

Desai's Cry the Peacock- A journey to the voiced world

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Abstract: Women are the marginalised section of the society. But they cannot remain voiceless for long, they have to speak and find an outlet for their tears and fears, anguish and anger, thus register their existence. The voices resisting exploitation are fully aware of their own strength and dignity. The age-old existence of oppression, despair and suffering is common in the lives of marginalized classes across countries and continents. It's an archaic system that has produced the men who run the country negotiate domestic and foreign policy and penned sexist laws that made it easier for women to slide through the cracks. Woman is marginalised defined only by her difference from male norms and values in every country and culture. Anita Desai, one of the Indian novelists focussed on women's situation in Indian society, whose leading voices has given the inner description of women's inner world, her sensibility, her sulking frustration and the storm raging inside her mind. Her *Cry The Peacock*, presents the story of a young sensitive girl obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster. The novel points the role and contribution of patriarchy and patriarchal values towards misery, suffering, loneliness and unhappiness of women. Desai's heroine in the novel chooses to remonstrate and fight against the general accepted norms and currents. The thoughts of the women protagonists in the novel are sure to crop up in her struggle to live their desired life. The main focus of the paper is to discuss a journey of a woman who confronts the gender-oriented tradition in search of her true self.

Keywords: Sexual Commodification, Marginalisation, Suffering, Feminine sensibility, Tradition, Limits, Womanhood.

I. INTRODUCTION

Anita Desai's novel *CRY THE PEACOCK* is a winner of the Sahitya Academy Award, which was published in 1963. It is a psychological novel, which explores the sensibility and inner working of the heroine Maya married to Gautama, a lawyer who is twice her age, living under a morbid fear of death. Desai focuses on the detached relationship between Maya and Gautama. She has described the failure of marriage between Maya and Gautama. It portrays Maya, a most sensitive woman suffering from neurotic fears and marital disharmony. Maya is a rebel woman who fails to identify herself with her husband Gautama's world and finds herself alienated from the affection she got from her father and besides her total economic dependence on her husband makes her feel rather insecure and powerless. She is in search of new vista for a woman's world, a space in which she is at par with man. The whole tragedy of pathos of the pampered rich woman is described in this novel in order to show how bright but brittle foundation of upbringing in such a

pampering aristocratic atmosphere crumble at the first encounter with reality. The novel clearly and evidently suggests that the modern life with all its achievements and progress is doomed to disorderliness and destruction unless it considers and nourishes the tender feelings of the women who form the nucleus in any society

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In India the writers of post-Independence phase tend to move inward and try to get more and more psychologically intended and try to assess the sociological effect on the psyche of their characters. This movement from the outward gross realities to inward complexities found as its mouthpiece a number of women novelists who by peculiar situation of their existence have been able to see the Indian complexities from close quarters, where constraints of varied hues and shades work upon the sensitive individuals. Fiction by women writers shares a major segment of the contemporary writing in Indian English literature. Through the eyes of women writers one can see a different world and with their assistance one can realize the potential of human achievement. So, they have successfully projected the urges, dreams and desires of a woman who refuses to be bounded and suffocated by the patriarchal society. Anita Desai happens to be a leading voice among those women novelists. She tells fascinating stories about individuals who have to traverse a ground too tricky and treacherous to handle smoothly. The dilemma faced by an individual in the Indian urban set up is portrayed by her. Desai is interested in analysis and portrayal of human relationship. The human relationship is not only of peripheral interest but also central to the main fictional concern in her novels. The innermost psyche of her protagonists is revealed to us through their interaction with those who are emotionally related to them on the basis of kinship. Hence her novels depict the human relationship in the family and especially among the kin. *Cry the Peacock* focuses on Desai's expression of her preoccupation with the modern ideal of building the society free from male domination. The novel explores the search of a woman to fulfil herself basically as a human being, independent of her various traditional roles as daughter, wife and mother. The novelist strongly agrees to Simone de Beauvoir's that fact that we are human is much more important than our being and women.

Cry, the Peacock, the first novel of Anita Desai, published in the year 1963, has given the portrait of a highly sensitive and

cultured woman, Maya, who cried for love and understanding in her loveless marriage with Gautama, who was the reason for the tragedy that has happened in her life. Her fate was determined by the male society, her father, husband and Albino, the astrologer- who brought madness and death in her life. Meena Belliapa considers this novel 'a remarkable attempt to fuse fantasy with perceptual experience'. The novel defines the uniqueness of feminine sensibility through the reactions and responses of the heroine to the events and situations in the novel. A highly emotional, sensitive and sensuous woman Maya has obsessive love for life. Her only sin is that she is sensitive, imaginative, passionate and sensuous and thus represents the disturbed psyche of modern Indian woman. The novel portrays an individual's journey in search of one's true self who confronts the gender-oriented tradition.

