WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER
Anita Desai in *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, published in 1975, once again deals with the theme of alienation and disintegration, a result of maladjustment and incompatible mental attitudes. It is the story of Sita, who like her other woman protagonists is trying to balance life and death, withdrawal and attachment, sharing and withholding. Sita is a woman in search of self. It is a continuous struggle to achieve harmony between the inner and the outer world. With four children, a husband, a house, Sita is in search of her identity. Sita drifts from a young girl, from a familiar island, to a wife and mother, to the unfamiliar city where she suffers from an acute sense of alienation.

Sita's fifth pregnancy not only brings physical changes but deep psychological pangs. At this juncture she is "able to reconstruct the past in
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her mind and it is only when the predicament of the present takes over that
the time past is forced to resign itself to the time present" (Uniyal Ranu,
The Fiction of Margaret Drabble and Anita Desai – Women and
to assert her relationship with the voice within. As in the case of Maya,
here too the author, in the case of Sita, tries to go into the inner psychic
interpolations.

Sita is a total failure, due to her incapability to adapt herself to
Raman, her husband's family. Her behaviour is provocative, she starts
smoking, a thing most unexpected of a woman in that household. Sita like
Maya becomes a phobic personality. Her extreme sensibility makes her
own children critical of her. They find her attitudes and behaviour
stupifying.

Sita wants to retreat back to Manori, her father's miracle island. She
finds it tedious to live in the city which implies 'solidity' of streets and
'security' of houses. There is nothing but dullness and hopeless
disappointment:

- but a thin crust, a flimsy crust that, at every second or third step,
broke apart so that she tumbled in, with the most awful sensation,
into a crushed pile of debris. She had no longer the nerve or the
optimism to continue. No, she refused to walk another step. She
would turn, go back and find the island once more (Where Shall
We Go This Summer, p. 58, hereafter referred as WS).
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Sita finds nothing authentic in the city life and the people who are incapable of introspection and self-examination, but live their lives like animals. She does not want to deliver her baby with the fear of the baby losing its innocence in this world. She retreats to the island with a strong faith of withholding the baby and keeping it away from the cruel world:

She had come here in order not to give birth...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.... She had come on a pilgrimage, to beg for the miracle of keeping her baby unborn (WS.p. 31).

Sita had not reacted in this manner during her earlier pregnancies. She had looked forward to the time of giving birth and had enjoyed it. She had found self satisfaction through her children. They helped her to release her restless energies. But this time she perceives a terrifying feeling of loss with the birth. She does not want to lose the precious, pure self, so well protected in the womb, into this insensitive world where human existence in not given much importance. She finds too much of aggression in the indifferent society:

She had four children with pride, with pleasure-sensual, emotional, Freudian, every kind of pleasure-with all the placid serenity that supposedly goes with pregnancy and parturition. Her husband was puzzled, therefore, when the fifth time she told him she was pregnant, she did so with a quite paranoiac show of rage, fear and
revolt. He stared at her with a distaste that told her it did not become her—a woman now in her forties, greying, aging, to behave with such a total lack of control. Control was an accomplishment that had slipped out of her hold, without his noticing it; over the years, till now she had no more than an infant has before he has begun the process of acquiring it, and so she wept and flung herself about, over-forty, grey and aging (WS.p. 32).

Sita's outbursts are not understood by Raman. He tries to reassure her but it has no effect. She displays an agony which he finds unbecoming of her and is puzzled with it, feels weary, but resigns to accept her abnormality. The children also accommodate to the practical world of their father and adapt to the dirt and violence. They not only separate themselves from her, but also reject her. Sita could not accept the world full of blood and violence. She feels "Destruction came so naturally; that was the horror" (WS.p. 45). The operative cannibalism that normally goes unseen and unobserved can no longer be tolerated by Sita. She is unable to reconcile herself to the persistent violence, she wants to change not only the society but the facts of nature too. Sita wants to offer her unborn child an alternative:

The theme of life and death is predominant throughout the novel. The images of brutality and violence are visible not only in explicitly violent acts, but in the forms of behaviour which reflect violence. The violence operating within finds expression in subtler forms of cruelty. The conflict between Sita's sensitive self and the insensitive world is objectified
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through a series of situations which convey tension and conflict, forcing Sita to withdraw her wounded and bruised soul in its protective shell.

