

Environmental Concerns in Anita Desai's 'Where Shall We Go This Summer'

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Abstract

All knowledge and development departments are currently analysing and emphasising the close connection between the natural and social worlds. The present paper is an analysis of this new perspective of analysis of relation between human and nature which is called ecocriticism. Ecocriticism has emerged as a new genre of study. Researchers are concerned about the environment since ecological balance is crucial in today's globalised society. Indian authors didn't take a backseat in this niche. They too take the issue very seriously in their respective works. Indian English authors are very conscious about the environment and environmental objects. They used nature as a background in their works very beautifully. Authors like as Amitav Ghosh, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Jayant Mahapatra, Ramanujan, Bhavani Bhattacharya. The present research work is the analysis of the ecocritical concerns in Anita Desai's novel 'Where Shall We Go This Summer'. This novel is one of the best examples of the representation of nature and relation between human and nature.

Key Words: Man-Nature Relationship, Indian Novels, Earth Centered and Ecocriticism

Introduction:

The present novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer* by Anita Desai was published in 1982. It is one of the good examples of the presentation of importance of nature and relation between human beings and nature. It challenges us to re-examine issue of the environmental crisis as a crucial issues in today's world. The aim of the current paper is to define the term "ecocriticism" in general and to study the importance of the nature reflected in the select novel of Anita Desai. This novel is the winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award, through an Eco-critical perspective. Ecological balance has become the recurrent issue of the present time in the entire universe, it has been highlighted an international level. Literary critics assess the books that serve as examples of environmental issues as part of ecocriticism, which is the study of the environment and literature from many angles. It is a presentation of the natural world and its products. There is a strong connection between the environment and literature according to ecocriticism. The 1990s saw the emergence of ecocriticism as a distinct literary criticism trend or school. Through their works, ecocritics demonstrated how humans interact with their physical surroundings. Literature evolved as a crucial weapon for critics to draw attention to environmental issues. The first author to use this phrase was William Rueckert in 1978 with his essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*. One of the pioneers of environmental studies is Rachel Carson. She first draws attention to the problems caused by the usage of chemicals like DDT in the environment. Although it first gained popularity in the second half of the 20th century, ecocriticism has been around since the romantic era. The environmental calamity spread beyond the natural sciences and into the humanities and social sciences as well. The critics of the modern age concentrated on nature and society.

The select perspective is ecocriticism- the study of environment which is as old as the human history. The history of the environment is as old as the history of the human race, you will discover as you study it. The significance of the environment is also discussed in the Lokayats, Buddhist tradition, Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Mahabharata, and Ramayana. The survival of all living forms on earth depends on the environment being in balance, not just the human species. Environmental pollution is viewed as a terrifying and destructive sort of global warming. The dangerous chemical pollutants that are created as a result of growing industrialization have permeated every aspect of human life. The ecology is out of balance, and this has caused very serious issues for human society. These issues are still there now as they were yesterday.

People relocated from rural to urban areas as a result of globalisation, which caused villages to disappear. Cities' populations continued to grow unabatedly, which had many negative effects on the environment. Revolutionary freedom fighter Mahatma Gandhi started a new slogan and movement "back to the village" which was created by putting out poignant ideas. Several authors and literary figures have also contributed to environmental awareness through their writing. Individuals' physical, mental, and intellectual development is impacted by environmental contamination.

In fact, man is the natural world's kid. Man was raised in the womb of nature. He used this nature's backing as an ideal in order to advance himself. He built his nest in the wild. Man noticed the trees reaching up to the sky and looked up at it. People wanted to walk in the skies after seeing birds flying

erratically in the sky. This man was content with nature, which gave his ego some wings. Being self-assured of his intelligence, this man began destroying the nearby wildlife without thinking it through, upsetting the delicate balance of the environment.

The above discussed view is incorporated by the present writer Anita Desai, a leading novelist in Indian English writing. She is one of the few novelists in English literary history that can be regarded to be gravely concerned with the environmental disaster that the modern world is facing. In contrast, it appears that early Indian novelists' works lack a serious concern for ecological balance. In the beginning the writing of Desai is concerned to feminism and man-woman relationship. But in the later phase her novels are concerned with the theme of relationship between man and nature. *Where Shall We Go This Summer* is the best examples of the depiction of the nature and its importance.

