CHAPTER III

THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS, WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?

_The Dark Holds No Terrors_, first published in 1980 tells the story of Sarita (Saru) – the movement backwards and inwards is towards her engagement with her self, an attempt to clear the ‘picture’, to erase the conception of a self image as well as to re-examine an image constructed by ‘others’. The self is central to the venture; the purpose is to know herself not in isolation but in relation to her family and society.

Deshpande says that it was only when she wrote _The Dark Holds No Terrors_, after contributing short stories to women’s magazines, that she felt a sense of satisfaction. ‘The theme of the liberated woman had been a germ inside me for a long time. I had started with the short story. “A Liberated woman”. It seems to me when I finished this novel that I had come close to what I had wanted to write’. She says that it was ‘a serious novel about a serious human predicament’, and she never thought of it as only a woman’s novel:

“It was difficult to write, it was different from the other novels I had read written by Indian writers... but all the reviews that came spoke of it as novel about a woman, a middle class woman, a professional woman etc. In effect, a novel about a woman.”
Deshpande identifies *The Dark Holds No Terrors* as the novel that gave her a voice and her subject: ‘my kind of writing came to me through this novel… I found my voice in this novel and moved away from short stories’. Though it was a difficult novel for her to write, it ‘flowed out of her’ because she understood the problem faced by the woman protagonist, Saru.

The epigraph is taken from the Dhammapada, one of the fifteen important treaties of the Basket of Discourses, the teachings of the Buddha. Consisting of 423 Pali verses uttered by the Buddha, the Dhammapada may be termed ‘The Way of Truth’ and expounds the philosophical and moral teachings and Buddhism. The epigraph places the onus of self-discovery and salvation on Saru.

Sarita, a professionally successful doctor, married to Manohar and the mother of two children, returns alone to her family home after her mother’s death, for no apparent reason and for an unspecified period of time. Having stepped across the threshold as a young woman to marry the dashing poet Manohar, against the wishes of her mother, Saru re-enters the home and re-crosses the threshold. The return, a central trope in Deshpande’s novels, facilitates a re-examination of past relationships, of all that has been told to her, dreamt or imagined by her and, more significantly, a review of her present circumstances- her identity as a working wife and mother and the immediate crisis that motivates this return, marital rape. The reader is hurled headlong into a scene of rape, the last line of the first chapter revealing the identity of the rapist – the victim’s husband.
The reader is introduced to a supposedly happy family – two children, the ideal number in India (Hum Do, Hamare Do, the two of us and two of ours, is a slogan propagated by an aggressive family – planning campaign in a country of more than one billion people), an elegant, sophisticated, professionally successful wife of a supportive husband living in ‘a paradise of matching curtains and handloom bedspreads’. Saru’s unannounced and sudden appearance at her father’s doorstep recalls to her mind the Krishna – Sudama story, a parable from Indian mythology: childhood friends, Krishna and Sudama go their separate ways, Krishna to become the king of Dwarka and Sudama to a life of penury. Sudama appears at Krishna’s gate with a small gift of puffed rice and finds on his return home, after a restful holiday and without speaking about his poverty, a palatial mansion. The parallels go beyond the similarity of Saru/Sudama knocking at the door – Saru hopes, by some miracle and without saying anything, to find a changed situation when she returns to her marital home. Deshpande’s novels are deeply rooted in Indian myth and legend: ‘myths condition our ideas so powerfully that often it is difficult to disentangle the reality of what we perceive from what we learn of our selves through them. In India, myths are perhaps even more powerful, for they have been with us in a long and unbroken tradition. The myths continue to be a reference point for people in their daily lives and we have so internalized them that they are part of our psyche, part of our personal, religious and Indian identity’. The Krishna Sudama myth would be widely known.

The family home as a space to revisit, to cross into after crossing out – even though, ‘the die was cast, the decision taken, my boats burned. There could be no turning back’ The Dark Holds no Terrors [P-37] – becomes a recurring symbol in Deshpande’s novels, as Jaya in That Long Silence and Sumi in A Matter of Time also return to their natal homes. The movement
back facilitates the counterpointing of past and present, another device of Deshpande, as her
women protagonists contend with the examination of their identity, then and now. The house
however is never depicted as a cocoon, a nurturing haven or a peaceful retreat. It is not a ‘room
of one’s own’ for creativity or mental space. The epigraph, ‘You are your own refuge/ there is no
other refuge’, sets the tone for Saru’s journey. The house, like the house in *A Matter of Time* is
like a character, with its internal dynamics, specific to itself, subject to changes and fraught with
memories of unresolved crises. It absorbs the tensions and the characters of its inmates: the
binary of inner space/ outer space, home/world, familiar/unfamiliar, refuge/strange world is
however not reflected in this house. There are no easy solutions in stepping back into the house.
The rooms are replete with childhood memories and associated with gender consciousness and
difference. The conditioning to subservience and inadequacy starts early in childhood when Saru
is debarred from the Puja room and kitchen for the three days of menstruation. The Puja room is
associated with a sense of shame with Saru,

“When feeling a pariah with my special cup and
my plate by my side in which I served from
a distance, for my touch was, it seemed, a pollution.
‘A kind of shame … engulfed me …
if you are woman, I don’t want to be one’.”

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-62]
(Mira, in *The Binding Vine* writers a poem on this sense of shame; both women, Saru and Mira are also linked by the theme of marital rape). The sacred space within the house – the Puja room and kitchen – instils a religious and cultural code by which the woman is both pure and impure, mistress and pariah, care-taker and outsider. It is significant that with her mother’s death Saru is given the puja room as just a room to sleep in. Her mother was a repository of religions and cultural codes, but Saru, having crossed the threshold, exists outside those codes now. Her parents’ room similarly defines the ‘space’ given to women.

“It had been “their” room, but it had always seemed only his, so successfully had she managed to efface her personality from the room”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-19]

Now when Saru re-enters the room it is to confront again the feeling of deprivation and inferiority she had experienced as a girl child, the mirror on the almirah reminding her of the time she thought she was ugly, the smell of mothballs, attar and rose-water reminding her of the puja she was allowed to perform on that rare occasion when she was more important than her brother. Past and present are compacted when even with the locking of the almirah, the closing of the room, and the new cooking implements in the kitchen, the changed dynamics of the house do not erase the past.
There are three houses in the novel – her father’s house, the one – room chawl and the elegant home. Saru now inhabits – each house underlining the way she is conditioned. Though the one- room chawl

“was heaven, inspite of the corridors
smelling of urine”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-40]

It is here that Saru is made conscious of being a ‘lady doctor’. The difference is made obvious here, as the door is open to a line of patients, the corridors filled with smiles, murmured greetings and Namastes, all for her, not for Manohar. The room is blamed for highlighting a situation whereby that which made her taller made him shorter, for privileging her as a professional over him when society expected her to follow him seven steps behind.

