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New Gender Identity in Anita Desai's Novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Bajarangi Prasad Yadav has completed his thesis entitled “**New Gender Identity in Anita Desai's Novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*”** under my supervision. He carried out his research from September 2007 to October 2008. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted to viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “**New Gender Identity in Anita Desai's Novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?***” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Bajarangi Prasad Yadav has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research committee.

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Abstract

The present thesis titled “New Gender Identity in Anita Desai’s Novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*” covers the main issues of the miserable plight of Indian women who suffer silently in isolation because of their sharp gender sensibility and corrosive emotionality. Society, culture, traditional norms and modes assign certain roles to each gender. Most of women are born with a stamp of ill-luck on their heads. The tragedy of such women is caused by the fact of their birth in a patriarchal society which fails to respect women as individuals. But women have consciousness of their own career in the post-independence Indian society. In this novel, Desai's women have consciousness of their body; they like to have control in their body. Eventually, woman like the protagonist Sita achieves her own liberation within the male-oriented society from her self-existence.

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I. Introduction

Anita Desai and her *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*

This research on Anita Desai's fourth novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* which appeared in 1975, describes the tension between a sensitive wife, Sita, and the rational husband Raman. *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* written by Anita Desai presents whose struggle for a new gender identity in patriarchal society, showing that she does only try to show the possibility but also equally focuses on the possibilities of falling in trap with the same patriarchy itself.

The ideal story weaver of the recent era, Anita Desai is a writer of her own class. Psychoanalysis of each and every female character makes her novel as if a journey to the maze minds. Born in the year 1937, Anita Desai with her deft characterization and with her remarkable anti romanticist approach so very eloquently brings out the dilemma, tension, fears, agony, frustration and love of the womanhood Whilst making her each novel as if a sage of sheer realism.

In 1990, Desai wrote a controversial essay for the *Times Literary Supplement*, *A Secret Connivance*, in which she argued that Indian women connive at their own subordination by aspiring to mythic role models, in the form of Indian goddesses. Desai says she believes that Indian society has changed since then, although not necessarily at a radical level. "Women are not actively encouraged to work, but the reasons are chiefly economic- it is recognized that women have earning power, too. The pressure to marry is still huge, and so in some ways there are increased pressures." The American students she taught are no less obsessed by marriage, she says, but for almost opposite reasons. Desai arrived in America too late to catch the "Second Wave" of the feminist movement in the 60s and 70s, and left India too soon. "She does not think feminism reached India till the 80s and 90s. Really it was

something that affected her daughter's generation. Women were involved in politics when Desai was growing up because Gandhi and Nehru were keen that women be a part of the independence movement. These women were looked upon as heroines, but they were also great exceptions. She thinks Sonia Gandhi was right to have stood aside as prime minister after the Congress party's victory in this year's general election. It was a role she inherited and not one she chose. She would have been used as a tool by the party. The Gandhi-Nehru dynasty could have gone on and on forever, but she thinks she was very wise to break it. And it is really magnificent news that a government she so much disapproved of has been voted out.

Indian English novel makes a departure in the writings of Anita Desai and catches up with the modern western world. She shifts from the outer world to the inner side. The modern western novel is either an existential fable or psychic drama. Such novels are psychological novels or stream of consciousness novels. James Joyce, Proust and Virginia Woolf are the leading names. Desai's characters are complete opposites like the protagonists of Camus as they live like complete strangers and are not able to communicate. The crisis in her fiction is born out of marital discord, a lack of understanding between man and woman. Desai is common in treatment of themes, existential aspect in particular. She grapples with the moments of acute trying situations in human life. She reveals the confrontation of man with himself and the question of his existence. Her search is directed to the mysterious religion of human psyche. The characters of Desai are alienated and lonely. Therefore, she is existentialist, stranger and outsider to her own land.

Anita Desai tries to search out her own identity, and always suffers from the guilt that she does not belong to a place or a person. Her characters are left to struggle for existence in the society and finally they accept the norms and values

of the patriarchal society.

This novel presents the energy of individuality with the emotions of connectedness in the post-independence Indian women with the socio-familial world, where they find the situation of womanhood and realize the sense of human being.

Jamila is a wife of the teashop owner in the Island Manori who has been a co-worker with her husband in the shop, where the islanders come to drink cashew nut spirits and talk. She is also the bread winner of her family; she is optimistic and confident to visualize her family by working hard. She has good interpersonal skills with her family. She obeys his rules and order to create peace among the people who are quarrelling loudly in her activity where they are drinking cashew nut spirits and talking. She has a sentimental relation with the past that leaves an ineradicable impact on her mind; she starts talking about Sita, a memshahib to Moses, a visitor to Jamila's shop and Sita's father who has dedicated his life to the well-being and freedom of the island and the nation.

Sita is the protagonist of this novel. Sita comes to Manori with her two children—Menaka and Karan—to get peace and security from the monotonous Bombay life. She is pregnant. She has a self-motivating force which urges her to visit Manori alone. At that present, she looks very enthusiastic, delighted and hopeful. She has a heart that communicates with nature like snake, sea and dark island. While she is going on the cart, Moses callously beats oxen. But for Menaka, their suffering is familiar because she possesses a kind heart able to feel other's problem.

The unexpected arrival of Sita brings a great pleasure and happiness among the island-dwellers. The island women-fisher and washerwomen welcome her with great smiling faces. Menaka goes through the different women who are selling goods keeping their children on the back- a need to earn survival for the

family and to provide a maternal love for children.

When Sita is living at her house, Mariam, Moses's wife, unintentionally kisses Karan and pours her motherly love on him. Sita seems to be indifferent to Moses and Mariam. She is culturally connected to them; she gets surprised when Moses comes to kindle the house because as a product of Indian culture. She has internalised the idea that women should take care of household activities. Sita has come to the island not to bear a child but retains her maternal feelings; she scolds Moses for not bringing milk for the children, and asks him to bring meal for them.

The novel shows that the protagonist Sita remembers the bright life in Bombay with her servants serving meal when she faces a dark room and finds nothing to eat in the room in Manori. She recalls the argumentative moment when she disagrees with her husband Raman regarding the child-birth; she wants to keep the child unborn in her womb instead of giving birth in the disastrous land. Her relatedness is disclosed when she is fascinated with the foreigner by the innocence in the patriarchal society who is going to Ajanta, but stands at the wrong direction.

Once Sita remembers her childhood as a girl living in Manori with her father, her elder sister Rekha, and her brother Jeevan. Sita's father advocates for national goods and manual works. The yearning for parental affection in Sita is so strong that she unknowingly envies Rekha's dearness to her father. Time and again, thinking that she has come in the world without mother, demonstrates the inescapable desire for mother's warm lap. Sita's need for mother, goes to Benares in search of another mother who had run away.

In this novel, winter changes into Monsoon with gushing rivers, and wet and fertile ground for production. The productivity is compatible to Sita's decision to return to Bombay accepting the monotonous Bombay life. When Sita hears about the

arrival of Raman in the island, an unknown and inexplicable joy gets born in her. She displays her internal wish to be with Raman in the description of a young lady with an old man in the garden. Sita becomes delighted hearing the nurses' concern for her delivery, and allows Menaka to study medicine. Menaka and Karan ask Raman about their friends, that shows the close friendliness.

The decision taken by Sita to go back to Bombay is a result of a momentary loneliness on the beach where Raman leaves her alone to live in Manori. The cruelty of urban life stifles her. She is panicky at the thought of bringing a new child and runs away to a small island. The female protagonist of the novel, Sita hangs between married life and her self-fulfillment. While she is awaiting the birth of her fifth child, her experiences as a housewife and mother as well accumulate in her deep anguish. She feels no genuine happiness in her martial context. Her hopelessness rises and makes her insensitive, cruel and alien to her husband and children. Her insanity drives her back to preserve the sense and sanity by escaping from her routine life in a Bombay apartment to rush to Manor, an Island in the west coast. Though she rebels against the birth of the fifth child, she has certain longing in her heart which she misses entirely. She wants to protect her unborn child against the cruel atmosphere in which she is living.

