• WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER

• BYE-BYE BLACK BIRD
Anita Desai's fourth novel "Where Shall We Go This Summer" is a psychological and sensitive study of a modern Indian woman whose loneliness, boredom and agony arises out of existential, constitutional and sociological factors. Sita, the main Protagonist of "Where Shall We Go This Summer?" is a middle-aged, rebellious house-wife, mother of four children. Sita is too similar to that of Maya in "Cry The Peacock" and Monisha in "Voices in the City". She is also an obsessed woman with her loveless marriage with Raman. Here in this novel, the marital relations as well as abnormal man-woman relationship have been portrayed with a remarkable poignancy by Mrs. Desai. Sita is a married woman and has four children, but a very picture of misery and dejection. Her unhappiness in married life finds expression in feeling of contempt for the friends and colleagues of her husband. Here in this novel of "Where Shall We Go This Summer" Anita Desai, by the character of Sita, explores before us a very vital aspect of feminism. Sita feels herself to be a prisoner in a house which offers her nothing but a crust of dull tedium of hopeless disappointment. Sita is pregnant for the fifth time. Now the problem is, Sita does not want the child to be born; nor does she like to abort it. Her quixotic wish is that she should keep it safely in her womb and prevent it from being born into this wicked world. Her husband, Raman is unable to understand her unusual idea. The main problem of Sita is that their level of understanding is not the same. Raman is pragmatic and outspoken whereas Sita is an introvert. Sita is a sensitive woman very much alive to the happening around her, the cruel violence that she finds in the human and non-human world around her. She suffers from an existential
predicament. Explaining her condition and inner psyche Usha Bande rightly observers:

"In "Where Shall We Go This Summer?" Sita shifts from compliance to rebellion and then to withdrawal, again coming back to compliance. Since she oscillates between her changing strategies, her behaviour is inconsistent and leaves much scope for disparity between her thinking and action. In the first part of the novel, entitled "Monsoon67". She rebels against her family and decides to go to Monori." What I'm doing is trying to escape from the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to be sane again."

"The second part "Winter47" depicts Sita's life twenty years back, her life with her father this part enables us to understand her later conflicts. Alternately, her resigned and aggressive trends dominate the third section." "Mansoon 67"1

Here we find that in this novel Desai opens chapter by chapter a woman's inner psyche and her own view on feminism. Sita's husband Raman is a son of her father's friend. When Sita's father died, Raman took her from the Island, sent her to college and because it was inevitable married her. As she recollects, when Raman come to take her away, she closed the theatrical era of her life, led her-out of the ruined theatre into the thin sunlight of the ordinary, the everyday, the empty and meaningless. It is those terms, "Empty" and "Meaningless" that she views her married life from which she derives no satisfaction, no fulfillment and

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no happiness. The unusual nature of Sita's childhood and the horrible circumstances in which Sita was brought up, must have had an everlasting influences on her. Sita's father was more than a man of community than an affectionate father to his children. He was busy with his public activities as a social reformer. His children grew up with the crowd of people around him forever. He looked like a saint and not as a father. Sita was bitterly puzzled by her father's magic, miracles, cures and clinic. She could admire, respect and adore him, but could not treat him as her father. Another way that makes Sita behave strongly is the way her mother deserted them. Sita has always imagined that she came in to this world motherless and this view fills her with a sense of grief and insecurity:

"Life seemed complete, full, without her, there was no reason for her to exist. Sita had imagined she came in to the world motherless and the world enough so. She had always lived in the centre of a crowd, having been one of those flower children of the independence movement whose chins were chucked by chuckling freedom fighters in home-spun, who had spent hours at a stretch, mosquito-bitten legs dangling at the edge of the dais on which politicians in waiting sat cross-legged before lowered microphones, addressing vast crowds beneath them." 2

She was upset when Jeevan, her brother informed her that their mother ran away to Benares. This information about her mother shattered her fancy world of imagination. This loss of motherly love has its impact on Sita throughout her life. And the question that tormented her throughout was why had she left her husband whom they called the second Gandhi? By this question, Mrs. Desai also reveals in this novel the

2. Desai Anita. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1982, P. 84.
patriarchal system of society towards woman. All the efforts of Sita to trace her were in vain. Sita gave up the pursuit in search of her mother, whose name she did know, whose face she did not remember and whose photograph she did not possess. The girl's identification with the mother is incomplete because of her lack of control with her. It is the sister who has taken the vacant place beside the father. Her sister's accessibility and her own inaccessibility to this father, fills Sita with a longing for the missing mother on one hand and nurtures heterosexual jealousy on the other. By Sita's bitter condition, Anita Desai presents in this novel a very common and realistic fact of feminism that in a world dominated by masculine values and laws, the young has no option but to withdraw and to withhold herself. She not only feels unwelcome but shy. She fails to open up her own existence and feelings. Sita could not decipher the mystery that surrounded her father either. His life was illustration of magnifying quality of faith which made life ultimately meaningless. Sita had to face her dying father alone because Jeevan had left the Island a few days earlier and Rekha, within minutes of his death. Sita alone, bewildered and confused, was left on the Island for someone to arrange the funeral. It is Raman who takes her away from the Island and later marries her. But Sita's inner conflict forces her to misunderstand Raman's act as one of pity and lust. Because of these thoughts Sita feels insecure in her husband Raman's house and trying to search her own feminine existence. Sita with such an unpleasant mysterious childhood passes to her own experience as a child. After her marriage when Sita comes to Raman's house, She finds herself in a disgusting surrounding. The family members of her husband's house "Frighten" and "Appal" her. Raman is a businessman, living in a joint family. Raman's family members are quite accommodative and considerate towards Sita, but they fail to understand the real problem of Sita. She doesn't find herself comfortable in Raman's
family situation. Raman's family is a traditional Hindu family where even man do not smoke openly but Sita, just to spite her-laws, smoke openly:

"She behaved provocatively—it was there that she started smoking, a thing that had never been done in their household by any woman and even by men only in secret—and began to speak in sudden rushes of emotion, as though flinging darts at their smoothes, unscarred faces."³

Sita totally fails to adjust with Raman's conventional family and patriarchal society. Here Mrs. Desai reveals pathetic and critical condition of a dreamy and simple hearted woman. Sita who is unable to understand her in-law's house. Sita remembers the first years of her marriage, with Raman's family in their "age-rotted flat" of Queens Road. In her husband's house she revolts against their "Sub-human placidity", "Calmness" and "Sluggishness."⁴

Frantic with fear, she fears that their subhumanity might swamp her. She spends almost all her time standing in the balcony and smoking. Things becomes so bad that Raman shifts to a flat to avoid daily tensions. But even here Sita is not happy. She is irrational, childish and petulant. She becomes upset even after reading the newspaper which is full of the news of brutality and violence and destruction all over the world.

