' (p.151).

These lines from the poem of D.H. Lawrence clarified it all for her. The great gap between them is securely bridged. She joined them from behind. She finds an answer to her problem in the poem. So far she has considered giving birth is an act of violence, but now she realises that a seed fallen from the tree of life into the cosmic womb must break on. There can be no life without growth into a full organism. Usha Bande aptly observes. "Bursting out of the enclosure of the womb is a violent activity, but in its impetuosity, it is creative." Sita realises that 'the strange new knocking of life at her side', is indicative of flow of energy which must be released to fertilise a new life. Sita's "desire to bear the child and return with Raman to the mainland signifies her return to life, community and society inspite of the debased dullness of life, the calamity, the lies and normal buggery, the odium, the detritus of wrong and sorrow dropped on every heart, for existence as not possible in an insulated stage of being, rather existence implies being with others." With this awareness herself questioning consciousness, gets busy in the task of self-improvement. She achieves integration of personality by arriving at a fusion with the world. She grapples with her real self. Ignace says that
"Fragmentation of self is frequently seen as one of the key meanings of major dimensions of alienation." She realises that "fragmentation to a cosmic awareness enhances her chance of self-discovery." She is fully aware of her duties and family attachments. She has to make a choice between illusion and reality and finally she chooses reality. She begins to think that she has come to the island to develop herself. Naturally she has come out of the magical illusions of the island, and ready to face the difficulties and realities of life. She also realises that her life on the island is not a real one but it is merely a dream created by her unconscious mind. Finally she realises that illusion and reality are two sides of life which can never be separated from each other.

Anita Desai, in her interview observes that in order to survive in the world, one has to compromise with life: "Of course if one is alive, in this world, one can not survive without compromise, drawing the lines means certain death, and in the end, Sita opts for life - with compromise - consoling herself with Lawrence’s verse. With the thought that she is compelled to make this tragic choice because she is a part of this earth, of life and can no more reject it than the slumberous egg can or the heifer or the grain." This compromise with life is gained after a prolonged period of intra-psychic conflicts. Sita shifts from compliance to rebellion and then to withdrawal, again coming back to compliance. ‘Sita reconciles herself to her lot. She strikes a balance between her inner-self and the outer world, her prosaic-self and her poetic-sensibility, her individual self and the societal-consciousness.’ Unlike Maya’s, her alienation is bio-psychic, not temperamental or environmental. Sita achieves calmness and peacefulness on the island. She ultimately finds a compromise a meeting point between Maya’s involvement and Monisha’s non-involvement in her relations that there is no freedom and fulfilment without enchainment.
Sita's move from fragmentation to self-discovery reminds of E.M. Forster's phrase, 'only connect' which might also have been remain buried in Sita's consciousness for a long time. In Forster's Howard's End, Wilcox remarks: 'only connect the prose and passion and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its higher. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die.' Sita's 'voyage to Manori is also a voyage of self-discovery. She realises that the island is no place of refuge for her nor does it have any magic of its own. She learns that running away from the realities and responsibility is not the answer for her problem.

Whether Sita manages to lead a healthy life after her return from Manori to Bombay or she simply strides back into her former neurotic rages and fears we are not told. When asked about the child, in an interview with Atma Ram Desai affirms that the child is born and learns to compromise: 'It is born, it lives. It adjusts. It compromises. It accepts dullness, mediocrity, either closes its eyes to or else condones destruction ugliness, rottenness. In other words, it leads an ordinary life of the kind its mother tried so desperately to change only to find she could not.' The above words convey acceptance, one has to 'accept acceptance'.

Later Sita realises that escapism is no answer to life's problems: 'She had escaped from duties and responsibilities from order and routine, from life and the city'. She also admits that 'destruction may be the true element in which life survives, and creation merely a freak, temporary and doomed event.' But now she is convinced that life must flow on and she, too, must have courage to flow on with the current of life.
‘Life must be continued and all its business - Menaka’s admission to medical college gained, wife led to hospital, new child safely brought forth, the children reared, the factory seen to, a salary earned, a salary spent (pp.138-139).’

Sita is not very happy for having made a compromise, which she takes to be her defeat unlike Maya and Monisha. Sita neither dies in the end nor kills anyone nor does she become mad. She simply compromises with her destiny. ‘But married life’, is ‘a perpetual compromise’ and any compromise or sacrifice for a greater good vindicates one’s victory and greatness, only by ‘connecting’ extremes one can arrive at an acceptable path in life. This is the positive solution that the novel ‘offers to the present day temperamental maladjustments and consequent alienation.’
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