The moment's seclusion reminds her that life cannot find meaning in the absence of family. The protagonist shows us a new gender identity to patriarchal society. She focuses the compromises between a man and a woman. She realizes that a man and a woman are two wheels of one in the patriarchal society. A woman cannot live without a man. Finally, her husband persuades her to return. Her sudden capitulation creates anti-climax situation in the novel. Then Sita packs all necessary clothes for the coming child, and prepares for the journey to Bombay.

This novel explains that compromise is the harmonious socio-familial situation where both a man and a woman in society have reciprocity of respect and comprehension of each other's feelings and ideas. So far as post-independence Indian women are concerned, they accept the feminine responsibilities prescribed by the Indian intellectual patriarchal society. They recognize themselves as an individual with her own ideas and emotions. Jasbir Jain comments on Indian woman: "She is simultaneously able to achieve two things-one, recognize the value of feminine virtues for society and human survival and second in the process also free them from the category of gender identity" (121).

Anita Desai looks at the burning problem of feminism as a contextual construction because of the variability of socio-economic and cultural set up of human society. Desai carries with her the very ideology and etiquettes of the society; her thoughts and actions are modeled upon the social mores and manners. She is differently situated in the global and local social context. Thus, feminism, for Desai, is heterogeneous and the relative that exceeds the universal sisterhood of women. Roy comments on Indian women, "Yong women what both career success and family intimacy" (35). Their real liberation lies in familial affection and encouragement. Familial affection supports with proper guidance and security.

Anita Desai's novel discovers the beauty and sweetness of human life through mutual understanding and reciprocation of love and respect. Commenting on her women, S.P. Swain says:

Anita Desai portrays women as not totally cut off from familial and social ties but or those who remain within these orbits and protest against monotony, injustice and humiliation. Woman in her novels is not a mere goddess or a robot but a self actualizing and self-realizing

individual. (105)

Desai's character undergoes crises of consciousness. In real life, they are alienated, lonely and misfit. To assert their existence, they try to find meaning in life which can sustain them. Desai projects the anxiety of the characters in their search for identity and meaning. In the mind of the central character, the past lives, full of sinister interpretation; the present is a burden pregnant with fear; the future is what is being sought by one who runs seeking loneliness. Her characters do not seek truth of life but a meaning of existence in the patriarchal society.

Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer!* describes the cruelty and callousness of urban life. It marks a return to the autonomous world of inner reality. When Sita is with child again she panics at the thought of bringing a new one. She runs away to a small Island to avoid the harsh reality. She struggles for a new gender identity in the society. Her sudden capitulation comes as an anti-climax. In this novel, Anita Desai probes into the crisis of an introvert woman who is bored and frustrated by her humdrum life and tries to escape into purposeless loneliness. Sita develops certain complexes. She realizes that she cannot live without family, children and husband. She is unable to go to maturity and turns into a complete misfit. She does not make up her mind to give birth to the fifth child because she has already felt uninvolved with her children. The agony and unhappiness in her soul spring from her unwillingness to go with the society.

Sita, in this novel, refuses to accept the cruel dictates of her patriarchal society. But she neither kills anyone nor commits suicide nor does she go mad. She simply compromises with her fate and learns the courage to face life boldly with all its ups and downs.

Anita Desai's novel is not a sociological phenomenon, rather it is psychic. She

sets herself seriously to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of millions of married women. These women are tormented by existential problems. They carry themselves a sense of loneliness, alienation and pessimism. Finally, in her novel, women are considered the realization of the meaning of life in the patriarchal society.

All in all, the novel introduces the inherent feature of association and community in women of India where people prefer interaction and sharing to alienation and selfishness, and the sense of self-respect in the patriarchal society. Desai's women characters favour accommodation, human interaction and mutuality to create a lively life in the patriarchal society. They have a thoughtful mind and realize the female's trouble.

Anita Singh describes freedom: "For Anita Desai, freedom implies liberty in person's independence, such as the nexus of ideas that make up the background of her conception of human life" (35). In her novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, there is the recognition that liberty is at once with creativity and that only pure freedom can make the world happy. Sita, in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, seeks her childhood-memorial as a refuge camp safe from her family life. By going there, she longs to connect the changes, distortions and revelations between the present and the past in her middle age, for a chance, she shelters in the Island.

Sujata Patel expresses Desai's thought by saying that: "She is acutely aware of differences that separate women ideologically as well as in practical socio-economic term" (5). The situatedness within the social environment creates the different notions and wishes in women and the different notions of liberation for women.

In this novel, Sita finds herself alienated from her husband and children. This sense of her alienation is because other emotional imbalances. The unhappy part of

her life is due to her inability to accept the values and the mode of attitude of her patriarchal society. She feels boredom and dullness in every individual. Her boredom and dullness are the greatest threats to her existence, so the heroine tries to visualize the world of her dreams in the patriarchal society. But ultimately, she intensifies her desire to recapture the experience and excitement in her. Therefore, she comes to a dilemma where shall they go that summer.

C.V. George comments on Desai's novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*: "Unravelling the mystery of the inner life of her characters, solitude and self-exploration are the recurring themes of her novels" (159). She presents such women who express the mute rebellion against an embarrassing situation as if they are afraid of dismantling the social order. The acute understanding of human psyche makes Desai examine the relative nature of the voices of women's liberation.

In this novel, the protagonist becomes conscious of the growing alienation in life because of the communication gap among family members. But her creative mind goes to the self-exploration that heals the alienated self.

My research tries to trace a new gender identity in Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* For this topic, I am going to apply the theories of gender identity of Judith Butler, Sedgwick and Ketu Katrak. I think the methodology, gender identity' will be applicable to prove this research.

II. Gender Identity

The terms 'gender' is used to refer to the social and cultural construction of masculine and feminine. It does not refer to biological difference, but rather to social context. The field emerged from number of different areas; the sociology of the 1960s and later the theories of the psychoanalyst, (Lacan and A his discontents) and the work of feminists such as Judith Butler Each field came to regard gender as a practice, sometimes referred to as something that is performativity of gender. As Simone de Beauvoir says, "One is not born a woman; one becomes one" (54).

Gender studies is a field of study which analyzes the phenomenon of gender. It examines both cultural representation of gender and people's lived experience. Gender study is sometimes related to studies of class, ace, ethnicity and location or geography. Study of gender has been undertaken in many academic areas, such as literary theory, performance theory, anthropology, sociology and psychology and psychoanalysis. The disciplines sometimes differ in their approaches to how and why they are study gender. For instance in anthropology, sociology, and psychology, gender is often examined Gender studies is also a discipline in itself, it is an interdisciplinary area of study. Gender, viewed from feminist perspective, is used to dominate women, gender is nothing more than the division of sexuality and men's domination over women. Sexuality constitutes gender, not vice versa. As Catherine Mackinson says: "Sexuality, then, is a form of power, gender, as socially constructed embodies it, not the reverse. Women and men are divided by gender made into the sexes, as we know them, by the social requirements of heterosexuality, which institution arise male" (60).

Gender studies provides a framework for describing how ideas and assumptions about biological sex and gender influence the political, social and cultural construction of

gender identities. It provides a framework for understanding, describing and defining how ideas and assumptions about gender influence every personal and professional aspect of human life. Some feminist critics have dismissed the work of Sigmund Freud as sexist, because of his view that women are mutilated and must learn to accept their lack of a penis. Karen Horney was one of the first to question the theory of penis envy. She argues: "it is the actual social subordination of women that shapes their development not to lack of me" organ, but of the privilege that goes with it" (25). The way in which an individual excludes their mother as means of forming, an identity is similar to the way in which societies are constructed. It contends that patriarchal culture like individual have had to exclude the maternal and the feminine. So that they can come into being. In the same way, the concept of gender performatively is at the core and the performance of gender, sex and sexuality is about power in society. It locates the constructions of the gender, sex, desiring subject in regulative discourse. Gender study concerns the role of sex in the construction of natural or coherent gender and sexuality. Both gender and sexuality are constructed as natural because the opposition of the male and female sexes are constructed as natural.