The return to her ancestral home gives Saru a sense of perspective, allowing her to see the constitution of a self conditioned by the voices of the other- mother and father verbalizing the weight of centuries of tradition. She discards every identity that defined her – now she is no longer wife, mother or professional woman.

“She was the wronged child again, the unloved daughter, the scapegoat”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-182]

But before becoming the child again, Saru contends with the counterpointing of the complete professional woman, the doctor
“no, not I, really, but the dummy
in the white coat”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-23]

with the notion of wifehood and motherhood transcribed through the ages, percolated
generations by myths, legends and social expectations. From the time of her definition
as lady doctor, Saru sees a redefinition of her gender relationship with her husband.

“Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-42]

She had grown up with the concept of femaleness in relation to the superior conquering
male, a notion informed through the ages of the man-woman relationship.

“I was all female and dreamt of being the adored and chosen of a superior,
superhuman male… I saw myself humbly adoring, worshipping and being
given the father-lover kind of love that was protective, condescending…
there was no “I” then”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-53]

The success of the professional woman, working outside the house, recognized as an
identity, distinct from, and more successful than the male, is underscored by feelings of guilt if
the ‘I’ dared to overreach the male. The consciousness of the ‘I’, the construction of an identity,
is always seen in the social context. Saru’s identity as a doctor is never seen in isolation but always in relation to what Manohar is: she was the lady doctor and he was her husband, she was earning not only the butter, but most of the bread as well, more than him. ‘Things told to us by others’, ‘things we have read’, have informed us of the subservience – dominance binary built into the man – woman relationship.

“A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he’s an M.A., you should be a B.A., If he’s 5’4” tall, you shouldn’t be more than 5’3” tall. If he is earning Rs.500, you should never earn more than Rs.499… Don’t ever try to reverse the doctor – nurse, executive secretary, principal – teacher role”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-137]

Deshpande places Saru’s thoughts in the context of easily recognizable women in Indian Myth- Draupadi and Sita and Kalida’s Shakuntala. Overturning again the paradigm of economic independence and a room of one’s own as necessary prerequisites for a woman’s identity, Saru avers that even if Draupadi and Sita had been economically independent, their stories would not have been different. A lesson learnt by Sita and Draupadi was to surrender and consciously abandon independence. Women in myth were to be emulated for their acceptance and subservience, Saru feels. She sees herself as a victim of economic independence and tries to instill strategies of repression and subservience by pretending to be not as smart, competent, rational and strong as she really is. The modern Indian woman in post-independence India walks a tightrope between the traditional concepts of wifehood enforced by myth and social codes and
modern concepts of the professional women working outside the home. She attempts to cope
with the guilt she feels because the fact that she has an identity of her own effectively whittles
down that of Manohar, and she tries to deal with the pretence of being less than him. She is
depicted as a woman experimenting with various strategies of survival in a social structure where
the reversal of roles threatens traditional notions of manhood.

She tries to abandon that role to become purely a wife and mother- an easily recognizable
and acceptable role:

“live like the others do ... stay at home and look after the children. Cook
and clean ... a mother in an ad, in a movie, dressed in a crisply starched,
ironed sari. Wife and mother, loving and beloved. A picture of grace,
harmony and happiness”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-80]

Deshpande introduces in the novel women constructed in stereotypical roles: Saru meets
women from the neighbourhood suffering from myriad complaints but silent about their
maladies, kept secret, borne stoically, and a matter of shame to them-

“their unconsciousness, unmeaning heroism,
born out of the myth of the self-sacrificing martyred woman”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-107]
(Mohan’s mother and sister in *That Long Silence* similarly remain silent about their illness), she has women friends who to suit their roles as wives had schooled themselves to subservience, regression and silence; she hears about women who, ill-treated by in-laws had ended their silence by jumping into a well. The silences of women and their repression is a major theme that Deshpande examines in her portrayal of Jaya in *That Long Silence*, Mira in *The Binding Vine* and Kalyani in *A Matter of Time*. The notion of pativratha, chastity, fidelity and glorified motherhood, is disseminated and imbibed through recognizable myths and social structures.

Saru returns alone, not as wife or mother, to her father’s house. The first step, it seems, in her journey of self-discovery is the discarding of the outer signs that made her an elegant, professional, successful woman. She reverts to a wife of austerity, comforting in its parameters, living the way women she knew in her childhood lived- with two saris for ‘home wear’, hair tied practically in a knot, hands rough with housework. She also enters a world simpler in its definitions – the men went to work, crossing and re-crossing the threshold, the children to school, the women stayed a home, within the threshold, and cooked and cleaned, scrubbed and swept. The movement takes her away from a world made complex by the blurring of boundaries in gender relations. So Saru comes back and thus starts her journey to understand the darkness within and outside.

Meenakshi Mukherjee views Saru as a professional doctor who is able to ‘analyze her physical and psychological trauma with the detachment of an analyst’. Deshpande’s novel is the first of her works that make central the reflections of a woman who distances herself from a
stereotypical world to re-examine issues and to find a release. The writer examines, probably for the first time in the literary history of Indian women’s writing in English, the issue of marital rape, a theme, she had dealt with in her short story *The Liberated Woman*, and was to examine again in *The Binding Vine*. The prelude to the first chapter describes in detail a scene a rape, with the last line revealing the identity of the rapist – the victim’s husband.

Manohar, Saru’s husband, was the man who was to take the literary world by storm, a poet, confident and self-assured, attractive and romantic. He provides her with the escape she needs from a restrictive home, and the darkness of her brother’s death – the freedom and space that she needs. The man we see now is ‘just another man, clinging to a job’, a college lecturer, a husband for whom Saru loses respect as he quietly accepts her success and the assistance she takes from Boozie in achieving it. Significantly, the reader never hears Manu’s voice, but sees him through Saru’s perspective. The male characters in Deshpande’s Scheme (except for Gopal in *A matter of Time*), from Mohan in *That Long Silence* to Kishore in *The Binding Vine* to Som in *Small Remedies*, exist, as she says, ‘in the wings’. Saru links Manu’s emasculation to her own success: ‘It is because I am something more than his wife that he has become what he is’. The Symbiotic relation of man – woman is cast in strict stereotypical boundaries of dominance and subservience. Any change in the dynamics of the power balance, a change both encouraged by the evolving economic, social framework of modern India and discouraged by tradition, myth and legend informing that framework, destroy the relationship. Saru’s success as a doctor makes her more than a wife, Manohar’s relatively lower status, economic and social, makes him less than a husband: these distinctions, commented on by ‘others’, hold up a mirror to Manohar, who then enforces his superior ‘rights’ as a man.
Each incident of marital rape follows a predictable pattern – stemming from a comment or a conversation-