"........her husband casually handed her the newspaper on his way out to office. They all hammered at her cruel fists - the fallen block, the torn watercolours, the headlines abut the war in Vietnam, the photograph of a woman weeping over a small grave, another of a crowd outside a Rhodesian

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4. Ibid, P. 142
Jain, articles about the perfidy of Pakistan........They were handgrenades all, hurled at her frail gold fish bowl belly and instinctively she laid her hands over it, feeling the child there play like some soft flesched fish in a bowl of a warm sea-
water........frightened certain now that civilization had been created by the God-like efforts of the few, in the face of a constant, timeless war of destruction that had begun with time and was now roaring around her, battering her and her fish - foetus so that survive, how could the child? How could she hold them whole and pure and unimpeached in the mist of this bloodshed? They would surely be wounded, fall and die.  

Being a woman and being sensitive to violence and brutality in the world is one thing, but to be affected by it so much as not to lead a normal life is a different thing, bordering on mental sickness. The lack of understanding on the part of her husband increases her agony. Raman remains engrossed in his business, her children grow independent and Sita left alone in her repressing situation but her husband never tries to realise her condition, her problem, her wishes and her mental agony. Raman always thinks that everything goes well. Desai reveals that because of being a woman, the real problem of Sita is that she is highly emotional and imaginative, while Raman is rational and logical. Their different approaches towards life can be seen when they walk along the sea beach:

"............she close enough to it to let the cream-frilled waves rush up and dash over her feet, then leave them washed and tingling on the glittering sand, and he a little

5. Desai Anita. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1982, P. 134.
more land wards where the tide could not assault his shod feet, his dry dignity, and he could crunch along on the sand's white crust of littered shells........"\(^6\)

The sea indicates sentimentality which is very deep in Sita, but on the other hand, it does not touch the heart of Raman and that is why he remains far from the sea. He is very calm and cool headed. He is a balanced man and avoids sentimentality. He adopts a middle way in life, but he has not a quality to capture the mind and heart of Sita who is in great depression. He does not talk to her during walk. Sita always realises that understanding, but it is only superficial. Sita realises that Raman has married her.

"For her fire and beauty, her quite outstanding fire and beauty."\(^7\)

Moreover, Raman had married Sita out of pity because of her fathers death. Sita never has a fulfilling family life. Her father being a Gandhian worker in Manori never gives her the required attention. Her father remains an enigmatic figure throughout Sita's life, one who "had cast an illusion as a fisherman casts a net." (W.S.G.S. P. 100-101). Sita's mind is plagued with the conflicting feelings of desolation and insecurity, as she behaves in a child like fashion in demanding attention from her husband, children and friends. Yet in her quest for a meaningful identity. Sita is well aware of her womanly limitations. There is a secret urge for unfulfilled creating in her:

"If only I could paint, or sign, or play the Sitar well, really well, I should have grown into a sensible woman.............I should have known how to channel my

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6. Desai Anita. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1982, P. 142
thoughts and feelings. How to put them to use. I should have given my life some shape then, some meaning."8

Desai portrays an incessant struggle in a woman's mind between reality and illusion. Sita finds urban life excruciatingly painful so on account of all pervasive destruction. She finds around her "Destruction come so naturally, that was the horror." (W.S.g.S. P. 46). Sita's marginalization is reminiscent of Tillie Olsen's observation on woman's condition:

"Cabined, cribb'd confin'd; the private sphere. Bound feet: corseted, bedecked' denied one's body, powerlessness."9

It is this lack of power, this trivialization of the self, this reduction of the individual that is highlighted in the delineation of Sita's character. Sita thinks that her relationship with Raman is not based on true love, but on compromise only. Raman never tries to touch the inner feelings of Sita's heart. They have lived together superficially. Sita tells Raman about her vision of true and divine love which she had after seeing a couple in the hanging Garden - She saw a young woman laying in the lap of an old man and when this woman uncovered her burkha, Sita saw the face of this lady who was suffering from some fatal disease. The old man stared at her and caressed her softly. They were deeply in love and were unaware of this world. This true love impelled Sita to realise the hollowness of her married life. Thus, Sita's vision of Muslim woman and her old love, indicates mutual love without any compromise and selfishness while her own married life is based on duties, compromise and adjustment only. The lack of understanding on the part of her

husband, increases her agony bitterly. Sita does not want to welcome even the guests of her husband and is frightened by them, for she considers them:

"Nothing - nothing but appetite and sex only food, sex and money matter animals."\(^{10}\)

Here Anita Desai reveals a woman's pathetic condition in her own husband's house. Desai reveals a different kind feminism in the character of Sita, she realised that she has always remained emotionally lonely. Sita seems to carve out an ideal type of existence in her mind which she can never match with that of real life. Her mind constantly vacillates between the Great 'No' and the 'Yes' to life. She understands that nothing worthwhile is to be found outside life. Anita Desai in her interview comments:

"Of course, if one is alive, in this world, one cannot survive without compromise drawing the line means certain death, and in 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 the earth of life, and can no more reject it than the slumberous egg can or the heifer or the grain."\(^{11}\)

Sita feels suffocated by the "Vegetarian complacence" and insularity of her family life. She is plagued by a feeling of desolation, neglect and boredom which leaves an indelible mark on her physical appearance:

