

## FEMINISTIC STUDY IN ANITA DESAI'S *CRY, THE PEACOCK*

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### Abstract

*Desai officially launched her career as a novelist in 1963 with the British publication of Cry, the Peacock. As a contemporary Indian Female author, Desai has been identified with a new literary tradition of Indian writing in English, which is stylistically different, and less identity, and "imaginary homelands". It's been considered as the voices of women during the period of publication and even till this day. Maya, the protagonist's life is portrayed in the way were most of the women live today. By being at home she longs for love of her husband, who is juxtapose to her longings. The present study is about how she strongly believes the albino since she has a weak mind and how her life has been misleading by the end.*

*Cry, the Peacock* Desai's first novel chronicles the morbid dread, descent into madness and suicide of Maya, a young Delhi housewife who is trapped in a loveless arranged marriage to the much older Gautama, a misogynistic lawyer. The novel foreshadows several of the major securing themes in Desai's works – the problems of independence and communication for women. Most of Desai's works engage the complexities of Modern Indian culture from a feminine perspective while highlighting the female Indian predicament of maintaining self-identity as an individual Woman.

Maya, the central female protagonist of the novel, is at once the expression of a romantic yearning for love and life, as also a distressed cry for help that is not heard in time. Even as her moods and moments crystallize under the conflicting pulls of desire and despair, fulfillment and frustration, the novel quietly unfolds the instincts and emotion that colour her stunningly subjective sensibility.

The novel has three parts to it. The first and the third can be considered as the prologue and the author describes the agony and depression suffered by Maya on the death of her pet dog Toto. The atmosphere of gloom reminds her of the albino astrologer's prediction that in the fourth year of her marriage there will be a death, either her or her husband. She relates her own story and often gives

details of her own happy days as a child. The author uses the stream of consciousness technique to explain the cause and growth of her despair since she represents the women hood. The second section of the novel reveals sanity to insanity. But even here there are occasional flashes of sanity. Maya reveals the first kind of attitude to fate. She lives a life of horror and fear at the prospect of the astrologer's prophecy being fulfilled. Her heart craves for love and understanding, solace and support from her husband. Gautama tries to lay his finger on the exact problem that bothers her but Maya is too secretive to allow him to learn the cause. He is a normal gentleman interested in his profession of an advocate, perhaps too practical and materialistic to allot time for expressing his love. Maya does not tell him about the albino's prophecy for fear of hurting him. At the same time she is unable to bear the oppressive burden of the secret. On the other hand the masculine representative Gautama does not believe in fate at all and he is of the view that no educated person ought to believe in such things.

Women are strong believer of fate when compared to man. Since Maya is portrayed as a stereotyped Indian woman she do have some hallucinations. It is because she seldom goes out. The strange part of Maya's hallucinations is essentially solipsistic and consequently she cannot share her

thoughts with anyone. She visualizes fate thus she remembers his eyes that were pale, opaque and gave him a look of morbidity. She recalls the experience of her childhood when she met an astrologer who was an albino she went with her ayah and she held the lady's hand in her tumbling fingers afraid of being left alone "the ayah and the child trembled in terror at the prediction but the albino continued" (64). It is four years since Maya and Gautama were married and Maya feels certain that one of them has to die. She never thinks of the possibility of averting the calamity by accepting the advice of the albino and seeking the grace of the all-merciful God almighty she dare not speak of it to Gautama and there were no friends with whom she could share her fears.

The albino becomes a nightmare and his prophesy hurts her repeatedly Maya had always believed in the perfection of her world but after learning Gautama's views on astrology and fate she felt her life was tainted with fate-fatality. The mental conflict that resulted gets reflected in her physical condition as well she feels very hot in her bed as she turns over in her mind the experiences of childhood she remembered the astrologers words again. Maya associates Gautama with a different world scented with poetry and amiability she yearned to be part of this world but she was certain she could never become part of it she is convinced that Gautama is the one fated to live in the world that she loved more and more days passed and she was the one to die it never occurs to her to allay her tears though prayers to the almighty.

The novel *Cry, the Peacock* is pervaded by the refrain of death. The prospect of death hangs on the two protagonists like the Damocles sword. Maya has the ominous apprehension of death as a Sequel to love of life as an ecstasy. The peacock's cry reminds her of the inevitability of death as an event which will cut short her long-loved sensuous experience of life: "Pia, Pia, "they cry'. 'lover, lover Mio, Mio – I die, I die" How they love the rain – these peacocks" (95). They will even grasp the snakes that

live on the sands there, and break their bodies to bits against the stones, to ease their own pain. Before peacock mate, they fight. They will rip each other's breasts to strips and fall, bleeding, with their beaks open and panting. The death motif is built skillfully into the very structure of the novel *Cry, the Peacock*. Death is associated in the mind of Anita Desai's hypersensitive Protagonists with violence. Apprehension of death plays a crucial role in the tragedy of Maya. Maya is a young sensitive married girl who is haunted by a childhood prophecy of an albino astrologer that either she or her husband will die in the fourth year of her marriage. Her neurosis is worsened not only by her father – fixation as transferred to her husband, but also by the continual memory of the albino prediction, and a compulsive apprehension of death.

Maya's conscious and unconscious may both be evaluated in terms of archetypes and their auxiliary symbols. Thus her attitude to the moon reveals her unconscious fear of death. The moon appears to her to be not the gentle moon of love ballads and fairy tales, but as a demoniac creature, a fierce dancer, and phantom. Because of her frustration in married love, the moon cannot stand in her mind for beatitude, peace or love, it rather stands as a reminder of the albino astrologer and of his predication about either she or her husband being liable to die four years after their marriage. Since her passionate urge to be both sexually and spiritually close to her husband is thwarted, the repetitious recitation. What is more, it is not merely her own possible death which agonizes and terrifies – her, but an existential loneliness and death as a full-stop to life in general which makes her react to things with extreme nervous tension. She becomes so taut with pent up passion that violence's is the only imperative that can provide her relief, and only violence such as that of murder and revenge can cause a passion of this In her novels, Anita Desai essentially tries to portray the tragedy of human souls trapped in extremely adverse circumstances.

It is seen that in her treatment of love and death Anita Desai holds Maya, a rebel against tradition, in contrast to Gautama, who poses to be pall-bearer of reason and log, but it really a supporter of the traditional view of Hindu Philosophy – that of resignation and acceptance. Maya stands for change, even if it is nihilistic, whereas her father and Gautama symbolize the continuance of the patriarchal tradition. The eminence that Maya enjoys as the narrator of most part of the novel makes it clear where Anita Desai's sympathies, on the whole, lie. She, however, does not reject the Bhagvad Gita's philosophy of self-abnegation and acceptance out of hand-she only seems to suggest a humanistic corrective to the traditional passive interpretation of it.

*Cry, the Peacock*, story of temperamental incompatibility leading to marital discord and disharmony. If she likes to abandon herself, give herself up to life, he would rather hold himself back

and sail through life like a lotus, never risking total involvement. Naturally, he comes to consider Maya's intensity a form of insanity and dismisses her love as an attachment. The sad intrusion of death into Maya's world is an occasion for mournful reflection.

#### Works Cited

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