Sita like Maya over-reacts to death. Gautama, Maya's husband in unable to understand her agony at the pet's death. Raman and Gautama find death a routine cycle of life, whereas, for Sita and Maya, it is an existential problem. We find both of them trying to get out of this cycle of life and death.

The cruel drama enacted outside Sita's flat on a Sunday morning shows Sita's sensitivity and concern for life, even if it be the life of an eagle:

Crows formed the shadow civilization in that city of flats and alleys.... There was always much black drama in this crow-theatre-murder, infanticide, incest, theft, and robbery, all were much practised by these raucous, rasping tatterdemalions (WS.p. 38).

Sita identifies herself with the proud defiant eagle. Her act of scaring the crows with her son's toy gun appears to be a carefully arranged and wilfully created 'act of drama' for her husband and her children. The death of the eagle is announced with triumph by her husband. "They have made a good job of your eagle,"... "Perhaps it flew away?" she cried, knowing it had not (WS.p. 41).
Sita revolts against this violence which Raman had accepted naturally. She refuses to accept the authority of the society where violence and danger are the inherent characteristics. Raman has no intention of rejecting the dictates of society but Sita wants to choose her own way:

To certain people there comes a day

When they must say the great Yes or the great No.

He who has the yes ready with him

reveals himself at once, and saying it he crosses

over

to the path of honour and his own conviction.

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 (WS. p. 37).

The long wearied years of marriage and motherhood, make her aware of the uselessness of life. She feels alienated as her husband and children are unable to understand her emotions. She finds no happiness in human relationships, so she desires to prevent the cycle of experience that make suffering and violence possible. Sita, like Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the*
Mountain is tired discharging her duties and obligations towards her husband and children. Her extreme frustration seems to be disintegrating her. Her children's attitude towards her is terribly frustrating. In her extreme moments of depression, she finds no possibility of another torturous child birth, followed by the responsibility of rearing another being, who would, like her other children, reject her as a mad woman. The age factor, her being forty, also goes against her physical capacity:

We believe that it is in the act of birth that there comes about the combination of unpleasurable feelings, impulses of discharge and bodily sensations which has become the prototype of the effects of a mortal danger and has ever since been repeated by us as the stage of anxiety. The immense increase of stimulation owing to the interruption of the renovation of the blood (internal respiration) was at the time the cause of the experience of anxiety; the first anxiety was thus a toxic one. The name 'Angst' – 'angustie', 'Enge' – emphasizes the characteristic of restriction in breathing which was then present as a consequence of the real situation and is now almost invariable reinstated in the affect. We shall also recognize it as highly relevant that this first state of anxiety arouse out of separation from the mother... It is, of course, our conviction that the disposition to repeat the first state of anxiety has been so thoroughly incorporated into the organism through a countless series of generations that a single individual cannot escape the affect of anxiety even if, like the legendary Macduff, he 'was from his mother's womb untimely ripped and
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has therefore not himself experienced the act of birth. We cannot say what has become the prototype of the state anxiety in the case of creatures others than mammals. And in the same way we do not know either what complex of feelings is in such creatures the equivalent to our anxiety.

It may perhaps interest you to learn how anyone could have formed such an idea as that the act of birth is the source and prototype of the affect of anxiety (SF-1, pp.444-445).

Sita has reached a stage of "inwardness", and her refusal is symptomatic of her frustration and disappointment with life. Sita does not want her baby to go through the torture of child birth. Infact the reality remains that keeping the baby in her womb is an existential necessity for her. Sita knows the impossibility of her wish, but she wants to fulfil her desire to go to her father's island. She has not been able to detach herself completely from the memories of her childhood. Sita thinks it to be inseparable. She wants to return to her childhood, to the island and one can say return to the mother's womb as there is no peace outside the womb:

By giving birth to the child now so safely contained, would she be performing an act of creation or, by releasing it in a violent, pain-wracked blood-bath, would she only be destroying what was, at the moment, safely contained and perfect? More and more she lost all feminine, all maternal belief in childbirth, all faith in it, and began to fear it as yet one more act of violence and murder in
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a world that had more of them in it than she could take. (WS.p. 56).