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10. Desai Anita. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1982, P. 47.
"A woman now in her forties, greying, aging to behave with such a total lack of control"\textsuperscript{12}

It is this attempt to probe in to the labyrinths of the women's psyche that inspires Desai to portray the pressing isolation and insecurity of a sensitive, middle-aged woman, Sita in her novel "Where Shall We Go This Summer?" Desai's protagonists, curiously enough do not assert in a pragmatic manner. they suffer in silence, perceive the agonies of existence and quietly withdraw into their own world. We see in "Where Shall We Go This Summer?", Raman becomes angry with Sita because he can not understand her conflict between illusion and reality. Sita is left alone in the abyss of boredom, but her husband never tries to realise her condition. He thinks that everything goes right and well. He is surprised to hear that Sita is bored:

"Bored? he had exclaimed in genuine surprise why? How? with what? and looked so puzzled so pained."\textsuperscript{13}

Raman is not ready to believe that Sita was bored, dull, unhappy and frantic with her situation. He realises that she is a free spirit and:

"From the way her turned, the way he disregarded her, did not see if she followed or not, she felt him release her then-give her up."\textsuperscript{14}

But in reality Sita is not free, she is fully aware of her duties and family attachment. Having lived a life of a mother and a wife, a daughter and a woman, Sita is still unhappy. She feels everyday life is in itself dull, corrupt and uninspiring. Sita thinks that even her children do not pay much attention to her, and they are attracted more to their father than to

\textsuperscript{12} Desai Anita. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1982, P. 32.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, P. 144.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, P. 149
her. She fails to tolerate the increasing sense of aggressiveness in the younger generation. She becomes disturbed when she sees her son Karan enjoying the scene of lighting between Ayahs. She is terrified to see it because she thinks that violence is found in animals, and not in civilized people. This incident increases the sense of insecurity in her heart. She is shocked when she finds even her little children fighting:

"Like the waves incessantly, tiresomely crashing into each other, her sons hurled their bodies at each other as if they were made for attack and combat."\(^{15}\)

Her children frighten her by their aggressive behaviour. Her daughter Menaka is extremely complex and dramatic like her father. The mother daughter relationship is fraught with anxiety and tension. Sita too desires to see herself in Menaka. As a child Manaka had shown an aptitude for drawing and Sita was proud of her creativity. She wanted her to pursue the career of an artist. But Menaka feels neither compassion nor pity for her mother"

"She had enough of her mother's disorder and nonsense - she would escape it wholly."\(^{16}\)

Not for her is the dull tedium of her mother's obscure self, the disorder and nonsense of her temperament. It is the father and not the mother that she wishes to emulate. As a young, girl she turns to her father's authority. Identification with the mother is not particularly helpful and it would not be a farfetched claim that Menaka by refusing to sympathise with her mother's anxiety ridden world is seeking to avoid her destiny. In Kisteva's terms, Sita's position is:

\(^{15}\) Desai Anita. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1982, P. 144.

\(^{16}\) Ibid, P. 177.
"outside time, with neither past nor future,
neither true nor false, buried underground, it she neither
postulates nor Judges."\textsuperscript{17}

Anita Desai's creation of Sita is an example of repressed person.
She hates her husband for not understanding her feelings and dislikes her
children for they are insensitive, so on. Her children never show any
curiosity about their mother's likes and dislikes and it depressed Sita very
badly. We find this the main Cause that Sita realises:

"Children only mean anxiety, concern, pessimism not
happiness. What other women call happiness is just-just
sentimentality."\textsuperscript{18}

She believes that children are not the creation of deep love and
happiness, but merely are the outcome of compromise between husband
and wife. Hence, they are troubles. Sita's problem starts from here and a
deep change takes place in her from a proud and pleasant mother of four
children, Sensual, emotional, Freudian." (P. 31). Sita turns into a woman
of "rage, fear and revolt."(P. 32).

Desai presents her view that a vision of unhappy but exemplary
wives does not enrich our world. In Sita, Mrs. Desai reveals a woman
who is continuously engaged in trying to find out her hidden existence
either through expiation or re-examination. She attempts to find out where
she stands in relation to others, through self analysis, through going over
the same ground over and over again, like a detective who has missed the
clue, until some kind of a structured whole is visible. Sita's rebellious
attitude towards society and her bold refusal to accept its values

\textsuperscript{17} Kristeva Julia, "About Chinese Woman", Translated by Anita Barrows, London, Marion Boyars,
1977, P. 35.
\textsuperscript{18} Desai Anita. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1982, P. 147.
crystallise in her decision not to have her fifth baby delivered. In order that she may achieve the miracle of "Not giving birth" she comes from Bombay to Manori, a small Island of the marve mainland, in which memory and desire, romance and reality are mixed together. Although it is not scientifically possible that Sita should not want the child delivered and keep it, may be in her womb, it fictionally dramatises her revolt against society and social system. Sita wishes to escape from the mundane reality of her existence in the company of her husband and four children R.S. Sharma identifies Sita to be an escapist and has reasons to say so:

"Sita seeks to escape essentially from the cannibalism that is operative, unseen and unobserved, in contemporary city life. The crows described in great detail in the first section are symbolic of this cannibalism. They are not the mighty monsters of fear and destruction which inspire awe or reverence ........the little crumb eaters who evoke only contempt and disgust. They form a shadow civilization in a world of small men with big appetites."  

The structure of the novel is conducive to the understanding of the psychic fragmentation of Sita. She revolts against the mundaneness of her family life. Sita is continuously waiting for some magical happening in her life. Her relationship with her husband is not emotional and deep. She is waiting for the day when her husband will understand her emotionally. She hopes that the unborn fifth child will bring some happiness and peace in her life, But Raman can not understand Sita's idea of not wanting to deliver the baby as an intention to abort which makes Sita hysterical:

"Mad! she gasped. "You're quite mad. Kill the baby? It's all I want. I want to keep it, don't you understand?". "No! he shouted in exasperation, feeling himself made a fool that she spur round and round her fingers till he was sick and giddy." You just said you don't want it. Now you say you do want it. What's up? what's up?

