

Elements of Feminine psychology in the novel of Anita Desai's 'Cry the Peacock'

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1. Introduction

Feminine psychology is an approach that focuses on social, economic, and political issues confronting women all throughout their lives. It can be considered a reaction to male dominated theories such as Sigmund Freud's view of female sexuality. The ground breaking works of Karen Horney argued that male realities cannot describe female psychology or define their gender because they are not informed by girls' or women's experiences. Theorists, thus, claim this new approach is required. There is the position that women's social existence is crucial in understanding their psychology.

The aim of present research work is to highlight psychological explorations of Indian women in the novels of Anita Desai. My focus on Anita Desai who is women novelist dealing with the world of women. She belong to urban upper middle class, English educated society. Their milieu is the world. She depict women with both their negative and positive attributes. Women in these novels are no longer treated as objects for her become the subject of these novels. We see women in all her colours: the "power of women. The deviousness of women. The helplessness of women. The courage of women". Novelist portray "Women who aspire, attempt and strive to be their true selves".

Anita Desai is a famous contemporary Indian English lady essayist of fiction. She has composed on a mixture of topics yet a lion's share of them are focused around ladies 'sufferings. She has a remarkable internal methodology to ladies mind, which, she investigates with cautious affectability furthermore importance to the current times. It concentrates on the crude and genuine systems that she, as a creator, utilizes to analyze her lead female characters, all with most extreme taste and honesty.

This study focuses on the critical parts of female characters in her books and their status in the complicated domain of her Novel.

2. Anita Desai's Techniques

Anita Desai is a diasporic writer who experienced a mixed cultural upbringing. She introduces a new age of psychological realism in her novel Cry, the Peacock (1963).

This research portrays the novelist Anita Desai whose women characters undergo psychic situations in a male dominated society with reference to her novel, "Cry, the Peacock" (1963). Anita Desai started a new era of psychological novels and gave a new dimension to the world of novel writing in English. Her women characters unfold a new vista with their unique nature of sufferings. Through her novels

she tries to project the agony and predicament of women in a male dominated, conservative and taboo-ridden society.

Anita Desai has also touched upon a very vital aspects feminine – psyche, Maya is not only child less but also sexually unsatisfied. Anita Desai's handling of erotic is a very stable absolutely on like Kamlamarkendeya, Kamala Das and ShobhaDey. In Cry the Peacock this is how the novelist describe Maya's desire for carnal pleasure

"...longing to be with him, be close to him... make haste in undressing... But when I went to rouse him from the couch, with a touch, I saw that he had closed his eyes not with mere tiredness, but in profound, invulnerable sleep and was very far from any world of mine, however enticing (CP, P.93).

MeeraBai criticizes,

Anita Desai breaks a new ground in the world of Indian-English fiction by shifting the emphasis from the external to the internal world. She creates a world of her own which she fills up with extraordinarily sensitive beings. She eschews social documentation and moralizing. It is not as though her novels are devoid of social purpose. Her novels delineate the inner lives of hyper-sensitive women who are in eternal quest for meaningful life in a way- 'the true significance of things'

3. Feminine Psychic evolution

Anita Desai undergo a strange psychic experience and suffer from failures and frustrations. They undergo trauma due to their hypersensitive nature and their insensitive husbands. Most of the female characters of Desai are either women with affluent background or are mere house-wives. The women in the novels under study are not those who play dual roles as that of a house-wife and a career woman in order to suffer from the tension of being over-worked. The restricted surroundings make the women suffer intensely.

The women characters in Anita Desai's novels are shown to have sensitive and emotional nature which is too fragile to cope with the dehumanized and artificial urban surroundings and with the hardened unfeeling nature of the in-laws. It is a difficult situation for these sensitive women to adjust themselves to the changing scenario, a troublesome transit from the protective nests of the parents' family after their marriage to a totally different family in the urban surroundings.

A close study of Anita Desai's works reveals her struggle for women's autonomy. She is an expert at depicting female psyche and holds a key position as a psychological novelist dealing with the psychic problems of women, particularly Indian

women. They have been depicted as dumb cattle without any will of their own. Anita Desai's female characters are educated, well to do and hypersensitive women who are burdened by the contemporary chaotic milieu. Anita Desai reflects the inner struggle of such women, their desire to break the shackles and assert themselves as human beings. In this struggle they often get alienated from the mainstream of life. Desai's preoccupation with the individual, highlighting the psychological motivation and her keen awareness of the futility of existence radiate from each of her novels. Anita Desai focuses more on characters rather than the plot and delineates them by exploring their psyche through peeping into their feelings such their agony, anger, dissatisfaction and frustration.

4. Critical analysis of Novel

Cry, The Peacock (1963) her first novel, it is about the heroine of the novel Maya. She is a spoiled and stout daughter of a rich Brahmin. She is married to Gautama, who is sensitive, impolite and an intelligent advocate. When she was a child, she was predicted by an astrologer that after four years of her marriage, she or her husband would die. Due to the fear, she loses her balance of mind. In an insane condition she kills her husband. A few days later she too commits suicide. The peacocks are said to fight before they mate, "*living they are aware of death .Dying, they are in love with life*". This novel describes the Psychological dilemma of Maya's inner Psyche. Almost the entire story is "*remembrance of things past*" by Maya herself. It is really her effort to tell the story to herself to understand and find meaning in her life. The complexity of her inner life is effectively brought out through the landscape as is her resentment against her husband for his inability to communicate with her. In Maya's mind reality and myth merge into a nightmarish outcome.