“If you had married a doctor”, the wife said tartly,

“You’d have gone to Ooty too… London, Paris, Rome, Geneva”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-111]

by the ‘other’ highlighting the changed power dynamics of the husband – wife relationship. The façade of normality, cheerfulness and breakfast banter unerringly assumed by Manohar the morning after his terrifying savagery bewilder Saru. She notices a divided self, a fractured male identity. Is there an understanding of Manohar’s actions, pre-empted as they are by damaging comments? Deshpande, however, makes a very definitive point by making the woman central to this examination. True, this is a human predicament, but now seen from the point of view of the woman. She gives a voice to the mythic ‘stone women’, and the many voiceless women who bear their darkness stoically. There have been too many instances she feels when ‘a man must have written this story and now women are ‘telling their tales’. ‘Writers in India in search of some truths about themselves and their condition invariably go to the epics and the puranas. So do women. And when they began, they were in effect rediscovering themselves, finding things relevant to their lives today’. Deshpande is a woman writing a story, Saru is a woman who does not write or speak, but needs to. Later - in That Long Silence, in The Binding Vine and in Small Remedies – Deshpande was to write about the import of ending a long silence and verbalizing or writing.
Saru’s response to this ordeal is to go deeper into the darkness within, silenced and repressed. In a similar situation, Mira in *The Binding Vine* had expressed herself in writing both poems and a diary. Saru lacks both voice and a forum for self-expression. She quotes Betty Friedan saying that it was easier for her to start the women’s movement than to change her personal life. But Saru stands in a line of Indian literary and mythic women before her who had schooled themselves to silence. Though Saru decries her women patients for their silence, she herself exists in the darkness of the past while silent about the darkness of being an abused wife.

The past is encountered in its full force when Saru cannot escape the memories of her mother. The impacting of the past and the present is most evident when Saru unconsciously reflects her mother’s gestures, expressions and words, and occupies her ‘space’: ‘and she went on jumbling herself with the dead woman sometimes feeling she was acting out a role, sometimes feeling she was her mother herself’. Deshpande’s heroines share a distant or troubled relationship with their mothers - Jaya in *That Long Silence* and Urmi in *The Binding Vine*; Sumi in *A Matter of Time* fears that her life should not reflect her mother’s, while Munni in *Small Remedies* consciously rejects her mother. Deshpande, when asked in an interview about autobiography, acknowledges that ‘certain things are autobiographical – a character, an idea. There’s certain intensity about them. Take, for example, Saru’s feelings of not being a wanted daughter in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Some of that has come from my own life’. Saru’s mother had assumed the voice of patriarchy and enforced traditional gender biases in her house. Dhruva her son had been the centre of their world and Saru the unloved, unwanted daughter. The novel gives expression to the myriad ways the son is privileged over the daughter in Indian households. The bitterness of this gender consciousness is heightened in Saru’s mind when
Dhruva at age of seven drowns. Her mother’s tirade against the girl unable to save her brother from death crystallizes in Saru’s mind.

“Why didn’t you die? Why are you alive and he dead… [you] killed him”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-191]

‘Things told to’ Saru about her mother’s bitterness towards her after she crosses the threshold to marry Manohar mark the final break. Dhruva’s death is explained by Deshpande as inevitable. ‘Dhruva’s death was a vital part of Saru’s experience. When he came to me, he came dead. At no point in my mind was he living. In fact I had a lot of difficulty writing the scene of his drowning. I was drained by the time I finished’.

The darkness within is compounded by a self-generated guilt about Dhruva’s death, her mother’s curses and the belief that the present crisis is a punishment she deserves. The release, almost at the end of the novel, occurs when Saru is able to speak, to voice the darkness within to her father. She speaks and relates to others, emerging from months and years of silence. Her father confides that silence had become a habit between him and his wife.

“Now… go on, tell me.

Tell me everything”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-199]
The trope of writing as an outlet, a major thread in Deshpande’s later novels (Jaya writes in *That Long Silence*, Mira writes poems and Urmi transcribes them in *The Binding Vine*, Sumi writes a play in *A Matter of Time*, and Madhu in *Small Remedies* a biography), first finds expressions in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* as Saru speaks to her father about her guilt and terror. Her silence for so long, her inability to talk to anybody about her fears, shocks her father. Now, past and present coalesce as the darkness of the present is seen as expiation for past sins:

“maybe I deserve it after all, Look what I’ve done to him. Look what I did to Dhruva. And to my mother. Perhaps if I go on suffering”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors P-204]

The breaking of the silence of the past and the present marks a release for Saru.

Deshpande says, ‘I think a woman’s story is about much more than victimization’. Saru’s strength lies in her decision to come out of her silence and speak. She is in charge of her life and consciously acts on her decision. She chooses to keep quiet and later chooses to speak. Deshpande says about Saru’s voicelessness, ‘one answer is Saru herself. She has learned to gag herself. Silence has been both the oppressor’s infliction and women’s strategies. What we want to reach at finally is the telling’. Saru is central to her world and takes the step to analyze and speak. Deshpande says about her women characters who move away from their families to reflect and speak, ‘It’s not an end. It’s a beginning. They’ve stripped themselves. Seen
themselves. Bare. One starts from there. It’s like rebirth to me”. The process of confronting oneself and then ‘telling’ or writing is seen by Deshpande as a catharsis and a release.

Saru sees the truth about her mother and her husband after voicing her inner traumas. Deshpande acknowledges that her women stand alone at their moment of realization, but stand fulfilled: ‘this aloneness is the only link between mother and daughter. There is no feeling, no communication between the two. At no point is there any sympathy… there is no reconciliation. But there is this. This commonness. It’s so important. So, such a beginning of life is not at all a vacuum. It’s full and rich’. The end of the novel is a new beginning for Saru. The title of the novel highlighted the ‘terrors inside us all the time’ and enforced the belief that ‘the dark holds no terror’. [The Dark Holds No Terrors[P-85] is justified by the conclusion after Saru sees herself as she is, and begins with a ‘clean state’.

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* inaugurated Deshpande’s consciousness as a serious writer, and the kind of novel she was to write later. The theme of this book was to be elaborated in *That Long Silence* and *The Binding Vine*, before Deshpande moved from the inferiority and anger of these works to the ‘outwardness’ of *A Matter of Time* and *Small Remedies*.

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the mother daughter relationship is based on gender, bias and lovelessness. In her novels mother and mother figures are not the matriarchs to be glorified but the suffocative and authoritative figures to be disdained. Hence, the insecurity of impressionable years manifests itself into the wrong choice of partners and sometimes landing
her into unwanted situation. In the novel, *Roots and Shadows*, the death of the mother surrogate
instead of ending the war between her and the daughter.

In the fourth United Nations Conference on women, held in Beijing, Ms.Hillary Clinton
opined:

“For too long the history of women, has been a history
of silence. However it is now no longer acceptable
for the world to discuss women’s rights as separate from
human rights”.

