

Social Reformation of the Masses of Down-trodden Men in Select Novels of Anita Desai – A Subaltern Studies Perspective

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Abstract

The recent novels in Indian English mostly deal with the past history of the masses of the marginalized in the South-Asian continent due to the impact of “colonialist elitism” (Ludden 2002) and its upshot-colonialism. Generally, the word, “colonialist elitism” (Ibid), denotes the Western modernity which badly influenced the masses of the marginalized groups in a society during the rule of imperialism.

In her novels, Anita Desai, one of the most eminent female writers of Indian English, often portray the harsh realities of the day today life of the masses of the marginalized including the lower-class workers, the lower-caste fishermen and the lower-caste women when they resist against imperialist elitism and its results. She often makes “use of symbolism” (N. R. Gopal 99) to portray the characters of her novels and uses pictorial words for describing the settings of the scenes in her novels. Also, she uses “flashback technique” (Ibid) in her novels significantly.

The select novels of Desai adding in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* and *Fire on the Mountain* give an account of details about the inner thirst of the masses of the less-privileged men to get released from the tradition bound society by resisting against dominant ideologies prevailing in the colonial rule and its effects. Also, the novels describe how far the social evils

prevalent in India such as class/caste discrimination, race, gender, religion, nation, colour, and age-oriented discrimination and other ethnic differences affect the everyday survival of the masses of innocent men in India.

The select novels of Desai obviously expound the importance of a separate space for the masses of the marginalized men to lead their life in a respectable way. The novels also show how the masses of down-trodden men hate the colonialist/nationalist elitism and its aftermath collapsing their identity and the past history of their ancestors. They develop self-confidence enough to resist the worse effects of modernity in destroying their soil, tradition, culture, social setup, etc. The novels exhibit how the masses of the under-privileged men tirelessly strive hard to resist against colonialist elitism and its aftermath. As a result, they get liberated from the age-old traditional taboos and from the ever-mounting imperialist elitism repressing their self-dignity and traditional culture.

The masses of the downtrodden men in the select novels are able to realize their self-potentiality, expressing love and affection to their compatriots through their close friendship with empathetic elites. The select texts explain how the masses of less-privileged men celebrate “traditional/territorial kinship” (Guha 1983) among them to strongly fight against the ever-mounting colonial knowledge and its upshot in India, similar to subaltern studies analysis. The groups of under-privileged men in the select novels, including the *chelas*, the fishermen of Manori Island in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*, the mass of under-privileged male-workers and the poor village men of Kasauli village in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* are able to retain their self-dignity through their kinship with their compatriots throughout their life. The paper logically analyzes how far the select novels of Desai’s *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* establish the just-order in the colonial/post-colonial society in India by depicting how the masses of ignored men get released from the social, cultural, and economic divergence intended by native elites, the colonialist elites and the modern elites during the colonial/post-colonial period in India through their kinship relationship, education and self-employment. It highlights the indomitable struggle of the masses of the down-trodden men against colonialist elitism and its upshot to obtain social-equality, freedom, and fraternity by reflecting the conceptual thoughts of Subaltern Studies philosophers like Ranajit

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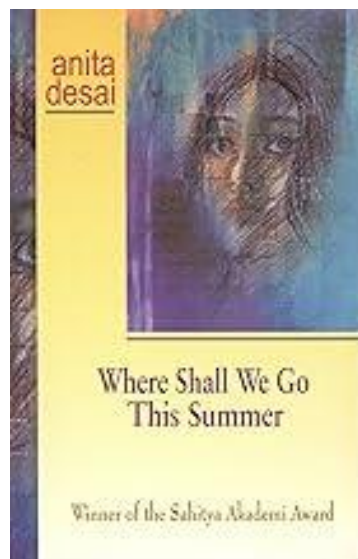
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Social Reformation of the Masses of Down-trodden Men in Select Novels of Anita Desai – A Subaltern Studies Perspective

Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Kancha Illiah, Uday Chandra and Robert Young.

Keywords: Anita Desai, *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* novels, resistance, social-reformation, self-potentiality, Subaltern studies criticism and colonialist elitism.

In general, social reformation means releasing someone from slavery or oppression caused by multiple social differences and traditional customs prevalent in a society. In the context of colonial/post-colonial space, it means someone's freedom from the thought or behaviour of the colonial/post-colonial capitalists.