Gender studies focuses upon gender identity and gendered representations as central category of analysis. Gender studies uses the concept of gender to analyze a wide range of disciplines. Although lines of argumentation in gender identities are inspired by feminism, a broad variety of theoretical approaches are used to study the categories of gender. Gender studies include woman's identities, men's studies, and gay and lesbian studies. However, sex, gender identity and sexual identity refer to different aspects of oneself. Therefore, one may be any combination of sex (male/female), gender (masculine/ feminine), and sexual identity (straight, bisexual, lesbian/gay). In recent history, people oppressed on the basis of different sexual identities

(bio-sexual, lesbians, gay men) and people oppressed on the basis of gender identity have formed communities which are partly separate and partly overlapping with one another. Gender identity refers to how one thinks of own gender, whether one thinks of oneself as a man (masculine) or as a woman (feminine) . Society prescribes arbitrary rule or gender roles based on one's sex. These gender roles are called feminine and masculine. Anyone who doesn't abide by these arbitrary roles may be targeted for mistreatment ranging from not being included in-people's circle of friends through the verbal harassment, assault, rape and murder based on one's gender identity.

Subjectivity, Identity and the Female Self

The concepts of subjectivity and identity are closely connected and virtually inseparable. Subjectivity refers to the condition of being. It is the process which welcomes a person and makes people constituted as subject to social processes and the processes bring us to beings. The concepts that we hold to ourselves is the self identity or the personal identity. Goldsmith defines personal identity as, "Personal identity means more; it includes a subjective sense of continues existence and a coherent memory" (61). Subjectivity is related to the question: what is person? And identity enquires how we see ourselves how do others see us?

As subjectivity and identity are culturally constructed, what it means to be a person is social and cultural, so identities cannot exist outside of the cultural representations. All the cultures in the world use the pronoun 'I' so that they have the conception of self and personhood.

The word 'self refers to the inner being of a person, which directs and controls her/ his social interaction. A person has to acclimatize with the milieu where one lives, and the acclimatization develops into different human personality that varies

according to socio-cultural values. The elf in the western world describes us as having a true self an identity which we possess and which can become known to use. We take identity to be expressed through forms of representation which are recognizable by ourselves and by others. Identity can be signified through effects, beliefs attitudes and lifestyles. Identity is considered both social and personal and it makes one person different from another. Self-identity is what a person thinks himself or herself. Most western women are inclined towards an autonomous individual self. They tend to seek for their own dreams and desires for the future. Their self precedes the social relation. Observing the western female self, Alison prentice and Ruth Pierson say: "Women have a human need equal to men's for affection and emotional support but that for satisfaction of this need women should not have to make a greater sacrifice of autonomy than men" (164).

The individualistic attitude of western women encourages them to detest the biased socialization by which women internalize the feminine attributes like beauty, meekness and dependence to be the dolls of men. Adams presents Beauvoir's views on the socialization, "The feminine body is asked to be flesh but with discretion: it is to be slender and not loaded with fat; muscular, supple, strong" (100). They are interested in the kind of physical beauty that is for them. Most western women are sentimental and emotional. They regard the feelings and emotions as weaknesses that create fear, dependence and helplessness. Adams presents Wollstonecraft's comment on educational method: "Another instance of that feminine weakness of character, often produced by a confined education, is a romantic twist of the mind, which has been very properly termed sentimental" (emphasis added in the original 398). Feminine values such as caring, sharing, loving and nurturing weaken them and subordinate them to the male-suppression. Most western women prefer self-assertion,

and the self assertion encourages them to search for individual respect even in married life.

In the recent feminist theory, we find different attitudes towards subject and subjectivity. During the beginning years of women's movement in the 1960s and 70s there was the antagonistic view of subject the view was that the subjectivity should provide a rallying point against sexist ideas and against the ideology of patriarchy in 1971. Doris Lessing comments on her novel *The Golden Notebook* (1971) about the issue of subjectivity is:

When I began writing there was pressure on writers not to be subjectivity. The pressure began inside community movement, as a development of the social literary criticism developed in the nineteenth century by a group of remarkable talents of whom Belinsky was the but known. (12)

The movement in the 1960s and 1970s encouraged and nurtured as a force oppositional to patriarchy and it guided women to create their identity. Despite the varieties of feminist criticism the commonness which all feminist criticism share is the concept of patriarchy or sexism. All feminist critics believe that the entire cultural spectrum is dominated by the patriarchal value. Everywhere, in the political literary and philosophical system, there is the play of patriarchy and the woman is made to be subjugated by male. According to the patriarchal ideology, the male is the standard and the female is the subordinate. Female cannot get their identity under patriarchy. Women should always be under the rules of it. Hence, patriarchy restricting women are minority because they are dominated by both the white and black man. Women are also discriminated on the basis of class and color in the black communities. Feminism charges against the pervasive patriarchal ideology, its culture, its values, its

insufficiency and one sidedness. Thus, in short, rejecting the notions of male superiority tries to elevate women's status in society and at the same time tries to erase all misinterpretation of women-ness created by society and culture.

Feminism and Gender Issue

Feminism and the issue of gender are interrelated. Feminism could not get its completeness apart from gender issue. Feminist critics hold 'gender' as their primary matter for discussion. It is obvious that gender is primarily a social construct where certain roles are assigned to each gender. Gender, of course, does not have any relation with human anatomy but is completely a social construct. Feminists' issue, regarding the suppression of women, is that the attitude of the society which is biased towards men) labels certain abilities and responsibilities to each gender, where men are thought to be superior to women in every aspect. Thus, "Most feminist theorists agree in rejecting the view that gendered traits are essential aspects of being a biological male or a biological female and treat gender difference as a socially constructed mode of organizing society and culture" (Longino 24).

The origin of women's voice against male dominated is a kind of political consciousness of the inferiority of women in comparison to men. Women in the west are economically and academically advanced. They have realized the undervalued position of women imprisoned within the narrow domestic world of mothering the house managing, and the biasness in the field of education and employment. As a result, they are demanding for proper place of women in the society. Nancy F. Cott examines the origin of women's movement: such consciousness of [...] inferiority was the first group-consciousness likely to produce a feminist movement, because it acknowledge cultural and social determinants of women's capabilities as well as divine and natural ones, and thus allowed for the possibility of change" (The Bonds

202). The revolutionary origin has given an impetus to the development of historical feminist figures.

Historical feminist personalities have raised a strong voice for woman's liberation from the biased male-tyranny or women. Mary Wollstonecraft in the eighteenth century attempted to liberate women from male dominating motives hidden in the emphasis of feminine features like neckness, humility, and childishness. Unraveling the bases of women socialization whereby they are taught to be feminine, Wollstonecraft indicates the fault in the process of the socialization. She detests the then false education system that inspired women to love at the expense of reason, and encouraged women to study medicine, business, and mathematics. Rosemarie Tong examines Wollstonecraft's view about women's education that they should "be provided with a real education, one that sharpens and focuses her mind and gives her a chance to develop her national and moral capacities. Her full human potential." So, Mary Wollstonecraft raised her voice in support of the education and emancipation of woman in *A Vindication of Rights of Women* (1792) which gave momentum to feminism. In the essay she says:

Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice. (398)

In these lines, Wollstonecraft shows that the patriarchal society's norms and values turn women not only to adopt metaphysical notions but also leads them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, adopting passion, which restricts them to get proper

education and training.

Similarly, Virginia Woolf, one of the distinguished twentieth century feminist writers, gave the first blow on patriarchal structure and a great contribution in the field of feminist theories with her famous work *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Woolf in the essay says that the social and economic obstacles extended before women always restrict their creativity. She says women can not create their literary works being imprisoned within the domestic premises. According to her, due to patriarchal social norms and values in the past prevented women writers to write openly because the work was considered as a sin. So, Virginia Woolf advocates for the radical change in the conception of family and social life. She refutes the traditional view about women that they are submissive, and cried for a separate space for women in literature and society because they are also independent human beings like men.

On the other hand, Simone de Beauvoir, another 20th century feminist writer, established the principles of modern feminism in her *The Second Sex* (1949). It appeared as an encyclopedic in its coverage offering historical, biological and psychological perspectives on women a consideration of prevailing patriarchal myth about women, and as an account of female love and sexuality in virtually all of its forms. She has brought a widespread consciousness on the part of women, pointing to the socio-historical construction of women. She contends the socialization that persuades women to be sexy and to be flesh for the mere entertainment of male ego. She shows that the males as 'one' define women. The male writers create myths which restricts the freedom of women as men have. According her, our language conditions us to speak of mankind instead of humankind and to use the masculine pronoun 'he' to represent both men and women. So, to break the patriarchal dominance upon women, it is necessary to challenge men at the level of theory for feminists but without

entering into the theoretical domain on men's terms. Rather, she creates a mentality for women to be self-assertive and determinate able to tackle with impediments, and to liberate them from the social construction of femininity. Jane Freedman says that her "Distinction between biological sex and the social creation of the eternal feminine" is a precursor of the distinction between sex and gender that is common in much feminist theory" (14).