The present novel is the story of Sita and she is shortly going to give birth to a child. Anita Desai describes the suffering of pregnant mothers who are concerned with life's loneliness. Desai recounts several geographical features that are covered in magical spells, claiming that this "island is an island of magic" (59). This story was meant to prevent her from having children, but she ended up having four with pride and pleasure in a sensuous and emotional way. Her husband warns her not to go to an island in the middle of the monsoon since she can't have a kid there when she learns she is pregnant in her old age, greying, and ageing to behave like a lack of control. Sita is desperately trying to avoid becoming a mother. However, at this stage, abortion is not an option. Despite being pregnant, she does not want to give birth to her child amid her city's polluted environment. She is angry that the riches and distractions of modern life have spoiled her other children while neglecting her own childhood and simple upbringing. She wants for her unborn kid to experience the same morals and pristine beauty as she did growing up in the island community of Manori. Her husband opposes her desire to relocate to Manori since he understands there won't be a nursing home or medical institution there to assist her delivery. At that point in the pregnancy, she does not want to take a chance. Sita, however, is adamant and relocates to Manori with her children. Sita recalls her carefree childhood while she is on the Island. She recalls how her father used to take her and her brothers to the island and tell them tales about the natural world. Additionally, she took pleasure in speaking about the nation's struggle for independence or freedom. On one such instance, the island was flooded with a flow of rain as a result of heavy rainfall. Sita was in danger of drowning until a stranger saved her. She eventually married that stranger.

She wants her children to experience the same natural splendour and bounty on the island. They are fascinated by the fish and seashells at the seashore after she takes them there. She is thrilled to witness the children engaging with nature. She does, however, miss her husband. She desires for her entire family to benefit from such a straightforward and healthy way of life. She despises the frantic, mechanical, city existence. Her husband eventually returns to Manori. He comforts Manori but advises her to return to the city so that she can receive the right medical attention before to the baby's birth. After experiencing the renewing effects of the natural cure of the Island, Sita accepts, and the entire family returns to their city life.

However in this peculiar work Desai has particular plans for the anxious pregnant woman in this situation, including getting her away to an island where she will be shielded from modern world developments. If we strive to utilise it, nature is a vast supply of energy. In the modern world, man experiences chronic fatigue syndrome, and the simplest method to treat it is to immerse oneself in nature, which will restore our impaired faculties and revitalise us for further work. In the entire story, Sita aspires to the same thing.

A good example of how humans gradually try to get closer to nature after the end of consumerism is given by writer Anita Desai through the main character Sita in the present novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*. However, while writing in English, nature has been incorporated as a significant setting against which the plots of these novels grow. One of the few literary works in which Anita Desai has highlighted this crucial topic that we are discussing here.

However, the present novel the writer Anita Desai has presented the importance of nature and sensitive thoughts about environment. The author has told the importance of nature about how Sita, the main character in this novel, became attracted to nature. In the present novel Sita is the main heroine who lives with her husband in the city. She is married and has four children and now she is about to give birth to the fifth child. She was born in rural areas in close proximity to nature and was brought up in close proximity to nature

Anita Desai very much concerns about Increasing Globalization; Man with his intelligence has made great progress in the field of industry. A man who is proud of his own success does not think about

the pollution caused by factories. Due to this, the surrounding environment became contaminated. Due to the release of contaminated water from factories into rivers, streams and oceans, all the water started to deteriorate. Due to the rapid increase in population, people were deprived of clean air. The waste of various things created and consumed by man increased to such an extent that the beautiful Vasundhara became ugly.

Man cut down huge trees to build tall buildings for himself. The water provided by nature was wasted. Sita Being born in a rural area, she is always attracted to nature because of her close relationship with nature. After marriage, she lives in the city with her husband. She finds it difficult to breathe in the noise.

Being born in a rural area, she was always attracted to nature because of her close connection with nature. After marriage, she lives in the city with her husband, because she does not like the nature in the city, so she is always attracted to the nature in the countryside. Due to the increased cement houses, big factories, roads in the city, she finds it difficult to breathe in the noise of the city.

Giving evidence of this, Anita Desai has tried to show how important it is to protect nature in the name of globalization; the loss of nature has become a matter of concern.

