

Interpreting Duality of the Self and the Other in Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*

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I

Sartre's phenomenological ontology highlights the idea that consciousness always exists in a social context which is populated and co-inhabited by other consciousnesses. Accordingly, understanding consciousness and its mode of being necessitates an investigation of its relationship with other consciousnesses. It forms the ground for Sartre's philosophical assessment of our relations with others with special reference to conceptualizing the Other in terms of its absolute difference and sincere alterity. Cox supports the stance: "Every person is a being-for-itself, but according to Sartre this is not all they are. There is another aspect of every person's being that is not for-itself but for-others" (23). It becomes relevant in the context of human-human encounter or intersectionality. Macquire observes:

Even in the most fundamental ways of being, the human existent spills over, so to speak; he transcends the bounds of an individual existence and is intelligible only within a broader framework that we designate as being-[for]-others. (106)

According to Sartre, 'being' is the formative ground for understanding our relationship to others. Therefore, we need to consider ontology since it deals with the revelation of being. Sartre says, "...the Other is an indispensable mediator between myself and me... I recognize I am as the Other sees me...nobody can be vulgar all alone" (222). He contends that man makes himself what he wants to be vis-à-vis his existential situations privileging the presence of the Other. Importantly, while experiencing others, we also experience the subjectivity of the Other. Seen thus, one experiences oneself as being subjected to the objectification by another subject since "...the Other constitutes me in a new type of being [by making me] his object... In it I recognize that, as the object of the Other, I am not only for the Other, that is, that I actually am just as the Other sees me" (Theunisson 222). Levy substantiates, "...all human relations can be resolved into this sinister dialectic of looking-at and being looked-at, of objectifying and being objectified in turn" (39). It is a revelation of our

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(potential) *conflict-ridden relationship* with the Other(s). Sartre opines: “Everything that goes for me, goes for the Other. While I try to enslave the Other, he tries to enslave me....Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others” (364). The fact that others can objectify me compels me to perceive others as objects and by doing so I deny them their subjectivity. It also highlights our wish pattern whereby it is desired that the Other should support/back our own self-conceptions. However, such wish-patterns may lead to conflicts.

II

Where Shall We Go This Summer? intensely resonates with the echoes of *Cry, the Peacock* in terms of its similarity with the thematic concern(s) yet it skillfully broadens the scope of the existential conflict caused by the duality of the self and the Other. Singhal opines that the novel culminates on a positive note and, “...thus novel marks a change in the thematic progression from negative to positive, from alienation to accommodation” (79). The novel regresses into this duality (of the self and the Other) with special reference to Sita’s ambivalent relationship with the Other(s), i.e., Raman, Maneka and the father. The conflictual relationships with the Other form the existential trajectory of the novel. It is important to highlight here that the gamut of Sita’s being-for-others is far wider than that of Maya (*Cry, the Peacock*) and signifies certain fundamental differences as well. Unlike Maya, Sita is a mother of four children and is expecting a fifth one too. Unlike Maya, she has a detached father, brother (Jivan) and sister (Rekha) corroborating her existential morbidity and hollowness. She keeps sulking at the gnawing sense of absurdity of her existential ‘I-It’ relations with the Other(s).

It is worth reiterating that each consciousness faces the world alone, and must create itself through its own choices by responding to the things around it, whether these are passive, natural objects or other consciousnesses. In the look of the Other, a consciousness recognizes a point of view which is different from its own and it is unattainable because it is a mark of its own incompleteness. At the same time, the look of the Other threatens to destroy it by turning it into an object. In response, the consciousness can choose to retaliate to objectify the Other. But in doing so it destroys an external view of itself and must resign itself to the incompleteness of its self-understanding. The consciousness is therefore entrapped: it can dominate the Other, or live with the threat it poses. It is in this context that the present critique explores the duality of