After the women liberation movements of the late 1960s, the impact of feminism began to be felt in literary criticism which was known as the contemporary feminist criticism. It moved forward progressively with Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) and reached its height during the 60s with American Showalterian concept of Gynocentricism. According to K.K. Ruthven, the central hypothesis of feminist literary criticism is that "gender is a crucial determinant in the production, circulation and consumption of literary discourse" (9). But within this school two schools have emerged- those who analyze writings by male authors to see how women characters are portrayed and those who analyze women writers themselves (sometimes called the gynocritics). Elaine Showalter lucidly defines this term as a concern with, "Women as writers... the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition" (47).

Millet in *Sexual Politics* emphasizes that women should be given power to develop their personalities economic status and literary career. She thinks that patriarchy is the main cause of women's suppression and subordination. Kate Millet has further led the women revolution making a connection between the personal and the private world. Maggine Human presents her remark, "The personal is political" (1975). It is by scrutinizing the personal level internally at home that we can

comprehend suppression on women at broad level, and it is by addressing the collective issues related with men's power and upper position that we can reconstruct and reform the structure, which ultimately influences women's life in personal law.

The decisions made by the public sector on the field of women, childcare, and family planning ultimately affect the private life of women. Radical feminists like Kate Millett take patriarchal ideology as the main cause of women's subordination. She says that patriarchal ideology always encourages women for traditional roles as wife, daughter, and mother as ideal ones. It, as Millet says:

Eaggerates biological difference between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant or masculine, roles, and the women always love the subordinate, or feminine ones. This ideology is patriarchally powerful because through conditioning men very women they oppress. (96)

In *Sexual Politics* (1970), she views that male-female relationship is the paradigm for all relationships. She says that "social caste supercedes all the forms of in egalitarianism: racial, political or economic, and unless the clinging to male supremacy as a birth right is finally forgone all systems of oppression will continue simply by the virtue of their logical and emotional mandate in primary human condition (96).

The "Me' movement emerged for social change in the 1970s produced a new consciousness for social change because of the impossibility of negation of anything. The era has aroused women to the point of radical dethronement of the male orient society by the enthronement of female culture. It was the period when all forces of human-life searched for self-identity and selfhood. Yolande Cohen

describes the milieu: "It aimed first to realize the total self actualization of the individual in the here and now" (355). The period of incredible energy and excitement influenced the women's movement all over the world.

Women in almost every culture are subordinate to men and are responsible for domestic life. This situation has stifled the actual potentiality of women. Feminist critics see this predicament as the product of gendered society and calls for women's equal position, equal opportunity and equal treatment in the society as well. Feminists believe that masculine or feminine features are merely a social construct, which could be removed in favour of gender equality. Helen E. Longino clarifies this situation as, "The constructivist conception of gender contrasts sharply with that, still characteristics of our culture, which specifies that there are two basic types of human being; male and female, and that certain traits, behaviour and occupations are appropriate for each type: masculine and feminine are natural kinds" (24).

Human beings make "structure" and they themselves are trapped within it. Social structure directs every member of the society. Of course, it is very difficult to be releases of this social trap but not impossible. Feminist critics are always optimistic for the situation where gender equality, between men and women, consist. The methods of feminist literary study include specifying, patterning and approximating systems that include us, which are employed to discover and change the gendered literary cultural system. Sherry B. Orther's *Making Gender* advocates gender as constructed phenomenon- "Within a practice framework, there is an insistence as in earlier structural-determinist models, that human action is constrained by the given social and cultural order, but there is also an insistence that human action makes "structure"- reproduces or transforms it, or both" (2).

The prevailing gender inequality is, in fact, an obstacle for harmonious

society. Both the suppressor and suppressed should recognize the situation. To bring women within the mainstream of the society, feminists, always, have been struggled. Both the gender commitment as well as determination could finally be able to achieve the goal for:

[We] have "making" from the actor's point of view. The question is how actors "enact", "resist" or "negotiate" the world as given, and in so doing "make" the world. This making may turn out to produce the same old social and cultural thing- "reproduction". Or it may turn out to provide something new, although not necessarily what the actors intended. (Orther 1)

Feminist literary critics study ideas about sex and gender that people express in literary and critical media. Gender traits, actually, originate in idea, not matter.

Feminist literary critics study the idea expressed by people about sex and gender.

Feminist study has been defined as the study of the dynamics of gender definition, inequality, oppression and change in human societies. Gender could be the central matter for discussion in feminist studies as:

To the extent that gender is that at the definitional center of feminist studies, "gender studies" can something be used as an alternative name for feminist studies, euphemistic only in not specifying, as the "feminist" label more than implicitly does, how far inequality, oppression and struggle between gender may be seen as differentially constituting gender itself. (Sedgwick 271)

Women's Empowerment in Indian Society

The issue of women's empowerment has become central to Indian policy making process as well as in society. Women's empowerment is not a myth. It is now

a reality and need of the hour. The great philanthropist Swami Vivekananda rightly said, "All nations have attained, greatness, by paying proper respects to the women, that country and that nation which does not respect the women have never become great, not will ever be in future" (1). Women's full participation is essential to achieve the goal of women's empowerment. Women constitute 48.09 percent of India's population. Her role in each and every field of the society is increasing day by day.

Today, the Indian state has accepted women's empowerment, women as active agents, participating in and guiding their own development. Susheela Kaushik says, "Politics means collective endeavour for social transformation that empowers women to fight any form of oppression, exploitation, injustice and degradation" (2). The twentieth century has been an era of vigorous reawakening, in the areas of women's political, economic and social rights. She similarly echoed, "Politics is present in all spheres of our social life, including areas like the domestic world of family and personal relationships, which it is generally assumed fall outside its domain".

Women's problem will be solved by women themselves. This would require women's empowerment. It is a well recognized fact that empowering of many more women are needed to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of millions of women who have an overwhelming faith in the leadership of women. The primary goal of the women's empowerment is the creation of a just, democratic and equal society. For gender equality, development and social justice may have been a shared dream. But there is a difference between the dreamers. And that makes all the difference. With the emergence of gender as one of the key issues of human progress, women who have been identified as a disempowered and therefore a non-productive sector, need to be brought into the mainstream of development.

Instead of merely adding a gender agenda to a development plan drawn up by the gender insensitive, the goal should be to redraw it by mainstreaming women's

perspectives. It is this empowerment strategy which has emerged as India's response to the challenges of equality, development and peace. For women to be truly empowered it is necessary to provide an expanding network of services so that they are freed from some of their gender related shackles of a practical nature and are also enabled to aspire to the actualization of their strategic gender needs.

Decentralization is essential for effective mainstreaming of women's concerns in development. As individuals and representatives of interest groups, women should be encouraged to participate in political institutions and process.

Gender discrimination is a universal phenomenon. Women were/ are excluded from positions of power. They were denied and continue to be denied opportunities to participate in the decision making process. Even when the decisions are to affect their own being, they are only passive observers. Women themselves, to a great extent, were responsible for their backwardness. Women chose to play, for centuries, only the roles of a daughter, sister, wife, mother etc. The female identity had its focus on nurturance, motherhood and house-making as the primary role and women themselves were reluctant to change.

Why is women's participation so important for their empowerment and development? The answer is very simple and straight. Firstly, there can be no real power in democratic world without the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life and at different levels of decision making. Secondly the goals of development with human face cannot be attained without women's full participation not only in the development process, but also in shaping its goals, targets. Thirdly, women's participation is changing the world in which men live by bringing new priorities and perspectives to the political process and the organization of Indian society.

Gendered Activities in Indian Society

Indian society is the society of integration, association and assimilation. The society inspires women to find their significance in connection with other people. It possesses the value of co-ordination to chaos and disagreement. The very inclination to assimilation has included all discordant tendencies of human beings, and has created a whole, which is variegated, yet united.