Desai's first novel Cry, the Peacock, "*the first step in the direction of psychological fiction in English*" Maya, a sensitive woman, suffers from neurotic fears. These fears are caused by the predictions of an albino astrologer about her premature possible death. She fears from her marital disharmony also. Through this novel, Anita Desai, tells us about a hypersensitive Hindu woman of orthodox background seeking unorthodox means of fulfillment. Instead of getting fulfillment she is found alienated. Maya's fascination for life clashes with her husband's rational and practical approach to it. Both of them can never understand each other and they separate. Gautam, Maya's husband, is a different kind of person. There is temperamental difference between Gautam and Maya and this proves fatal. This temperamental difference between Maya and Gautam is the main factor to the theme of psychic disintegration.

Cry, The Peacock is the anguished loneliness of a fairy-tale princess Maya, for whom life with her father was a continuously fantastic party. Married to a much older, matter of fact, business-like, staid Gautama, Maya fails to get rid of her father-obsession. Life becomes intolerable for her when her pet dog Toto's death brings back to her mind the albino-astrologer's prediction about the fourth year of her marriage.

R.S. Pathak points out that "*self-alienation is the more basic form of rootlessness and can thwart the individual's mental and psychic development in an alarming manner*".

Desai's novels are a probe into the dark interiors of the human psyche and a description of the various forms of loneliness and isolation that assail these characters. Being over-sensitive, sentimental and imaginative, Maya is a total contrast to the rational, logical, no-nonsense Gautama. Her isolation is total when she realizes that he is not able to empathize with her reactions to events around her. Even her friends do not provide her any solace. Maya admits, "*There was not one of my friends who could act as an anchor anymore*" and Gautama too "*could never join me*". This existential angst troubles Maya often: "*But those were the times when I admitted to the loneliness of the human soul, and I would keep silent. The things we leave unsaid would fill great volumes*". The distance between Maya and Gautama kept widening and gradually Maya begins to accept it:

Maya needed "*contact, relationship, communion*" to soothe the disturbed, agitated mind. Yet, she and Gautama were often just parallel lines which could never Among Desai's protagonists, Maya is a brilliantly documented figure portraying an alienated consciousness, tortured by her own phobias and neuroses. In her earnest appeal for love, her child-like responses to life's problems and her meet. She shows all the sorrows of an alienated being in modern society.

Anita Desai's novels carry a sense of universal feminism. She has depicted the tyrannies, torture and violence confronted by women in Indian society through delving deep into women's psyche. Her literary themes of incompatible relationships, alienation, quest for independent identity and authentic existence almost unconsciously weave into her plots and characters. She has managed to make a place for herself in writing about the long term effects on the psyche of women in the family and the society and their attitude, compromising or otherwise. She discovers the inner functioning of her protagonists' minds describing the inner recesses and revealing the essential human condition by placing the individuals in states of extreme tension. Her Novels Fire on the Mountain, Cry the Peacock and Voices in the City deal with the psychic conflict of women-protagonists Anita Desai's novels carry a sense of universal feminism. She has depicted the tyrannies, torture and violence confronted by women in Indian society through delving deep into women's psyche. Her literary themes of incompatible relationships, alienation, quest for independent identity and authentic existence almost unconsciously weave into her plots and characters. She has managed to make a place for herself in writing about the long term effects on the psyche of women in the family and the society and their attitude, compromising or otherwise. She discovers the inner functioning of her protagonists' minds describing the inner recesses and revealing the essential human condition by placing the individuals in states of extreme tension. Her Novels Fire on the Mountain, Cry the Peacock and Voices in the City deal with the psychic conflict of women-protagonists.

They portray their female characters on the verge of psychological breakdown with a View to capture the prismatic quality of life in their fiction. They use the stream of consciousness technique, flashbacks and interior monologues. Their female characters are mostly educated, well to do and hypersensitive ladies burdened by chaotic milieu. They reflect the inner struggle of such characters, their desire to break the shackles and come out of their shells and assert themselves as human beings. They can be considered as the innovator of psychological study of alienated women in India. They deal with the problem of meaninglessness in life and lack of communication not from the philosophical or sociological but entirely from psychological point of View. As psychological novelists they try to delve deep into the emotional built up and crevice of their characters. They employ very beautifully all techniques of psychological novel like zigzag puzzle, diary entries, self-analysis along with stream of consciousness and flashback. They make each work of theirs an accelerating exploration of the psychic self. The psychological turmoil creates psychic imbalances, which in turn, handicap them in establishing harmonious and gratifying inter -personal relationships. There is a complete compatibility between their theme and technique with the help of colour and symbols they reveal the hypersensitive nature of their heroines. Their language have three major characteristics love of words, sensuous richness and sensitivity, which suit their expression of personal vision. They are such interested in life with its hopes, frustrations, negations, rejections and chaotic flow of

events as they are concerned with the art of giving shape, purpose and wholeness to life.

Desai always tries to show the psychological state of her characters because she thinks that the inner life of man and woman decides his or her character rather than the external condition of life. She is affected by man and women relationship at home. None of her characters are happy. She uses symbols and images to describe the suffering of mind. Desai 's emphasis on the inner world of her characters the techniques she find most effective in portraying it are stream of consciousness, flashbacks and interior monologues. She captures a psychological realism which submerges the story with the consciousness of the characters. Plot acquires only secondary importance. Simple plot line leads to complex situations. A story "imposed from the outside or a theme similarly imposed simply destroys their life, reduces them to a string of jerking puppets on a stage. part of my private effort to seize upon the raw material of life --- its shapelessness, its meaninglessness.

Almost all her female characters are hypersensitive, grappling with some problem or the other "*facing, single – handed, the ferocious assaults of existence*" All the female characters in Desai's novels grow and develop. Desai is however, quick to point out that it is not feminism that has taken her in this direction but her interest in individuals, both men and women.

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