Sita finds the system of not giving birth perfect, as what is not real tends to be perfect, reality is full of lapses and draw backs. Her strange, insane impatience and hopefulness once again intensify in her the desire to recapture her imagined experience and excitement when she meets a foreigner, waiting on the wrong side of the road, for a lift to Ajanta. She finds him to represent an innocence, uncorrupted by experience. She identifies herself with him, as like him she too is waiting endlessly:

"I" am waiting, she agreed - although for what, she could not tell: for the two halves of this grey egg- world to fall apart and burst into festival fireworks, a woman's seaweed hair or bloodstained feathers? For the revolution of the world to alter in one mighty swing that would fling them all, tiny grey sand-lice, into icy space? Somewhere such indiscretion, inspiration, and force. But, it, she came to tell, she would live on, smothered by this endlessly damp, soft grey sand, and it seemed that these years of her life were dyed, coloured through, with the colour of waiting. It was not a pure colour—it was tinged at times with anxiety, at others with resignation. Or with frenzy, patience, grimness, fear...... she herself was ...... living monument to Waiting (WS.p. 54-55).

Sita is waiting for a life without indifference and aggression. She wants to withdraw herself form her husband's home to her father's island Marori. The temporal sequence of the text highlights her internal self and
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her anxiety. She goes to the island after twenty years. She makes a self-conscious attempt to recreate the past and retrieve the life on the island of more than twenty years ago. Her first journey was with her father in her childhood, immediately after India's Independence. Her second journey explains her predicament and her disenchantment with life.

Sita is fully aware that her quest for lost beauty and innocence is bound to be doomed as a failure but she finds an urgent need to alter the present. She wants to live in the past. The island once again becomes her dream, a vision that would be able to fulfil her wish. The second section of the novel reflects on Sita's childhood. She entered this island with her father, her siblings and her father's disciples, in the winter of 1947, after India attained Independence. This entry to the island announces a peaceful life as contrast to the pre-independence life, full of turmoil and insecurity.

On this island, strange experiences and strange sensations made her think and grow too large for the chrysalis of children and so she slowly, unwillingly emerged (WS.p. 76).

Sita's relationship with her father is like Maya's relationship with her father in 'Cry, the Peacock'. She too, like Maya finds the father a brighter side of life. The unrealised reality is brighter than the realized reality of Gautama and Raman, who have lost their brightness and curiosity. As a child Sita had an idolized image of her father, but her entry into adulthood is marked by the loss of faith in the image:
The first, the very first prickle down the spine that told her that her father's daylight, practical charisma had its underlit night-time aspect, was perhaps not such an extraordinary and after all, although its cause may-or may not - have been unconventional (WS.p. 76).

Sita's loneliness and alienation set in when her suspicions are enhanced by her inability to enter his world, as he preferred incestuously, his eldest child Rekha. The father seemed to be obsessed with Rekha's talent, her was always oblivion to the other two children.

Observing that it was always across the older sister's solid shoulders that he placed his arm when they descended from the terrace to the casuarina grove and strolled out across the beach to watch the sun melt into the sea and the 'chelas' pelt each other with sand-pies, observing how it was always her guarded eyes he met during a moving passage in the morning's devotional songs, observing how he stretched out his hand and squeezed her fingers when they sat on the veranda and watched some young 'chela's' pranks and charades- perhaps it was no unusual prick of jealousy that chilled Sita (WS.p. 76).

Sita was always aware of how different she was from Rekha and Jeevan, her young brother. Sita proudly found herself and Jeevan a contrast to Rekha's dragging jaw, thickly round shoulders, drooping eyelids. She and Jeevan, though ragged and wild, were quick and sprang and danced on the veranda, unlike Rekha, who never appeared to move. Sita had to admit
Rekha's superiority, her one glory, a gift, she could sing. Rekha's singing, in the attic that was the prayer room, early in the morning, became a nightmare for Sita, as her voice kept her father involved with her always.