Unlike the western women's movement that emerged from inferiority to men, the Indian women's movement emerged from the social evils like child marriage, dowry system and purdah system practiced by male-oriented society on the name of, religion. For Indian women, emancipation lies in the absence of the social injustices. While fighting for women's liberation, the Indian prioritized the developmental activities like women education, health and wealth to produce a self-dependent woman.

Indian mythological exemplars have powerfully influenced the mode of thought and costume, feeling, expectation, and dreams of Indian women. Indian people worship the mythological figures. Kathryn Hansen accepts the unavoidability of the myths, "The patterns of women's lives, their expectations and ideal, their orientation to social reality are significantly shaped by the models of womanly conducts set out in stories, legends and songs preserved from the past" (257). Sita, a wife to Rama in the *Ramayan*, is regarded as a chaste, diligent and self-sacrificing spouse. She is the symbol of wifely duty and perfect familial duty. Simultaneously, she is a resilient mother who produced adventurous sons- Lava and Kush- who could challenge their own father, Rama. Accordingly, Draupadi, wife to five Pandavas in the *Mahabharata*, possesses a firm self-respecting will, and a devotion to her husband's progress and security. Yet, she did not bear the loss other honor and

prestige. Shakambari Jayal writes about the bloom and strong self of Draupadi, "With her delicate beauty she combined on iron will, and thus could pronounce her choice firmly" (255). The mythological figures have been inspiring forces for historical figures in the Indian culture.

Infact, Indian culture and evolution were generated from powers of women the whole universe seems to be the creation by Shakti. The creator Brahma, the preserver Vishnu and the destroyer Shiva are all supposed to be working with the power behind them. personified as their wives; the Saraswath, the goddess of knowledge, is the wife of the creator "Brahma", Lakshmi, the goddesses of wealth, as a wife to Vishnu, the preserver. The Shakthi-Parvathi, supports Shiva as a wife by providing the power of destruction. In ancient India, women were warriors, rulers and saints. They were respected highly and revered greatly. Whether this is true or a mythology, these factors indicate the importance of women in developing societies.

In 1987 AWARE has trained women and organized as a separate brigade which is known as Chaitanya Shakti "Chaitanya" means awareness and "Shakti" means power personified in women. For the last years 2850 women were trained in our Human Resource Development Centre at Bhagwatipurarm. After the training these women went back to their villages and undertook educating the women with a plan of action for political concretization and socio religious debates. They organized Federation of Mahila Mandalis with membership of 1.80,000 Tribal and Harijan women as members. As a result of their continued organization they resisted domination of men and even completed with men for leadership.

While this socio-political struggle continues through the programmes of Chaitanya Shakti, to make women stronger and economically independent. The

independent earning of Indian women "ends up as an additional responsibility undertaken for family, often to support an unemployed or underdeveloped husband" (qtd. In Krishnaaraj 2-3). Self-dependence in economic matter, even though it creates an occasion for women to broaden understanding, is relegated to the value of household activities. Chatterjee says: "In fact, women's engagement in productive and income generating tasks is not distinct and isolated from those of cooking of food, caring of children, etc, nor does such engagement on the part of women free from their normal household obligations" (1). As they feel attached with familial values, they tend to spend their income in the betterment of family's economic status. For Indian women, economic independence means to help familial members and to fulfill their duty and responsibility in the family. Moreover, their connectedness with familial members attracts them into the world of family, sacrificing the individuality inside them. The family oriented nature prevents them from demanding divorce from husbands.

The post-independence Indian women yearn for the kind of knowledge that provides them liberty and creates a consciousness of their selves as real human beings. Meena Kelkar and Deepti Gangavane explain:

Knowledge does not mean information (or knowing what) or just theoretical knowledge, but that knowledge which makes them aware of their own existence as real human beings. It is that which liberates one from the old fetters of thoughts and provides wings of thoughts. (25)

Das further explores the significance of education: "Education plays a significant role in removing hackneyed perceptions and is a means of change" (176). Education provides a new flight and realization of the dignity of women selves as human beings. Education vitalizes the hidden invigorating capacity and ingenuity inside the women

to be open-minded to grasp the new opportunity. Education creates an awareness of being humans in the women.

The female workers are not treated as the male workers because their biological differences are considered disabilities; actually these biological differences are not their faults. So they should be provided compensation instead of discriminating negatively. In jobs, the females' time off for pregnancy and child birth, is taken against job or duty but the males' time off for illness is not taken as such. So, the procreation and parenting status are rooted in social policies, not biological differences.

The Indian society could be typical example of a gendered society. We know that gender is largely determined by one's rearing and may or may not conform to the individual's biologically determined sexual identity. In the Indian patriarchal society, while a son is treated as a permanent member of the family, a daughter is viewed as a transient member. This discriminative attitude starts with their birth and remains until the end. The Hindu law, which has its origin in ancient Sanskrit texts and old customs, also assigns special role to male and female subordinating females to males.

In the Indian patriarchal society, women's duties for example, good daughters, good wives, and good mothers, are well defined. They are supposed to behave as a candid domestic creature where:

Wifhood and motherhood are accepted as pivotal roles for women: by implication, these roles complete in themselves and women need not pursue any specialized discipline of knowledge, art or profession. The good woman is sweet, gentle, loving, caring and ever sacrificing.

(Desai and Thakur 1)

In a gendered society, males have control over each and every vital decision, but females are given the rights to decide upon trivial matters. It is a predicament that

females are compelled to thought to own those limited rights. The decision on marriage, alliances of daughter and sons, buying, selling and maintaining family property, day-to-day behaviour are controlled by the patriarch in alliance with others male members. The domestic front, especially household maintenance, is in the charge of the eldest female member. It is her duty to look after the day-to-day domestic needs of family members and also to control other younger female members and teach them to follow the patriarchal rules and regulations.

Violence upon women, in various forms, is seen far and wide in Indian society. Its wide prevalence and pervasiveness has disturbed the society, which is also damaging women's health, psyche and perception of the self. The cases of rape, dowry violence, adultery and prostitution have appeared as major problems in the society. A data shows that most of the murdered women are killed by their husbands and others by their own family members. It is extremely difficult for a wife in a traditional Hindu society to go to the court against her husband or family because of her financial dependence, lack of education and information and above all, social pressure.

In the nineteenth century, women activist pleaded for the education of women to make them better partner for their husband, in the last century education was for their empowerment, and today they are pleading for their right to education as citizen. Educational awareness has provided better opportunities to the woman than before in the Indian society. Different movements also regarded the social injustices to be bad and supported women's liberation from the evils. Social reform in the nineteenth century advocated for the ideals of Vedic period that allowed women to exercise their inner potentialities. Swarn Dayanand Saraswati, Swarn Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Raja Rammohan Roy favored for women's upliftment and participation in literary career, teaching, medicine, business and other facets of worldly affairs like

women in-Vedic period. Anjani Kanti writes: "In the nineteenth century, India began to discover her long cherished ideals and cultural self-consciousness [...]. The reforms, who advocated the emancipation of women, aspired the restoration of such healthy and congenial conditions which one prevailed in the early Vedic period.

The nineteenth century social reform movement was an era devoted to the elevation of the status of women. The charisma of the social reformers and the dawn of women's emancipation could take firm roots because of a willing acceptance of the lot of women of an ascribed status. That women are to be led by men was an ideology firmly rooted in Indian society and women's uplift did not create destructive anti-reform waves due to this cultural dictate of the then existing social order. Another pair of upheld values in Indian society is that of sacrifice and suffering for a cause and both these characters of the social reform movement acted as the sustaining forces of this movement. The third positive force was the feudal characteristic of Indian society. The earliest social reformers belonged to the elite class of zamindars and thus they did not face the severe opposition their counterparts in Maharashtra did. Maharshi Karve, Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar did. Coming from the common class or even the depressed classes happened to be a source of intense suffering of these three reformers. This suffering went a long way towards the sustainability of the social reform promoted by these three persons. At times the suffering became a much stronger driving force than their charisma. Charisma bears the risk of being short lived while sufferings of leaders given depth and life to the reform they direct. To conclude, those were the days of sustainability of movements by the contemporary value systems. Women were willingly allowed by Indian society to follow the social leaders. What, then, did the social reform contribute to the self-image of the woman? It was still the status of the follower and worshipper of the leader. These values have

changed over the advent of the twentieth century when society began to consider these as obsolete.