The quest of the protagonist of the novel is not only one woman's quest but the quest of all women of the society towards some understanding and acceptance of her predicament. Apart from Maya there are other more women in the novel as Nila and Goutama's mother who symbolically present positivity and strength- both of them have the ability to fight the odds. The novel begins with the line:

All Day long the body lay rotten in the sun

The very beginning of the novel tells the husband wife alienation theme by unfolding the relationship of Maya and Gautama which reminds us the fate of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's novel *To The Lighthouse*. The story unfolds that Maya's father get her married to a middle-aged lawyer whose age was twice of Maya. The marriage was never fruitful and as a result at the end Maya became violent and killed her husband as a revenge of his icy cold impassiveness and indifference weaves the story of the novel. Maya always compared her mental conditions with the birds and creepers, leaves and clouds of dust.

like to mice in one small room, not daring to creep out, for fear they'll pounce on you, ask you where you are going. When you'll be back, why you aren't wearing the jewellery they give me

She failed to establish effective communication with her husband as she was an introvert and suffered from utmost sexual dissatisfaction. Her life is shadowed by the three-fold effect of death, doom and destiny. Even though her mind is at times highly chaotic and anxiety ridden, she does not lose her discriminating sense, but fights with womanly impulses.

It was discouraging to reflect on how much in our marriage was based upon a nobility forced upon us from outside and therefore, neither true nor lasting. It was broken repeatedly and repeatedly the pieces were picked up and put together again as of a sacred icon with which out of the pettiest superstition we would not sear to part.

The story of Maya is the story of suffering of a noble woman, who is subjected to several psychological jolts which finally

throws her off the balance. It is the tragic end of a grief-stricken woman, who suffers at the hands of her husband, at adolescence she was injured by her father hesitantly to a very decent living, but the marriage to a man who is bereft of emotion or love, devoid of any human values and concern for the partner, provides her only brutalities and tortures. Maya's role in the novel helped Anita Desai to carry a new aspect of feminist publishing. She is the most exciting and psychologically amazing amongst whole Desai's female characters. She staged a sort of women who silently abide from the men. She is the mute representative of the depressed women in male dominated society in India. Her act of murder is a revolt against callous materialistic social order. She believes that she is not fit to live in this world based on male centred wisdom, reason and order. She wants to be free from the chain of slavery based on customs and established norms of the society. Her revolt against the social order is an aesthetic revolt- she became the voice of the society against the male dominancy.

II. CONCLUSION

Kohli points out "No other writer is so much concerned with the life of young man and woman in Indian cities as Anita Desai."

Her involvement with Indian woman and their reaction is different from other which distinguishes her from other Indian writers. It is explained with following examples Maya is a protagonist of the novel *Cry the Peacock*. She is obsessed with death and haunted by predication of astrologer that her marriage is going to end within four years with the death of either she or her husband. Finally of insanity she kills her husband and commits suicide. Authors Sita is a major character of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* She finds alienated for her husband and children. She remains lonely in the broken family. In *Fire on the Mountain* Nanda escapes from house and leaves in the isolated place because of her unfaithful husband. In the novel *In Custody* ups and downs of human mind is illustrated beautifully. Desai's another novel *Voices in the City* has remarkable existential problem. It is a novel of three protagonist, Nirode, Monisha and Amla. Alienation, isolation, loneliness and self-identity are main concern of the novel. Language and Technique: - We cannot separate theme and technique from Anita Desai's novels. They are not isolated elements but inter related. In order to convey theme, she uses places, characters, situation, dialogues and silence Her use of technique and narration give her distinct position among the Indian novelist. It is vital agent of thematic trust. Her dialogues are powerful and touch the heart. She uses different techniques of narration as per theme and situation. She uses memories of past Nostalgia as a narrative technique. In this respect she is compared with James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. All readers and critics are anonymously agreed that beyond doubt Anita Desai is one of the most popular feminist Indian novelists in English. It is she who has enriched the tradition of the Indian novel in English. Anita Desai's contributions to fiction have made her special and

uplift the position of Indian fiction in to desired height of world literature.

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