



THE EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF LOCALE IN ANITA DESAI'S "WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER"

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the significance of the locale in Anita Desai's novel "Where Shall We Go This Summer", through the interpretation and the comparative study of the rural setting in Manori, the island and the urban setting in Mumbai, the metropolitan city. This paper aims to understand the locale and its aspects that influence the characters' emotional and psychological development. The novel portrays the serene, pure and natural landscape of Manori and the exact opposite backdrop of the busy, bustling and practical city of Mumbai. The narrative is an exhibition of the impact these two distinguished Locales had on the protagonist at large and the other characters of the novel in general. The deep impression of the island of Manori on the protagonist has made her compassionate; and defined her ways of life; on the other hand, she cannot stand Mumbai's corrupt, inhuman ways of life. It results in her inner turmoil and brings complexities in her relationships. The evocation of the locale and its impact on the characters; their experiences, sheds light on the intricate interplay among place, family, society, culture, and the human psyche. The exploration of the locale in Desai's novel offers valuable insights into the deeper thematic and symbolic layers of the narrative.

KEYWORDS : locale, impact, psychology, culture, society, family

INTRODUCTION:

Where Shall We Go This Summer is a poignant example of locale study which shows the impact of locale on the inner and outer aspects of the characters. The characters exhibit the influence of the locale in which they have spent most of their life. In this novel we get to know that Sita, the protagonist who lived in two totally different locales, during different phases of her life acts as an example that shows the impact locale has on the psychology of a person. Her struggle to adjust herself in a new locale becomes difficult due to the deep impression of the old locale she had in her early life. She has to move from Manori, the island where she grew-up in a natural environment, full of purity, honesty, love and simplicity, to the urban locale overflowing with corruption, dishonesty, deceit, fraud, crime, venality, and evil. She tried to accommodate and adept herself with the urban culture and its immorality for a long period of time. She suppressed her love for the virtues of the island of Manori. But in her forties when she got pregnant once again for the fifth time, she had a sudden outburst of her suppressed emotions. She got extremely frightened to give birth to her baby in such an unscrupulous and wicked world. She wanted to keep her baby unborn safe in her womb forever, instead of giving it birth in this evil, sinful world of suffering. She was sure that such magic was possible in the magical land of Manori. She believed her father had that magic through which he had cured many ill people of the island.

"She had come here in order not to give birth. An explanation she had repeated to herself and her husband so often that, instead of acquiring lucidity— 'Ah! Oh, now I understand'— it seemed steadily more strange, mistaken. Yet she had arrived, she was on 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, and worked miracles of a kind. --and he might work another miracle, posthumously. She had come on a pilgrimage, to beg for the miracle of keeping her baby unborn." (P-31)

The difference in the two backdrops of the novel is crucial to support the storyline and the theme of the novel. These backdrops provide rationale for the course of actions in the novel. These backdrops act as a stepping stone in the psychological development of the protagonist. The kind of foot print and impression the locale of the island of Manori has created on the mind of Sita from her childhood has shaped her mind in a different manner. Manori has taught her humanity,

sensitivity, values and love for animals, plants and for all living beings. She lived there in harmony with nature, without corruption, dishonesty and treachery. She was happy and at peace in the presence of nature. She breathed freely in the cool breeze of the seashore. She was Surrounded with people who are compassionate and loving, who are grateful to nature, to the man her father who had treated them for their disease, and have provided solutions for their problems.

On the contrary is the locale of Mumbai, the city of cement and pollution where she lives after her marriage with Raman, her husband. Yes, Mumbai is called a city of dreams but unknowingly the dreams are fulfilled at the cost of humanity. Here she didn't find compassion among the people. The guests at her husband's house are nothing but his business associates, colleagues or acquaintances with whom he shared just a little humour and a meal, very practical relations, no emotional bonding and attachment. Sita told Raman that these people frightened her. She says "They are nothing-nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matters. Animals." (P-48)

She never got used to anyone. The subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness of Raman's family made her more frantic with fear. She thought that sluggishness might swamp her. She started smoking instead of eating, speaking in a sudden rush of emotions, asking extreme questions, which remained unanswered by all the family members. They never reacted or complained about Sita "as if they wished to be in peace to eat, to digest." (P-50)

Raman has to move to a little flat where they lived alone with the expectation that the sea view of the flat may please her and make her happy as she was once on the seashore of Manori. But the same sea she did not find soothing here. It was supposed to wash off the unpleasantness of the city away from her. Though she spent most of her time in the balcony of her flat smoking, she did not look at the sea. She stopped admiring it. The same sea had a different mental appeal to her in different locales. She had to search for those few moments that proclaimed that she is still alive, not drowned and dead.