Sita grows up with the mystery of her mother's absence. The absence of the mother and father were taken for granted in the early years as the father spent a lot of time in prison. Sita fails to solve the puzzle of her absence when everything else seemed settled and peaceful on the island.

Life seemed complete, full without her, there was no reason for her to exist. Sita had imagined she came into the world motherless—and the world was crowded enough so (WS, p. 84).

Undoubtedly life seemed complete at the superficial level. Slowly she recognizes the lacuna created in her life by her mother's absence. Her identification with her mother is incomplete because of no contact with her:

Sita was not really a child at that time—in another environment she might have already been regarded as a young woman, but she had lived a strange life, an unusual life, that had the effect of making her withdraw into the protective chrysalis of childhood for longer than is usual for most. She saw the island as a piece of magic, a magic mirror—it was so bright, so brilliant to her eyes after the tensions and shadows of her childhood (WS, p. 63).
Sita steps into youth in the absence of a mother. She finds her father a man with magic and wants to be close to him but the vacant place beside her father is taken by her sister. Rakha's natural accessibility and her inaccessibility to their father sets in the 'heterosexual' jealousy which leads to her missing the mother. The desire of contact with the mother is intensified by the mystery around her absence. She identifies herself to her mother. "I think perhaps that is the urge my mother felt when she ran to Benares.... I had to run away, too-to the island" (WS.p.148). With a mother who ran away leaving her, a father who is obsessed with his elder daughter, a brother who is self-centred and escapes, Sita spends her childhood and youth in isolation.

There is a close similarity between Jeevan, Sita's brother and Arjuna, Maya's brother. Both of them find it impossible to live in the prison of their father's kingdom. Unlike Sita and Maya they free themselves from their father's custody and run away to lead their lives freely and independently. On the contrary, Sita and Maya ruin their married lives due to their father obsession. Sita's case is more acutely frustrating than that of Maya as Maya gets her father's complete affection where as Sita leads a life of unsuccessful pursuit of developing a relationship with her father as he was too involved with the elder daughter, who Sita feels had no sincere relation with their father. She feels free and relieved when the father dies. Sita had an abnormal childhood firstly because of her mother's absence and an aura of doubt around her absence. Secondly, as a result of Gita, her elder sister's relation with her father. Gita could have helped Sita as a mother, but
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on the contrary it is Geeta who is responsible for Sita's abnormal childhood and the prolonged time to come out of childhood to youth. One undoubtedly agrees with Freud who attributes a lot of emphasis and importance to the placement of siblings in an enlarged family. It is not true only at the time of birth but it has its effect on an individual's life throughout. Freud gives equal importance to the father-daughter relationship as to the mother-son relationship:

Things happen in just the same way the little girls, with the necessary changes: an affectionate attachment to her father, a need to get rid of her mother as superfluous and to take her place, a coquetry which already employs the methods of later womanhood-these offer a charming picture, especially in small girls, which makes us forget the possibly grave consequences lying behind the infantile situation. We must not omit to add that the parents themselves often exercise a determining influence on the awakening of a child's Oedipus attitude by themselves obeying the pull of sexual attraction, and that where there are several children the father will give the plainest evidence of his greater affection for his little daughter and the mother for her son. But the spontaneous nature of the Oedipus complex in children cannot be seriously shaken even by this factor (SF-1.pp. 376-377).

Sita's position of being the youngest unconditionally places her near her father but we find it not happening with Sita. It is always her sister Gita, the father's favourite. There is an air of coquetry when the father with half-closed eyes listens and appreciates Gita. Sita is quite aware of this fact,
thus making her childhood and youth miserable. This misery follows her in her adulthood, her frustrations and rejection of life seem to be a result of her rejection by the father in childhood. The jealousy for the insincere sister leaves her restless. She wants to go back to the island in hope of having a direct and private contact with her father.

The mother's absence, the sister's indifference are enhanced by Sita's disillusionment with her father. The world considers him to be a messiah, a saviour, with a magic wand but Sita's image about her father is scarred when she knows that her father's "daylight, practical charisma had its underlit night-time aspect". (WS.p.76). The disparity between the idealized image and the identified one lessens her respect for him. She wants to communicate and clarify but it is not possible because of the elder sister's presence.