Along with social reform, the national movement for the freedom of India from the unwanted reign of British people has become a touchstone for women to realize their potentiality. The participation of women in the movement has strengthened them to endure atrocities, and created the national feelings. The then prevalent notion that Indian to Indian people is like a mother, emphasized the liberation of India in the liberation of Indian women from the social oppression. Furthermore, Gandhian ideology spooked them to pursue the dictates of their own conscience, and to believe in their intellect. Ronald J. Terchek and Nitis Das Gupta evaluate the movement: "The Gandhi-led freedom struggle in India ushered in a new era of consciousness on the part of Indian women and thus is an important step towards the emancipation of Indian women" (36). Gandhi was in the opinion that women should be self-assertive, yet they have to comprehend duty and responsibility towards nation and family.

British women missionaries in India taught Indian women to be individuals. Kanti says, "Under the western impact, Indian women experienced an air of freedom and the stir of the new era [...]. It brought to women a total new concept of themselves as persons individually important and nationally needed" (61). As it is impossible to escape away from the current of western individualistic culture, the Indian women assert their individuality within the circle of national culture.

In short, different social, cultural and historical backgrounds have shaped the direction of women's liberation movement in the present. Western women have an individualistic, self-respecting, and political background that has made them aware of the depressed position in the western world, and has urged them to dismantle the

present social structure. On the other hand, Indian women have a strong connection with the traditional value of Indian culture, but at the same time, they cannot live separate from the socio-cultural rules permitted in the western world.

Thus, the Indian society is bounded within gender phenomenon. The discriminative attitude between men and women has become a major problem to form society based on equity.

A woman's entire life is spent in maintaining and sustaining the family physically, emotionally and psychologically, but it is always undermined. Even now, after so many years of independence, women suffer inequality, domination and exploitation. Fundamental rights and progressive laws are limited within papers, which are almost ineffective to change the status of Indian women. Women are sometimes said to be equal to men and consequently judged by the same standards, again said to be different from men, and hence deserve different treatment. This issue is seen more complex in the post-independent Indian society.

The Indian society needs reformation from the grass-root level. Gender relations in the family have to be transformed into egalitarian norms so that a woman is not sacrificed at the altar of suffering and service. In short, the Indian women broaden their psyche with the acceptance of their intellectual and physical capability. They prefer the kind of knowledge that brings them liberation and freedom from the shackles of traditional beliefs about women. And they do not hesitate to go far from the world of joint family.

In the following chapter, I will analyze Desai's text *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* using the theoretical basis developed under Indian women's identity and self-fulfillment in the patriarchal society.

III. New Gender Identity in Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*

Desai in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* yearns the subtle kind of knowledge that provides women liberty and creates a consciousness of their selves as real human beings of the post-independence Indian society. Here, knowledge makes them aware of their own co-existence as real human beings. These women's feelings towards individualistic self enables them to find their value as human beings and share human emotions like happiness, rage, fear and resentment.

The existential alienation and despair of Desai's women characters turn into an insistent longing for death, their hollowness and personal dignity in the family where they live. Sita, a wife to Raman, the factory owner, becomes hopeless and alienated even in her own family because of the indifferent and self-centered demeanour her husband and her own children. Her distress rises and makes her insensitive, cruel and alien to her husband, her own children and the ayahs who work in her house. Her self feels humiliated when the surrounding does not care for her. Her insanity drives her back to preserve the sense of sanity by escaping from her routine life in a Bombay apartment to rush to Manor. Her bondage to Raman and children creates conditions as those are responsible for the misfortunes. She is termed mad and she is entirely out of the common chord of life. In plain words she tells her husband: What I am doing is trying to escape from the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to the sane again..." (32).

She feels no genuine happiness in her marital context. People do not try to comprehend her innermost feelings. Moreover, Sita loses her grip on life and develops in mind uncertain and unrealistic attitude towards life. She wants to visit different places alone hoping to build a determinate self to cope with the impediments of life. She boldly reveals her intention to Raman: "I want to protect my unborn child against the cruel atmosphere in which I am living" (31-32). In a freak of madness she

aims at abortion and flies to 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. His legend was still here in this house- in the green tinge of the night shadows, the sudden slam of a wooden shutter, the crepitation of rain on the roof- and he might work another miracle, posthumously. She had come on a pilgrimage, to beg for the miracle of keeping her baby unborn. (28)

Though she rebels against the birth of the fifth child, she has certain longing in her hearts which she misses entirely.

Sita has grown tired of the life of dullness and disappointment of her family. She wants to seek her childhood as a place of her happiness again. This Island may provide her a refugee camp safe from her family life, away from the humdrum life of Bombay. Her longings or lust for the miracles associate her vision and she finds no answers to her deep anguish, rather herself like a jelly-fish stranded on the sand-bar slowly suffocating and unable to survive on the sands of life. For a change in her present existence she desires shelter in the Island, "She saw that Island illusion is a refuge, a protection. It would hold her baby safely unborn, my magic. Then there would be the seal, it would wash the frenzy out other, drawn it. Perhaps, the tides would lull the children too, into smoother, softer beings" (91).

Sita attempts for a futile search for some purpose in life. Her anxiety, concern and pessimism produce emotional outbursts and she undergoes a search for an escape to be alive to her sensitivity. Her arrival at Manori has given her a new life, a new awareness, a new consciousness, she now realizes "what a fare marriage was, all human relationship" (36). She visualizes the world of her

dreams and once again, she intensifies her desire to recapture an experience, an excitement and innocence.

Desai shows us that Sita is trying to adjust in the house of her husband's parents after marriage. There Sita feels like a square peg in a round hole. The sub-human atmosphere in the house makes her inward-looking and places her in a suffocating existence. She fails to adopt herself to patriarchal society. She moves in a small flat and lives alone with her husband and children. Her life there is hardly better, her privacy is disturbed, she finds her own identity at stake, she struggles with the monotony of life. The novelist beautifully describes the monotonous moments of Sita as follows:

She sat there smoking, not even looking at the sea any more, till she exclaimed, ' Bored? How? Why? With what? And could not begin to comprehend her boredom. She herself looking on it, saw it stretched out so vast, flat, so deep, that in fright she scrambled about it, searching for a few of these moments that proclaimed her still alive, not quite drowned and dead. (45)

The agonies and the chain of unhappy incidents in Sita's life make her a strong character to refuse the dictates of the patriarchal society. She does not desire to live like a saint, a magician and as the original inhabitants of Manori with Moses and Meriam, but she struggles on social principles in the patriarchal society. When Raman comes to take Manaka for admission to the medical college, his arrival gives Sita some sort of satisfaction but at the same time she comes to realize once again the cold actualities of life. Though it is not a positive solution of her problem yet she looks within herself and a sense

of cowardish approach and escapism overpowers her. She feels:

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 to offer it an alternative, a life unlived, a life beartched. She had cried out her great "No" but now the time had come for her epitaph to be written *che free per villate it grass rifiute*.

Very soon how that would have been written. (128)

The confident character Jamila is a wife of the tea shop owner in the Island Manori who has been a co-worker with her husband in the shop. She is optimistic and confident character who visualizes her family by working hard. She is very firm and dominating in the shop where people are making loud noise. She creates peace among the people who are quarrelling loudly in her activity where they are drinking cashew nut spirits and talking. She controls them by saying: "keep quiet, joy, we can hear you all right, we are not deaf" (10). She succeeds in creating silence and peace in the shop due to her audacious and self-confident self. She struggles for her own identity in the patriarchal society. She is very strong woman who shows her own activities to many islanders through peace and silence.

Similarly, other female character Menaka, "By the time she was ten- a supercilious, self-contained, and beautiful girl- she has made up her mind to be a doctor" (108), has a judging mind capable to decide about her life. She tears the paintings even though her mother denies the act. She refutes the sentiments that Sita shows towards her paintings by saying: "If they are bad- why not?" (46). To be a doctor is the conscious decision taken by her mind whereas to be a painter is the decision taken by her mother's heart.

The relatedness with the bygone life hovers around Sita. When she is in the Island house without any light, her mind goes back to the bright and clean room of Bombay and the present looks like a terrible event. The face of Moses in the darkness creates fear in Sita, and she unwillingly resorts to the Bombay life:

'Here !' she cried in a panic other whole body ached with a shrill insistence and the thought flickered through her of 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. 'Bring the luggage in', she ordered. 'Get the beds made. And food- haven't you got any food made?' (26).

