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“Cry the Peacock- A study of feminine existence”

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Abstract: The feminists aim at putting an end to male domination and for achieving this goal they have to destroy the structure of culture as we know it the feminists believe that women should struggle for their social and economic freedom. They should try to end female exploitation. Many Indian novelists focus on women's situation in the Indian society. Anita Desai is one of the leading voices who have given the inner description of the woman's inner world, her sensibility, her sulking frustration and the storm raging inside her mind. The central theme of her novels is the existential predicament of woman as an individual. The very concept that women need something more than just food, clothes and accommodation is aptly illustrated in this novel. The hyper sensitive mind of the women is illustrated by Desai in the most tender way where the atmosphere of tension is set ideally against the backdrop of a sultry Indian summer. The oppression and depression, the anxiety and fear, the frustration and foiling of the female protagonist set against a typical Indian scenario brings out the very best of the writer in a coherent way. *Cry, the Peacock* gives expression to the long smothered sad cry of the wounded psyche, the harrowing tale of blunted human relationship being told by the chief protagonist herself. The novel presents the story of a young sensitive girl obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster.

Keywords: Feminism, Frustration, Male Dominated Society, Suffering, Feminine Sensibility

I. INTRODUCTION

Anita Desai's female protagonists are tolerant and submissive but do not seem to be ready to sensibly record the critical familial situations, especially in husband-wife relationship. They sacrifice their identity and individuality and they suffer from intense isolation because they could not reconcile with the demands of their

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psyche and with those of the world around them. They view the world as a hostile place and often take a negative stance, which generates psychic states of fear, guilt, anger, bitterness, anxiety, helplessness and depression. These women writers question the need to accept the man made image of a woman. A reflection of the situation of women in the male dominated world is also found in the novels of Desai. Being females they are represented incapable of reaching out to the

wider world. Anita Desai portrays females' desire of liberty from social and traditional bondages in the patriarchal society in her novels. Women, in Anita Desai's fiction embody the author's quest for psychological insight, awareness and harmony. They are the focal point of contact between the writer's consciousness and the world from which they are alienated. Her women, therefore, have to face conflicts make effort to break away, to assert their individuality and think whether their decision to do so is the right one, how to resolve the identity crisis and emerge victorious from the trauma. These are some of the questions Desai seems to explore through her women characters. Her themes certainly touch the raw nerves of human experience. Her women characters undergo many sufferings inside and try to overcome from it and attain empowerment in their life. The novel throws light on the preoccupation of Maya's inner world, frustration and storm raging inside her mind. This novel is considered to be the trend-setter in feminist writing. Desai portrays Maya as hyper sensitive, and cultured, she tries to explain in detail about Maya's trapped feminine psyche right from her childhood to her ultimate death as a youth. She falls a victim to the social and psychological predicaments. The cry of the peacock and the cry of Maya are similar. Maya says the world appears like a toy specially made for me, painted in my favourite colours set moving to my favourite tunes. Similar to the monsoon peacock, dancing madly and crying

for its lover and finally killing itself.

Major Thrust

In India, family plays a dominant role in the life of a woman. The family ties more important to a woman that is her own welfare. Her own emotional well-being depends on her relationship with her family members. According to woman, tradition seems the dominance of male society who always creates the limits. Cry, the Peacock gives expression to the long smothered sad cry of the wounded psyche, the harrowing tale of blunted human relationship being told by the chief protagonist herself. The novel presents the story of a young sensitive girl obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster. Her extreme sensibility is presented in terms of immeasurable loneliness. Maya cannot get over the trauma of a prediction that an albino priest forecasts death for Maya or her husband in the fourth year of their marriage. She is married to a man who is not only double her age but temperamentally quite different from her. Maya has been completely neglected by her husband because Gautama has been influenced by the philosophy of non-attachment in the Bhagwad Gita and practises it absurdly in his relationship with his wife. Maya is deeply frustrated and hurt by the discovery that he is totally indifferent to her physical charms. In order to understand Maya's psyche, we have to begin with her childhood. She is a motherless child born in a God fearing traditional Brahmin family which has such a cultural background. Maya has a strong love for animals. In the novel

besides the peacock, there are many descriptions of animals. It is significant that the novel opens with the death of Toto, Maya's pet dog. It is the beginning of the mental imbalance. She is very sad at the death of her dog whereas Gautama considers it rather calmly. The communication gap between Maya and Gautama begins to widen and neither of the two is able to bridge it. A kind of agony begins to mount in Maya's bringing along mental fears which magnify everything out of proportion. As she has been brought up in a fairytale world, a wide gap is created between her illusions and the reality of life, between what she expects and what actually happens. In India, family plays a dominant role in the life of a woman. The family ties are more important to a woman than is her own welfare. Her own emotional well-being depends on her relationship with her family members.. Maya's final identity lies in her confrontation with her own act of madness. Her fear for death and so her choice of flight leads to death and destruction of life. As a woman of traditional society, her guilt and consciousness haunts her. Only prophecy makes her as a murderer. The prophecy is the main reason for her neurotic behaviour of Maya. Her conscious haunts her and so she commits suicide. Thus, Maya ends her life. Anita Desai's *Cry The Peacock* is a unique example or an illusion of the feminist point of view. Anita Desai's female characters are highly sensitive human beings. They are driven to the limits of despair and living within a

limited conventional structure. Desai always prioritise women and their sufferings in the male dominated society. She explores how women have reached different stages in life due to the conservation of counterparties. She 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; she is perfectly normal and healthy woman. Her only sin is that she is sensitive, imaginative, passionate and sensuous and thus represents the disturbed psyche of modern Indian woman. She tries to strike balance between institutional needs and intellectual aspirations and is deeply bewildered when the existential absurdity of life is brought before her. When she experiences loneliness and lack of communication, she feels herself in mental crisis.

Conclusion

Anita Desai has performed a significant function of instilling a positive feminine identity rather than a female identity, role model women who deters the dependence on men. She has raised voice for the Indian women. Almost in all the novels of Anita Desai, she has always tried to convey the inner urges of her female protagonists through her writing and depiction of situation in a proper way that has echoed to all. These things have helped her to peep into the inner world of the women and delineated their reality in totality. She has

always acted in her own way and attempted to express the feminism in her own way. She has contributed to India with the feminist concern; the most important thing about her is the way of expression. Her all novels revolve around men and women of exception, incompatible couples and have always tried to explore the feminism in varied ways She has always covered the women of all age group and all types like children, old, intellectual, dull etc. in her writings which has made her one of the great feminist of the times.

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