In this novel writer Anita Desai has also commented on Conflict mind. As the main character in this novel, Sita, is pregnant, she is not ready to give birth in the city. So that the increasing pollution of the city does not adversely affect her baby, so she hopes to give birth to her baby near the nature in her village. But Sita and her husband do not agree on this due to differences with her husband. So Sita and her husband always had a bitter quarrel. As a result, she decides to give birth to her baby in the nature of the village. In this situation, the main heroine Sita is in a state of mind.

Author Anita Desai has expressed her thoughts on how nature teaches positivity to humans suffering from negativity. She has tried to tell that there is an unbreakable relationship between human mind and nature. She has said that nature affects human mind. Nature has a positive effect on the negative mind. Due to this, a person gets the highest happiness in life.

Anita Desai also talked about alienation. According to Desai it is very important to know how children's feelings, children's thoughts are formed. If the parents do not behave properly with them, then it affects the children. Just like the nature in which we live, culture affects us and our children. Sita, the heroine of the present novel, is suffering from the noise of this culture in the city. In such a situation, her husband does not accompany her properly and she feels childish even in this noise of the city.

Anita Desai has tried to give a good example of this in her novel, how human beings feel childish despite all the comforts in this world of globalization. Anita Desai has expressed the thoughts that when man feels this childishness, the beautiful nature embraces him.

Attachment with Nature: Sita, the heroine of this novel, tries to get free from the daily busyness of the city and experience living happily in the presence of nature. The human mind always longs to go away from the hustle and bustle of the city to somewhere in the beauty of nature. As nature gives us happy reasons to live life, the human mind is always ready to rejoice in the presence of nature. This gives meaning to life.

The present novel symbolises there is direct link between environment and people which is intricately linked. Environment has an impact on the birth, growth, and demise of organisms and species. The connection between people and nature shapes culture. This civilization would not be complete without literature. The literature captures the impact of how humans and nature interact. Nature and the environment are impacted since humans are to blame for these changes in the natural world. Nature and human beings have a master and unbreakable relationship. Humans should use nature in a proper and balanced way without encroaching on it. Human life is incomplete without nature. Humans should make their lives beautiful in the presence of nature. Life should be enjoyed in the company of nature. If we take care of nature and preserve its purity, the future of our coming generation depends on us.

The most notable development in literary studies in the postmodern era is in perpetual flux, during a time of quick and perhaps confusing change. The lack of evidence for an environmental perspective in modern literary studies would seem to indicate that, despite its "revisionist impulses" (Glotfelty xv), scholarship remains academic in the sense of being blind to its surroundings. Even though the study of literary texts and movements in relation to concepts of nature, wilderness, natural science, and spatial environments has been pursued for more than a century, the term "ecocriticism" or "ecological criticism" was only coined twenty years ago, and in the last ten years, the study of literature in relation to environment has become more popular.

Where Shall We Go This Summer is a compelling story of a sensitive young wife who is divided between the need to leave the monotony and hypocrisy of her middle-class and outwardly happy existence and the realization that the links that bind her to it cannot be easily broken. 'Skilful dramatisation... the

narrative is precariously perched between myth and social reality... for the talent itself, as the novel evidences, is exceptional in its innate sensibility and awareness of the craft of fiction.

This narrative emphasises the contrast between traditional rural living and contemporary technopolis existence. People tend to breed in extremely diverse cultures and environments because of the disparities between the two, which has an impact on how they act and what they value.

The primary character of the book, Sita, the only victim, arrives on Manori Island in 1967 during a monsoon with her son and daughter as well as a child still inside her. She seeks refuge in Manori's cool breeze and pleasant weather from the hectic life she leads in Bombay in an effort to soothe her nerves. Situation in Manori: Her father's house is essentially surrounded by dust and grime at this point. The narration doesn't make it obvious why she is unhappy with her life or what motivated her to run away from her responsibilities. The clarity of the explanations is lacking as we try to understand the condition of a pregnant lady who always wants to be comfortable and free from family stress during the period because those issues were not seen as vital ones in the society we live in. Was she able to find serenity and leave her solitude on that island? At the end of the story, Sita does not experience a significant event. Her devoted and trustworthy husband Raman finds her and takes her back to her former life. Domestic abuse does not occur to Sita, and she maintains her independence. The clarity of the explanations is lacking as we try to understand the condition of a pregnant lady who always wants to be comfortable and free from family stress during the period because those issues were not seen as vital ones in the society we live in. Was she able to find serenity and leave her solitude on that island? At the end of the story, Sita does not experience a significant event. Her devoted and trustworthy husband Raman finds her and takes her back to her former life. Domestic abuse does not occur to Sita, and she maintains her independence. She had to go back to doing the same things, and she had to wait until the following monsoon to decide where to go for the summer. How many of us lack the ability to express what suffocates us and are unable to find a solution like Sita did? In this rapidly changing life, we become accustomed to complaints and anxieties and learn to live with them.