the self and the Other unraveling the existential aspects of one's relationship(s) with the Other. It is in this context that the novel mirrors the marital disharmony between Raman and Sita. Consequent upon a total lack of understanding and the deep existential chasm; there exists no harmony between the husband and wife. Resultantly, Sita loses interest in the normal activities of life; feels bored and alienated inspite of living in a grand city of modern India, i.e., Bombay. Her plight is "...reminiscent of that of Antoine Roquentin's in Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*" (Naikar 77). Being an introvert, she is disgusted with the hustle and bustle of Bombay and feels the world being unsympathetic towards her. Sita "...feels ignored and unwanted. It is a crucial period when one feels a dilemma of existence" (Ram 64). This protagonist of the novel is an extremely sensitive and introvert woman whereas her husband Raman, like Gautama, is a practical, intellectual and rational man. In such circumstances, the birth of conflict between the two is a natural phenomenon. Raman and Sita—being the creatures of totally different temperaments—are entrenched in the dynamics of a persistent, confrontational relationship. They are not ready to yield to the wishes of one another. This signifies the play of the dialectics of the Other-as-subject and Other-as-object in the novel. Another noted critic Prasad points out that this novel deals with "...a recurrent favourite existentialist theme of husband-wife alienation and in-communication" and thus substantiates the ongoing critique of the novel (54). Pitching the argument in this context, the novel presents the poignant tale of Sita's existential anguish and ensuing attempts for authentic being-for-others which Ram interprets as "...an irresistible yearning for a purposeful life" (75). However, she fails to establish this authentic being-for-others. Seen thus, the absurdity of existence overpowers her being and she feels choked as none could be a savior. She fails to interpret the absurd nature of existence. Camus defines absurd as: "This world is not itself reasonable that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart" (26). It is important to point out that Sita is special, in the sense that the Camusian irrational governs her and hence she finds it almost impossible to authentically relate to the Other. Thus, she finds one of the most intimate relationships to be hostile.

Further, it is worth highlighting that the presence of the irrational is indubitably thicker in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* than in *Cry, the Peacock*, and the same is true in terms of Sita's altered defiance to the Other(s).

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Notably, the novel reinforces the conflictual dimensions of human relationships on account of a fatal recognition of the subjectivity of the Other. However, this novel suggests that revolt is an alternative to the Other-as-subject for the purpose of living the kind of life one desires. And here lies the tragedy of the protagonist, since an all-inclusive being-for-itself is not possible. The being flows towards others as its pre-requisite structural ontological necessity. Consequently, such kind of being-for-itself is not possible and hence it is an illusion. One's self-conception does not depend solely on an individual because others can always objectify the individual with their conflicting perspectives on him/her, resulting in the subject/object duality. Accordingly, Sita is unable to relate herself either with the mainland (Bombay) or the island (Manori) – the representative locales of the dualistic structure of the novel. The mainland and the island symbolize conflictual dimensions for Sita. Importantly the two spaces, being distant drums, sound sweeter to her at a distance. The city of Bombay, where Raman wants to live, presents a rational way of living whereas the island – Sita's fantasy realm – stands for a sort of primitivism. Another critic Rani observes: "Being unable to accept the cruelty and violence of the world around, she withdrew to magic Island of Manori" (32). However as Sita experiences the difficulties of living on the edge(s), the realization engulfs her with the passage of time. Hence, at the end of the novel she leaves the island "...with relief, worn out by the dreams of Manori, longing for the same, the routine ridden mainland as for a rest in a sanatorium" (Desai 100).