"I mean I want to keep it. I don't want it to be born." 20

Sita is afraid to give birth to her child in hostile environment. Therefore, during the period of her fifth pregnancy, she does not want to live in the violent atmosphere in order to protect her child from its bad effect. She wants to go to the Island 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 world. Memory plays a crucial role in the protagonists sense of real and the unreal in Desai's fiction. Sita in this novel "Where Shall We Go This Summer?" often remembers her childhood days that probably releases her from the agony of present existence and in it Desai reveals before us a woman's search for freedom and spirit of feminism. Sita feels a disquieting loneliness around her and so she takes shelter in her past. (In the memories of her childhood):

"She had come here in order not to give birth. An explanation she had repeated to herself and her husband so often that, Island of acquiring lucidity............"Ah, Oh, Now I understand!"..........it seemed steadily more strange mistaken. Yet she had arrived, she was on the Island in order to achieve the miracle of not giving birth wasn't this Manori, the Island of miracles? Her father had made it an Island of magic once, worked miracles of a kind."21

20. Desai Anita. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1982, P. 147.
But we find that Sita's hopes about the Island are short lived. The discrepancy between reality and aspiration, once again plunges her into intense suffering. The Island holds no magic for her, no magic touch to heal her wounds. The magic, the illusion itself, she realises is a fraud. Sita is shock to see the great change on the Island, the magic and beauty of it has vanished consequently. Her faith is shaken. She finds total emptiness in her life. In search of her freedom and happiness she finds nothing. The endless monsoon continuously shatters her faith and dreams. She is badly depressed and disappointed by it. Her children accuse her:

"Whenever she turned or locked up, she saw them staring at her, watching her as though waiting for her to break down and admit failure."  

Once the Island was a home, it provided her shelter and refuge but now she has responsibilities to fulfill. It is significant that Sita can return to the Island only as a guest now, her destiny is elsewhere, it is on the mainland. She can not run away from her life as a mother and a housewife. She realises that the Manori of her past, has nothing to sustain her children. Karan and Menaka insist on going back to the urbanized life and Sita has to compromise with her children. Moses informs her abut the arrival of her husband Raman. This information fills her with grief because her freedom will be disturbed. But soon she feels - "A warm expansion of relief, of pleasure, of surprise - oh happy surprise!" (Where Shall We Go This Summer?)

She is also happy because she has been feeling insecure on Island, but now with Raman will be secure. Here Desai in this novel reveals traditional Hindu society towards women, within Hindu society, women's highest virtue lies in their invincible attachment and service to the family.

22. Desai Anita. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1982, P. 152.
and in their moral obligation to fulfil the demands of the marital bond. Marriage itself remains the predominant goal for most young women in Hindu culture, and there are even specially sanctioned rituals through which maidens can hope to gain a husband, and by extension, a respected and accepted place in society. And despite the fact that the wife is traditionally considered a goddess figure in the home, in practice the husband is the central signifier through whom her own physical/emotional/spiritual fulfillment is deemed possible. It would not be wrong, therefore, to say that Hindu women are expected to find total life fulfillment only through the ties of marriage and the family but in reality find nothing. Sita compromises with the old patriarchal order to regain her status as Raman's wife. The idea of empowerment is an elusive dream to Desai's protagonists as they yearn to express themselves in difficult situation. Though Desai does not alter alternative and radical models of female behavior, She depicts the irreconcilable contradictions, the discontinuous identities and the fragmented nature of the life of her protagonists. They live and die as dreamers, but are never denied, their status and position in the social fabric to which they belong. Failure in one aspect of the women's lives does not render the dysfunctional in society. It is their ability to live life as women according to their own terms, that mark the strain survivors in a hostile patriarchal world in Desai's fiction.

Family forms an important nexus in a woman's world. It is within the institution of family that Desai's women seek to construct a viable space for themselves. Woman's primary sphere is the man's private sphere, the home. It is in the home, within the family structure that Desai's woman live and grow. The feminine desire for a landscape, the intense urge to locate themselves within this landscape, is an expression
of their intensely private self which remains concealed within the home. It could be argued that the home, the family which constitute a man's private world is a woman's public sphere for there is another private interior within which she hopes to collect and compose herself. And it is this intensely personal domain that Desai's women have recourse to Maya's hankering for her father's garden and Sita's return to the Island are significant gestures in themselves. For in Sita we witness merely a hysterical's reaction or an unfulfilled woman's anguish but she stands apart as attempts to restore their lost selves. Sita thinks that Raman has come on the Island for her sake. But when Raman tells her that he has reached there because Menaka has called him, this news hurts her bitterly. She is shocked deeply:

"Either he was tantalizing her, deliberately, or he had nothing more to give her, or he was just unaware of her needs and demands."  

She thinks that her children and her husband have betrayed her. Sita feels about her children that:

"They were being disloyal to the Island and its wild nature."  

Unlike her legendary namesake, in the Ramayana, Sita in "Where Shall We go This Summer?" chooses exile of her own accord. The legendary Sita too was pregnant at the time of her banishment from the kingdom of Ayodhya, by her husband Rama - The Myth of Sita is an important ideal of Indian womanhood. She incorporated chastity and endurance, patience and purity, surrender and courage. It is said that she was born of the earth. Sita is brought back to kingdom of Ayodhya after

23. Desai Anita. "Where Shall We Go This Summer?" New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1982, P.132.  
24. Ibid, P. 94
many years of exile in the forest on her return. She is asked to give a proof of her chastity once more, to which she revolts and prays to her mother, the earth, who gave her form and body, to open up and receive her into her arms. The mother concedes and Sita merges into her. The metaphor of "The earth as mother" is a dominant feature of Indian folklore and religious tradition. Although one sees no distinct parallels between the modern Sita and the legendary Sita, one does notice that Desai's Sita is a suggestive transversion of mythical figure. Her exile is an attempt to restore herself. The return to the Island is an expression of a woman's desire for maternal embrace. In it she seeks not a complete harmonious return but the strength to envision of a future. She returns to the mainland, not alone but with her husband and children, as a married woman Sita can not live in this maternal refuge forever. She must depart lest her presence becomes a burden, a threat, a concern. As suggested by Sudhir Kakar:

"......in Indian society ..........a daughter is considered a "guest" in her natal family, treated with solicitous concern often accorded to a welcome consider, who, all too soon, will marry and leave her mother for good."25

In Indian society a married women's house is her husband's house and Sita is not exception. Sita's problem seems to be caused by the alienation and in communication in her married life. Their hasty marriage makes Sita uncomfortable and uneasy and she is not able to adjust herself to the given circumstances. The reason for her unhappiness can be described in the words of Dr. M.Maini Meitei:

"In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* the suffering of Sita is caused by factor psychical in origin: the betrayal of

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her unconscious inclination to preserve and uphold
traditional values of an integrated life in face of the chaotic
values of modern city civilizaiton is at the root of her
unhappiness and loss of Identity."

The novel ends on an optimistic note, because Sita gets hold of
herself, realises in a flash of visionary insight the truth of life and avoids
the mental breakdown which was Maya's fate and Monisha's tragedy. Sita
like Maya and Monisha, presents feminine psyche in many ways. She is
alienated from her husband. Desai Presents in Sita a tormented woman
because of patriarchal family system. But she is unlike Maya and
Monisha, unlike them She, however neither dies in the end nor does she
kill anyone or goes mad. At the end, Sita shows more practical wisdom
than other female protagonists who failed to face the bitter realities of
life. In the end of the novel, we find Sita thinking with a heavy heart of
the preparation she will be required to make the arrival of the new baby
and trying to compromise with her circumstances. By this novel Mrs.
Desai reveals a very vivid and realistic picture of a woman's life and her
circumstances that she faces during her lifetime. In Sita she presents the
lot of a common Indian woman who makes a compromise with her
destiny and life. Sita with great feminine courage, develops a new interest
in life and develops a lust for it. Though similar to Maya and Monisha in
some respects, Sita rises above them in her capacity for a positive
acceptance of reality. Desai shows a new face of Indian womanhood in
Sita's great courage towards life. Desai challenges the prevalent version
of the middle-class Indian women stereotype, by subverting their quest
for fulfillment (with in the family) with an intense dissatisfaction with the

26. M. Maini Meitei, "Anita Desai" Where Shall We Go/This Summer? "A psychoanalytical study", The
family system. More over she demonstrates their inability, sometimes their unwillingness, to change the pattern of their lives. The result is that articulation becomes a problem and nothing but the landscape acts as a mirror of their unsatisfied ego. A transference of desire takes place. Women in Desai are in constant search for a sense of fulfillment. There are ties between friends, siblings, parents, children, partners but she sees them as forming an incomplete self-fulfillment. It exists as a bearer of their past lives and functions as a paradigm of their future anxieties. In the process landscape not only delineates their quest for the lost mother but becomes their surrogate mother. Mrs. Desai explores this particular feature in the discussion of "Where Shall We Go This Summer?" In this novel Mrs. Desai explore the inner fragmented life of a woman. Sita in "Where Shall We Go This Summer?" is a difficult woman because of her over-sensitive approach to life, to things, to events. Desai explores the state of nothingness in her women's lives. Their soft simmering anger and lackadaisical attitude arouses in us contrary emotions of sympathy and imitation. Desai describes her women as "Slipper dragging." It is a gesture of defiance and of dissatisfaction. The majority of her women are comfortably situated in their homes and married (sometimes with children) yet unhappy. To these highly strong, opinionated, self-consuming and unhappy women, Desai gives a voice and a desire. Desai's focus begins with the house. As a family settlement the house not only provides shelter but is ranked amongst the most immediate space within which Indian women can hope to situate themselves. It provides the basic framework within which women can compose and recollect themselves. It ensures them with a destiny. The room inside the house and the garden enclosing this house are the central metaphors seemingly in a diametric opposition with the metaphors of the city and the Island. In order to understand the predicament of one of her earliest protagonists, Sita, it is
important for us to see her life as structured between her father's house and her husband's. Both locations act as a reflection of her subjectivity. If she lives within the folds of patriarchy as an attractive figure, natured by the values of her class, she also becomes a threat to that very system which has nourished and nurtured her. She echoes the emptiness that circumvents such a consciousness. We recognise a certain pattern in Desai's feminism for most of her women, a retreat from their husband's house points towards their dissatisfaction with the social world. It signifies a lack which they have been unable to fulfill. It also brings into focus a discontinuity between their actual and the desired existence. Conventional lives do not appeal to them and they wish to escape from the world of convention to that of freedom. In ending this novel "Where Shall We Go This Summer?" on a different note i.e. New identity of feminism Anita Desai represents Sita with an aura of traditional womanhood:

"Her 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, the moral buggery, the odium, the detritus of wrong and sorrow dropped on every heart, for existence is not possible in an insulated stage of being rather existence implies being with the other." 27

We see that temperamental maladjustment, spirit of rebellion and alienation from society are finally overcome by Sita who makes a fresh and new beginning. In Desai's fiction we come across a critique of woman's position in society. It also provides women with a voice. Mrs. Desai, by her protagonist Sita, provides before us her outlook towards

feminism. It has made it easier for women to recognize the common constraints within which they function, irrespective of their cultural and social boundaries. For Desai we can quote these lines:

"I do accept, however, that women writers tend to place their emphasis differently from men, that their values are likely to differ. Whereas a man is concerned with action, experience and achievement a woman writer is more concerned with thought, emotion and sensation."28

Desai's novels focus on the moods and temperament of her women protagonists. Anita Desai, in this novel portrays the numerous facets of the woman's experience emphasizing in particular the trials and tribulations of being a woman in a rigid patriarchal culture.

Anita Desai's novel "Bye-Bye Blackbird" is generally considered as a departure from Desai's other works.