The locale of Manori provides the sense of security and protection to Sita but the same locale of Manori appears unsecured and frightening to her children Menaka and Karan. Both of them were born and brought up in the technologically

advanced city of Mumbai and hence the technologically backward village of Manori was the root cause of their dislike of it. Hence it proved that locale has tremendous influence on the overall personality, behaviours and psychology of people.

Locale contains different layers one upon others, it has massive power in the formation of every literary work. This novel too unfolds different coats of locale which helps readers to become aware of the setting, place, period and time in which particular story takes place. It provides all necessary background to understand even small details of the narratives.

Language plays an important role in establishing a particular locale in the novel. It is indicative of a country, state, particular area of the place, their culture, beliefs, psychology of the people, their practices etc. The name of the protagonist, Sita, her husband Raman, her children Menaka and Karan are taken from the Indian mythological books Ramayana and Mahabhart, helps readers identify the Indian backdrop of the novel. Throughout the novel we come across many words from the local Indian languages eg. lungi (1), Sari(9), memsahib(9), sahib, 'chalo,chalo,(15) shanti town, baba, veranda, vedas(34), Mahabhart, Bhagvad gita, Hindu, ayah(43), Marathi(43), shehnai(52), chelas(61), Parsi(62), jeevan ashram(63), cheekoos (64), Bangali(67), tanpura(67), babaji(72), raga(78), bhajan (79), Benare (84), Swaraj(86), lota (87), Ganga (87), Gandhi (88), Jail (91), mantra (95), Abracadabra(95), dada (98), Amma (110), mama (121), khana(137). Though the novel is written in English language Anita Desai successfully created an Indian background by using the words from Indian native languages. She had also made a reference of some of the Hindu religious books eg. vedas(34), Mahabhart, Bhagvad gita etc. to provide cultural values to the novel and the story. We also come across the names of different languages used in India eg. Sanskrit (95), Kokani dialect, marathi (108).

Divulge of social issues of the period also helps the author to bring up the locale of the period that could enhance the vision of the readers of a particular scene. Anita Desai has painted the quarrel scene among the ayahs with minor details so well, giving life to it.

"There was a sudden sound like the screeching of brakes, a commotion -only it was not a common road accident but a clash and clamor of aroused women. The ayahs were up in arms. Hearing the screams, Sita leapt up to lean over the rails and peer down the street, and although she could not see the women fighting in the cul-de-sac, she could see the passers -by who had stopped to stare, and the whole street seemed to quiver and whip with their passion and rage. There was a clamor of shouts and accusations, screams and shrill, tooting sound as the argument gave way to action. She thought she saw the madly flapping edge of the battle scene- arms flailing, sari ripping. Certainly, children were crying. Tea, book, cigarette- abandoning them, she ran."

Even today mostly the maids who work as a nanny belong to socially, economically and culturally not so well established and developed class, they are generally from the slums of the city hence are not really sophisticated and well-behaved citizens. They are uneducated and lack sense and sensibility. They spend their time in useless bickering and gossiping. At a time, they start having verbal fights and end up in physical fights. The children they are taking care of are really affected drastically. This social issue is really of great concern today. This kind of careless, dangerous behaviour among the nannies is not a very rare occurrence. By describing this type of squabbling among the nannies in the novel the author has made this work breathing for its reader. And this is how the readers of this novel or any other novel can actually live the narrated story with the help of locale presented in it.

CONCLUSION:

locale is as important as the characters, plot, and theme in the novel. It helps the author as well as readers to make the novel alive through the depiction of places, setting, time, period, language, society, culture, and the psychological effects it has on the characters and the story. Language, its dialects, regional peculiarities used in the novel to convey the thoughts and actions of the characters play a crucial part to give its reader a rich experience of the events in the novel. The physical, social and the psychological development of the characters in the novel is impacted by the locale. The protagonist's inner storm and the outer eccentric behaviour is the outcome of her inability to cope with the changes occurred in her locale in the course of her time.

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