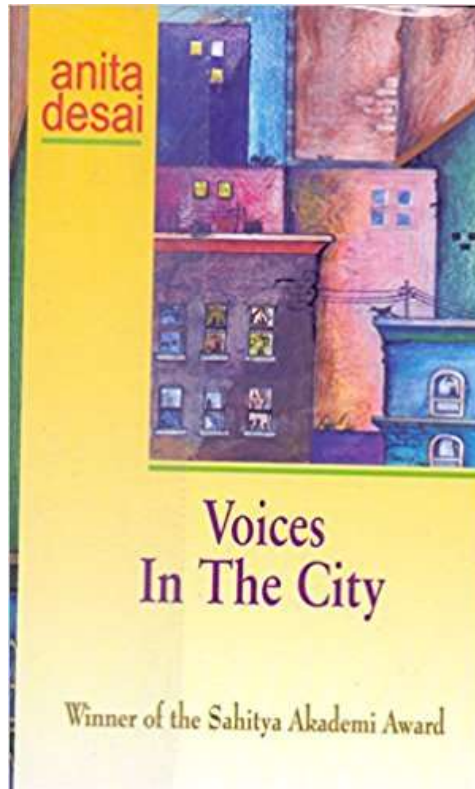


Marital Incompatibility in Anita Desai's *Voices in the City* and *Where Shall We Go this Summer?*

Ms. B. Vijayalakshmi, M.A., M.Phil., SET



Courtesy: <https://www.amazon.com/Voices-City-Anita-Desai/dp/8122200532>

Abstract

Marriage is always pictured as a commodity which encapsulates a period of companionship, support and sexual fulfillment for men. But, it is portrayed as a sacrificing factor, commitment, self-destruction, security and dependence for women. Women always have been associated with the words *mental stress, trauma, and devotion, adjustable and deplore*. Marriage is a tradition in Indian society and the marital women's sufferings and psychological issues have been the subject of some Indian women writers. Focusing on Indian women, their mental stress, issues with their new family and the conservative ethics of the Indian patriarchal society are the major themes in the field of Indian Literature. Kate Millet says: "Patriarchy, reformed or unreformed, is patriarchy still: it is worst abuses purged or foresworn, it might actually be more stable and secure than before." (27). Women are confined in four walls in the name of security. Throughout the life, they have to depend someone. She has many roles to play.

Keywords: Anita Desai, *Voices in the City*, *Where Shall We Go this Summer?*, mental stress, trauma, alienation, frustration.

Female Characters of Anita Desai

This article pictures the female characters of Anita Desai and their psychological issues in a patriarchal society with reference to *Voices in the City* (1965) and *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* (1975). Desai began an innovative era of psychological issues of women and gave a new phase to the world of novel writing in English. Through her novels she projects the pain and sufferings of women in a male dominating and conservative society. The women characters of Desai undergo a mental destruction and suffer from failures and frustrations. The reason for their mental destruction is their hypersensitive nature and careless husbands. Their restricted surroundings and inattentive spouses force the women to take actions mutely and violently. This results in incompatible life between husband and wife.

Monisha

Monisha, in *Voices in the City*, an educated woman undergoes trauma in the hands of her husband. Monisha comes to live the ancestral house of Jiban. It is a joint family, welcomes Monisha in a traditional manner. Jiban's is a four-storey house where uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, cousins and in-laws around her. Being a daughter-in-law in a joint family, she has more responsibilities, but not given much importance. Her desire is to read books when she gets leisure time. She owns a library which consists of classical books. Unfortunately she has no time to read books because she has to do all the household works in the time. She is deeply agonized when her family members are ridiculed Monisha for having such classical books. She gets time to spend her time with her husband only in the evening. Jiban is man who wants Monisha to be friendlier with his family members. He does not care about Monisha. He is indifferent towards his wife. The communication gap between Monisha and Jiban causes her mental pain. Living in a conservative joint family, Monisha is not allowed to communicate with her husband freely. Jiban too fails to spare time with Monisha and fulfill her desires.

Focus on Sterility

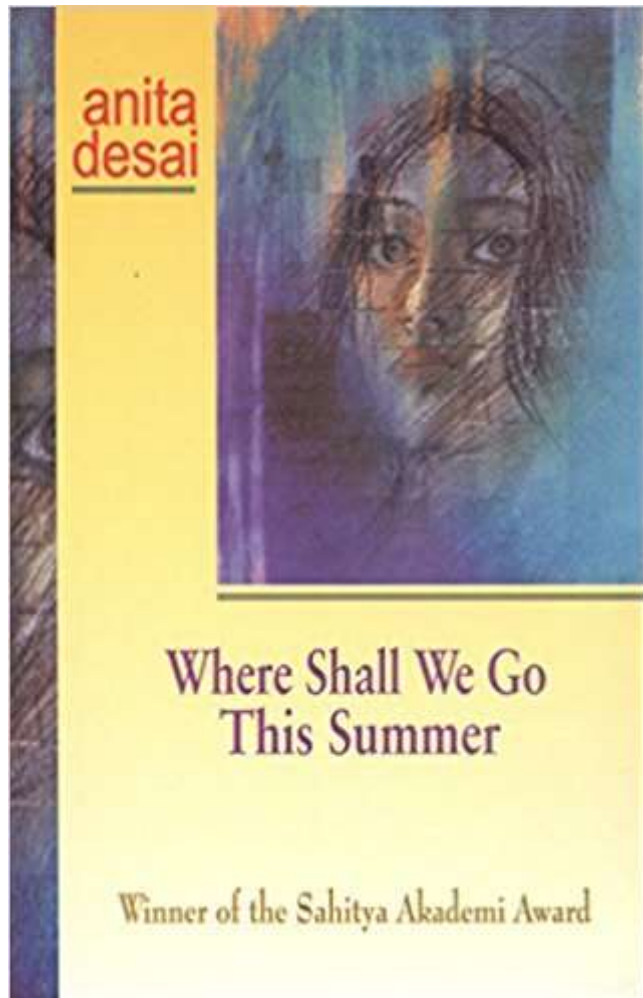
Monisha becomes a main topic of discussion among the family members of Jiban because of her sterility. Every woman's prime duty is to become a mother after marriage. Attaining motherhood becomes the ultimate thing in marriage. Her incapacity of moving from a daughter-in-law into a mother makes her alienated from her family. Monisha takes money from Jiban's cupboard to meet the medical expenses of her brother. Nirode is highly criticized by her mother-in-law. This situation deepens Monisha's condition worse than ever. This situation clearly reminds us how Indian women depend on men for money. The words of her mother-in-law hurt Monisha and make her situation the most horrible. Her mother-in-law forgets that Monisha is her daughter-in-law and she has all the rights to take money from Jiban's cupboard. Monisha thinks, as a wife she can use her husband's things. When Monisha is accused for being theft, Jiban keeps calm and this attitude of him makes Monisha humiliated. She is completely agonized. Her mother-in-law says,