"In its emphasis upon the cultural factors in shaping the individual psyche."29

But, we see in this novel, the most remarkable thing is that the novel "Bye-Bye Blackbird" is not different from the point view of feminism. Although the novel revolves round the two male characters, Dev and Adit, the main story concerns an English lady Sarah, who lives in a dual world. "Bye-Bye Blackbird" presents three major characters Adit Sen, his English wife Sarah and his young friend Dev who face problems of adjustment in England. Adit Sen, goes to England to join the London School of Economics for higher studies and faces initial problem


of adjustment. His problem arises from the sort of treatment the Indian immigrants in England receive form English. This novel deals exclusively with the situation of the Indian vis-a-vis the English in England. In this novel Anita Desai very vividly explores a virgin territory in the dilemma of the English wife married to an Asian living in England. Among these three characters, Sarah (woman protagonist) Plays a very vital role in the novel. Sarah is an English lady married to Adit Sen, an Indian immigrant. By marrying an Indian immigrant, Sarah faces cultural crisis As Krishnamoorthy Aithal rightly explains:

"Anita Desai's novel "Bye-Bye Blackbird" deals with the theme of East-West encounter. The novel covers numerous aspects of this encounter between the British and the Asiatic immigrants in England, including the most intimate and demanding encounter, marriage."  

Sarah suffers much because of her marriage with an Indian Christine Longford, a friend of Adit, introduces Sarah to Adit in a cocktail party. Even in the first meeting, Sarah's shyness attracts him and he chooses Sarah for company because of her beauty and Indianness:

"You are like a Bengali girl. Bengali women are like that reserved, quite. May be you were one in your previous life. But you are improving on it - you are so much prettier!"

We see here that Adit marries Sarah, an English girl, because of her beauty and shyness. She looks like a Bengali girl to him. But Sarah marries Adit because..............

"He seemed so rich to her, he seemed to have so much to give her - so many relations and attachments, pictures and stories, legends, promises and warnings."32

Adit is a colourful man. He is light-hearted and openminded man. He loves brightness and boldness, while Sarah is quite different - she is dull, simple and lonely. She wants to hide herself from the bitter realities of her life. Their personalities are quite different after their marriage, they settle down in Clapham, a small city. Adit and Sarah have to adjust much because of their different cultures. For her husband Adit, Sarah cooks Indian foods but the typical Indian male-chauvinist in Adit, finds a great pleasure in ill-treating Sarah. Though Adit is a openminded person and loves boldness but his behaviour towards his English wife Sarah is quite different. Adit behaves with Sarah like a traditional Indian man who does not believe in women's own existence and Sarah becomes victim of his outlook:

"These English wives are quite manageable really, you know not as fierce as they look very quiet and hardworking as long as you treat them right and roar at them regularly once or twice a week."33

Sarah, as a typical submissive wife, on the other hand, always speaks good of her husband. She pretends that she is treated nicely by her Indian husband but in reality she is victim of her husband's outlook towards women. Mrs. Desai very vividly explores the oppression of

33. Ibid, P. 29
woman by her own husband and reveals traits of feminism in the novel. When Sarah’s mother asks about her cooking, she says:

"Adit still does most of it." 34

Explaining the cultural incompatibility Krishnamoorthy Aithal rightly observes:

"The ritual and beliefs of the one mean nothing to the other, makes each of them groan in pain at the lack of regard shown by the other, for what each holds dear." 35

Though not deeply involved in the main motif of the novel, Sarah is an existentialist character like Maya, Monisha and Sita. She is only oversensitive. Marriage has given her nothing but alienation and loneliness. She is romantically in love with India. She must have read and heard stories about India and Indian life. She dislikes the English people's love of privacy and reserve behaviour. Her marriage with Adit, shows her love of Indian life and Indian culture and for it she tolerates her fellow-citizens humiliation to her. Sarah makes a search of identity and reconciles herself to her lot of a wife of an Indian with whom she is in love. By marrying an Indian man, she provokes the anger of the white society. By marrying brown Asian, she has broken the social code of England hence she is always subject to taunts and jibes of not only her colleagues but even of young pupils of the school where she works as a clerk. She is always defensive because of her weakness which is her marriage with an Indian. She always avoids any question regarding her husband and family life but her students find delight in asking such

34. Desai Anita, "Bye-Bye Blackbird", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1985, P.133.
questions. Julia who is a teacher in her school comes out with typical British superciliousness. Sarah dreads such embarrassing comments:

"She was still breathing hard at having so narrowly escaped to answer personal questions. It would have wrecked her for the whole day to have to discuss Adit with Julia, with Miss Pimm, in this Sance, Chalk-dusted, workaday office, she was willing to listen for hours to Miss Pimm's diagnosis of her aches and pains.

...........But to display her letters from India to discuss her Indian husband, would have forced her to parade like an impostor, to make claims to a life, an identity that she did not herself feel to be own, although they would have been more than ready to believe her."\(^{36}\)

Sarah is not only victim of her husband but also a victim of cruel society but she constantly fights for her identity and own existence. What of grown-ups, even the young ones emulating the elders taunt her. Her pupils ignore her and taunt. They pretended not to notice her at all. Once she came cross the road, she heard them scream:

"Hurry hurry, Mrs. Scurry!" and where's the fire, Pussy cat?"\(^{37}\)

This much about the ordeal she undergoes at her work place at the hands of her colleagues and pupils. The strains of interracial marriage are so much on her that they effect her day-to-day life. When she goes for shopping, she avoids going to the stores of Laurel Lane where she lives, for her shopping would easily betray her link with India. She prefers

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37. Ibid, P. 32.
going to a big Department store where she would remain an anonymous buyer, none knowing her Asian connections:

".........but inside the sparkling halls of the supermarket where walls of soap and cornflakes hid her from stranger's eyes, she could be as eccentric, as individual as she pleased without being noticed by even a mouse."38