Violence against women, whether physical, mental or emotional is an issue that crosses
all borders and all classes of women. Feminism and its crusade against a male dominated society
is of special importance in the Indian context. The Indian woman has for years been a silent
sufferer. While she has played different role as a wife, mother, sister and daughter she has never
been able to claim her own individuality. The words which we always associate with what we
consider to be the concept of an ideal woman are self-denial, sacrifice, patience, devotion and
silent suffering. A woman was and is expected to subordinate every wish and every desire to
someone else- a parent, a husband or a child.
One of the most succinct of feminism has been given by Karen often.

“Feminism emerges as a concept that can encompass both an ideology and movement for socio-political changes based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women’s subordination within any given society”.

Feminism as an ideology and as a movement could not have left untouched Indian English Writings. Better education and employment opportunities have created a new awareness among Indian Women.

In the words of Veena Noble Dass:

“The Indian women caught in the flux of tradition and modernity hearing the burden of the past and the aspirations of the future is the crux of feminism in India. A search for identity and a quest for the definition of the self have become prime features of women in literature under the sway of feminism”.

This realization coupled with a shift of emphasis from the external to the internal world, has resulted in an urge to deal with feminist issues by many Indian English Novelists. Moreover, these concerns have lent to the works of modern novelists an intensity and depth which cannot leave the average reader untouched. Among modern women novelists, the most prominent are
Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherjee
and Shashi Deshpande.

_The Dark Holds No Terrors_ tells the story of a marriage on the rocks. Sarita is a successful doctor during the day time, at night a terrified and trapped animal in the hands of her husband, Manohar who is an English Lecturer in a small college.

The novel begins with Saru (Sarita) returning after fifteen years to her father’s house. She once proclaimed that she would never come back to her father’s place. She returns unable to bear the sexual sadism of her husband. The rest of the novel is what Saru remembers and a brief confession to her father about her trauma.

The narrative meanders between the past and the present. Her stay in her father’s house gives Sarita a chance to review her relationship with her father, husband and her dead mother. She remains unchanged till the end. She has a better understanding of herself and others. This gives her the courage to confront reality.

Sarita is highly self-willed and her problems multiply because of her ego and innate love for power over others. She revolts against her parents and runs away from home to get married to a person of her choice. She feels always insecure in her parent’s house. Her marriage with Manohar at one stage she felt security and love. For her, he is an ideal romantic hero. He satisfied her hunger for love. “I was insatiable, not for sex, but for love. Each act of sex was a triumphant assertion of our love of my being loved. Of my being wanted”.
She is a successful and reputed doctor. She becomes a busy doctor which ultimately upsets her family life. Her husband gets annoyed of her popularity and her busy life makes her concentrate less at the domestic front. This is an awkward situation in which she is placed. At personal level, she feels a gradual disappearance of love and family-attachment which she had once developed. Now, what she faces is a psychological conflict which becomes inevitable. She as a wife is not able to devote her time to attend to her husband’s need and children are not taken due care of. In the given situation she fails first as a wife and next as a mother.

Sarita’s family life and happiness started declining as her popularity started increasing day by day. A conflict in her mind ensues which is due to her achieved position and the ascribed position of her husband. The financial ascendance of Sarita, renders Manohar less significant and impotent. He thinks that the only way he can retain his potency and masculinity by turning into a rapist at night. His action at night terrifies and humiliates Saru.

When Sarita’s life becomes a problematic one, she hears the news of her mother’s death and goes back to her parent’s house. She becomes an emotionless human being. Everything appears for her strange including her father.

The whole situation in which Sarita has placed herself is rather unwarranted. The lack of perfect understanding between husband and wife causes the whole problem. Lack of emotions and spiritual oneness between the husband and the wife has to overcome by mutual surrender of ego then only mutual understanding and happiness will follow. In domestic life, there should be
a blend of acceptance and rejection, flexibility and rigidity and above all revolt if the occasion demands and compromise for peaceful life.

All these characters are blended in Sarita who represents a middle class society in Modern India. Her trauma is her aspiration and paucity of its fulfillment.

_Bala Kothandaraman pertinently observes that the_

“Unconventional are seen to suffer for their violation of accepted norms of society or for questioning them, death is the way out for them, unless their experience teach them to subdue their individuality and rebelliousness and realize the wisdom of the traditional ways”.

This observation does not exclude conventional women. They too suffer, but their suffering is sanctified by the norms of the Indian culture. A tradition bound woman may sacrifice anything for the sake of her family’s welfare and she may not zealously guard her individuality. In the case of educated woman it becomes more often that not the family life happiness is minimum because of divided self between husband and children and then between work and herself. Feminine sensibilities crumble and natural love disappears, clash of egos results in incompatibilities. Love is no longer for them a sweet thing to possess and enjoy. Equally, Manohar’s male ego tries to dominate Sarita, which ultimately results in disintegration. It is not clash of principles but only the clash of egos. Sarita’s feminine psyche encounters the working forces which emanate from her husband’s masculine vigour.
Sarita is not able to seek any support from any quarter makes all the more her suffering worse. Her father shows no sympathy because hers was a marriage of her choice. Hence she has to fend herself all oppositions and oppressions. Deshpande probes the inner recess of Sarita’s psyche in order to discover the root of her silent suffering and passive resistance.

Her life is a “journey from self-alienation to self identification”. It is also from negation to self-assertion and from frustrations to confidence. Sarita who was not prepared to face her husband at one stage decides to leave her father also and go away somewhere ultimately comes to grips with her situation. Her father advises her to live her present with determination”.

“Don’t turn your back on things again.
Turn round and look at them. Meet him”.

[The Dark Holds No Terrors [P-216]

This pep from her father builds in her total confidence to meet her husband to face the situation. She is not her own refuge and will never blame others. She has to face her husband fearlessly. The fear of darkness or unknown fear which haunted her mind so long now gets dissipated and resolves to face her life. Deshpande makes it plain that a woman’s life is her own and she must develop the thinking that she is an individual not a dependent but a being capable of withstanding trials in life alone.

The modern woman is more than a mere mother or sister or daughter. In the current world she is a multifaceted individual, capable of playing any role but what she needs now is a
strong mind and will. Her identity is no longer seen in terms of the identity of her male counterpart. This new woman passes through a process of transformation which signifies a change from bondage to freedom and self-assertion.

Sarita’s feeling of loneliness is indicative of inner disintegration. This disintegration is due to her ego and her will to dominate others. Economic freedom and education ushered into her life a new set of values. They are based on money, power and social status. The wholesomeness in life for Sarita is possible if only integration takes place.