The very beginning of the novel mirrors the conflict-thematicity between Raman and Sita. The text presents "...her [Sita's] overwrought mental condition as the cumulative outcome of a stressful marriage" (Chakravarty 86). Desai comments about their married life, "...all through their married life they had preferred to avoid confrontation. All that they had done, he [Raman] now saw, was to pile on the fury till now when it exploded" (Desai 33). Childhood impressions and the socio-cultural environment in which human beings grow-up, inflate the existential self-conception of an individual followed by a relentless objection to the intrusion of new ideas. Viewed in this context, Sita is completely fed up with her married life at the mainland and also with the fact of her fifth pregnancy. Consider the following textual quote highlighting the conflict dimension between Raman and Sita:

Her husband was puzzled, therefore, when the fifth time she told him she was pregnant, she did so with a quite paranoiac show of *rage, fear, and revolt*. He *stared* at her with a distaste that told her it did not become her a woman now in her forties, greying, aging, to behave with such a total lack of control. Control was an accomplishment which had slipped out of her hold, without his noticing it, and so she wept and flung herself... . 'I'm [Sita] not pleased, I'm frightened'... 'It's not easier. It's harder harder. It's unbearable. (29, emphasis added)

Importantly, the fifth child deepens the existential gulf and ripens the latent conflict in the narrative. It is important to stress that what is easy for Raman, is unbearable for Sita. In this context, Sita refuses to be an object that the Other can appropriate and use as an instrument. Secondly, she is able to realize Raman taking a perspective on the unborn child and thus it induces an 'internal haemorrhage' in her perspective towards the fifth pregnancy. Thirdly, she experiences the returning *look* of Raman who is judging her at the moment and thus feels her own objectness signifying her inauthentic being-for-others. Raman a true representative of the Heideggerian One who always exhibits the technological¹ attitude feels that it is a temporal emotion in Sita and would soon fade out. He feels that she, "...would fall again into that comfortable frame of large, placid joy, of glazed satisfaction, of totally intuned pride and regard, as she did usually" (Desai 29) and tells her, "...not much to go now, Sita, it'll soon be over" (Desai 30). On the other hand, Sita experiences herself as being the 'Other-as-object' by such a detached attitude of her husband who fails miserably to measure her anguish even slightly. It results in the existential storm in their relationship. Resultantly, Sita opts to challenge the four walls of the house, including the mainland (the doctor, the hospital and the telephone), with a radical intent to transcend her facticity and the returning look of Raman (the Other) though in bad faith. She declares, "...I don't want to have the baby" (Desai 30) and thus shocks Raman. Desai tells us that "...they stared, uncomprehendingly, at each other, more divided than they had been on that day she fighting, the other laughing" (31).

Nonetheless, Raman fails to understand what Sita means by saying that she does not want to have the baby. Her declaration makes Raman to become angry and therefore he calls her mad. On knowing Sita's decision not to deliver the baby, Raman deduces that she wants an abortion. On the contrary, she is

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thinking of something awkward. She carries an irrational desire not to deliver the baby. She is not willing to bring her baby into a world where the creative impulse has no existence and only an overpowering desire to destroy exists. She wants the expected baby to remain in her womb. Such a wish-pattern manifests her search for peace in life. She asserts, "I mean I want to keep it I don't want it to be born" (Desai 32). In this regard for Rao, "Anita Desai dramatizes the conflict between two irreconcilable temperaments of the diametrically opposed attitude towards life" (51). To complicate matters, the news of war in Vietnam, the Rhodesian Jail, the perfidy of Pakistan are other events which add fuel to Sita's combustible attitude towards the world. Sita has been subjected to experience her objectness by the Other(s) and thus she fails to find authenticity in the hostile relationships.

As a response, she cultivates an ambivalent attitude towards the unborn Other. Probably, she does not want the unborn Other to be a part of the hostile world and therefore she desires—though in bad faith—to keep the baby in her womb. Her body offers a sort of space where the returning look of the Other is not possible. Hence, she cherishes a fantasy for the purpose of maintaining her privileged subjective freedom signifying a different kind of defiance towards the Other(s) at the same time. It is her way of equaling Garcin's declaration, i.e., "Hell is other people". Secondly, it is also an act of regaining control of (her) self. And for this purpose, it is necessary that Sita must defy the Other and thus create the looking/looked at dichotomous duality. By way of such a stance, Sita opts for the second attitude towards others by being indifferent to Raman and her children. Sartre says:

In this state of blindness I concurrently ignore the Other's absolute subjectivity as the foundation of my being-in-the-world and being-for-others. In a sense I am reassured, I am self-confident: that is, I am in no way conscious of the fact that the Other's Look can fix my potentialities and my Body. (381)

Sita displays the hatred paradigm towards Raman (the Other) whereby she wants to flee from the judgment of the Other, signifying her alienation and distantiating from Raman. However, speaking dialectically, it is bound to fail. Now, she treasures a desire to go away from her husband. Gupta points out, "...the title of the novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is highly suggestive.

The interrogative feature of the title is symbolic of the uncertain state of the heroine's mind, of her awareness, and of her indeterminate fate" (116). Her act of leaving her husband just because she does not want to give birth to a baby reveals her bad faith. This bad faith also inculcates the idea to escape from all responsibilities of her situatedness. However, her defiance comes as a reaction to the neatly arranged order of the Other(s) which clashes with her idea of her authentic existence. What seems commonplace and ordinary to Raman is something extraordinary and unusual for Sita. The incident where crows attack a wounded eagle that is, "Too young to fly" is a major occurrence for her (Desai 38). She tries to scare away the crows with Karan's gun but does not succeed. It appears as if she sees her own plight in the eagle. On the other hand, her husband declares the death of the eagle as a triumph. Raman considers the crows victorious because they have killed a bigger creature. Sita considers that crows were selfish creatures that could not match the flight of the eagle and they ganged up to kill it. Sharma in her book *Symbolism in Anita Desai's Novels* states that "...the crows are the symbol of civilization, particularly of the city people" (82). Further, she finds "...civilization torn between the reality of cruelty and the illusion of compassion embodied respectively in the images of the crow and the eagle" (Sivaramkrishna 22). Elucidating the difference motif in the relationship of Raman and Sita, another critic Sharma in a book titled *Anita Desai* observes: "They accuse each other of madness because they look at reality from different perspectives" (98).

Sita exhibits different habits and conceptual thoughts which act as hindrances in her adjusting to new situations and persons. Rao observes that the cause of her unhappiness originates from "...her constitutional inability to accept the values and the attitudes of the [the others]" (51). Having failed to have an authentic relationship with the Other, she refuses to accept the harsh realities of life which most people, including her husband, submit to very easily. She equates her condition to that of a jellyfish "...washed up by the waves stranded on there the sandbar" (Desai 149). Not only this, she never adjusts according to the circumstances. When she used to live with her in-laws, she never tries to adjust to the family environment. The "...family members of her husband's house frighten and appall her" (Dash 31). Further, the undercurrents of suspicion and doubt lie at the core of Raman-Sita relationship. When they meet a man near the Ajanta caves, she likes/praises the man whereas Raman exhibits his radically different perspective/reservations thereto and says, "...he

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was a fool—he did not know which side of the road to wait on” (Desai 52). Raman goes to the extent of suspecting Sita, and regards that her admiration for and interest in the hitchhiker was practically “...an act of infidelity” adding to the existential woes of the protagonist (Desai 33).