He left it the cupboard when he went to the office: my son is always careful of his things. Only you were in the room at that time. When you left, you shut the door and none of the servants could have gone in. Of course the servants will be dismissed, all of them. I will not have a thief in my house, I say, I will not have a thief in my house. Who is to tell who this thief is? After all, you were the only person who was in the room all day (12).

Alienated from the Family

Though she is surrounded by her family members, she feels alienated from them. She is terribly haunted by loneliness. Monisha's voluntary confinement and the false accusation of theft make her lose all hopes. Monisha starts realizing that her married life with Jiban is futile. The frustrations and failures make Monisha to think that death is the only remedy for her sorrows. Her failure in finding the real meaning of life makes her to take violent decision. She is depicted as a woman searching for love in a loveless life. Desai's portrayal of Monisha, is a typical Indian woman who cannot tolerate the empty life. She is portrayed as a victim of conservative society. An affectionless and loveless relationship with Jiban creates a pathetic way.

Where Shall We Go this Summer? – Mental Trauma of Sita



Courtesy: https://www.amazon.com/Where-Shall-We-This-Summer/dp/8122200885/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1527973437&sr=1-1&keywords=Where+Shall+We+Go+this+Summer%3F

Desai's next novel *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* also depicts the mental trauma of Sita, the protagonist. Raman, a busy factory owner is the husband of Sita. He belongs to an upper middle class, always engaged and finds no time for his wife. Sita suffers mental stress due to the inattentive attitude of Raman. This stress and alienation drive her to think deeply that earth is a cruel place. Boring of the daily household things she starts keeping herself away from all this. She hates her monotonous life. Being as a motherless child, she longs for love from her childhood. Raman fails to

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fulfill Sita's expectations. He is not a romantic man. Sita often irritates by the visitors of Raman because she always wants to spend her time with Raman. In order to get relief from her sorrows, she starts smoking. Sita becomes upset by the sight of crows attacking a baby eagle. Immediately, she searches for her son's toy gun and uses it on the crows. This incident clearly shows us the innocent nature of Sita. She empathizes for the baby eagle and Raman does not care for it. Being a practical man, he cannot be disturbed by normal things.

Taking Everything Seriously

Sita takes everything in a serious manner. Her surroundings, children, neighbors and society make her chaotic. Though she lives in with her four children and husband, she feels deserted from them. She always finds fault with everyone even with her children and husband. She feels that the world not is moving according to her desires. The gap in the relationship between Raman and Sita leads her to mental stress. Raman accuses Sita that she is an immature, foolish woman and often fights for everything. She does not want a fifth child in the chaotic situation. She does not want to be a caged bird, flies to an island Manori along with her two children to keep her fifth child unborn. But the island fails to give happiness and it is just a mirage.

Her voyage to Manori, the Magic Island where she had spent
Her childhood, is also a voyage of self-discovery, illusion may
Be an escape from reality. But it is bound to vanish in the light
Of reason that is solid and tangible (15)

When she hears the arrival of Raman to Manori she feels happy. After realizing the genuine meaning of life, she returns to Raman.

Monisha and Sita

Sita is not like Monisha in *Voices in the City*. She is depicted as a woman who can bear all situations. Sita understands escaping from problems is not only the solution, but facing the critical situation with courage is more important.

Monisha's immaturity leads her life tragic. She cannot bear the satirical words of her family members about her sterility. Her incompatible married life with Jiban totally disappoints her dreams. The foremost similarity between Monisha and Sita is their loveless and valueless married life. This is the significant cause of their mute actions. Monisha and Sita are portrayed as voiceless women who cannot adjust the barren life. The existence of Monisha and Sita is totally vain. Monisha and Sita suffered from ill-matched married life. The two protagonists are mentally separated from their husbands. Though Monisha and Sita are surrounded by family members, they feel they are alienated. The innocent and the hypersensitive nature of Monisha and Sita clearly show us they want to be dependent. Jiban's careless attitude and Raman's practical mind lead the protagonists' mental stress. Simon de Beauvoir says: "It has been said that marriage diminishes man, which is often true, but almost it annihilates woman" (20). Here, the incompatible married life between the husband and wife is totally annihilated the protagonists life.

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