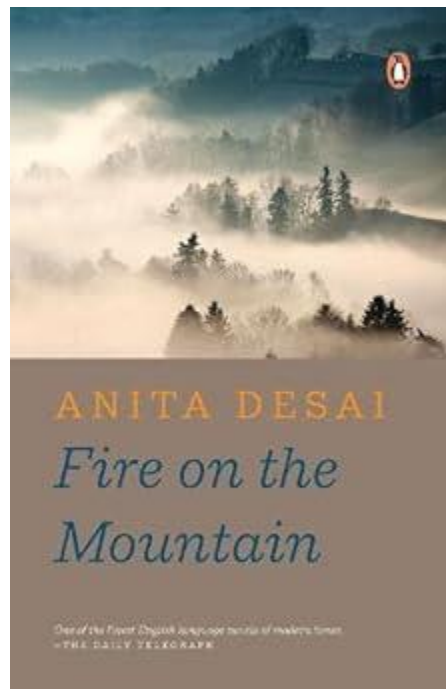
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The paper examines how the select novels of the well-renowned Indian English women writer, Anita Desai's *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* And *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* expose the theme of self-reformation of the under-privileged masses of men when they encounter the adversity of the ever-growing colonialist elitism such as caste, class, gender, race, age, religion, region and "post-coloniality" (Ludden 2002). In the novels, Desai explicates

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the social rebellion of the less-privileged masses of men against the social/spatial dominance of the ruling-elite groups in colonial India and in post-colonial India. As a social novelist in Indian English, she clearly explicates how the underdogs strive hard to recover their identity collapsed by the selfish desires of powerful elites during the hierarchy of colonialism and its aftermath in India.



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Also, the paper reflects the conceptual thoughts of Subaltern Studies philosophers, like Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Kancha Illiah, Uday Chandra and Robert Young through the analysis on the reclaimed identity of the masses of the under-privileged men in select novels of Desai.

Firstly, the paper discusses the resistance of the masses of less-privileged men against the social evils during the regime of colonialism and post-colonialism represented in the select novels of Desai. The word, “resistance” refers to an ‘organized covert opposition to an occupying or ruling power (Oxford-2562). The select novels of Desai elucidate the ‘subaltern politics’ (Guha 1983) of the masses of the marginalized men. The “subaltern politics” (Ibid)

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means the resourceful fight of the masses of the marginalized men against the power elites who subjugate them through the implementation of land laws, labour laws during the regime of colonialism and its consequence. It exhibits how the mass of marginalized male-individuals remain as dissenters of legal laws, traditional customs and trade policies implemented during the regime of imperialism and its upshot in India and prove that the “subaltern can speak” (Young 1995) when they are given enough space as mentioned by the subalternist, Robert Young.

In *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* the ashram life of Sita’s father and the social evil, untouchability, affecting the normal life of the low caste men in Manori Island are criticized by the under-privileged male-individuals and by the groups of subaltern men, like *chelas* and the mass of the marginalized village men of the Manori Island. In *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*, the fake medicinal practices of the Hindu-priest, untouchability, and the wrong desires of the colonialist elites of Carignano house, Pasteur Institute, Carignano club, school and army millet oppressing the marginalized people of Kasauli villages are condemned by the mass of the less-privileged men of Kasauli village and by the subaltern cook, Ram Lal.

The paper projects how the novels expose the “inadequacy” (Partha Chatterjee 1986),” rightful resistance” (cited in Uday Chandra 2015) and the “productive labour” (Kancha Illaih 1996: 165-200) of the marginalized male-individuals against the upper-handedness of colonialist elites and nationalist elites and other type of powerful elites in India today. The novels spell out how the marginalized individuals/groups represented in the novels have retained their fragmented identity in a colonial/post-colonial society through their healthier relationship with the empathetic elites and through the mutual understanding among themselves. They reveal how “the subaltern cannot speak” (Gayatri Spivak 1988) when they project the predicament of the masses of male-individuals in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*. The masses of the marginalized *chelas* and fishermen in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*, are exploited by the false idealism of Sita’s father, a hypocrite politician. Similarly, the masses of the marginalized workers and the village men of Kasauli village in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* are often affected by the social prejudice of the white elites and of the Hindu priest. The masses of under-privileged rural men of Kasauli village in the novel blindly follow the Hindu Priest’s superstitious belief that the cow-dung is the best medical-treatment for

all chronic diseases. The masses of the marginalized rural men's blind belief upon the superstitious ideas of the Hindu priests exposed in the novel reveals their "unawareness" (Chatterjee 1986) as stated by the subaltern critic, Partha Chatterjee.