Sita gets a final shock in her supposed recognition:

The rubies and pearls shocked her. In that always murmuring casuarina grove, that always animated house on the knoll with its meetings, its gathers, its music, its shift and flow of ideas and activities, she now felt herself separated from them, the chosen one, chosen by the ghost for a flashing vision of its jewels although it remained invisible and fleshless itself. Sita found herself turning into a wanderer, always in search of the ghost. Who, what was she? (WS.p. 85).
Sita becomes a vagrant spirit, separated from her mother, she is in search of the ghost, who is undoubtedly her mother. The withdrawn and restless Sita is always waiting. The mother's ghost is validated by the sight of her father crushing her mother's jewels for the so called treatment of the poor and ignorant. The island engulfed her in her youth, and her father's truth also frightened her to such extreme that she had left it with a sense of relief. Sita experiences a hidden guilt at this relief, now beckons her to return back if she wanted to save 'the child from being born. The truth being:

She had to struggle to free herself from the chain or she might have spent her life in the cold meshes, regarding the enigma of her father, a slave to his undefined magic. She succeeded, ultimately, in discarding him and leaving him, what was left of him, on the island, but he could not be forgotten. Unlike her mother, he had left traces and not merely traces but what could be called monuments (WS.pp. 87-88).

Sita finds an urgent need to fulfil her wishes and longing by entering the island. She wants to revisit the island and realize what was the centre of her past that was crippling her present. The only way to reconcile herself to the past was to re-enter her father's island for revealing the truth.

The third section of the novel confronts Sita with the present reality. The past had become a magic refuge from the dreary mainland, and the day to day life. Nostalgia had created a need to find a sense of belongingness in
Sita. Her return to the island and her children adapting to the island, gives her satisfaction and happiness that was short lived. With the baby's birth time drawing closer Sita becomes less self-absorbed, She finds herself closer to reality:

The children stared about them..... it was clear they accused her of every mishap and misfortune. Whenever she turned or looked up, she saw them staring at her, watching her as though waiting for her to break down and admit failure. To them, she realized with a painful sloughing-off of disbelief, it was life in their flat on Napean Sea Road that had been right and proper, natural and acceptable; it was this so called "escape" to the island that was madness (WS.p. 102).

Sita realises the fact of the matter, the island had nothing much to offer to their growing minds, it was capable of offering all of them a short change and respite. Sita realises her changed relationship to the island. Twenty years back, it had provided her and her family a shelter and refuge. She grew up in that environment but her present responsibilities cannot be fulfilled on the island, thus her return to the mainland becoming a necessity. The present-day reality cannot be sustained in the Manori of her past. She realizes the demands of the present-day life with equanimity:

- where was the magic of the island that she had promised herself, promised the children? Was this it?
If it had existed—black, sparkling and glamorous as in her memory it was now buried beneath the soft grey-green mildew of the monsoon, chilled and choked by it (WS. p. 103).

Sita was bored with the tedium of life on the mainland and hence makes this trip to Manori. Staying on the island she becomes aware of her disillusionment with her immediate surroundings that had elured her to make this return journey. She realises the opposing forces existing between her and the children as: "they had no memory of its past glamour, and so she and they moved always in opposite directions" (WS 103). She understands the futility and hollowness of her actions. Unlike Maya, Sita wanted to recapture the past along with her children. Unable to do this she does not sink into isolation, as her responsibilities full her out. The stay on the island was undoubtedly refreshing, the monsoon revives her interest in life. She once again becomes a young girl of her youth, enjoying the wild pleasures of nature, in a carefree manner. This happiness and satisfaction make her realise her responsibility towards her children and above all the baby nurturing in her womb.

