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## **The Reflection of the Ramayana: ‘Sita Myth’ in Anita Desai’s Where Shall We Go This Summer?**

**Kanchan Pipaliya**

Ph.D Scholar, Dept. Of English and CLS,  
Saurashtra University, Rajkot.



## **Abstract:**

The society promotes the most prevalent picture of Indian mythology that of Sita and Savitri. Through their tales, these pictures of women illustrate the principles of Indian civilization - the way Sita surrendered to Ram, accompanied him into the forest, and accepted her exile in silence once again. There are echoes of Sita's rebellious voice in contemporary texts, where one can find a fresh interpretation of the ancient 'Sita Myth'. In Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* the protagonist Sita is a neurotic character who rebels against male oppression; however, she eventually embraces the household tie. The present paper examines how the 'Sita Myth' is reflected in the novel and how it is altered and recreated in various circumstances.

**Keywords:** Myth, Re-writing, Sita-Myth, Mythic Image, Ramayana



## **Introduction:**

Anita Desai is a member of the third generation of contemporary urban authors. Myth is a psycho-emotional reality for her. She is aware that reality can only be comprehended through myths. As a result, Anita Desai's writing reflects the legendary truth of Indian existence. This mythological reality is portrayed via the intricate relationships between the ego and society. Desai combines mythology with reality. It is the psychological reality that is significant for her since, as a woman, she is aware of womanhood's predicament within society's mythological framework. Anita Desai uses the stream of consciousness approach to examine the topics of mythological escapism against societal duty. She explores the intimate inner worlds of women who struggle to live with the rigorous value systems of the outside world without compromising their self-identity.



## **Sita Myth:**

In Hindu mythology, Sita is Lord Rama's wife. She is a central character in the Ramayana, a significant Hindu epic. Sita was born at Sitamarhi and was transferred to Janakpur by her father, Maharaja Janak, shortly after her birth. Sita is one of the most chaste ladies and is revered as the embodiment of all womanly characteristics in Hinduism. Devi Sita is also seen as a manifestation of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and Sri Vishnu's spouse during the Treta Yuga. Devi Sita is an ideal lady who has all the virtues that a traditional Indian woman is meant to possess. She was an excellent daughter to her parents, an ideal wife to Rama, and an amazing mother to her twins, Luv and Kush. Sita had several challenges and tribulations throughout her marriage, and it was her bravery, virginity, and devotion to Dharma (righteousness) that ultimately determined her victory. Sita demonstrated how a strong woman should be and how she should never abandon her convictions in life via her life narrative. Probably, Sita's whole purpose for being born on Earth in human form was to defeat the haughty Ravana, Lanka's demon king.

## **Representation of 'Sita Myth' in *Where Shall We Go This Summer***

In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Anita Desai employs the 'Sita Myth' to help us understand the heroine's inner conflicts and her agonising attempts to reconcile her inner realities with the meaningless world outside, as Anita Desai's forte is to explore the inner climate, the climate of sensibility, particularly of Indian women who endure an intolerable struggle with thoughts, feelings, and emotion.

'Sita' has served as a role model for Indian traditional women up to this point. The name 'Sita' was selected purposefully. The names 'Sita' and 'Raman' are extremely deliberate. In the novel, the character of 'Raman' looks to be "caricatured." The mythological "Ram" and "Raman" in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* are similar in that they are unable to comprehend their wives' emotions and rationalise their aversion to life's realities, obligations, and societal responsibilities. This is why both Sita suffer. Sita feels disillusioned in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* "Who feels torn between her intense desire to get herself free from the



boredom and hypocrisy of her life and her final realization that she cannot easily break the bonds that bind her to her meaningless existence” (Desai 132)

Sita's escape from boredom becomes unavoidable now that she has been shocked out of her complacency. A startling realisation pushes her to reconsider her whole life's purpose. She can't continue her existence, which is nothing more than a gradual death, without her self-identity. The exiles of 'Sita' from The Ramayana and 'Sita' from Where should we go this summer are contrasted. She has a deep desire to return to her childhood home, Manori, where she grew up. The island is sealed off from the rest of the world, away from the crowds, noise, and commotion of Bombay life. Sita is transported back to her childhood, when she was safe and happy with her father. Her father was a Gandhian thinker and a well-known person on the island. Through his heroic and redemptive traits, he had left an indelible mark on the island.