Another reason for the brewing of disharmony between Sita and Raman is their conflicting perspectives on reality. She lives in the world of fantasy and miracles. For her, Manori is the real world and it is pitted against the world of Bombay where struggles and sufferings are the result of human apathy towards nature and real human deeds. The average human beings do not attract her. Prasad writes, “She fails to adapt herself to society at large and boldly finds faults in dehumanizing norms and values that have a stronghold on its members and have relegated them to the state of animals” (56). On the contrary, Raman has a different perspective on reality. For him the mainland is the real world which provides all the modern facilities to all of them. There are schools and colleges for the children to study, hospitals and doctors for the new baby and the factory for one’s professional earning. Sita hates selfishness, greed, craving for money and other materialistic pleasures, and she questions the credibility of these things. Therefore, she strenuously strives to free herself from such materialistic chains. Since the Other represents an insensitive world, the conflict between Sita and her husband is consequent upon the dialectics of the self and the Other. This compels Sita to withdraw into her own protective shell and to choose a new world of her imagination. In this sense Sita appears to take a Nietzschean resolve, i.e. “...the secret of harvesting from existence the fruitfulness is—to *live dangerously* (Nietzsche 228, emphasis original). Hence Sita resolves to go to the Manori island—the land of miracles. Notably, it is from this strange island, peopled with worshipping followers of her father, that Sita has imbibed an intense imagination and idealism. Unable to negotiate the duality of her existence, she feels that her anguish can be healed with magic.

Sita’s second visit to the island manifests her insistent search for peace, tranquility and harmony. She yearns to rediscover the magic of Manori to protect the unborn baby according to her (delusional) wish-pattern. Sita is living a romantic dream. Interestingly, the façade of the island soon begins to reveal its hollowness and concavity. It is a place where darkness is all pervasive. Rao comments, “It’s a story of illusions melting away in the cold light of the everyday and the commonplace” (57). The desire for glory and magic is occasioned with a perplexing fiasco. Further the look of Moses, Miriam and others leave a

destabilizing and debilitating effect on Sita. They *look* at her with a sense of unease and wonder if she was the mistress of the house at the island. Importantly she is compared to her fabled father and is thus signified as "...the unworthy offspring of the illustrious and well-remembered father" (Desai 25). Viewed in this perspective her escape to the island lays bare its emptiness and paves the way for her subsequent existential despair. The silent awareness of losing out the temporal coherence of being excavates her despair and highpoints the fragility of her existence. When Sita reaches the island along with her children, the Other gets further solidified. Now she finds herself in conflict with the children, Karan and Menaka, who refuse to adjust to the primitive life of the island. They replace Raman and subject Sita to their look and thus corroborate her anguish. When city bred children express their surprises and discomfort over the absence of proper electricity, she tries to calmly satisfy them and says, "...you can see the sky lit-up" (Desai 25). It also explicates the idea that motherly instincts fail Sita. Since they inhabit dissimilar worldviews, her kids fail to share intimacy with her. As a result, they identify more with their father. Having failed to understand the real cause of her monotonous existence, her cold understanding of the Other(s) alienates her further. She experiences the duality of significance and insignificance. In such circumstances, she *chooses* to eulogize the bullock cart as a symbol of simple and rural life. Importantly, nature is used as a potent tool to present the motif of the existential duality in the novel. It also mirrors her ambivalent moods vis-à-vis the duality of her mental states. It is worth considering that in the beginning of the novel, nature at Manori is presented in terms of its harshness and severity *yet* it also offers solace to the alienated Sita. After being rejected by own children, she finds nature as the only friend on this remote island. On the other hand, the urbanite nature is full of tensions and anxieties and induces Sita to perceive this world as an asylum of mad men. This apparent contradiction embodies her inner conflict. In spite of her well-nurtured defense mechanism, she fails to respond to the look of the children and "...every time she caught their eyes, the accusation in them, made her turn abruptly away, having no answers for them" (Desai 27). As a result, she relies on the world of smoke (cigarettes) as if it equals her existential fog vis-à-vis the dialectics of the self and the Other. Coming to Manori is her step towards seeking solace from the dull life of the city. But her decision soon refracts its cracks as her children start keeping a