Escapism is not a permanent solution and the real solution has to be sought from within rather than escaping from the dark or cursing the darkness, Sarita has to light a candle and declare that the dark holds no terrors. The real darkness in her mind, once she dispels it with the candle of truth, she will see the reality visibly. She arrived at a point of realization wherein nothing either becomes a problem or reveals any darkness. The darkness of mind ceases to be terrible the moment Sarita decides to face situation. It is only the crisis of identity which is the root of all problems in human life.

The novel reveals the quest of an anxious, eager ambitious, self-assertive and self-righteous woman. Her quest leads to uncover that strength in human being which makes living a joyous possibility.

A mature Saru now shuns extremes and takes a practical view of the circumstances. She is neither the typical Western liberated woman nor an Orthodox Indian one. Shashi Deshpande
does not let herself get overwhelmed by the Western feminism or its militant concept of emancipation. In quest for the wholeness of identity, she does not advocate separation from the spouse but a tactful assertion of one’s identity within marriage. In the novel, *Roots and Shadows*, Indu decides to go back to Jayant with the hope that she would do what she thinks correct and not be dishonest to her innerself.

Learning from her bitter experiences, she realizes how an emancipated woman should be. She takes the firm decision on how Akka’s wealth is to be put to use, knowing full well that the other relatives would feel greatly offended. She does not care to make good her promise to the dead Naren and decides to spend on Vithal’s education. All this shows how mature and detached she has become as she does not care for the likes and dislikes of the living or dead and follows her own conscience.

Thus Shashi Deshpande suggests that the modern Indian women should learn to conquer their fears and assert themselves. The novel ends on a note of compromise which is quite representative of the basic Indian attitude. With the conviction of rationale and accountability she holds steadfast to her decisions in a tradition bound household, which is proof enough of her individuality. Deshpande has taken a bold step forward by exploring the working women’s needs of the head, heart and the anatomy.

“Where shall we go this Summer?” (1975), Anita Desai presents an intense identity crisis of the central character Sita, a sensitive woman in her early forties. Unable to live in the strife-torn present she in those of identifying herself with the past, represented by her childhood
on Manori island twenty years ago. The past becomes a psychic residue in her personal in
conscious, the backdrop of her life, and her obsessive preoccupation with it, gives her the
strength to leave her home, husband, two children and the urbanized life of Bombay for Manori
Island, where she thinks she would be able to love under a magic spell:

She saw that island illusion as a refuge, a protection. It would tell her
baby safely unborn, by magic (for she is in her advance stage of
pregnancy). Then there would be the sea – it would wash the frenzy out of
her drown it. Perhaps the tides would lull the children too, into smoother,
softer beings. The grove of trees would shade them and protect them.
(WSWGTS 101).

This vision is the motivating force that urges Sita’s leaving her home, much to the dismay
of her husband Raman, who sees the absurdity of the plan a pregnant woman leaving for an
unreal place as if she were bewitched:

She had escaped from duties and responsibilities, from order and routine,
from 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 of offer it an alternative a life bewitched (WSWGTS 139).

Sita’s problem seems to be due to maladjustment with her husband: the home life and
surrounding atmosphere nauseating her. She is fed up with her husband, a businessman, whose
complete lack of feeling brings her to the verge of insanity. A great change takes place in Sita, from a proud mother of four children,

“Sensual, emotional, Freudian” (31) to a woman of “rage, fear, and revolt”, for control… had slipped out other hold” (32).

A close examination of the whole situation however will reveal that Sita’s more a psychological problem than being external, as resulting from unfulfilled wishes. Tragically, her dreams of getting love and affection from her husband end in nightmare. The point at issue is that her husband ignores her instincts, and what she likes him to treat her in a great and tender way, is what he cannot be.

As a result in the long run, the husband-wife relationship is dragged into difficulties that come out in the form of identity crisis, for both Raman and Sita, stand for binary oppositions. Raman is a creature of society, more or less an extrovert, more accommodative, apathetic whereas Sita is hypersensitive, an introverted personality and a pessimist. She not only hates Raman for his lack of feeling but also derides the “Subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness” (WGWGTS 48) and the routine manner of her husband’s family. As a reaction against these, she speaks, with rage and anguish, and with “sudden rushes of emotion” (WSWGTS 48).

In order to seek a means of escape she takes to smoking, abuses her children for trifles, and flies into a rage when the servants talk in the kitchen because she thinks they are quarrelling. Finally, she like Stephen Dedauls in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man chooses three things
exile, silence, and cunning. All this is the ultimate rejection of the values her husband represents, and she has resolved to go to Manori island as a kind of exile in her search for identity in silence and in her revival of the past, away from home, and civilization, thus reminding one of Billy Biswas in Amn Joshi’s The Strange Case of Billy Biswas. She has her vision to fulfill on their Island as one sees it in the early part of the novel:

She had come here in order not to give birth… Washn’s this Manori, the island of miracles? Her father had made it an island of magic once, worked miracles of a kind. His legend was still here in this house… and he might work another miracle posthumously. She had come on a pilgrimage to beg for the miracle of keeping her baby unborn (31).

The clash of identified between Sita and Raman that takes an unhappy dimension has other interesting points of focus. At the root of the husband wife conflict there is the theme of tradition versus modernism. By temperament and upbringing Sita’s root is in tradition represented by her father and Manori island. Her sudden encounter with Bombay following a hasty marriage to Raman threatens her very root of existence, for Raman and Bombay stand for modernism.

“Where Shall We Go this Summer?” is a faithful record of the post war state of reality, characterized by a sense of muddle confusion, meaninglessness, pervasive horror and fear. The only thing that represents tradition is Sita’s memory of the past; and her conviction that the past still continues to exist in its full form is countered by the debris of the past itself.
The present, however, is not religious enough to retain the glory of the past, hence her isolation and loss of identity and breaks down her relationship with her husband and others in the family.

In “Where Shall We Go this Summer?” the suffering of Sita is caused by factors psychical in origin. The betrayal of her unconscious inclination to preserve and uphold traditional values of an integrated life in the face of the chaotic values of modern city civilization is at root other unhappiness and loss of identity. The world presented in ‘Where Shall We Go This Summer?’ deviates from the institutional values, dogmas and old certainties, nor is it surrounded by either magic or illusion, as Sita though earlier.

The characteristic meaninglessness of absurd literature has become the meaning sought for. Anita Desai’s world in the novel is the present age which

“has shrunk in spirit languishing in confusion, frustration, disintegration, disillusionment, meaninglessness and rootlessness” (69)

as in Glimpses of Indo English Fiction R.S.Pathak suggests in his study of “The Alienated Protagonist in the Indo-English Novel”.