The paper elucidates how the marginalized male-individuals integrating Moses in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* Ram Lal and the cook, in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* converse with the urbanized elites, like Sita in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and Raka in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* boldly. The novels clearly expose how the male-subaltern individuals tirelessly strive hard to produce positive changes in the Indian society during the colonial/post-colonial period. The marginalized male-individualism the select texts adding in Moses in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and Ram Lal in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* are projected as brilliant individuals who never believe the irrational myths existed in colonial/post-colonial rule in India.

In *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*, the subaltern, male-individual, Moses, is a brilliant boatman. He shows his dissatisfaction with the worse social manners of the mainlanders through his gestures and body language. He condemns the modernity of the mainlanders, like Sita and the driver from the city instantly. He strongly questions at the strange behavior of the urbanized elites, adding Sita's father, Sita, and her children. Moses seems to neglect the European notion of 'bourgeois domesticity' (cited in Guha 1997, 2000: 277) of the urbanized elites upon the underprivileged masses of men, as observed by the subaltern critic, Dipesh Chakrabarty. He criticizes the arrogance of Sita at her second arrival at the Marve beach. He perceives that Sita has not inherited 'the dignity, the mystery and the ascetic splendour of her father' (*WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* 13).

He mocks the strange behaviour of Sita and her children during their sea-journey towards the Manori Island. The sea-journey to Manori Island illustrates the 'productive labour' (SS IX 1996: 166) of Moses as perceived by Kancha Illaiah, the subaltern studies essayist. In the journey, Moses is enforced to perform multiple roles as boatman, bullock cart driver, conductor, and conveyer in order to fulfill the needs of the ruling elite, Sita, in the Manori Island. He criticizes 'them for their folly in having come' (*WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* 19) when he is given the driver's

seat during their sea journey to the island. He hates the existence of untouchability in India when Sita's daughter, Menaka, hesitates to touch his hands. Moses yells at her loudly 'Sit still please Memsahib' (*WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* 17), like a commander during the sea-journey when Sita bends down lowly from the boat to catch a strand of seaweed for her son, Karan. The journey displays how he reacts sharply when he is subordinated by the urbanized elites, including Sita and her children, Menaka and Karan. Despite being a dalit fisherman, he stands as a man of outstanding social behaviour.

Moses' strong opposition to Sita's egotistical commands at her father's house in the Manori Island is yet another example to his strong willpower. He gets irritated at her egotistical commands ridiculing his dignity. He quickly and sharply responds to the provocative questions of Sita, when she questions arrogantly about the poor maintenance of her father's house such as "Why haven't you cleaned it? Haven't you got any food made?" (*WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* 23). His unpleasant physical response to the provocative questions of Sita exemplifies his 'rightful resistance' (cited in Uday Chandra 2015)) against the proud elite, Sita. The term "rightful resistance" (Ibid) signifies a negotiation of "power structures from below" (Ibid). He expresses his hatred upon the self-centered commands of Sita through his facial expression, such as 'His jaw swung-warningly... rigidified into a purple barrier about his faces' (Ibid). Afterwards, he purposefully 'began to shuffle towards the door' (Ibid). He drags his feet towards the door. The silent resistance of Moses against the nationalist elite, Sita's is more than enough to show the dissatisfaction of the male-subaltern, like him to the Western-modernity of the urbanized elites.

In *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*, Desai reflects the subalternist, Guha's perception on 'people's politics' (Guha 1983) which condemns the rule of the elites. It is displayed very well through the description about the prompt reaction of marginalized men, like Moses. The novel vividly expresses how Moses liberates himself from the shackles of colonialist elitism and its consequences when he bitterly remarks at Sita's insane activity, playing on mud along with her children that 'she was mad' (Ibid143). His bitter remark about Sita's insane activity confirms that he is 'not a subaltern anymore' (Spivak 1992: 20) as appropriately mentioned by Spivak in her essay, *The Post-colonial critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (1992). Such

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types of the non-verbal resistance of the subaltern man, Moses, are an illustration to the everyday struggle of the marginalized men in the Manori Island against the urbanized elite, like Sita.