Sita went to island to draw the inspirational evocative feelings of nature. "The green coconuts on the tree,' she called to them. Did you see the cheekoos on the trees there-small brown ones?" (58) When she as a child has much enjoyed the tree that grew in the Mainland? "There was an effervescence in the air that made Sita kick up her heels and prance like a pony. She was not really a child at that time in another environment she might have already been regarded as a young woman, but she had lived a strange life and unusual life. She saw the island a piece of magic, a magic mirror it was so brilliant to her eyes after the tension and shadow of their childhood" (59). She was overwhelmed by the picturesque or calm atmosphere of the island. Sita describes the scenic beauty of Island Manori: The fields were only pits of mud and slush. Whole shanty towns seemed built of bamboo stakes on which the Bombay duck was habitually hung to dry but now stood stark. The village pond, an artificial tank with broken stone steps was full to the brim and could be differentiated from the pools and puddles of the fields only because its water was not brown with mud but green as spinach, thick, viscous" (21). She never lets her village down rather takes pride in it, which the Bombay city lacks in larger level. As a matter of fact one "muscular woman with an aborigine skin, wearing a mango-green sari, and stood up and was the first on the island to hail" (21) the new arrivals of the land (Sita and her children), wants to identify with natural aspects of the island. To N.R. Gopal "the island for her was a like Prospero's enchanted island in *The Tempest*. She is so much under control of her childhood memories the even after being grown up and having borne many children she is not able to free herself" (A Critical Study of the Novels of Anita Desai 81). Sita becomes the Duke of island Manori after the demise of her father, she has not forgotten the magical island which can indeed come to her rescue from her physical and Mental suffering. Anita Desai clearly depicts the life and behavior of the islander through the personality of Sita. As she says "all remembered how he walked barefoot in the muddy, ploughed fields down by the village where the islanders grew some meager crops of vegetables and rice" (68). Even Sita discloses her typical feelings that she came to live on the island like an islander. "I will fetch my water from the well like you,' and walked on, barefoot, bareheaded, dressed in homespun, carrying loads like them" (68). In this line we find the typical village situation and the richness of it, which is far more different from the city life like Bombay. The episode of island was life of leave-taking from routine of everyday life in the city. Desai says: " So Sita never felt alone or unsafe; the house in its groves of palms, seemed surrounded by a host of watchful cranes, always half-awake, ready to spring to life at the slightest touch or alteration in light and wind, raise their wings and give voice to warning." Again she says "The grove was like a radar system planted around her house." (117) Sita is a nature loving character who always wanted to be very close to nature and as earlier days spent in Island that has not faded away from

her memory lane but frequently hunted her come back to the old fort of her father. As winter made its appearance Sita was disturbed by it, she tried to control her passion for life quietly replied to herself “I will keep you safe, we will go nowhere,” (119) in her desperation she sees the light at the end of the tunnel, that “even the slumberous egg as it labors under the shell patiently to divide and subdivide.....(117) waits for the arrival of summer, she knew it would ebb away and sink into the sea to wait till next summer, next year. In one way we can also look at the pregnancy of a mother that the unborn baby’s mother’s womb is another ecosystem. Everything is found there for the survival of the foetus. The readings of Anita Desai’s novels have invigorated our drooping spirit and the ray of hope has been reinstated to realize the humane ideals. Life has to move on, in spite of all sorts of human predicaments, this aspect has been masterfully used by Desai. Even though all of her novels do not deal with large movements of human history but they do speak aloud little things of contemporary human struggles. In fact it really thrills and its rawness of suffering soul can really move a non-Indian reader. She also helps us to discover the invisible and darker aspects of the individual self. She has foretold and expressed in her writings about the awareness of environmental hazard and degradation of nature. In recent times this has been a pivotal point of discussion, this has become a global concern. Therefore, every individual is responsible to work for the better tomorrow.

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