One of the aims of Anita Desai in her novels is to display how this characteristic spirit of the age has loosened the bond of husband wife relationship. It will be interesting to account for the obsessive preoccupation of the novelist with this theme of broken family when she lightly touches upon the relationship of Sita’s father and mother. Their relationship was one of
estrangement, for her mother deserted her father before she had headed for Benares from where she did not return. Even her father, who had been a saint to his chelas (Disciples), a charlatan to his critics and a wizard to the villagers, led a strange life so far as his mistress and his relationship with Rekha, Sita’s step sister seemed to have been coloured by Electra complex. Sita’s escape to the island is an unfailing echo of the earlier husband desertion motif in her identification with her mother, a “ghost in white” (WSWGTS 87), which cannot be exorcized by her. But his side of the story has other interesting points to note.

Going back to history will reveal some facts about Sita’s enigmatic and mysterious nature as having been a symptom of her want of care and sympathy of a mother or a real sister a healthy ground for lack of confidence in her later life. In her moments of joy and sorrow she has none to share, hence she keeps herself to herself. This character trait is quite unpalatable to others, and it has its origin in her childhood life and experience. The attitude of her father’s internal questions which never became articulate and were kept repressed. Usha bande rightly comments:

“This experience breeds feelings of worthlessness, and its consequent strategy is rebelliousness. Sita cannot corroborate her father’s dubious ways. It seeps down her psyche as a bad human experience”. (Pande 107).

Childhood experience is of vital importance in the study of mind’s behaviour for that lies embedded in the individual consciousness as latent content that appears and reappears as the drives and urges in the individual’s unguarded moments. If the person is fully or partially under the control of this aberrant mental process, he is subject to neurosis or hysterical according to the
degree of the force of drama that is inside the mind. Sita in the novel is a case in point. Lack of
mother, an elder sister of a girl providing companionship further worsens Sita’s condition.

Sita’s suffers from nervous disorder being herself faced with this void, and emptiness,
irreparably continuing to exist even after her marriage, resulting in her loss of identity, self-
confidence and inability to reassure love and security to her children. This is aggravated by her
husband’s mechanical and matter of fact attitude towards her with no warmth of feeling,
understanding and attachment. No wonder, Sita is completely alienated from the world around
her and starts living in a world of dream and fantasy and “make believe” under the strain to “a
serious psychological confusion” (Pathak 30).

The central issue of the novel, that is, identity crisis as a result of husband and wife
polarity, is also a predominant theme of the other novels of Anita Desai. Together with this the
cultural and racial conflicts as evident in “Bye Bye Blackbird” may have originated from the
writer’s own family background directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, for she is
an offspring of parents of different cultural backgrounds. Though little material is available as to
how far the subject in question is true or not, in psychoanalysis this is a matter of immense
significance. Through the study of symbols used by a writer, his or her personal life as mirrored
in the work can be divined. The truth of this platitude may be seen in proper perspective if one
recalls what Lawrence once said:

“But one sheds one’s sickness in books – repeats and presents again one’s
emotions, to be master of them”. (Moore 234).
The symbolic situation of the eagle crow’s fight reveals very subtle the personality clash between Sita and Raman. She is the eagle and Raman is symbolized by the crows that attack the helpless eagle “on the ledge that jutted out below their balcony” (WSWGTS 38). Sita’s desperate efforts to save the eagle from the attack of the crows whose scimitar beaks pierce the eagle, is her fight against the masculine values represented by her husband. The scimitar beaks are a symbol of phallus, and the attack of the crows with them is suggestive of male chauvinism unleashed against the feminine instinct. To fend herself off, she resorts to a kind of penis envy by summoning the strength of her sons, who supply her with a “long handled brush” and a “toy gun” (WSWGTS 39), symbols of mothers-on incestuous relationship, and also the collusion of the mother with her sons against the father. There is a strong dose of Oedipus complex in his episode.

The last scene of the fight or aftermath of the fight, “blood stains, and the feathers sticking out of crow’s beak” (WSWGTS 41) and the disappearance of the eagle are an added meaning to the entire strength of the novel. The blood symbolizes sexual conflict in the husband wife relationship: Sita’s momentary impulse to kill her child inside the womb, a kind of her death wish. In cultural psychology failing hair is a symbol of castration. In the novel the drift of feathers in the beak of a crow is a psychological situation in which the triumph of the father Raman over his sons who fight on the side of his wife is strongly suggested. His triumph is associated with castration motif castration of his sons. Despite everything in the novel it is Raman who is victorious in the worldly sense. Defeated Sita’s weak defense perhaps it flew away? Against her husband’s caustic remark that her eagle has been eaten by die crows, suggests the future course of her action following her defeat and loss of identity.
Sita hurriedly packs up and leaves for Manori island in complete defiance of her husband’s hostile and hypocritical world. Like chella, she returns to her father’s island, charmed by him. This is, indeed, her last effort to try to save her identity by showing her faith in her father’s magic world. Perhaps she is searching for a great revelation or a miracle to happen.

In order to cast a cultural colour over Sita’s exile, Anita Desai captures the great exile motif of the Indian epic, The Ramayana. Through the use of the paradigmatic pattern of Indian culture, the underlying theme and structure of the novel are made more significant. Even the choice of names, Sita and Raman, are highly purposeful. The mythical Rama is in the caricature of the character of Raman. Both Ram and Raman rarely show emotion and love for their wives. This is one of the reasons why both the Sita’s suffer. Besides, the bringing of the Ramayana theme is to impose an artistic unity on the form of the novel in the mode of Joyce and Eliot.

Sita in “Where Shall We Go This Summer?”

“escape seems almost inevitable or she has to face a life of slow suicide without her identity and self. To her, her father is her all, a wizard, who still casts a spell over her” “He had been a wizard, she accepted that now, her father. he had cast illusion as a fisherman casts a net… upon a flock of fish in the sea” (WSWGTS 100).

He is a picture of her personal dream, to which her childhood belongs and future still gnaws at for refugee and for self identification.
“Where Shall We Go This Summer?” is a psychological study of human personalities which are at war. At a deeper psychological level Sita’s quest for her identity is an outcome of the husband-wife conflict. The strange and overtly insensitive nature of Raman causes serious libidinous problems to the mental life of Sita.

The whole situation is to aggravate her introverted nature that finds a kind of wish fulfillment in the following evocative manner. In her state of perversion, Sita ages pleasure out of the sight of strangers. First, the sight of a foreign tourist, who wants to go to Ajanta without knowing which direction he has to go, attracts her attention much to be annoyance of Raman. To her, the foreigner is an example of courage Raman lacks.

Firstly, to her such encounters are uncommon, and are not a dull repetition of her routine life. Hence they are vigorously stimulating to her. Secondly, they are a source of aesthetic pleasure, a means of diversion from boredom and ugliness; and thirdly, these two situations, being associated with courage and beauty respectively, give her emotional satisfaction. All together the subtle irrational working of Sita’s mind at such moments is governed by “Pleasure principle” by lessening of extinguishing the amount of stimulation that resides in her mental apparatus in the form excitement, hunger, drives, etc. About the attainment of pleasure and avoiding pain, that it is automatically regulated by the “Pleasure principle”. (Freud 365).