The marginalized cook in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*, Ram Lal, primarily resists against the modern elite, Nanda when she hates the arrival of her great granddaughter, Raka, at her Carignano house to stay along with her. He subtly whispers, ‘She is old, I am old, we are old’ (*FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* 35) when she goes out of his sight. He reveals his contempt for the selfish attitude of Nanda by his act of flinging his market bag furiously at a bony hen. He hits at the hen in Nanda’s house ‘in a particularly demanding tone’ (Ibid), as if he is criticizing Nanda’s selfishness. Secondly, he scornfully speaks to Raka about the colonial hegemony of the white elites in the research station, the army millet, and the club located at Carignano hill. He exposes his rightful anger against the selfish activities of the urbanized elites of Pasteur Institute, army millet of Carignano hill and Carignano club. He dislikes their selfishness to live for their wish without caring about the survival of the less-privileged village people of the Carignano hill by polluting the natural environment of the hill.

In his interaction with Raka, Ram Lal extensively narrates the pitiful ill-treatment of the modernized elites on the group of rural men lived in the Kasauli village. For instance, the dogs in the Kasauli village greedily eat the decayed bodies of dead animals poured down from the Pasteur institute in the hill-station. As a result, the dogs become mad and bite the mass of under-privileged men of Kasauli village. He scornfully criticizes the indecent parties conducted by the elites of the army millet at the club. He dislikes the unpleasant evening visits of the band of army men to the Carignano club. He comments hatefully that such parties are the unnecessary imports of colonialism. He speaks condescendingly about the merriments in the garrison, destroying the livelihood of the local people of Carignano hill. He does not like the awkward dances of the ‘Angrez Sahibs and Memsahibs’ (Ibid 73) during the nighttime parties conducted in Carignano club. He complains that such parties spoil the peaceful sleep of the villagers and pollute the environment of the Carignano hill. He hates the British army men’s visit to the Carignano club affected the normal livelihood of the innocent villagers of Carignano hill. He denounces the bad behavior of the British army men who throw away the empty bottles of whisky and cool drinks near the club.

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His speeches delivered to Raka against the installation of the imperial institutions, such as the Pasteur institute, the Carignano club and the army millet in Carignano hill spoiling the normal life of the mass of villagers everyday proves that “the subalterns can speak” (Young 1995) as mentioned by the subalternist, Robert Young. In his conversation with Raka, Ram Lal reveals his dream to bring social changes uplifting the living standards of the masses of innocent people in the village. Owing to the furious speeches of Ram Lal against the malfunctioning of the imperial institutions of Carignano hill-station, Raka gets instigated to set fire to the hill-station. The strong criticism of Ram Lal about the colonial institutions explains how he becomes a promoter of liberation to the mass of under-privileged men living at the Lower mall of Carignano hill.

Secondly, in select texts, Desai discloses how the down-trodden masses of men regain their ‘class consciousness’ (Guha 1983) or ‘traditional organization of kinship and territoriality’ (Ibid) in order to fight against the “elite politics” (Ibid) of the ruling elites, similar to the subaltern studies criticism. The “traditional/territorial kinships” (Ibid) are developed among the less-privileged groups of men and between the marginalized groups of men and the group of compassionate elites against the ever-growing colonial knowledge in the regime of colonialism and its upshot in India.

The select texts expose how this type of kinship relationship help the masses of repressed men struggle against the “colonialist/nationalist elitism” (Ludden 2002) which spoiled several social associations including family system, marriage system, legal system, religious system, and other systems prevalent in the South-Asian society today. Almost all the downtrodden groups of men in the select novels, including the mass of less-privileged *chelas*, the mass of lower-caste, fishermen of Manori village in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*, and the mass of under-privileged village men of Kasauli village in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*, get uplifted in their life by releasing themselves from the social, cultural and economic divergence intended by the feudal capitalists, the colonialist elites and the modern elites during the colonial/post-colonial period in India.