Sometimes Sita's feeling towards the past appears as love and companionship. She becomes energetic when she hears that the lady doctor in Bombay asked about her health. "'Oh what did you say?' Sita asked, entranced by the thought that there was someone on the mainland, who remembered her, called her name, asked about her condition and future. She felt shaken as by the unexpected love (120-121)". Sita's sharing with the feelings in the lady doctor in the trembling of her heart due to the affection and care as shown by the doctor as if someone is there to comprehend the pain at her pregnancy. Accordingly, her attachment with her childhood comes with innocence and delight. Sita says, "'We used to play', [...], 'Jivan and I- such games on the beach, together'" (102). Even the playing contains the sense of companionship and sharing.

Menaka has developed the kind of physique that the Indian society generally wants women to build— slim and gentle, "She was so slim, so perfectly made, her clear skin held her together so tautly and purely, her discipline and her instincts seemed inviolable" (42). Menka has feelings for her friends in Bombay though she is

in Manori. As soon as the talking of Bombay is started, she asks her father, Raman about her friends: "At the first open mention of Bombay, even Menaka flowered. She dipped her long lashes and murmured, 'Have you seen Neera, Papa? Did you speak to Neera?'" (125). The discussion of Bombay creates a kind of vibration of hope and enthusiasm in her. The common but the most influential aspect of relatedness in her even with animals can be understood in her realization of the Oxen's pain:

The young girl glared at him with a ferocity a man would surely feel, as he casually beat the bullock across its jutting hip bones, dug his whip into the soft flesh between the legs and gripped and twisted its tail, but moses did not feel it— his back was broad, his hide was thick it yielded only perspiration. The boy laughed and cried together almost hysterically in pain and terror that did not quite obliterate the excitement of the adventure. (20)

The feeling of connectedness with the past people creates an ambience of remembrance and realization of the absence of the people in the past. Desai's women characters like Jamia is displayed in the course of conversation with the Island habitants in the shop: "It has long ago they lived on the Manori, moses, 'Jamila said, placatingly. She leant against the wall, raised on horny food and scratched it reminiscently. 'Out children won't remember'" (10). Jamila, who is shouting at moses because of his loud voice becomes pacified and calm while talking about Sita's family. The relatedness of feelings and remembrance erase the physical and temporal distance between Jamila and Sita's family. The movement of Jamila's hand scratching the hornyfood implies the strong psychological connection with the past. Moreover, she becomes overwhelmed with the good and altruistic nature of Sita's father who had dug a well to the island dwellers when she regards the death of the cow in the well as

a fortunate incident for a cow. She evaluates the drowning, "How fortunate the cow that drowned in it and other day. 'How sweet must have been her death', Sang Jamila, moving about them, refilling their glasses, touching them on the shoulders, reminding" (12).

In fact, the relatedness with surrounding world brings the feelings of happiness among these women. The intimate relationship is displayed when the arrival of Sita in the island brings a far-reaching and ineluctable smile on the face of the island woman. Her arrival at Manori has given a new life, a new awareness and a new consciousness. Though Sita is coming to the island after twenty years but she is disappointed with the islanders, and they felt equally disappointed with her. There are impossible expectations on both sides. The misunderstanding between Roman and Sita results into marital discord, but Sita, as an ideal wife, tries to idealise the relationship between a husband and a wife. She feels that a life of complete inwardness and subjective approach is not the way to make one's life happier. Though she has begun to drift away mentally she indulges sometimes in introspection and sometimes in retrospection of her unhappy married life. She is disgusted with her life and her alienation is inherent in her relationship with her father. Naturally, she is unable to maintain conformity with the established norms and values of the patriarchal society. Though she tries to encounter it affectively but she misses to communicate her reaction against every incident. Thus, she is left like a stranger longing for the life of a primitive world. She wants to go away from the madness produced by the communication gap between her and her husband: she wants to live in the place where people can comprehend her feelings and emotions.

The feelings towards self-respect is disclosed in the escape of Sita's mother from the conjugal life with Sita's father. Her running away becomes a search for

identity. Jeevan, Sita's brother says: "She didn't die- she ran away, to Benaras" (76).

Even in the life of Benares, she visits houses to houses for her survival:

Where did she go with her lota filled with Ganga's water? Up the stairs
down the narrow alley still blackened with night as with kohl, edging
past a white bull that calmly chewed the garlands offered to the many
altars of the city, hurrying up another, narrower flight of stairs through
which the fine roots of a banyan tree silently insinuated themselves;
through the arched doorway of an old, rimed house- whose house?
What room? And why? (78)

There is a consciousness of her existence and future in the running away from the familial life. Indian women have a strong sense of relatedness with their husbands and marriage bond. In Desai's novel, Sita after the death of her father devotes her mind in study, keeping a temporary abstention from the thought of marriage, and succeeds in utilizing the opportunity brought by Deedar's son, Raman, "Deedar's son came to cremate her father, shut the house, fetch her away, send her to college, install her in a college hostel" (89). Similarly, Menaka is also devoted in study which Raman as an educated fellow of the post-independent India supports her, "The college admissions have begun [...] she wants to apply for admission to the medical college. She has to appear for an interview. I've come to fetch her" (122). Her career becomes more important for her than marriage.

Sita wants security and company in her life. Her close observation of the shells close to stones demonstrates her dream for security, "Look; said Sita. bending to show them how shells seemed always to search for security, attaching themselves to a stone, there forming layer on crusted layer, or to a strand of sea weed, clinging to it like so many pearls to a string" (113-114). The shells represent innermost feelings of

Sita to get support and to live in community; she finds a shelter under husband's love. She becomes childlike and weak in front of Raman, "She felt so weak, she wanted to lay down her head and weep. 'My father's dead- look after me'" (120). She finds her husband's company as the only warm place where she gets solace and consolation. Sita's dream and expectation lie in the companionship and diligence towards Raman with whom she feels happiness and beauty of her life. A lovely company with Raman is heavenly bliss for Sita, which she displays on the "quite divine" (133) meeting of the two people in the garden. It is in the tenderness of Raman that she gets pleasure, and the moment becomes "the only happy moment of [...] [her] life" (134).

On the other hand, Jamila also likes to remain with her husband. She controls the people in the shop and takes an initiative in keeping order in the shop. Her husband has ordered her to create peace there. Her husband says: "Jamila, keep order in there" (10). She silently obeys him as if she does not do any work without his assent. She has accepted her position under the husband who is the owner of the tea shop. Similarly Miriam is introduced as "Miriam, my wife" (57) by Moses. Miriam is mute and acquiesces her social identification as told by her husband. These women like to carry on their married life managing the self-fulfillment and liberation within the framework of marriage in the patriarchal society. The conjugal life affects their feelings and attitude towards household activities.

Desai's women find the value of their earning within the boundary of familial support from the patriarchal society. They are prone to make their, survival and go outside to work. They have to bear the responsibility towards their children and family. Jamila appears at the very beginning of the novel as the woman who is earning and supporting her family: "This was the domain of the tea shop owner's wife, Jamila. She cackled to see him come and served him his favorite cashew nut spirits in

a thick, smeared glass" (8). Her earning becomes the support for her husband to conduct her family. Similarly, the dependence of women on men for survival comes in Raman's family. Raman says to Sita: "you have lived comfortably, always in my house. You've not had worries" (134). And she does not comment on the statement produced by the male-oriented psyche of Raman. Sita is independent on Raman's income and lives in his house. Even Menaka, his daughter, expects her father's economic help for her further study.

Desai's women characters tend to assert respect and compension of their sexuality from men, remaining within the traditions of Indian society. At the same time, they accept the Indian culture that expects chastity from women, and advocates heterosexual relation. Desai's women refute the excessive burden of going through pregnancy that can ruin their health. Sita is quite bold enough to defy the ill health brought by her delivery. She explains her mental pain and fear, "'I'm not pleased, I'm frightened; she hissed through her teeth; frightened'" (29). As she grew older- in her mid forties, the pregnancy becomes poignant and fearful. But her husband Raman cannot comprehend her feelings, and she becomes pregnant the fifth time. She, as a representative of the whole Indian race, rebels against the insensitive and incomprehensive attitude of males-dominate. She reveals her anger at Raman, "'What do you know about my condition' she flared. 'I've told you- I've tried to tell you but you haven't understood a thing', and hurled slippers, papers nightgowns" (30). She pours her inner rage at the selfishness of Raman by throwing the things.