To her husband these are irrational and unintelligible freaks. He wonders why the happiest memory of this wife is “strangers, seen for a moment, some lovers in a park”
(WSWGTS 147) and not her own children. “Children only mean anxiety, concern pessimism. Not happiness”, says Sita. The whole situation can be interpreted in terms of her repressed feelings at violet eruption. It is a general symptom for a psychologically repressed person to release his or libidinous drives particularly when they are active, fully “unchecked by any inhibition” (149), as Freud observes. For such a person it natural to hate or with somebody, who is very near and dear death. Freud once more adds:

> “Hate, too, rages unrestrainedly; wishes for revenge, and death-wishes, against those who in life are nearest and dearest parents, brothers and sisters, husband or wife, the dreamer’s own children are by no means uncommon” (150).

Desai’s creation of Sita is an example of repressed person. She hates her husband for not understanding her, dislikes her children for they are insensitive, so on. During the journey on the sea, Karan excitedly calls the sea weds “Snakes”, which enrages her. Of all the children, she dislikes Menaka the most because the latter cuts flower buds, tears her Sunday water colours, wants to pursue medical science instead of literature, and above all, calls her father onto the island to fetch her, save her from the boredom and void of the island. Sita feels she is betrayed by her children who turn to the island. Sita feels she is betrayed by her children who turn to their father. At heart she also recognizes her husband, his disposition, his courage:

> He never hesitated everything was so clear to him, and simple: life must be continued and all its business. That was why the children turned to
him, sensing him to be the superior in courage, in leadership (WSWGTS 138-39).

But even then her unhappiness is that her husband comes there to take Menaka on receiving her letter, and not to take her. She loves him when she sees him for the first time after her escapade: “She felt so weak, she wanted to lay down her head and weep, My father’s dead look after me”, WSWGTS 131). All her life she has been searching for a father figure and Raman is far from being so. In her present state of defeat on the island the desire for security, tenderness and gentleness all the more increasing. But her agony is that her insensitive husband remains unchanged dull impotent so far as his response to her is concerned. On his second coming to the island this is evident:

… he had nothing more to give her, or he was just unaware of her needs and demands. He raised his hand and stroked Karan’s hair with a gentleness she herself ached to attract, and she stared at him, bored into him with her eyes, wanting and not being given what she wanted. (WSWGTS 132) No doubt, Raman is important.

“A sudden sense of his getting old and grey and not wanting to have another child mark his unattractive role as a husband sexually, physically and emotionally” (WSWGTS145)
Sexually repressed Sita remains isolated in the background while her children and husband share their life and experience together. Her realization that hers was a “face marriage” makes her unnerved because her husband does not know the “basic fact other existence” (WSGTS 145) her soul’s existence, her instinct existence. The more she thinks the greater is her shock. Once more she becomes hysterical, and to an introverted person this is bound to happen. She lives in a world of phantasies, incongruities and violent outbursts as a means of escape from reality. Her entire life is woven in this strange manner inscrutably. It is at such a moment that her mind recaptures the image of the two lovers in a park. This may truly be characteristic symptom of introversion as put by Freud:

…. introversion describes the deflection of the libido away from the possibilities of real satisfaction and its excessive accumulation upon phantasies previously tolerated as harmless. An introverted person… is in an unstable condition; the next disturbance of the shifting forces will cause symptoms to develop, unless he can yet find other outlets for his pent-up lipid. (382-83).

But at the height of her frustration and self defeat things come round. The island is no more hospitable. Both Moses and Miriam are in different to her; the house is dirty, dusty, and dark; food is not available on the island; the sea is muddy. It is in the midst of this murky atmosphere that she remembers her Bombay house:

“the thought flickered through her the flat in Bombay, white with electric light, the twinkle of China, the meal served by servants in white, the
routine to which the children were used, and their beds, smooth cool” (WSWGTS 29).

About the change in Sita one will be interested in what Anita Desai says when interviewed by Jasbir Jain. The novelist says that Sita:

“has had an unusual childhood, she is led to expect life, to continue to be an extremely unusual, full of large, meaningful happenings, whereas life comes to her as very trivial, full of disappointments, it comes as a tremendous depression to her. Really her entire will is not to give birth to a child in such a world. There is no sense of contentment at all; it is rebellion right through to the last moment. When she realizes what she has to live to, she has to compromise”. (WSWGTS 11).

As a result, Sita cannot even treat her husband’s friends, quests, colleagues, business, associated, and visitors with tolerance and understanding. They appear to her like animals. She takes to smoking because she cannot put up with the obsessive, subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness of her husband’s relations who are always concerned with food and palatable dishes.

They totally neglect her and are indifferent to her and therefore accept her as an outrageous outsider. She revolts and, takes to smoking, instead of eating, as a mode of release for pent up emotions. Further, she feels that insularity and complacence of Rama’s friend and
the aggression and violence of others are carefully calculated affronts on her being. As such she spends most of her time on the balcony, smoking and looking at the sea.

Sita has suffered long separations and dark seclusions, since; she had the tensions of political life in crowded assembles, in mobs in slum tenements and in villages where life is barbaric. She sees the island as a place of magic, a magic mirror bright and brilliant after the tensions and shadows of early political life and here she believes, she can ever recover her lost childhood Moreover, there is a lack of communication between Sita and her father. He used to crush small pellets of jewels and gold and mix them for medicine. Her overhearing the conversation between her father and an old friend of his reveals further that his public image is not the real image and this confirms her conviction that his medical practice of not rationally explicable, for she believes, it is based on the therapeutic value of faith. His mixing of powder of gold and jewels belong to their mother who had run away to Benaras when they were quiet young. Her later efforts to locate this ghost in white, stripped of its jewels, lost in Benaras in rendered futile as Benaras has come a refuge to the runaways. Sita could have found the love and affection of a sister and a friend, but due to her father’s partiality she is deprived of their company also. This serves as the foundation stone of her anxiety-ridden personality Virender Parmer observes:

“Sita’s animus has to be seen in the context of her relation with her father, her father’s mysterious conduct on the Manori Island had left an indelible Imprint on the psyche of sita when she was a child”(85).
Is short, Sita strives to free herself from the ambivalent influence of her father from his undefined magic. Though he is a Gandhian to others, he is a bundle of contradictions in himself. He declares opposition to statues and memorial tablets, but he cannot resist a garland of marigold, jasmine or tinsel, offered to him in meetings where he spoke. The well in Manori is another instance of his charismatic, personality. It yielded water, that is, “sweet to the believers and brackish to the cynics.” (WSWGTS 88) There is evidence, though not proof, about the existence of a mistress, perhaps a second wife.