But inspite of all her precautions, she can not escape from the situations, which is now part of her life. The tension between pretension and actuality, appearance and reality is always there which tells upon her, resulting in Schizophrenia: She does not know to where she belongs and she is fed up with putting on faces. She feels displaced in England by marrying an Indian. She is worried about the loss of identity in her own society and country. When people discuss about India, she deliberately avoids the discussion. It is a bitter agony that Sarah lives the life of a cultural exile in her own country. Desai presents her, like Sindhi in Arun Joshi's "Foreigner". Sindhi is twice removed from his culture and society under circumstantial compulsion. In her description of feminism in this novel, Desai presents her opinion that marriage can not solve the problem of loneliness of women. Loneliness can be resolved from within and Sarah also faces the same problem - Married to an Indian, she tries her best to adjust herself with her Indian husband and his friends. She does not share with her husband her views about her friends because like other English people sometimes she also believes Indian to be inferior. One usually imagines the English wife, secure in her homeland and among her friends, showing of her Asian husband like an exotic pet or tolerating him with a hint of condescension. What one is not prepared for is the soul-tormenting agony of shame that Sarah feels. Her Asian association is a

dark secret, she does not wish to reveal. Though she loves the kind, bumbling Adit, and their lives are tolerable even happy with in the four walls of their home, Sarah lives in terror that her relationship will be known to the school principal to whom she is secretary. The contempt directed at Indians, who make their home in England and left ugly mark on her too.

Sarah on her part, tries to identify herself with her Indian husband, but the two are not able to go along happily as husband and wife. The maladjustment in the married life of Adit and Sarah is quite clear when he receives a latter from his parents, and he does not take pains to translate it to Sarah. He does not want her comprehend his country and people. Once Sarah insists that they must go to India, she knows something about India and Indian peoples through the pictures of the Indian stamps and at this Adit rebukes her. Adit badly rebukes Sarah without understanding her feelings. This behaviour deeply hurt Sarah's feminine pride. Adit says:

"Have we the money?"...............or the time? ........do you know how much an air ticket costs?"39

Adit does not want to know her wife's feelings and emotions. Though Adit shows that he has well-adjusted in British culture and society, yet it is frequently apparent that he has not changed his Indian way of thinking towards women. On one occasion when Sarah's cat puts its nose in the rice and she does not bother to change it, he is badly disturbed. This shows the wide gulf between the two different cultures of East and West which can never be one. Sarah suffers from inferiority complex regarding her Indian husband, and this complex forces her to behave like a tortoise. Adit is deeply involved in his likes and dislikes, he

does not bother about his wife's problems and even her feelings. Once by chance, Adit boards in the same bus in which she is travelling, but he does not go near her and watches her from a distance. He considers her to be a stranger with hardly any genuine relationship. He all the time remains busy in himself. Adit does not let her wife Sarah participate in discussions with his Indian friends. The gap between two cultures is so deep that there can merely be a superficial adjustment between the two. Sarah has been married to Adit for the last three years, but even she can not understand or speak Hindi. Adit is a self-centered man who does not care about his wife. The hollowness of Sarah's married life can be seen when Adit goes out with his friend leaving his wife alone just to:

".......pick up empty cups and glasses and full ashtrays and yawn her way to bed."\(^{40}\)

Adit, naturally, is a typical male-chauvinist. In Adit Mrs. Desai explores before us, typical male and his mentality towards a woman. Adit never respects his wife and her sentiments. Almost all the decisions in their family life are taken by Adit without consulting Sarah, Adit decides to return to India so that:

"My son will be born in India."\(^{41}\)

Sarah is a passive victim, "the other" in the hands of the male-chauvinistic Adit. Ironically, when Adit prepares himself and Sarah to leave England, Sarah gets a promotion. When Sarah informs Adit about it, Adit gets angry and accuses Sarah that she does not want to leave England where as she has already decided not to accept the promotion. This discussion leads to a confrontation and Sarah begins to weep. She seems to be more an Indian wife than an English woman:

\(^{40}\) Desai Anita, "Bye-Bye Blackbird", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1985, P.46.
\(^{41}\) Ibid, P. 204
"Sarah in Bye-Bye Blackbird is a case of both social and psychological alienation. The social factor stems from her marriage to an Indian settled in England; her psychological trouble emanates from her pride system."\(^{42}\)

Sarah slowly changes herself so that she can adjust with Adit in all matters. For Adit, she stops cooking English foods and learns to cook Indian food. Desai, very vividly, points a hideous picture where a women, cut off from her own kind, dwells in the twilight world of Indians in England - a lost society balanced precariously between nostalgia for the richly coloured, land of their own and the calm security of the welfare state. Sarah shares their exile as she is now an out caste with very little in common with her own parents. The boisterous, free and easy ways of Adit and his friends, create bad impression on Mrs. Roscommon James and widens the gulf between mother and daughter. What does she have in common with these people? Even in England the womans status was determined by that of her husband. Sarah could not be herself - She was Adit's wife - labeled, condemned. Sarah's predicament is really very pathetic. Her identity crisis has been described more than once in the novel which makes her lonely. The question always nagging her who is she? After marriage she faces an identity crisis. She is disturbed by an anguish of shedding her name and identity:

"She had become nameless, she had shed her name as she had shed her ancestry and identity, and she sat there, staring as though she watched them disappear or could only someone who know her, knew her background and her marriage, imagine this? Would a stranger have seen in her a lost maiden in search of her name that she seemed, with a

sudden silver falling of the light of glamour, to an unusually subdued and thoughtful Aditi."

If a girl marries in the same culture it is easier for her to adjust to her new home and people. But by marrying a "Wog" she had generated hostility among her colleagues. Sarah is worried about the loss of her own identity in her own society. She is very badly disturbed by an anguish of shedding her own name and identity in her own country England. As R.S. Sharma rightly says:

"Anita Desai focuses on this disturbing aspect of loss of identity that immigration necessarily involves. The pathos of a culturally alienated girl are most movingly rendered in Sarah's life."

Anita Desai presents that Sarah's sensitive search for identity and loneliness is like that of Maya (Cry The Peacock).