The paper presents how the down-trodden masses of less-privileged men boldly criticize the fake-idealism of the urbanized elites through their ‘kinship relationships’ (Guha 1983) in a society. They struggle hard to claim their civil rights and liberty during the reign of imperialism and its effects through their revolutionary acts against the British elitism and its effects. The novels portray how the downtrodden groups of men assert their ‘insurrectionary consciousness’ (Guha 1983) against the social conflicts created by the domineering groups of elites, such as forced exiles, imprisonment, displacement, and migration. They also portray how the non-elite male individuals or groups of non-elite men who gradually obtain maturity to figure out the ways and means to lead a morally worthy life. The writer of the select books and the subalternists, like Guha, Chatterjee, Spivak, Kancha Illiah, Chakrabarty, Uday Chandra and Young, give a picture of how the less-privileged masses of men get freedom in thought and expression as distinguished human beings. The novelist and the subalternists take great effort to portray how the masses of the marginalized men aspired to live nobly in the separate spaces created by them in a society.

Desai makes the empathetic elites in the select novels, like Sita in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and Nanda, Raka, Ila Das in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*, take responsibility to bring positive changes in the life of the marginalized people. Desai tries to stimulate the empathy of the people in the upper rung of society. She evidently portrays both the social-protest and social-uplift of the masses of the downtrodden people, like the masses of chelas, the fishermen in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and the less-privileged masses of rural-men in Kasuali village in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*. She idealistically presents how an outstanding human relationship between elites and non-elites results in social reformation in a society through the select novels, *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*.

Particularly, the groups of the displaced men rebel against the ever-mounting colonial violence in India, like the Western modernity of Sita’s father, Sita and her children in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and the doctors of the Pasteur Institute in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*. The colonial/post-colonial violence represented in select texts such as the implementation of the imperial’s institutions, the enforced exiles of the down-trodden groups of men and the selfish desires of the ruling elites of colonial/post-colonial period affected the

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ordinary life of the masses of the less-privileged men in India today. For instance, the group of marginalized village men in the text, *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*, gets used to recollect the mythical deeds of Sita's father by singing songs about his ashram life in the Manori Island. The group songs of Moses, along with the fisher folk of the Manori Island, mock at the failures of Sita's father in implementing the social doctrines of Gandhiji in the island. The songs of the less-privileged group of men in the Manori Island are an indirect criticism of the social doctrines of Gandhiji like subaltern studies analysis. The group songs of Moses show how the doctrines of Gandhi, specifically his doctrine on simplicity by avoiding the usage of modern tools or machines everyday degraded the social status of the displaced communities existing in India. The lifestyle of the masses of rural-men in many villages becomes worse daily as they blindly follow the doctrines of the nationalists preached by the fake-politicians, like Sita's father. They are forced to live in slum areas with improper roadways. They are also forced to drink impure drinking water daily.

The novel, *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*, noticeably illustrates how the mass of the under-privileged group of males, the *chelas*, gets liberated from the Western modernity of Sita's father. It exposes how those masses of the under-privileged men in the island develop their "self-capacity" (Guha 1983) when they identify the false politics of Sita's father. Although the influential speeches of Sita's father delivered during the freedom struggle in India seem to help the masses of the common men, the *chelas*, his speeches aimed at exploiting them. His lectures on the concepts of the national father of India, Gandhiji, make them believe that Sita's father is a 'second Gandhi' (*WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* 78) who comes to release them from their slavery to colonial modernity. The mass of *chelas* is mostly inspired towards Sita's father when he miraculously cures the strange diseases of the mass of the innocent fishermen-folk of the Manori Island. The *chelas* join themselves voluntarily in the 'community devotions' (Ibid 61) conducted by Sita's father at the upstairs of Fiona house in the island. They are also instructed to follow Rekha's devotional songs during the prayer hours held in the Fiona house. Gradually, they are forced to 'wear homespun clothes and walk bare footedly' (Ibid 68). In all, they are misused by the false politician, Sita's father to implement his social doctrines in the Manori Island. However, the mass of innocent *chelas* understands that Sita's father is a false

politician when he moves to cut off his relationship with them. At first, they, as the mass of less-privileged men in a society, cannot display their protest the illegal relationship of Sita's father with the down-trodden group of women of the island. Afterwards, they derived enough courage to keep themselves away from the false-politician, Sita's father. Hence, they start leaving him one after another without even 'saying goodbye' (Ibid) to him and become businessmen.