There are several psychological causes, which affect Sita and her fear of the ensuing child-birth is not without reason. First of all her confinement will force her to give up the strenuously guarded strategies of detachment. It means getting involved in life once more physically as well as emotionality. However, a deeper psychic reason is behind her fear. That is her guilt feeling caused by the awareness that she has not exercised self-control in sexual desires. Self reproach has a gnawing feeling upon her and externalization of her inner turmoil. Sita thus gives vent to her fury in order to pretest herself from the onslaught of her self-hate.

When one dissects her psyche, there are visible sings of self-tormenting intents within her. Her wish to keep the child inside her is a kind of procrastination. Sita’s primary drive is self effacement. So an urge to magnify her suffering is a part of her mental make-up. She gets vindictive satisfaction on her the self-inflicted pain. Anita Desai herself confirms in an interview with Jasbir Jain that Sita has a wish to perpetuate her pregnancy. This is a kind of rebellion adopted by her until the last moment. Sita goes to Manori revolting against all norms and advice. She turns aggressive towards everyone including her husband, children and Moses. The
single theme of the novel is that she is not willing to give birth to the child. V.L.V.N Narendra Kumar observes on her mental state as:

She is caught in a dilemma. She is torn between acquiescence and denial. The child in her womb is safe, pure, whole and protected. She wonders whether she would be doing an act of creation by giving birth to the child or she would be dethroned what is perfect and safely contained (Kumar 35).

Sita resorts to withdrawal when her complaint and expansive remedies fail. One can see hr mostly bored with and disintegrated in life. She disregards her appearance, grows disobedient and difficult to approach. Her spirit is pervaded by a mental and physical inertia. Here Desai probes into the consciousness of a woman, who fails to adjust to the demands of her roles as a wife and mother. Withdrawal from the outside world starts at an early age and becomes an important tool in her adulthood. Sita gradually grows to the position of an onlooker on life, eager to guard her own freedom. However Sita’s decision of leaving the islands and going back to the mainland means that she is willing to compromise her freedom.

Sita also doesn’t possess a healthy man’s concept of freedom the pre-condition of positive freedom. The pre-condition of positive freedom is spontaneity. Spontaneity only helps to overcome only helps to overcome one’s loneliness and insecurity and helps in the affirmation of life. Sita, on the other hand, resorts to escapism. She wants to achieve is and effort of forgetting the real self as she is disparate to maintain real self as she is glorified self-image.
Thought Sita is severely depressed she doesn’t become will-less like Desai’s other protagonists like Monisha, Nirode and Amla, the saving grace of her situation lies in this aspect. Humanistic psychologists tell us their disdain and dejection acts as warning signals to check the disintegration of one’s personality. If one heeds to these signals, one can recover the self. Sita finally overcomes all despair by establishing both with nature and her family.

The novel “Where Shall We Go This Summer?” thus emphasizes the triumph of life over chaos and of art over life. The three part structure of the novel, “Monsoon 67”, “Winter 47”, and “Monsoon 67”, further illustrates the thematic pattern of the novel. The first section “Monsoon 67” presents disintegration, in which the central protagonist Sita is tossed about rootless on the waves of a monsoon sea. The island home left for about twenty years becomes, in D.S.Maini’s words, “an apt metaphor for her condition” (Mainin 227). The second part “Winter 47”, while should essentially precede the first section chronologically, stands for integration, and the third and last part “Monsoon 67” is a continuation of the first part of the novel divided by a flexed hinge of the past and is suggestive of reintegration, as in Virginia Woolf’s “To The Lighthouse”, integration, disintegration and reintegration form there integral parts of the novel structurally.

At the end of her stay of Manori Sita comes out as a different personality who is no more disturbed by the concept of time, past, present and future; all are melted into one. Noe she is supreme commander of life, absorbing all the incongruities of her surrounding, her husband, her children. Looking forwards to the future she becomes a benign mother, an understanding and sympathetic wife. Thus, she goes out of hard shell of one individual identity, making herself a
complete personality in duality. That, indeed, is the androgynous vision of the novelist. For beauty lie not only in acceptance but in the adjustment of masculine and feminine principles the anima and the animus in the Jungian concepts.

However, it is Sita’s triumph not Raman’s; the only thing she thinks is that at such a moment should her husband deserve that triumph. She lovingly calls her children “Menaka”, “Karan” while putting things together, which is of course a symbolic act, as if she were a player, whose part is well acted on the stage. And she wants to avoid such questions as what is true and what is false. In the midst of all this confusing, this muddle, she feeds a circle. She has seen her childhood, growing up stage, marriage, middle aged life and has yet to give birth to a child, attaining to a full circle of life. The vision of Sita is:

..She…looked out of the window to see him (Karan) running round and round in circles on the terrace, as if warming up his motor for the journey. Giddy from kneeling and bending so long, she felt herself whirl. Life had no periods, no stretches. It simply swirled around, muddling and confusing, leading nowhere (WSWGTS 154-55).

The concluding part of the novel, however, has a different tone, and this is an essential artistic development in the whole structure of the novel. Sita who has been unable to come out of here egotistical self now gets apocalyptic vision. Earlier she was unable to compromise with her husband, but now she can see things in a circular form, and ring, making the moments experience something permanent. She finds that all her life is false, a Maya, and her immediate
experience is real, the still centre, marked by a vision of revelation. As Virginia Woolf says in her “To The Lighthouse”, “there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark…” (Woolf 183). In fact, it is the supreme moment of getting self knowledge in which Sita melts in other melt in her.

Sita loves her husband, admires him, his ideas and his self. The reign of chaos is over; there is unity. And like an artist she gathers things, binds things and packs things in complete understanding and harmony. All element of begation vanish in the thin air, and Sita’s journey takes on a positive note. At such a moment she is angry “at the confusion, the muddle of it all” (WSWGTS 153).

Sita sees things in terms of oneness: her husband, children, herself, their belongings, and even the sea and sky, which were earlier two antipodes; the

“island had seemed a small, dark blot of foreign matter on the pale dun sheet of the sea” (WSWGTS 20). But now “Neither sea nor sky were separate or contained they rushed into each other in a rush of light and shade, impossible to disentangle” (WSWGTS 153).

As her mind is eddying, whirling round and round, Sita
“is in full agreement with the natural rhythm of life: she is ready for the birth of her child in the womb; she sees the vision of herself in the nursing home, doctors, nurses, labour pain, garments of the infant in her stream of consciousness with a mixed feeling of pain and pleasure during childbirth. And at such a moment of illumination life stands still, and all personalities melt into one”.

Sita’s identity crisis is over. Her identity is one of impersonality. This corresponds with life when it is worth living. Life is a continual process of sacrifice, adjustment, and compromise. “Where Shall We go This Summer?” deep psychological probing into the innermost recesses of mind of modern man in quest in the contemporary world.