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distance from her. They hoist the flag of the *present* at the island and hence bruise Sita. The desired solace stands challenged by the Other. Menaka is a thorough foil to Sita and manifests a compelling challenge to her mother's swollen subjectivity. Menaka's strong identification with the father expands Sita's anguish. She feels that all are violent upon her and treat her (as) Other-as-object only. Later, when Sita and Menaka discuss about science and art, Sita says, "Science can't be satisfactory... . It leads you to dead-end. There are no dead-ends, no, in art. That is something spontaneous, Meneka, and alive, and creative" but for Menaka, "...art is nonsense" (Desai 108). However, Menaka is the one who is able to see through Sita's delusional world and declares that "...there is no light" there (Desai 23). It objectifies Sita's magical island. In addition to this, Menaka hates Sita's proclivity for drama and feels most disgusted and hurt by it. Menaka is the one who writes a letter to her father and requests him to take them (the children) away from the world of her mother and thus she substantiates their distantiation from her mother. Menaka's intense hatred paradigm towards her mother makes Sita realize her own objectness by the returning look of the Other. Bande remarks: "To the world she appears crazy. Her attitude, her outburst of anger, her appearance... ." (114). On a condensing note, Sita's futile attempts to impose her interests on the children are occasioned with their incessant disapprovals.

Now it is vital to assess Sita's weird childhood as well as her relationship with the father at *Jeevan Ashram* " ...the Home of the Soul" (Desai 57 emphasis added) so as to decode the finer nuances of the duality of the self and the Other in the novel. Particularly, Sita's father is far different from Maya's father. This is a relationship which lacks love and implies an exhaustive neglect of Sita. The father, being "...a political celebrity" has no time for the children (Raizada 41). He represents a larger than life public figure eulogized by the public at large. The inhabitants perceive him as a saint and the island belongs to him. Interestingly the distanced father evokes a strange curiosity in Sita and, she yearns to explore the clandestine aspects of his magical world. Such a curiosity compels Sita to keep a constant look at the Other (the father). However, the magical realm of the father soon extends repulsion to Sita. As she comes to know that the father mixes powder to cure people's tumour and boils, she realizes that the father does not have any superhuman powers. In addition, her father's obstinacy for maintaining a primitive life also suggests his tactical strategy

for living like a legend amongst the village folks at the island. Sita is also suspicious of an illicit relationship between her father and elder sister Rekha. Her father's "...unusual tenderness towards [Rekha] confuses her with strong internal questions" (Meitei 33). Sita is also suspicious of another illicit relationship between her father and Phoolmaya, who beget a son after ten years of marriage. Her father's mysteriousness is further strengthened by the narrative clue that Sita's mother did not die but ran away to Benaras which implies the chord of a strained relationship between the father and the mother. Importantly we never "...learn Sita's mother's assessment of her husband. It is one of the potentially disruptive and destructive silences in the novel" (Bhatnagar 109). Seen thus, Sita is a discarded, unwanted and worthless daughter living in a hostile world which emits absurdity and anguish. The Other intimidates and thus treats her as being-in-itself only. None is trying to reach out to her in an authentic manner. The relations lack mutual reciprocity and constitutive otherness and add to the oscillation of master-slave dialectic leading to the conflictual, dichotomous dynamics of the self and the Other in the novel. Therefore after the death of the father, the family disintegrates in spur of a moment. Rekha does not care to shed tears on the demise of the father and decodes it as "...a moment of release from the old man's love" (Desai 99). Sita's brother Jivan too disappears after a couple of days from the island leaving Sita to hold on to her discolored existence till Raman comes to the island to take her back to mainland (Bombay) signifying a new hope for the wretched Sita. Such incidents cause a heavy and visible damage to Sita's innocent mind and she feels like "...an island on the island" (Ram 74). The preceding discussion reveals that Sita's childhood and her relationships with her father, Rekha and Jivan are devoid of authenticity and thus add to her existential aberration vis-à-vis her being-for-others.