Sita's stay on the island not only enables her to discover her old joys but also helps her to reconcile herself to the mysterious past and future uncertainties. Sita finds a co-ordination between her inner state and her physical appearance, her external self. Anita Desai through Sita conveys the importance of self-realization. Sita is satisfied having realized her self at least once where as Maya unable to realize her internal self ruins Gautama and her own self. Sita's disillusionment of the island is overcome
with her present encounter with the island, as the island like a mother, provides her inner respite which teaches her to respond to life practically. The island provides her a nexus, as if she were back in her mother's womb, warm and well-protected. Sita's comfort provides her an ability of see within herself, her inner self resulting in enabling her to look out, to look beyond herself, making her aware of her responsibilities.

Anita Desai lays emphasis on the institution of family, within which her women protagonists struggle to form a viable space for themselves. It is within this space, in a male dominated world, the woman strives to live. When given a space for her private inner self she gets an opportunity to gather and realize herself. Self-realization, once achieved, shows an increased capability as a wife, a mother and a house-keeper. It is at this level we find a difference between Sita's and Maya's reaction. Their initial longing for the past and for their father is the same as a hysterical, mad woman's outburst, but they stand apart form each other when it comes to resolving their lost selves. This highlights the importance of self-satisfaction and motherhood.

Sita and Maya have not experienced the love and affection of their mothers:

Their own process of "mothering" has been incomplete because of the absence of the mother, therefore the need for symbiosis has remained unfulfilled. The natural mother's absence has failed to initiate them properly into the "separation-individuation", process
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an important one through which a female child learns to separate and see herself as an individual.

It could also be suggested that both Maya and Stia have been totally caught in the "semiotic", Maya disappears into history, that is, into her father's house. The father has to die again in her terms of his memory, in her mind. The influence of the father has been very strong in their minds and they must learn to outgrow it (UR.p. 181).

Maya is unable to outgrow the father obsession, as a result, in one of her tantrums she kills Gautama.

Sita takes a daring step of returning to the island where she realizes her mistake, gets over the father obsession, and returns to the mainland with her husband and children to discharge her duties and obligations. Doing so she becomes more like Nanda Kaul, who made no compromises with the duties, with the demands and requirements of the husband and children. The second journey to the island brings with it 'a plethora of memories' and becomes a turning point in her 'reassessment of filial ties' (UR.p.182).

Sita's return to the island helps her to learn to make a pact with life. We witness her ranging moods from despair to helplessness, her struggle to have a sense of belonging and in the end a calm and graceful reconciliation as a final decision. Experiencing the island in full detail, she realises the need of bringing order in her disorderly life:
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Sita was left on the bed, smoking, rubbing her toes in the ash, feeling them draw away from her, into other regions, regions safer and duller, shutting themselves in with the barbed wire of prudence, caution, routine and order, leaving her in her own disorderly region that smelt of raw tobacco, was lashed by the monsoon storm that swept so freely over the desolate island, leaving her there out of disapproval, horror even, and an instinctive rejection of her wild values and wild searches, leaving her. She lay back on the bed and shut her eyes (WS.pp. 118-19).

The wild storm and subsequently disrupted life on the island, reveal the hard fact to Sita. It brings forth an awareness of the importance of rhythmic pattern is which the seasons move. The island, that stood as a symbol of security, is itself disrupted by monsoon, she terminates the search of security. The island was perfect for a dream but reality required much more. Probably this urge of going back to the island was one of the changes due to her pregnancy when a woman wants to discard her daily routine. In the normal course, the woman's skin, eyes, undergo a change during pregnancy but in Sita's case she descended much more, to the depth of her inner self where she found it necessary to go back to the island.

The time of delivery coming closer, and the not well equipped island, she realises the desire to prevent the birth of the baby impossible. She neither holds her husband nor her children responsible for their condition:
"Perhaps I never ran away at all. Perhaps I am only like the jellyfish washed up by the waves stranded there on the sand-bar. I was just stranded here by the sea, that's all. I hadn't much to do with it at all,"...... "But you have nothing to do with it. Nothing. There's just the sea-it drowns us or straands us on the sand-bar-and there's the island. That's all" (WS.p.149).

Sita realises the limitations of life on the island, as all it can offer is isolation, rejection and disapproval. She is aware of her responsibilities and does not want to desert her children like her mother. The return has helped her to restore her sanity which was being drained out on the mainland where: "They are nothing-nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter. Animals" (WS 47).