Sita aspires to be free of Raman's disappointment. She aspires to be free of society beliefs and human connections that are based on lies. Her mind flashes with the wild idea that she can spare her kid from being born into a pointless existence. She travels to the island of "Manori" in order to avoid giving birth — to accomplish the miracle of not having a kid. "Manori" is an island of magic for her demented mind, an island of miracles since her father had made it an island of magic and wrought miracles there. Sita believes that she and her unborn child would be secure at her father's home. Despite the fact that her father is no longer alive, she believes she may enlist his help in preventing the birth of her child. Her father's large mansion, the island, the traditions surrounding her father, and the closeness to the mysterious sea take on a legendary quality.

For her, the location becomes a romantic metaphor for her father's heroic, Gandhian, and redemptive traits. Sita is compelled to seek sanctuary on her father's enchanted island in order to safeguard her kid. For her, the outside world seems unsuitable to dwell in since injustice, cruelty, and violence predominate. For her, the boundary between the creative and the destructive has become so thin and lethargic that glancing at it causes it to evaporate entirely. She becomes more adamant about her resolve not to give birth to her child. Her father's



island, 'Manori,' gives an alternative in her life. Sita had purposefully buried the memories of the island under her mind for years.

Its black magic, its subtle glamour had grown too huge, had engulfed her at a time when she was still very young and quite alone, she had grown afraid of it, been relieved to leave it and come to the mainland with Raman. The mainland—the very word implied solidarity, security the solidity of streets, the security of houses she had not realized then that living there would teach her only that life was a crust of dull tedium, of hopeless disappointment but a thin crust, a flimsy crust that at every second or third step broke apart so that she tumbled in with the most awful sensation into a crashed pile of debris. She had no longer the nerve or the optimism to continue. No, she refused to walk another step. She would turn, go back and find the island once more. (Desai 52).

Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* like 'Sita' in The Ramayana, seeks to escape discreetly from the harshness of a world controlled by masculine ego. The fabled Sita took the male ego's ruthlessly enforced desolation and mortification, but the Mahabharata's 'Draupadi' despised and rejected the male ego by opposing it. Sita accepted her fate, made do with it, but when the male control became too much for her, she retreated in solitude.

The load of 'love' in the form of masculine possessiveness is too much for Sita to bear. She is a quiet opponent of false materialism. Sita in the Ramayana did not enjoy 'love' being associated with masculine rule. Sita recognises the futility of her predicament, in which she would be unable to have an intimate relationship with her husband Raman until she attempts to reconcile her inner reality with the exterior world of meaningless false ideals. She must make the same option as the fabled Sita, who disliked and rejected the world's erroneous social and moral standards and vanished into the soil. In Constantin Cavafy's poem, the novel's contemporary Sita finds a solution to her problem.

To certain people there comes a day

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



He who has the 'Yes' ready within him

reveals himself at once, and saying it crosses over to the path of honour and his own conviction.

Should he be asked again, he would say No again.

And yet that No. the right 'No' -crushes him for the rest of his life. (Desai 98)

Sita discovers the substance of the poem, which states that having the fortitude to say the "Right No" frees one from life's illusory responsibilities. Sita is compelled to declare the 'Right No' to Raman's instruction and mundane daily routine.

Raman, ironically, was the one who originally suggested Sita flee by asking, 'Where Shall We Go This Summer?'. In The Ramayana, Ram inquired about Sita's wishes, and Sita indicated her desire to return to the forest and visit the hermitages. Sita had reached the forest, unaware of Ram's cruel and severe choice to abandon her, and had experienced the loneliness and sufferings of life. The mythological Sita, on the other hand, asserts herself as a single mother to her boys. Sita, from *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is terrified of giving birth to her fifth child and feels compelled to flee to the fabled island "Manori," where she believes her deceased father may still perform a miracle and she can keep her kid safe in her womb.



## Conclusion

The novel seems to be perched uncomfortably between myth and social fact. The Ramayana's Sita was unable to reconcile herself to a society that never permits a woman to be a person and regards her as a lifeless, meaningless object. The novel's Sita eventually understands her powerlessness and quietly accepts to Raman's demand that she be carried back to the mainland (Bombay). She is disillusioned and lonely, much like the mythological Sita. Her disenchantment is exacerbated by her father's admission that he was not a real Gandhian at heart. Sita felt too lonely to fight since she was the daughter of a king (Janaka) and the wife of a king (Ram). Sita, the protagonist of the tale, is also lonely, and she reluctantly agrees to her husband's demand to return to Bombay and resume her previous routine.





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