The foregone discussion throws ample light on Sita's saying 'No' to the Other and thus foregrounds her defiance thereto. It is a 'No' to the meaningless and hollow relationship with the Other. The Other does not appear to transcend its subject position so as to alleviate the in-betweenness existing between the self and the Other. However, Sita displays a quality distinct from Maya in terms of transcending her facticity and dialectically moving closer to the Other and thus she manifests a yearning for establishing 'We-relationship'/'I-Thou' relationship towards the end of the novel. Expanding the critique to wider denominations, it is important to

point out here that Sartre in his later work *Notebooks for an Ethics* holds that it is possible for a consciousness to experience a meaningful relation with the Other whereby both of the participants can remain subjects. He labels this sort of relationship as authentic social relation or 'we-relation'. Seen thus, Sita confirms that, "...self is not a constant, stable entity. On the contrary, it is something one becomes, one constructs" (Nehamas 7). Sartre in his key essay "Existentialism is a Humanism" also maintains a similar stance: "There is no human nature, because there is no God to have a concept of it. Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills... . Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself" (349). Sita endorses to such a converted consciousness towards the end of the novel. The third part of the novel aptly contains the metaphor of monsoon and thus it makes a strong suggestion of Sita's converted consciousness. Towards the end of the novel, Sita tells Raman that she did not desert them and states: "No, no- desertion, that's cowardly. I wasn't doing anything cowardly...I was saying 'No' but positively, *positively* saying No" (Desai 135 emphasis original). Such positivity on Sita's part connotes an invocation to the Other to look at her in the framework of the we-relationship. Towards the end of the novel, she starts interpreting the island differently. Consider the following textual extract: "Sita felt a spasm of fear at her bravado, her wild words, her impulsive actions that had flung [her] alone onto this island surrounded by wild seas. It was no place in which to give birth. There was no magic here- *the magic was gone*" (Desai 104 emphasis added). Hence, she highlights dynamism for constructiveness seeking self-direction and authenticity of her being-for-others. And now, "The thought of [Raman's] adult, quiet and critical company gave her a sharp sense of pleasure" (Desai 118) and later when Raman reaches the island, she feels, "...comfort, security [realizing that] it was the second time he had come to fetch her from the island [and now] nodded and waited for him to say more" (Desai 121-121). Now Sita displays an existential transcendence aimed at cultivating we-relationship with the Other. She aims at what Gadamer calls 'fusion of horizons'. In view of such phenomenological expansion of Sita's being, she starts comprehending Raman's suffering during the weeks she has been away including his worry and anxiety about her, the unborn children, Menaka and Karan living alone amidst the wilderness of the island. Understanding from this perspective, Sita's duality appears to

embrace the point of an existential negotiation/synthesis. Sita's return from the island is due to the fact that she begins to realize the difficulties the Other(s) must be facing on account of her withdrawal. Sita is able to make sense of the irrational/absurdity of life. It is important to note that Sita's retreat to the mainland is skillfully left open-ended by the novelist. Hence, it may be interpreted as a dialectical resolution of Sita's existential woes. Her return "...to the mainland signifies her return to life" (Anand 100). However, after return to Bombay, the text speaks nothing about her later life.

The analysis of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* lays bare the dialectical manifestation of the dynamics of the self and the Other. Whereas Maya fails to negotiate the duality of the self and the Other, Sita embraces – silently though – the notion of existential possibilities and thus negotiates the contradictory pulls of her existence by preferring mainland over the island towards the end of the novel. She is able to negotiate such dualistic/existential cacophony by co-opting the Sartrean converted consciousness so as to cultivate the 'we-relationship' with Raman (the Other). Such a decision grants her existential autonomy to synthesize the dualistic pattern of her existence and paves the way for an "...authentic way of being which transcends the dialectic of bad faith" (Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics* 473). On a condensing note, the Sartrean framework of being-for-itself, being-for-others and we-relationship adds a new dimension to the evaluated novel and hence it makes a value addition in the existing corpus of critical studies on Anita Desai.

Endnotes

- 1 The term technology, in Heideggerian context, denotes treating everything having no value independent from the value one gives to it. Everything is treated as a *stock* under this attitude.

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