Desai's Sita revolts against the dominating outlook of Raman by going to Manori. The journey of Sita from Bombay to the Island with two children and one in her womb is a great challenge for Sita, but she easily accepts it to oppose the e world of Raman. Similarly, her disinterest and indifference to her physical appearance to

attract her husband also is a kind of rebellion against the sexual oppression of the patriarchal society. Raman says, "Why can't you just be neat and tidy?, he had asked despairingly in the beginning, but then learnt that these were the two qualities she had never known" (120). The remark of Raman reveals the indifference of Sita to Raman's expectation from his wife that she should take care of her physical beauty.

Desai scores out the tragic vision of life to which she stores variety of meaningful images. This technique of Desai articulates sense and sensibility vivifying moods, psychic states and sensitiveness of her character. The image of violence in this novel is remarkable of beauty in the scene in which Sita is upset by a sight in front of her. In the balcony other house she is holding a pop-gun trying in vain to 'keep away the crows that were attacking a wounded eagle on a neighbouring roof-top' (31). She orders Karan, "the toy gun. Go, Karan, the toy gun will do" (35). She makes the toy gun a weapon to fight against the male-oppression in the form of the crows. The piercing of the crows ruins the body of the eagle. She fights against the cruel crows that are oppressing the weak eagle.

Other images of violence are presented through the words like 'one small incident', another small incidents and more small incidents'. These are all capable of expressing Sita's anxiety for the protection other unborn child. The crowded city of Bombay finds a suitable symbolical description hereunder:

Crows formed the shadow civilization in that city of flats and alleys. She watched them from the balcony, hopping clownishly about the rocks on which the sea broke, scrambling to catch a rotten fish to scraps to edible flatson left by the waves of sink in the sun. They even sat on the ledges and balcony raits of the flats, waiting for crazy looks to throw out a bucketful of kitchen garbage into the alley-scrap were

caught by them in mid air, expert for all their clownishness, tattered wings holding them aloft as they twisted and flapped to get the largest bits. There was always much black drama in this crow theatre-murder, infanticide, incest, theft, robbery, all were much practiced by these rough, rancous, rasping tattered demalions. (34)

Apart from the images of violence, destruction and darkness, there are striking images of the sea and sun-shine, flowers and butterflies. These reflect a sense of regeneration in nature and also the acute awareness of the delicacies of the protagonists. The following image of flowers reflects Sita's sensuous nature and cheerfulness:

The earth seethed with weeds and the weeds with minute wild flowers in brilliant tints waxy white stars, curled yellow ones, small blue eyes and clusters of vermillion and coral uxor that Sita plucked and scattered for the pleasure of smelling their sweet tarry sap on her hands. Butter-yellow and kingfisher-blue butterflies flew up like so many petals taking flight. (38)

Desai's women have modeled their habits and nature as the socio-cultural ambience expects qualities from them like chastity, virginity and devotion to their husbands. Sita remains silent when Raman indirectly talks about her inclination towards the foreigner going to Ajanta. Raman reveals the Indian social psychology, "on another occasion, when she had again spoken of him, he said, 'you seem to admire him a lot', and there was annoyance in his voice. 'You would have liked to know him better, it seems'" (47). But Sita says nothing about her attraction towards the foreigner. Her silence clearly expresses the knowledge and acceptance of the social psyche that restricts women from looking towards another man other than their husbands. She knows that she has to be loyal to her husband to live in the patriarchal society.

On the other hand, Jamila and her small domain inside the tea-shop displays the acceptance of the strict rules of the society for women. Her domain "where only known and trusted customers such as Moses were permitted and welcomed" (8) is a secured area for her, and she easily accepts it. The people permitted by her husband who lives in the tea-shop are welcome by Jamila and by welcoming them and living honestly in the domain; she abides the cultural ethos of the Indian society.

These women prefer to live with the social culture of heterosexual relation. Sita feels her existence undoubtedly related with her husband, "Neither sea nor sky were separate or contained- they rushed into each other in a rush of light and shade, impossible to disentangle" (139). The sea and the sky connote Sita and Raman, who are inseparable. Moreover, the inherent interrelatedness of a man and a woman is reflected in Sita's devoted mentality to her husband, "She allowed him them, to have his triumph; not to try to cap it with her verse. He deserved that triumph, purely by being so unconscious of it, so oblivious" (137-138). Sita asserts her ignorance and the conscious, rational and reasonable mind of Raman and thereby affirms the coexistence of the dual forces to regulate the worldly phenomena.

The connectedness with husband always remains in these women. Sita feels her existence connected with Raman solely even though she goes to the Manori Island leaving him in Bombay. She sees her survival with him in Bombay. She sees her survival with him, "perhaps I never ran away at all. Perhaps I am only like the jelly-fish washed up by the waves, stranded there on the sandbar. I was just stranded here by the sea. That's all, I hadn't much to do with it at all" (135).

Sita feels that Raman does not value her feelings, which makes her lonely and

hopeless. Her mental alienation and insensitive can be reflected in her life in the Manori Island after leaving the Bombay life. Her behaviour with children is rude and cruel though she has affection for them inside her: "once she said hysterically, help me" (27). Her motherly love has disappeared under the alienated self of Sita caused by the indifference of Raman. Raman is the only one pillar of his family to create peace and harmony. The absence of Raman becomes the cause of Sita's social disrespect. Sita has properly realized the fact that it is very difficult for her to lead her life and her children alone without Raman. The sudden decision taken by Sita to go back to Bombay is a result of a momentary loneliness on the beach where Raman leaves her alone to live in Manori. The cruelty of urban life stifles her. She is panicky at the thought of bringing a new child and runs away to a small island. The moment's seclusion reminds her that life cannot find meaning in the absence of family. But, finally, her husband persuades her to return to Bombay Then she packs all necessary clothes for the coming child, and prepares for the journey to Bombay.

IV. Conclusion

The social and cultural beliefs are responsible to determine the personal identity. Desai's women characters in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* achieve their own liberation within the male-oriented society from their self-existence. Society, culture, traditional norms and mores assign certain roles to each gender. Most of women are born with a stamp of ill-luck on their heads. The tragedy of such women is caused by the fact of their birth in a patriarchal society which fails to respect women as individuals. But women have consciousness of their own career in the post-independence Indian society. In this novel, Desai's women have consciousness of their body; they like to have control in their body. Sita's resentment at the fifth time pregnancy demonstrates her internal wish to control her body.

The society of nineteenth century women had got complete shell of feminism; females were receiving remarkable progress on socio-economic and political aspects. In that capitalist society, due to the new innovation of technology, commerce and business, women got higher rank. They understood the meaning of love and sex. They were too much conscious on their body and beauty. They knew the value of beauty. They used love and sex as a tool to manipulate males. In that transitional phase, women were making their effort to sought equality with males to secure a piece of pie and essentially sought opportunities for women's advancement in their existence through institutional reforms and work place. As males were encouraging for socio-economic, educational upliftment for the females feeling that their empowerment would help to run family smoothly. On the other side, they introspected that such changes would ruin their freedom and divert their authority. Sita resists even the loving and devoting male's norms and values of a patriarchal society. She is determined to break the male tradition. She tries to get self-identity through the path

of compromise and self-understanding cooperation and dialogic relation with all males.

Anita Desai probes into the crisis of an introvert woman who is bored and frustrated by her humdrum life and tries to escape into purposeless loneliness. Owing to unusual consciousness, Sita develops certain complexes. She is unable to go to maturity and turns into a complete misfit. She desires to go out to seek refuge in the magic island. She undergoes acute mental agonies silently in isolation only because of her sharp existential sensibility. She does not make up her mind to give birth to the fifth child because she has already felt uninvolved with her children. The agony and unhappiness in her soul spring from her unwillingness to go with the society. But she neither kills anyone nor commits suicide nor does she go mad. She simply compromises with her fate and learns the courage to face life boldly with all its ups and downs.

Summing up, to create her self with self-respect and socio-familial support from the patriarchal society, Sita manages her self-respect within socio-familial atmosphere. She achieves her own identity from the male dominated society which shows her assertion of a new gender identity.

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