Similarly, the mass of less-privileged fishermen of the Manori Island is also hypnotized psychologically and emotionally by Sita's father. Because of his adaptation to ashram life in the island, the mass of down-trodden fishermen starts loving Sita's father. They innocently adore him as a man with 'supreme power' (*WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* 110). He becomes a 'local feudalist' (Gulati 110) as he exposes himself as 'a Gandhi-Prospero figure' (Ibid) before the group of poor *chelas* and the fishermen in the island. Even though the mass of down-trodden fishermen in the Manori Island acquires "a lifestyle dangerously" (Charmazel Dutt 182) by getting inspired to the false-idealism of Sita's father, they undergo a metamorphosis to uplift themselves as social rebels condemning the colonialist elitism and its outcome. Before his death, they are pathless and helpless as they are converted into emotional slaves to him. They are unable to stand against his sexual abuse of the poor fisherwomen of the island during his private prayers at nighttime in Fiona house before his death. They noiselessly glance at the upstairs in his house 'with the troubled roll of their eyes' (*WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* 85) during the prayer hours of Sita's father. However, they get released from the magic spell cast over them at his deathbed. Sita indicates the release of the mass of the less-privileged village men of the Manori Island by saying that her father lies dying and adds that he has 'released them to go saint-like into their native sea' (Ibid 90) from the fake dreams of her father. Sita's father himself accepts that he has failed to implement his idealism of 'transforming the island into a New Atlantis' (Tiwari Shubha 166) at his deathbed.

After the death of Sita's father, 'a beam of light flickered in the minds' (*WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* 85) of the mass of less-privileged fishermen. They get improvement in their life by throwing away their subordination to fraud politicians, like Sita's father. Progressively, the mass of neglected fishermen of the Manori Island becomes courageous enough to pass comments on the failure of Sita's father in implementing the social theories of

Gandhi in the Manori Island. The group songs of the masses of the fishermen explain how they aspire to stand on their own legs by getting engaged in a new business. The masses of the marginalized fishermen led by Moses sing group songs about the magical cures of Sita's father at the Temple of Manori Island. Moreover, the masses of disadvantaged fishermen in the island collectively march towards the house of Sita's father as a token of gratitude, carrying baskets full of fishes, a vessel full of milk and other things during the second trip of Sita to her father's house. This kind of marching of the group of less-privileged fishermen with plenty of food items is a symbol of their prosperity and self-sufficiency and it shows that they are liberated from their poverty after the death of the fake politician, Sita's father. Their march towards Sita's house demonstrates their 'pre-political' (Guha 1983, 5-6) awareness or a traditional type of 'kinship' (Ibid) relationship that existed in between the modernized elites and the mass of poor fishermen-folk. Additionally, it symbolizes how the mass of fishermen of the island 'collectively fight' (Ibid) against the modernity of the urbanized elites, like Sita, her father, and her children.

After the departure to Sita from the island, the group of marginalized fishermen including Joseph Ali, Jamila's husband and the sick man denounce her rude behaviour. They jointly question themselves by saying that 'Who is she to come here to live' (*WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* 143). They try to reconstruct their lost identity. They get emancipated to such an extent that they can question the elitism of the urbanized elites, like Sita at least in her absence. Though they are discontented with the attitude of Sita, they firmly lay their faith in the supernatural power of her father. They utter, 'We will remember *him*, the father' (Ibid 142). Their recitation of mythical stories about Sita's father is considered as one of the 'practices of peasant insurgency' (Guha 1983: 73-76) as stated by Ranajit Guha to oppose the hypocrite elitism of Sita's father. The critic of the novels of Anita Desai, Dr. S. P. Swain, passes a comment on the downtrodden men, like Moses in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and Ram Lal in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* that they are radical individuals who are resentfully 'promiscuous and inordinately self-conscious' (Dr. S. P. Swain 253), seeking a just order in society.

The novel, *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*, also portrays the resistance of the mass of neglected men of Kasauli village who face the unavoidable circumstances that repress them. Due to the establishment of colonial institutions adding in Pasteur Institute, Carignano club and the

army millet in Carignano hill-station, the survival of the marginalized rural men becomes risky. They are often affected by dangerous diseases, like rabies, as they are bitten by mad dogs which roam around the Pasteur Institute. Desai also explains the worst effects of social problems such as child marriages and the superstitious beliefs of the group of poor rural men on their village priest. However, the group of oppressed, village men of Kasauli village resist against such social evils with the help of Ila Das, a social welfare officer. They obtain freedom from the dominance of ‘colonial modernity’ (Guha 1997, 2000) over them during the regime of colonialism and its aftermath.