"She............fell herself cut loose from her moorings and begin to drift round, giddily, as though caught in a slow whirl-pool of dark, deep water."

Inter-racial and Inter-cultural marriage of Sarah causes adjustment problems specially for a woman, which are not easy to overcome. In Sarah's case the problems become more complicated for she has married a person whose race was once ruled over by her own, in spite of "Progress" and "Modernity" old prejudices die hard. Sarah is homeless in her own native country which is the biggest irony. Sarah feels that she is nameless. Faced with Alienation and loneliness, Sarah wants to know her real identity.

"Who was she - Mrs. Sen who had been married in a red and gold Benares brocade saree one burning, bronzed day in September, or Mrs. Sen, the Head's secretary, who sent out the bills and took in the cheques, kept order in the school and as known for her efficiency? Both these creatures were frauds, each has a large, shadowed element, of charade about it. When she briskly death with latters”\(^\text{46}\)

Sarah is continuously in search of her identity. Sarah tries to trace out the real Sarah. In Sarah's search for her own identity Mrs. Desai reveals, the aspect of Feminism where a woman always is in search of her identity in male-dominated society. A woman played so many roles as a daughter, wife, mother that she lost her own actual identity. In "Bye-Bye Blackbird" Sarah feels:

"Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume. Where was Sarah? Staring out of the window at the chimney pots and the clouds, she wondered if Sarah had any existence at all .........\(^\text{47}\)

In this novel, Mrs. Desai presents Sarah as a representative of women's pathetic condition in the society, the woman, who leads a double life : one at her house where she tries her best to take care of her husband and other at her office where she works hard. But she had lost her identity. Sarah's problem is human. She wants to be a real person whether English or Indian. She is totally fed up with sitting on the fence. She tries her best and fully devotes herself to remain a sincere wife seeing to it that her marital life is not destroyed. Her husband too had been playing charade although not as consciously as she. Of all wives of Anita Desai

\(^{46}\) Desai Anita, "Bye-Bye Blackbird", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1985, P.34.

\(^{47}\) Ibid, P. 35.
she is the best in understanding and supports her husband. In the circumstances mentioned above Sarah knows how to handle her husband. But woman has always been the object of male subjectivity. She has been defined in terms of her relation to the male need in society. Her social role and position in society is also assigned by patriarch and Sarah is not any exception. As the "Other" Sarah sacrifices a lot for her husband and family and she is treated like the "Other" by her husband Adit. Seema Jena looks at this predicament of Sarah from a wider perspective:

"Anita Desai draws our attention to the annihilation of self that marriage involves, for the female."  

From the point view of feminism we see here that Sarah has to annihilate her individual identity and self because marriage leaves her no choice. In this respect Sarah is very much like Sita, Nanda Kaul and of course Maya and Monisha who are all annihilated by marriage. Sarah is totally disintegrated after her cross-cultural marriage because she neither involves herself completely in her husband's culture, nor does she adopt herself to her own society. Sarah has to smart with the feeling that she has lost her individuality. Sarah feels that the real solution to her problems lies in leaving England and going to India. She comes under the spell of rootlessness. She is hung between the two different societies - Indian and English. She is uncertain of her identity, feels totally lost. She feels she is playing two roles. She is sandwiched between the two different races and decides to leave England with her husband like a true Indian wife. Sarah though an English girl, acts with characteristic values of an Indian wife. When Sarah accepts her husband's choice. Anita Desai touches upon the crises of her female protagonist in the lost section of the novel. While Adit's friend Dev finally accepts England. Sarah accepts her husband's

decision without any kind of rebellion. Sarah accepts her husband's argument to leave England with the characteristic submission of a traditional Indian wife:

"She could not tell what effect the smallest refusal or contradiction might have on him - he might start beating his chest and complaining of being misunderstood, he might start screaming accusations at her, he might shut himself up and weep.....anything was possible in his highly - strong and dramatic condition. She dreaded such a reaction. Rather she would sacrifice anything, anything at all, in order to maintain, however superficially, a semblance of order and discipline in her house, in he relationship with him."49

Adit Sen, the husband, seeks his ownself only and is totally unaware of his wife's loss of self and identity. Adit is no batter than Gautama and Raman who behave similarly. Adit is in search of his own existence and is unaware that his decision hurts Sarah. Sarah's existentialist delimma reaches its peak at the end of the novel. After her marriage she has sacrificed many thing for peace in her family life. Now, she has to say good-bye to England itself where she has lived for twenty four years. In a man-woman relationship there would always be a need for sacrifice and surrender. But the paradox is, in reality, it is always the women who does so. Sarah is different from Desai's other characters. She is almost an exile in her own land but like others she never withdraws. She faces the challenges of life and triumph over her suffering and dilemmas. Hari Mohan Prasad compares Sarah to a volcano:

"Sarah's character has more power, in her there is a real split, a real dilemma, a real suffering, but she triumphs

over all these. She is a silent volcano, not dead. Yet not brusting.\textsuperscript{50}

The irony is, the volcano never brusts in the novel. We have all our praise for this alien woman who understands her husband, his family and country, which she would accept, once in India. And the novel ends with their departure to India bidding goodbye. Her unconscious mind is badly disturbed by this marriage because this has alienated her from her friends, mother and society. But she is a devoted wife and that is why she accompanies her husband to India and bids goodbye to England forever:

"Like a creature in Alice in wonderland, in a dream world that bordered on nightmare when the train blew steam, blew whistles, rang bells and roared, she clutched of Adit's arm and momentarily her face lit up with the thrill of a journey and the prospect of a new world.\textsuperscript{51}"

By presenting the stereotype woman and her problems in an understanding and sympathetic way, Anita Desai makes everybody realize the predicament of the woman, in a male-chauvinistic society. Sarah is, in "Bye-Bye Blackbird" the epitome of a woman under stress who struggles constantly for her feminine existence and pride. She is an optimist who feels that her life would have a meaning after her child is born and with this hope she leaves for India with her husband.


\textsuperscript{51} Desai Anita, "Bye-Bye Blackbird", New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks 1985, P.226.