The island seemed to hold a promise for Sita to resolve the dialectics of her situation but this is fulfilled partially. The island and its inhabitants seem to be indifferent to her absence as they reject her and do not need her. They find her a contrast to her father:

"What do we want her there for? After all, she-she is not like her father... A plain woman,...That was a man" (WS.p. 157).

Moses finds her coming back an intrusion in his life. She is an unwelcome guest:

“She was mad," Moses explained. "Got angry, too, just like that, for nothing, all the time." He drank deeply and shook his head as
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if a fly bothered him. "So angry always. Angry wit me, angry with Miriam, angry because there was no food-always angry. Mad people are like that Huh," Only remember him, the father. How he lived, and his magic. The island is his, it is really his" (WS.p. 157).

Sita's withdrawal to the island is a pursuit to recreate and reconcile to be inside her own self and fulfill her passion of "divine inseeing". The island provides her the inner, womanly space, which was not possible at the mainland. She seems to have reconciled with her mother's wondering ghost, with an intense desire of her daughter forgiving her father and then resuming her role as a mother. She is satisfied metaphysically and ready for her return to the mainland to give birth to her baby.

Sita is saved from disintegration unlike Maya, by her children and most of all by her pregnancy which forces her to reconcile with life as "Life had no periods, no stretches. It simply swirled around, muddling and confusing, leading nowhere". (WS.p.155). Suddenly she experiences a certain respect for Raman's courage and cool attitude which she totally lacks. Watching Raman's "posture-that desire to spread out and lie back, the will to remain upright, straight-she was moved". (WS.p.138). Sita had never before thought about him and his problems but had lived just with her own problems:

It struck her that he had suffered....worry and anxiety about her, the unborn child, Menaka and Karan, living alone on the island in
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this wild season. His boys at home must have worried him too, while he was at work in the factory which was not without its problems either—he never told her of them and she never gave much thought to it but the possibility struck her now. He looked worn much older than his years. Nor could he stay here, resting, as she was doing. (WS.p. 138).

While in Bombay Sita thought of Raman as having taken her there to lead a life full of tedium and boredom. Twenty years after that, her return to the island makes her realise that he was the man who had saved her from the island, as she was left alone, and provided her with the security of the mainland. When she had accepted his offer the first time, it was a mere compromise and reconciliation, but accepting his second offer after twenty years is an acceptance of the limitations and constraints of her thinking and actions:

She thought he really was, how much the nicest man she knew. She allowed him, then, to have the triumph, not to try to cap it with her verse. He deserved that triumph, purely by being so unconscious of it, so oblivious (WS.p. 151).

Sita's return marks an end to her "pilgrimage", as she calls it. The pilgrimage that was associated with consent has proved to be successful. She feels she has paid tribute to the neglected island of her father. She had a desire to meet her parents during her pregnancy, being satisfied with the fusion she 'jumps out' to transform herself out of this centre to other
centres—as a wife and a mother. Sita has now learnt to live with outwardly what she could not accept inwardly.

We find a disparity between her desire to refuse and her inability to do so. Maya and Monisha did not 'jump out' where as Sita successfully 'jumps out' to acknowledge of the whole family. Her temporary 'No' helps her to repair her injured self. She finds it important to be practical like Raman, the reason why her children turned towards him and found him superior in courage and responsibility. She realises that she is after all she is a coward. She is reminded of her Cavafian 'No':

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.

She had escaped from duties and responsibilities, form order and routine, form life and the city, to the unlivable island. She had refused to give birth to a child in a world not fit to receive the child. She had the imagination to offer it an alternative—a life unlived, a life bewitched. She had cried out her great "No" but now the time had come for there epitaph to be written (WS.p139).

It is this epitaph that saves Sita from being explosive and violent like Maya. She comes out illuminated through her short but painful experience. It brings forth a realization of the importance of her external duties along with the requirement of her inner self. The external world of her household is full of companions, her husband and children where no
stranger can step into her inner world, it is only the island, that has fulfilled her yearning. She must return to accept life as it is. This acceptance puts an end to the family disintegration. There is a reunion.