The text, *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*, also shows how the group of innocent village men resists against the social, cultural, and environmental conflicts caused by the Hindu priest and the colonialist elites of the Pasteur institute, the Carignano club and the army-millet existed in Kasauli village. Especially, the novel exhibits how the mass of village men overcome the social menaces prevailed in the village such as child marriage, untouchability, superstitious beliefs and the environmental pollution caused by the British institutions through their sincere adherence to the suggestions of the social activist, Ila Das. They understand how the British institutes eradicate their traditional culture, the purity of their soil, and their physical and mental health. The text explains how ‘the doctors in the Pasteur Institute make serum for injections’ (*FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* 48) for the whole country and polluting the surroundings of the Carignano hill. As a result, the mass of ignorant men are ‘doomed to blindness’ (Ibid 140) caused by the air pollution of the Pasteur institute. Owing to the counsel of the empathetic elite, Ila Das, the mass of neglected village men of Kasauli village start visiting the doctor’s clinic. The mass of less-privileged village men gets liberated from its subjugation to the Hindu-priest and to his false medical treatment for all dreadful diseases. They stop taking red chili powder and cow-dung as ‘a universal treatment for all diseases’ (Ibid) due to the regular advice of Ila Das, a social activist. Gradually, they stop conducting child marriages in their houses. Their adherence to the counsels of Ila Das is seen as their willingness to get uplifted in a society. Raka’s angry reaction to Ram Lal’s speech is exposed at the end of the novel. Her act of setting fire to the Carignano hill-station is an outcome of her desire for social-advancement of the mass of under-privileged in Carignano hill.

To conclude, this paper represents how the less-privileged masses of men in select novels of Desai, the mass of the *chelas*, the mass of fishermen Manori village in *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?* and the mass of rural-men of Kasauli village in *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* successfully attempt to retain their self-dignity in a society when they fight against the colonialist elitism and its aftermath. They recollect the history of their ancestors. Also, they speak boldly about their present social-status as masses of non-identities due to the false-utopianism of the elites of imperialism and its outcome. In the select novels, the masses of the marginalized men were able to raise their voice either silently or strongly. The article presents the social reformation of the masses of less-privileged men in select novels describing how they create a utopian world of social equilibrium developed by their strong bond of love among themselves and through their mutual-relationship with the kind-hearted elites of the colonial/post-colonial society. Those kinship relationships existed among the masses of non-elite men and between the masses of non-elite men and the modern elites are considered as the social revolution of the masses of downtrodden men. Such a kind of the social-revolutionary affiliations of the masses of less-privileged men is called as ‘autonomous’ (Guha 1983) social activities as mentioned by the subalternist, Ranajit Guha.

The paper presents how the select novels of Anita Desai reveal her sincere social concern to liberate the masses of the marginalized from the clutches of conventional taboos and the modernity of the elites of imperialism and its upshot. She yearns for the social reformation in India, treating all human beings equally. The paper proves how Desai genuinely exposes the tireless hard work of the masses of the desolate men to earn a dignified survival in a society as a novelist of social realism. The masses of neglected males in her novels, *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN* and *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*, assert the new identity and get uplifted in their life by removing their old identities and by altering their blind adaptation to the elitism of the imperialists in colonial and post-colonial society in India. She minutely concentrates on everyday occurrences happening in the social appendages including family, marriage, class, castes, and religion in the select texts.

Thus, the paper describes how the masses of under-privileged men and the subaltern, male-individual in select texts of Desai try to rewrite and place things in order in a society. It

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reveals that the representation of the social reformation of the groups of exploited men in select novels of Desai paves a way for the social uplift of the masses of deprived people in a society. It highlights how the masses of the under-privileged men get uplifted in their life if only they will take steps to form a common link of togetherness ‘derived from membership in community’ (Chatterjee 1988: 11) as opined by the subaltern studies theorist, Chatterjee in *Selected Subaltern Studies* (1988). At the end, the paper emphasizes healthier human relationships, breaking out the dominant ideologies of colonialist elitism and its upshot in a society as a subaltern studies evaluation.

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